HEART OF AN EAGLE

THESIS

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By

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This thesis consists of a poem in the form of three related dramatic monologues in free verse. The subject of the poem is King Philip's War, an Indian war which took place in New England in 1675 and 1676. The central figures in the poem are the Indian leader, Metacom (King Philip); Benjamin Church, the Englishman responsible for Metacom's death; and Metacom's wife, Melia.
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IN MEMORIAM

Metacom of America--killed in action defending his country from the invader, August 12, 1676.
THE EAGLE'S HEART

come, I was expecting you

the eagle's heart is fierce
and tender
he is merciless in the hunt
and loving of his mate
and her wingling brood
the heart of an eagle is noble
so cold as to be hot
and he takes but a single mate
in this his one life

the wind is the eagle's old ally
if he loses his mate
to her death
then the wind will weep
and moan
and rabbits will rejoice
at the sound of an eagle's sorrow
for the enmity of their blood
and that eagle will be alone then
the eagle's wings are great
and wing without sound
in the highest winds
lord of the sky
he rises to the sun
and sees all
he sees all with the eyes of the highest one
for only then can this hunter die
after he has seen all
and knows the song of the sun
for it is then
that the eagle's heart breaks
and he dies

he dies on a windless morning
and falls to earth
the mighty heart food for dogs
but his spirit rises to the sun
when the strong winds come
and there
the eagle's heart lives forever

so my father
with sad eyes, such sad eyes
spoke to me
when winter skies were grey
the trees grieving for their leaves
in the days of my youth
as I became a man
my father was a true man
even the false ones
the linglish
called him great lord

come, I was expecting you, friend
please sit down,
here by the fire
yes
it is a chilling night
strangely so, for the leaves have not yet turned
and the earth is wet
the night wind is quite strong
but don't worry
this hut will shake
and shudder
but it will be here
in the morning
when first the light comes
and steam rises from this swamp
my birthplace
which was once a lovely island
in a comely lake

the wind and I, you see,
are old allies
my grandfather, a holy man
gave me the wind for my old ally
at my birth
such things seem unusual to you
I know
for you are not from my world
but a world with different ways

even my brothers loved the wind
though their hearts were not
of the same nature as mine
my younger brother--
sit down by the fire
are you comfortable now?
let me see your eyes while I talk in the firelight
have you eaten
were my wife only here
she would cook us a grand feast
she was a wonderful cook
she was beautiful, and--
can I do anything
to make my guest more at home?
good

you want to hear the story?
yes, the real story
then I will tell you my memories
friend
I am honest, not like the linglish
those invaders and barbarians
who taught my people
the singing people of forest
and sea
to lie and cheat,
and in my recollections
you will find no thing that is not

oh
look through the smoky fire hole above us
my friend
see the light begin to fade
the stars to shine through clouded twilight
and look in the firelight before us
see it flicker
so my people begin to fade
and the world of my fathers
flickers out, to the last glowing ember
and the grey ashes remain
now may the highest one
who sent the good power
to us all
give me the power to say what I know
knowing that all is ending forever
now
and all truth will be lost
in the lies
of those who came across
the holy sea
to my father

my father
that good and wise man
the chief counselor of our people
feared in war
sought in peace
whose old allies were happy
and enemies sorrowful
my father
Osamequi the leader
he gave the linglish succor
fed them when they were starving

gave them permission

to share our land

 taught them the ways of living

 that make the earth bountiful

in disposition

listen to that summer night wind

my friend

singing in the tall trees around us

if only the summer wind

would always sing

 eagles would never die

and dogs could never defile them

those dogs who whine to coax eagles down

to doom

sing, summer wind

the linglish

with their whining

coaxed my father down

he thought that we could teach them

make old allies out of them

learn their strange knowledge
teach them what we knew
those treacherous bastards
they were only coaxing us down
until strong in their numbers
they became
until their corruption spread among us
sickening the body
and rotting the spirit
until my father grew old
and in old age wanted to look away
and see only peace
great lord he was
he told me
I was an eagle
of course
these things seem unusual to you
I know
for what connection do you have with them
a man cannot be an eagle you say
and eagles are fearful predators
ah, but you are not from my world
but a world with different ways
where dogs are admired and praised
and eagles called fearful predators
do you care for meat?
I am hungry

the meat is bitter
but all we have
my heart is bitter too, friend
for the death of my people
yes, I have seen it in a moment of vision
when?
I'll tell of that
of my younger brother
and my wife
my older brother as well
a man like my father

