

Eliseo's Cabin, Taos Pueblo

Yellow alfalfa banks the rutted lane
that winds in under the bedstead gate
latched with loops of baling wire.

Horseskulls bleach on fenceposts
running down through sagebrush
to the cabin snug by the sandy creek.

Pieces of plows hang from the cedars
along with barn hinges, tractor chains,
and a rusted-out kettle. A buffalo hide

drapes a lodge pole wedged in willows.
The cabin's covered in sweetpea vines,
blossoms tumbling out bees.

Eliseo has set his cot outside
near an iron pot brimming peonies.
Lying alone at night, watching
stars shake, hearing the creek talk,
he remembers before there was a camp

and his father would come here to watch
thunderheads collapse on the prairie
and drag sweeps of rain across arroyos.

Worried about the old man sleeping on the ground
he sawed planks and hauled them up by buckboard
rocking to the meadow on wheels that smelled of sage.

Now old himself he comes to his cabin
to heat chili and bread on the wood stove
to sleep by the creek or sit by a spruce
whittling birds for grandchildren.

In the dark, he hears his ponies graze
across the fern-crowded creek
where fireflies flare like memories
and his father and grandchildren's voices
rise from the cold traveling water.