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romantic tipi

"...she will talk through my tongue." -- Emily Carr

some historians make-up romantic gestures, stories, creative amusements about indigenous groups of people in any given country. this in itself is of little or no consequence or it seems not to be of any consequence except to those who try to create from historical truths, or at least try to have a clear perspective of historical reality. American painter R.A. Blakelock 1847-1919, was concerned with the direct representation of nature, his sunset paintings, his representation, his direct correlation of the end of a particular way of living, indigenous people who live within a natural setting along rivers and in forests. by the turn of the century only a few tribes in the united states could be found in encampments. his concern for nature and those peoples living in natural settings almost drove him mad. at least that is what I've read about him and then surmised. Blakelock covered his canvases with thick paint, pigment's sublime tints. his painted moons, always night's wading light. society today can surmise what life might have been like during past decades by studying or reading paintings. yet, one's experience is one's experience. all I can do is read history or listen to someone else speak of things I know nothing about, to try come to a small truth, an understanding of who someone else's history is tantamount to climbing a mountain by watching it being done by someone else.

my brother and sister may not agree with the way I saw things in my childhood. our cold water flat. our mother heating water in a huge aluminum pot, carrying that hot pot to the bathroom, down a skinny hall. mother poured scalding water into the footed tub, she turned the chrome cold water faucet on until we could sit in there and wash. we took turns in the same water. boy could mother scrub off all that mud. making mud pies was one of my favorite activities. sneaking into our landlord mr. cennibar's garden, behind our apartment building, I'd grab a hand full of rose petals. there were twenty three rose bushes planted in his small space. I crushed the petals until juice ran down my arm. I was the best perfumer in my neighborhood. with sun beating down between mr. cennibars two buildings, the hickey family on one side, us on the other, we'd slouch through puddles on rainy days. we lived over the

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grocery store, and the barber shop until we moved when I was a teenager. I felt rich with all that light pouring through all those windows in our newly painted apartment. that apartment was over my father's cobbler shop, the tailor shop and the drug store. our landlord lived downstairs in the back with two Alaskan dogs and his chickens in a garage under him. all the kids watched as the butcher cut off the heads, chickens running around spurting blood.

God clothed the birds, provided for all creatures. all creative people vie for followers of their thoughts, at least that's what I think. I don't assume my way of living is good for everyone or anyone other than me. its tiring to read or listen to people expound on the virtues of their way.

so I wax on, wade in, expounding on my own virtues. I'm diligent, loyal, disciplined and the most creative being on the planet. I'd make a lousy wife, with no interest in serving or compromising my positions. put a pen or a brush in my hand and I'll make a masterpiece. to know me is to love me. what a load of peonies. in trying to end this small essay on romantic tipi life, to revert back instead of the straight forward march I often walk. in turning around I find there is almost nothing I know about indigenous peoples of the Americas. the lone ranger and tonto don't count. the green stature of an Indian on a horse in front of the boston museum don't count. the casino's in some states don't get me any closer to an understanding of indigenous life. I've never been on a reservation. my only contact with an 'Indian' is a young poet who has nothing to do with Blakelock or romantic notions of himself.

the fade into city landscapes, coffee houses and concrete homes, ally ways rutted with darkness, gingko leaves falling on sidewalks, this caffeine age representation, the flat world of cell phone computer screen knowers, known by those who know, those whole grain knowers, who float on top, signaling who is in and who is out. some artists still speak in other tongues, lay flat on ground, look straight up at the sky, at the sharp tree shapes, cloud formations, setting suns. some artists paint abstract sinks

between headless chickens, rose petals, and scalding water is a resolution, an ending of romantic depiction. so much of this country's

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history, stymies me.

horse drawn milk truck
delivers every other day

this morning that horse
was shot

and now milk comes
in paper cartons

from large grocery
stores full of more