Wamsutta was my older brother
the elders said he was
my father reborn
a brave, proud leader
who claimed his people's right
to live
the linglish, you see
when my father was dead
said something very strange
they owned the land
now imagine the madness of claiming
to own the earth or the sky
why
no one in his right mind can fathom it
I know, I know
you think I exaggerate
that I hate my enemies
who have gained sway
over my father's land
but no
they claim ownership of the earth
the way you or I, in our right minds,
might claim this gourd dipper
painted red for health
these linglish are crazy
I tell you

these people who came in great stinking boats
over the beautiful sea
where the dark waves swell
into white flying foam
and wondrous fish larger than the green forest trees
play, yes
I say it is good for the many fish
that these linglish don't live in water
indeed, you know, now I think of it
I've never even heard of one bathing
and they wonder how we know
when they are coming through the forest, ascribe to us
an evil power of premonition
while it is only that we smell them
yet they claim we stink
who every day bathe whenever the rivers
are not frozen
oh, how my enemies smell

when my father died
those very ones
who called him great lord
and bowed before him
they told my brother that he was their slave
that he must make marks on paper
they call it paper
marks to certify his dependence
to make abject protestations to some
ruler of theirs
called king
why
there is no dignity to such a thing
if I required it of those
who follow me
they would kill me
and rightly so
you, friend
you have no king whence you come
no, of course not
my brother Wamsutta was too proud
to even reply to such nonsense
they poisoned him
my younger brother is dead also

here, have some water from this red dipper
I had a red dog when I was a child
red as the sunset that precedes gentle weather
he barked at squirrels in the trees
squirrels who played in the tall green trees
swaying
in spring winds
my red dog followed me about so much
my uncle would laugh
and call us brothers of war
my uncle led my father's warriors
and mine
he is dead now
but alive to the highest one
to whom all live
even the rocks you think are inanimate
strange friend
the red dog?
he grew old as I grew tall
went to sleep one winter's night
when the trees hung down with white ice
and one's nose turned red in the wind
red as my dog
what right do they have to take our land?

her father was a collaborator
he lived on the outskirts of a linglish village
doing odd tasks, dirty work
when he wasn't made stupid by the poison
they gave him to drink
then you could find him lying in the dirt
flies buzzing on his mouth
his wife's mind was damaged
she believed what the linglish told her
that we were of the evil man
whose face is a bear's
hands misshapen claws
the one who brings sickness
who loves deception
she hated herself and called our enemies
her people's savior
and so they do style themselves
what a sorry way to hide their shameful deeds

with father and mother as they were
what could one expect of their daughter
I'll be blunt
she was a slut for many men
and one linglish man used her for a boy
something my people never knew of
before those invaders appeared on the rocky coast
bringing diseases that cut my people's numbers in half
yet they say they are sent by the good power
that we are evil and they are good
they speak of justice and kindness
and push a knife between your ribs twisting
then they praise the highest one
to justify the evil that they do
yes
and they call us savages

my younger brother told me
of an evil deed
I would tell you
but you wouldn't believe it possible
you think I am too critical
well, what shall I say?
some of them have nice smiles
I have known a few who were honorable
do I hear something in the trees?
I heard something in the singing trees long ago
good power!
she is gone from me

my younger brother
my father's son by a woman not my mother
Sassamon was his name
he had a mind like the sunlight on clear water
in the first summer of the world
my father sent him to the linglish
to learn their ways, master their strange knowledge
he did
I think he understood them better than they
themselves
he accepted their way of worship
claimed it created no conflict with our way
I said it did
that they used it to destroy our way of life
how did he die?
I--
I wonder if you know
what he said of the linglish?
the wind is very strong now,
is it not?
see through the flap of my hut's door
the moon shining on this camp
the last refuge of a free people

her eyes had a shining
and her face was moonlit
she came to me
saying she sickened of being a crazy woman
among the linglish
great shame
and a fearfulness of what she had become
overwhelmed her
that linglish who presently kept her
for a menial
used her in that unnatural manner
of which I do not even wish to speak again
she asked for refuge
Melia was her name

I looked at her and knew
she was using me to hide from herself
and what she had done with herself
that she was corrupted like the earth
where the linglsh indent it with their heavy boots
fence the land and call it theirs
I looked at her beauty and her corruption
and saw my people

I gave her refuge
I fell in love with the moonlight
and the warm earth
that she was meant to be
her name, did I tell you,
was Melia
Melia truly loved me and hated me
for my eagle's heart

have you seen
the four-footed beasts
the invaders ride
amazing, just amazing
I got hold of one of those beasts
--don't ask me how--
it's a secret
whenever I leaped on this four-legged's back
he made noises and leaped about
in the air
I went soaring in the trees
ouch!
how my younger brother would laugh

he became my secretary
after he returned to the people
Sassamon mastered the linglish ways
language, dress, and manner
the way of worship
now this is what he told me
you won't believe it
I know

he said the linglish had killed
the highest one
well, I said,
I think they would do it
if they could
and laughed
I did not believe it
but my brother said it was like this:
the highest one, master of life
became a man
and visited the linglish long ago
he wanted to help his children
to teach them a right path in enemy territory
but by them he was killed
making the earth grow dark
and hid away in a mountainside
then, because being the high one he could not stay dead
he returned to life and gave light back to the world

