

New York City Pastoral

We didn't see the candy wrappers.
Only a tangle of grass surprised by brilliant dandelions,
spring squirrels delighted by their agility,
a host of pigeons with rainbows on their necks.
If we'd looked up, we'd have seen gray and ivory buildings
pressing against the perimeter of the park.
If we'd been listening, we'd have heard the clop of horses' hoofs,
the growl of the cross-town bus,
or the call of the dog owner, urging a recalcitrant Irish Setter along.

But we were focused on our watercolor sets:
Slim metal boxes with cakes of paint
In cherry, orange, lemon, lime, sky, grape and horse.
We were admiring the curls of color that ribboned
from our brushes when we dipped them in the water,
and then disappeared:
Twenty fourth-graders intent on splashing Central Park
across eight and a half inches of paper.

Constance Del Nero

Nunahi Duna Dlo Hilu-I

Columbus, dear, you had it wrong.
They're not Indians at all.
Tell your good friend Amerigo,
they're not Native Americans either.

Schoolchildren open their textbooks and read,
1830: Indian Removal Act
as if Indians were nits, blackheads, ingrown hairs.

The Cherokee wrapped the tatters
of their culture around them
and marched westward,
even as their children died and
their landscape disappeared.

Only rocks and trees and far-off stars witnessed
Nunahi Duna Dlo Hilu-I:
The Trail Where They Cried.
Clouds saw but moved on,
and never stopped to tell.

Constance Del Nero