

BEAR AND BEE HIVE BY NIGHT  
 (Ursus americanus)

My honey mills wind down in aftercool  
 of late September sunlight's rapid plunge.  
 All day, productive order was the rule,  
 now workers rest before their first waves lunge  
 at morning sweetness waiting in the clover.  
 Moon-time awakens hulking stealth with claws,  
 just like a Choctaw spirit passing over  
 sleep-dark weeds and logs on brazen paws.  
 Old Bruin knows the dynamo is dormant;  
 he knows he needn't fear sting-barbs or shot.  
 He comes as if he's cued by an informant,  
 then wanders off to some deep woodland spot,  
 my precious topaz beaded on his chin:  
 His tongue will find it, tell him where he's been.

So he'll be back. He needs no workers' dance  
 to point him toward his coveted reward.  
 Once found, his black brain memorized each chance  
 he took and won. He's proved himself the lord  
 of night, of fields and salmon streams, wild bees  
 besides. Now mine, compared, make easy prey.  
 Each raid, he's also seen my apple trees;  
 he'll soon gorge twice at my expense. By day  
 I don't believe old tribal kin return  
 as bears. By sun I count compounded loss  
 and load my double-barreled vengeance, burn  
 with educated scorn for tales that cross  
 the years. Through hunter's sights I watch him pose  
 against the moon, my aim. He's safe. He knows.