maybe, I said
but there is still a darkness
in the spirits
of these stinkers
who are afraid of rain
and make nakedness lewd
oh, Sassamon said,
forgive them
what is forgiveness, I asked
I see faces in the firelight
every night
I hear weeping in my dreams
and a great black bear swam out in the sea
yestermorn
when the sun was bright
never to return to land
the white geese fly
the round earth yearns
for her children
while the shining moon completes her phases
and I cannot save my people
faces of dead warriors
haunt my memories
but you see
I had to try
I saw it all coming
for even those who live
become dead like the linglish inside
have some water
no?
well, I will
my throat is dry,
dry
once
when we had been very happy
together
it was in the late spring
by the fire we sat of an evening
over a pot of good stew
I told her I loved her more
than the moon
when it turns red and comes near
this earth
I told her she was beautiful
a red wildflower
growing in a field of dead
winter grass
my flower
Melia
she threw boiling stew in my face
why did you do this?
I asked her
when I could
she could give me no answer
but began instead to tell me
of all the men
for whom she had spread her legs
since her thirteenth summer
of how she did what pleased them
whatever they wanted
one by one she told me of them
and how they used her
she said it wasn't her doing
first she was too young
to know
her father a drunk
mother, mad
second she was in love
with this one or that
third she was just being a crazy woman
it was not her doing she said
the linglish sent her to me, she said
a spy for now
a poisoner later
yes, I said
I know this
but they did not send you to throw
hot stew in my face
and these things that you've done
the shame you carry in your heart
you have chosen each one
and so the shame is yours
but if you live this crazy way much longer
the shame will go away
and so will your heart
for a dog's pride
is not clean
like an eagle's

after then she became my wife
returned to the old way, and learned
struggled with herself
became a sacred woman
and taught the younger ones, the children of the people
Melia, the beautiful, they called her

once, she and I
were walking in a linglish town
the men smiled secret smiles
tried to exchange familiar looks with her
they thought I didn't know
thought they were thus superior
I observed them with curiosity, but
I will never understand
their way of thinking
proud of secret shame
they make sex a game
and loving intercourse, fucking
they must conquer everything
poor sad enemies
she loathed the sight of their faces

those sorry people
one night my younger brother told me
sitting by a fire
the holy dancing for corn
dancing
oh even now I can hear
the singing of the forest people
singing in my heart
Sassamon told me
they hung the good power on two trees
crossed

why did I start a war
that I cannot win?
I'll tell you
if you can understand
for you are from another place
another time
with different ways
after my father died
I dreamed
I dreamed I awakened in a fog
with mist in the green trees
and the moon a glare in the dark clouds
the wind was still
that worried me
the wind, my ally, was quiet
I walked out of camp
followed a path which led
to a linglish town
but before I arrived
I came upon a clearing
the linglish love clearings
and I think they must hate trees
in this clearing of the forest
I saw a scene upon a hill
shrouded in darkness
lit dimly in the misting air
glowing softly, the moon's glare
I saw cross beams upon a hill
surrounded by linglish men and women
and someone else was there
holding out arms in approval
someone strange from faraway
and on the crossed trees
nailed arms outstretched
bleeding, quietly dying in the mist
there was no wind, it worried me
I saw my father
bow
his warrior's head
and die
pierced in his eagle's heart
while the linglish sniffed the misty fog
strange dream
it haunted me

it haunted me
after my older brother
died
and Melia came to me
and I was poisoned
by what she threw in my face
I almost went mad
touched by the sacred sun
for the thought of those unclean pleasures
she had taken with other men
but I kept it in myself
an eagle must bear his pain
in silence
my grandfather told me so
this dream haunted me
Melia's past tormented me
and every day I saw the invaders
grow stronger
and my people weaken
in body, in heart
my spirit was restless
a summer wind in the tall grasses
growing round the river's bend
hear the owl in the night?
last night I heard a squirrel
do you hear it, the owl
the owl speaks at night
thirsty, my friend?
comfortable?
do you wish to hear more
the night grows old

in my restless spirit
I climbed the highest hill
in our land, one summer bright day
I wanted to pray
and be close to the sun
my father and Melia
my people, the singing ones
of the forest and the sea
I looked down all around me
and prayed to the high one
to save the singing people
looked to the east, I saw the
square towns of the pious linglish
the broken forest, those evil fences
over what was once my people's earth
their place to live between the earth and sky
then far to the west
where all was still green
I gazed
on an unspoiled world
where human beings were happy

suddenly
at once
immediately
I knew
I spun about
the linglish towns
I spun about
the western earth
clear to the sky
the world
the people
the linglish
suddenly
I knew
my father was the people
Melia was the earth
and the linglish
would destroy
our entire world
struck dumb
wanting to cry out
as if
to warn
a friend
of an enemy
arrow
poised for flight
from the trees
but unable to speak
I saw it all
and I screamed
my voice is deep
the hills about me
shook with the echo
then all went silent
in the sun bright
summer day
when I saw
with the eyes of the highest one
that there could be no end
to this war
so long as one true mind
lived among my people
and the peoples of our world

what?
who was the someone else
strange
in my dream of a crucified father
you wouldn't believe it
if I told you
one fright at a time
for it is someone
that you know
the fire burns low
the smoke grows bitter to the eyes
I feel a chill creeping, creeping in my breast
I killed my younger brother
I could not tell you before
of this
you would not have understood
the division that came between us
for you are from another time, another place
with different ways, a different race
but listen

he was my secretary
he helped me to deal shrewdly
with the linglish
he understood that barbaric language well
he said it was much simpler than ours
but that was to be expected
for our culture was older and higher

when I began to prepare for war
to send out runners to the many peoples
of our world
my brother Sassamon
asked me
why?

I told him of my seeing
in the bright summer sun
what would happen to the earth and sky
the peoples and their children
he said it couldn't be
a world could not perish
at the hands of such a people
as the linglish
short and sickly
who needed the shooting sticks
to fight from afar
not like men, not as warriors
who should war hand to hand

and where are your scars I said
for he had never been a warrior
like me, you see
he had lived among the linglish
but he was so very bright
and he had shaped his argument
to appeal to an eagle's pride

he said he would inform the linglish
if I continued preparation for war
trying to unite all the peoples
of our world
to fight for it
I went into a rage
I could see my world
slipping away
the seeing coming to naught
I saw my people's death
and my own life end
in futility
I struck my younger brother down
and he died
held in my arms
too quickly for me to speak
and though he tried to touch my tears
he couldn't

that old owl says I will die
for my brother's life
but half the linglish
have died for mine
forgiveness?
what is that?

a linglish man came to me
with Sassamon my brother
he said his god would make us
all alike
but why, asked I
must we all be alike like you?
why don't we be alike like me?
calling me a heathen
he called those who collaborate with the linglish
praying people
but, I said, my very life is a prayer
to the high one above
how can you say I do not pray
then he talked to me of forgiveness

yes
forgiveness is what the linglish talk about
when they have got all that they want
and left us nothing
but I am proud to die
for my brother's life
eh?
was my younger brother, Sassamon
that someone else in the dream
no

I had a son
my Melia bore me
his little eyes were black
his skin shone brown in the sun
he had the soft lips of Melia
the hawk-shaped eyes of Wamsutta, my brother
he had my temper
and my grandfather's hands
I named him Wamsutta for a dead great one
his laughter, I recall the little one's laughter

he and his mother were captured
when I was away
trying to convince the five united peoples
to unite with my confederacy
to fight the linglish
we could have won
together

I told them of my seeing
when I prayed
that someday they also would fall
before the linglish
if we did not stop them presently
all the peoples of our world
gone would be
in body or heart
but the five united peoples
so strong
had made old allies of the linglish
wanted the shooting sticks
the black pots so useful for cooking
and, they said,
we and they were enemies

yes, brothers, I said
but the linglish do not fit
into our world
with its balance of alliance and enmity
yes, brothers, I said
they'll destroy it all
but the pride of the five united peoples
the eagle's pride I understood so well
Sassamon's argument
living after his death
prevented them from seeing
can an eagle be conquered by dogs
they said
the great warriors laughed
in the sacred circle of assembly

when I returned
Melia and my little son
were gone
the great warrior
Cannonchet
later betrayed by the cowards
among his own people
at his own request
to save them
executed by the order of the linglish
Cannonchet told me
our camp was attacked
in the dark night
collaborators from among the peoples
helping the linglish in the forest
the linglish could not have won a battle
without them, I say
the fighting was confused in the darkness
Cannonchet said
and the linglish and the betrayers
with them
were driven away
but back through the dark forest
the screams of a woman were heard
Metacom, she called, Metacom
she called my name
Metacom
until, Cannonchet said,
her voice, her screams
faded into the far secret fastness
of a dark forest night

then my heart was broken
and I want only to die
for the linglish put the boy and
my Melia
on a slave ship
they are gone
my people will be soon gone
the world whose seasons stretch back
to the first spring
uncountable generations ago
will too be gone
and only the lies of the forgiveness
asking linglish
will remain
until they sicken themselves
to death I suppose
they will live on the bones of my people
the singing ones of the forest trees
my enemies will grow rich
over the death
of a living world

Melia, love
if only you could hear me
but perhaps you can
somewhere faraway
tell the boy
my son, do you live?
his father was the eagle's heart
remember our times together
when the wind blew the moonlit grass
on a cloudy night
and the trees sang soft and secret words
to our hearts
I saw a falling star
dying in the dark night sky
with grace and dignity
a moment of time
a flicker of great light
and a faraway silence ensuing
the water bird called your name
mournfully as a storm gathered in
its power song of light and thunder
for the coming deluge
how sweet your love was to me
rain, and the smell of wet summer earth
Melia,
we walked in a virgin forest
patches of light in verdant and dank
warm darkness
the deer and the singing bird sought
out the grey-winged owl
to learn the wisdom of solitude at dusk
by the flowing rock-graced stream
of clear, cold water
where we lay down to love

she said,
can you love me?
yes, I said
truly?
yes, truly
then here I am
yes, here we are
I'm so glad

then you were lost
and I looked out over the frozen fields
desired so much to go to you
the snowy fields, the crows cawing
Melia
I hear you calling me
when the waterfowl mate
and the sea waves kiss the shore rock's lips
Melia, lovely brown woman
I will die having lost you
the dogs will make a meal of an eagle's heart

what, my friend
you are weeping
I lost track of my thoughts
I did not intend to burden you
with my sorrow
listen
ever did you hear the story of the bear
who wanted to marry a porcupine woman?
it seems that the bear asked a fox
to arrange the nuptials
and--what?
yes
there are men out there
among the trees
you see that large tree?
as it gets lighter you will see
two men in particular
both with shooting sticks
one linglish, the other a collaborator
whose brother I killed
for trying to turn me over
to the linglish
he has very good aim with a shooting stick
and always points it toward the heart
he is corrupted, that collaborator
crude and brutish
like many of my people now
he has learned the linglish practice
of mutilating the dead
scalping, quartering,
and torturing the living
he is convinced he is a savage
he can't speak his own language
much better than he speaks linglish
and loves to drink that linglish poison
rum
when I struck down his brother
he told me
you are a great man
Metacom
but when I return with the linglish
and you lie dead in this swamp
I'll chop your ass

can I get you anything else
before dawn
a little water?
your throat is dry from the long night
I wish I might have been a better host
if my wife were here
she would have cooked a grand feast
she was a wonderful cook
here, the red dipper will give you health

what?
the wind is dying
but my friend
even the wind must rest one day

surrender?
no, I'll not wear chains
suffer no mock trial
I want to die free and running
running toward that tree
but those two better hope
that their sticks don't misfire
that their aim is accurate
or I'll leave them lying in the mud
where they intend to leave me
the sun is coming
the firing will begin soon
farewell to my world
and to you friend
my story is finished

what?
I promised to tell
who the other one was
in the dream of Osamequi's
crucifixion?
well
wouldn't you rather know
about the bear's wedding?
and the porcupine
no?
you must know who the other one was
in the haunting dream of my father

then
look through the opening of my hut
when I pull the flap back further
see the sun just touching the trees
which are not moving
see the death of my people
it was you

what?
yes
it is a windless morning
THE WAR DOG

watch that snake you fool
hurry!
wherever were you gone so long
we've been waiting
yes, waiting

now come with us
yes come with me
we're going to kill a savage king!

to kill a monster
who's drunk the blood
of many a holy innocent
destroyed whole towns
of good pilgrim folk
whose presence blesses
this land of bounty
christians
sent by god the almighty
to subdue the wild earth
a new and promised place
and this savage king dares to object
the coward beast would think to prevent
he objects to our inheritance

so quietly
quietly through these misty woods
we will creep, creep in the night
silent, silent
slinking in the darkening forest light
I know where he is
oh yes
I know where he is
a praying indian told me

a convert who has seen in christ
the error of his evil ways
a beast with a grudge to settle
a killer
with hatred of his king
ah
how that night wind blows
so fiercely

good friend you see
from far away
we came to civilize
to bring help to the unenlightened
make a place for our posterity
they need our aid
good christian guidance
these foolish pagans do
yes, we are shining a light
among the canaanites
and teaching them godly uses

uses of the land, uses of the earth
and the uses of souls' salvation
indeed
it is for sweet Jesus' sake
that we are here
look!
see that moon shining through a cloud?
there in the star-eyed fog above us
by god's blood
I swear before it sets
behind those dark distant hills
and in green trees the white
sun rises easterly
I'll have his severed head
hold it in my two hands
use it for a football
if I please
and no better does he deserve
for this savage king would even dare
would think in his vain heart
twisted in evils' all
to prevent god's will inexorable
and our holy purpose
but conquest is the way of life
the superior survive in history
the lord strengthens the good
and god doesn't make mistakes

oh
they are an execrable race of savage animals
shunning always the truth
that convicting truth flowing so freely
from the mouth of god's holiest ministers
I know my soul is saved by faith
blasphemers!
drunkards and slutty whores
murderous creatures fit only for slaughter
watch it, a fox's hole you fool
do you want to break your leg
and what would be said of me?
if you our guest
were injured so
while under my supervision

yes good man
yes
I am the captain of this band
this mixed band of true and pious englishmen
and praying indians
whom I don't trust
they're uncircumcised you know
but without the latter, beasts they be
we wouldn't have never won this blood-drenched war
yes
you remember the sayings, don't you?
to catch an eagle, set loose the hawks
divide a house to conquer it

what do you ask now?
his name
his name is king Philip
though he calls himself
in trickery
by that vile heathen appellation
Metacom
or Metacomet
or some such silly babble
it matters not
I know him well
he's king Philip all right
and this great sachem Metacom pretension
will not fool me
never oh no
though he be a crafty sort
like all his kind
tricky as that slithery green snake in the grass
right there behind your foot
and just as vile
ha! you fool
don't jump
non-poisonous

what?
yes
don't you listen
I said I know him well

once I traded in his camps
until he caught me selling rum
and banned me from his sight
imagine, imagine, imagine you!
this impudent savage
that ignorant primitive
banned a christian from his unholy sight
but the war draws to finish tomorrow
and revenge, my godly revenge

hey, my sister's getting married
soon
the younger one
a pretty maid
a comely lass
I remember her birth
in the winter
my twelfth year
I'll be home to attend her festive

king Philip, the rum?
well
good rum never hurt a christian soul
it keeps away the fevers
and if a soul isn't christian
it can watch out for itself
banned me from his sight
my sister's getting married
going to hell at any rate
no
the soul, I mean the pagan soul
not my younger sister
idiot
don't make jokes
I had a maidservant once
selling rum?
a man's got a right to make a living
no sin in profit
divine reward
greed in wealth?
no you fool
god is the richest lord of us all
the landlord of the world
who owns the earth and rents it for a tithe
dawn
that night wind is too strong
for comfort
but it smells of the earth and the sea
and perhaps blows England to me
I miss my native land
would that god might give her light
convict her of her grievous ways
yes
years ago
when his father lived
great Massasoit
a lord who understood
our natural rights
gave us a place
in this blessed land
full of the gifts of nature
and the potential of providence
though these savages
are poor enough
wear skins of deer
and live in huts
here, in a rich full land
you
who comes from far away
you can with certain see
y they are obviously
incapable of progress
and god doesn't make mistakes

years ago
when Philip was hardly
a man
only a youth
and I a few years
older

say
Church is my name
I just thought now
we've not really
been acquainted
you can call me
Benjamin
my friends always do

well
I came to his camp
wanting to learn the heathen
ways
of living in this dark forest
it is a hostile land
you know
those beasts called bears
great monsters
human-like
in some ways
they can devour a man
and snakes in tall trees
devils in the woods
why the trees grow here
so thick and high
a christian soul could lose his way
fall prey, fall prey
forest spirits and demons
familiars in the darkness
who
it is said
enjoy the favors
of these heathen women
and they're willing enough
to open their legs
the praying ones, I mean
though the wenches unconverted
wild she-beasts
always pretend to virtue
a pretense
I have seen them
defend to their hard deaths
those crafty deceivers
but we'll stop such tricks
we'll cut down these trees
lumber for ship's masts
and the earth freed for farming
I had a pagan maidservant
bound to me
do you understand?
we'll cut down the forest trees
we will exterminate
the indian

how?
well
listen, an owl
the sound is fearful
unsettling
we can give them rum
or lots of smallpox infected
blankets
can hunt them down
with dogs
I would have made her a christian soul
she was my godly responsibility
damn
these thorns
I would have made her white
that is, as much as possible
I am sure god would have it so
and god doesn't make mistakes

her mother thanked me
every day
I kept her father in rum
sold it to him very
cheap
hardly a profit
at all
the wind in the trees
I weary of this wind
even my own kind company
I did not keep from her
a christian name I gave to her
I called her Mary Church
and a place in godly society
she ran away
called back her heathen name
and ways

these killers of women and children
workers of cruelty
merciless predators
with hearts
cruel as eagles
we'll hunt
them down
they
deserve
to die
send
them
to
hell
whence they came
and
that chief demon
Philip
the hottest spot
in torment
awaits him
I've the scent of his death
he'll not escape me
she ran away
that brown heathen slut
god doesn't make mistakes

we hit a camp
the other day
of savages who claimed
to want, to ask
surrender
mostly old grey men
women
and children
starving
hungry
the young men
dead
their corn plots unattended
in the disorder of war
sinners in our righteous hands
given over to wrath
by an angry god
my sister's wedding will be so grand

it was a fearful sight
to see them frying
in the fire
the stench of burning flesh
but a sweet sacrifice
to god most high
an acceptable offering
to the lord
methinks this wind grows weaker

there took we three prisoners
for mercy's sake
brown-eyed women still in youth
and not at all unattractive
oh
but you should have heard
the devilish clamor
the very pagan outbursts
noises and babble
that came from their soft lips
when we threw the captured children
on the fire
demon's howls
yes demon's howls
crazy pagan babble
but nits make lice
and cruelest eagles come from eggs
Metacom
he calls himself
she's been sold
you son of a bitch
into the darkness of slavery
Metacom
king Philip, I mean
a youth
when I first met him
even then
he was already lost
to god
sat listening at night
to old pagan men
talking proud superstition
and ran by day
in the forest wild
as a warrior and a
hunter
he had a very old, old I say
red dog
let's stop and rest
a moment
sit on a stump in the clearing
for this will be
the last time we stop
until morning
and I'm out of breath
by god
I heard a fine sermon two weeks ago
on the subject of christian mercy
Mercy is my sister's
name

let's see
I remember now
Philip
that old red dog
he kept it alive past all good use
an aged, mottled, stinking
creature
with not one white tooth
left in its jaws
but the savage chewed bear meat
until it softened
and fed it mushy
to that old crumbling creature
just the godless sort
of useless sentiment
that these tall fierce heathen beasts
seem so very prone to
here
you can eat
this herb
don't fear
I learned my forest craft
in Massasoit's camp
yes
Metacomet taught me
Philip
I mean
she ran away that
brown heathen whore
I often dreamt
in cold
autumn nights
I dreamed when I was wearied
in cold
autumn nights
when I heard the
pagans singing
and dancing in delight
the distant sounds
orange moon
near the pregnant earth
and clouds shone
blue light
of dropping casually
his head
in her lap
how she would scream then
I could never
get her to scream
what?
Philip?

Philip, yes, Philip
let's rise and go
time, time
time!

that old dog
whose mottled red hair
young Philip stroked
speaking to it kindly
in that native gibberish
meant for beasts
full of beguiling
sweet silly sounds
do you know what that deceiver said?
he said
before Alexander his brother
Wamsutta they called him
his brother's young wife
he said--
not long ago
I saw her drowned
lying naked on the river's edge
a pretty brown piece of woman flesh round breasts and long black hair tangled in the mud but too cold by then to-- well she shouldn't have followed Metacom

Philip, I meant Philip several of his pretty sisters were there in the midst of a tribal gathering then Philip said yes Philip said he tried to convince me the liar you know he pretends presently he can't speak english but by god's wounds he speaks it well enough
spoke it plain
called it a simple language

he said that dog
wait
step away from that bush
its leaves are hellish poison
he said that dog
had on that very sunlit morning
killed a bear

a great black bear
wandering near camp
the dog leaped high
leaped through the early frosty air
past the claws of an old he bear
why the hound could scarcely move
and fastened fast in a fierce death grip
to the bear's great hairy throat
bringing him down among the trees
on his furry back
shaking the earth in a fearful fight
a dusty struggle
for life
crafty fool
he knew quite well
I slept late that morning
he thought to trick me
so I thought to trap him
make him lose face
before the circle
of family assembled
savages love circles, you know
but dread
the loss of honor

I said
with inescapable reason
I said
and where
your young lordship
where
where is a fresh black bear's
carcass
tell me
for I could see in camp
no recent kill
save a deer skinned and roasting
ah
the sweet smelling fires of my youth
I would return to those innocent days
lost in the years of conflict
the stars seemed brighter
I knew I had him
I knew it
dead to rights without escape
this infernal breeze
I wish it would finish
laying
listen to it whisper in green leaves
in the tall branches of the moonlit trees
which only now in the declining year
start to begin to die
late summer
when the fall winds bring death in many colors
I knew I had him
dead to rights
god knows I did

but he smiled
and those hawk-shaped eyes
gleamed
smiling
over fair game
he told me
he said--the forest is thickest here--
said
I would show it to you
linglish

a corruption of tongue
you know
they can't say English
like proper people do
foreign speaking devils

linglish
he smiled
I would show the carcass to you
gladly
linglish
except this great red horror
the fierce, fearful war dog
ate it up
to the last piece of claw
without leaving a trace
only the memory
of a battle
well
no one said a word
to contradict him at all
I had no answer
save calling him the liar he was
and I couldn't do that
not to his face
I'm not stupid
then did the savage begin to laugh
so hard
the savage laughed at me
at me, a friendly guest in camp
threw back his brown head
of black braided hair
roared with his deep voice
then so did they all laugh at me
the pretty girls
their delicate hands
over full full red lips
and Alexander even
Alexander
whose respect I sought
as the future king of pagans
oh yes
this Philip was a crafty man
and is
even in his sleep
a tricky devil
but I have him now
they say he wants to die
and if he had from christ himself
the soaring wind singing wings of an eagle
he would not escape us presently
me, captain Benjamin Church
when morning comes
soon
soon
soon
hurry up!
you are as slow in the forest
as a white man
come on
that whore, that whore
she ran away
well
now she can tell her lies
in the dark dank hold
of a slaver
what
the maidservant's heathen name?
it doesn't matter
she shan't need it
where she goes
on a slow boat to slavery
you ask too many questions
trust in god
god doesn't make mistakes

now Alexander
was a fine native lord
the offspring of his father
when he was king
and he went hunting
I tracked him down
we took him prisoner
away from his tribe
there were some questions
his objections
to our buying more land
and a pledge of loyalty
to the crown
he died in a silent fit of pride
a sign of divine favor
to us
not never poison
as the savages say

king Philip though
he's a different matter
a ruthless man

when once
in a time
before the war
we knew that he
was plotting
to unite native resistance
to the several english
colonies
Philip had taken
his brother's place
and he took his leadership
seriously

we had him surrounded by many
call his bluff, I said
call his bluff
make him fight before he's ready
I know this man
I said
I know he has a temper
a rare cold rage
as sharp as broken ice
you see, my friend
we thought to force
his scheming hand
by that very sinful nature
of his cruel, proud warrior's heart
for we required of him
submission
the signing of a document
a formal pledge to bind
his hands
have you ever tried to catch
an eagle?

I saw the rage in his eyes
my blood went chill
I felt in my bowels the cold cold
touch of disaster
I tell you I saw it
death in his eyes
death you could know
like a woman's smile
and feel

with your heart's quickening beat

I didn't breathe

when he was a youth

I saw him tear off the head

of a strong man in battle

but then he smiled

with half-closed eyes which gleamed

a hawk sighting game

made his mark

with a cavalier's shrug

I sign, he said

whatever Sassamon

my secretary

says

I do not know this linglish tongue

or the meaning of your strange markings

I knew then as surely

as I know you now

good friend, and partner in the future

that many christian souls

would find their maker soon

yes

but I told you he was crafty
I sent her to him
as a spy
gave her a phial
of poison
she ran away
betrayed my trust
that brown pagan bitch
her heathen name?
never mind
you ask too many
questions

you see, you see
they really can't be trusted
at all
even when
they pretend to pray
they often recant
and go back to being
indians
or some poor semblance
thereof

take Sassamon
I use him for
an example
he had a mind so quick
like a bird on the wing
went to Harvard school
he knew things
that I'll never know
could dispute with learned masters
returned to the pagan life
one day
an advocate
of Philip's cause
christianity
is not your culture
inherently
he said
but a faith
that transcends
all ways of life
the heretic!
so god's judgment
did upon him come
we hung some friends
of Philip
for it
and only then
only then
was the badger lured
from his dark hole
good fortune, yes
god's grace
if Philip had had
but one more year
to prepare for our
extinction
I don't want to think
what might have been
the gist of his savage
malevolence
I think the wind begins
to lay
and Metacom's lair
is not far
away
that wearied moon presently sets
the time is now
just think of it, my friend

a new world is born
with the rising
in the green trees on that far hill
of the sun
and the last real
savage hope
breaks so fiercely against
Christian strength
oh god!
with the ten commandments
in my left hand
and a pistol in my right
our righteous cause
shall be upheld
victory
and progress
to the last days
of this green earth
behold!
civilization comes to America
now
the land will bear its fruit
these wretched forests fall
while
spreading over all
good Christian life
and liberty
my friend
here is the sacred gift
I give you
your future world

just stand behind
the knotted tree
with this praying indian
and me
there are the huts
miserable dwellings
where vengeance lives awaiting
and vengeance
is my heart
huh?

am I sure
that god's will
is hereby done
listen
I have seen whole
camps
of savage people die
in a matter of
two days
by that judgment of
god
which you impugn
with your silly question
smallpox
the women and children
first to lie
in the earth's cold
embrace
and they are the chief
seeds of increase
god's judgment
I tell you
before the coming of
civilized man
these indians were
quite numerous
but since the discovery
of this new land
how they melt away
at the slightest touch
of European hands
the wind!
it's all but still
so strange, this change
to find no morning wind
in the teeming forest
and not a breeze over the swampy earth
on which Philip has chosen
to die
but god doesn't make mistakes

ho ho!
he's dead
the coward died running
see him lying in the mud
a great doleful
naked dirty beast
hey
get that pagan who shot him
to chop his ass
and quarter his flesh
in pieces
but give me his head
yes
give to me that severed head
the fulfillment
of my many dreams
if only
if I could but
hand it to her now
drop it in her lap
with a casual gesture of unconcern
a flippant shrug
the way he once shrugged at me
when I told him
I would kill him
I never said you wouldn't
he said
and see her face
watch her scream
quickly
haul up high
the pieces of his flesh
hang them in the trees,
for the slayer of
so many
so many christian hearts
his heart must not find rest
must not insult the earth
by such refuse
as his flesh

he once told me
on a cold winter's day
when I was truly young
and he a little younger
never
he said
insult the earth
I listened to you
teacher

yes haul him up high
in the green trees above us
oh
if only I could hear her scream
what a conquest that
would be
his eyes are closed
as in rest
if only I could have seen
with my two eyes
that faithless woman scream
that brown heathen--what's this?
what's this
the wind--
the wind had died
but rises now
and I fear the strangest fear
put the severed head in a sack
be quick
the wind comes back, comes back
see it as it shakes the trees
wherein his bloodied heart does hang
in the bright bright
morning sun
food for the eagles
which come forth now
screaming from the sky
and over these trees
soaring in the wind
they all so proudly fly
no
my friend
don't waste your shot
the eagles are too high

well, and so what?
may eagles and owls
god, I mean
forever in hell
torment his soul
damn him!
her name
was

Melia
MELIA THE BEAUTIFUL

pardon my chains
don't come too close
everyone on this ship
is dying
pardon my chains
you, from far away
of them
I'll soon be free

you needn't tell me
and I won't scream
I know he's dead
today
the singing wind informed me
in the early dawn when rose the sun
out of the holy sea
a fearful sound
which sang in the winds
the wind of the fathomless sea
I heard the eagles' mourning then
I heard it in the winds of the sea
though only sea birds
wander
so far away from land
I heard the eagle's weeping then
I heard it in the winds of the sea

it is a plague that kills this ship
captive and captor alike
do you know, strange one
when they took me
he said
now my heart is broken
and I want only to die
the captain himself
is shut
in his cabin
praying for his life
and the last live sailor
hear that splash?
just leaped in the deepest sea
and only
my young one lives
untouched
here
with me
it's not easy to kill an eagle's heart
though dogs
may try to defile it
and try to shut out the song of the wind
when she sings of the earth
and the sky
it's not easy to kill
an eagle's heart

I had a dream
when I was a slut
and my evil life is a dream
of a warrior lord named Metacom
who buried my life in a dream
deep in the forest trees
I dreamed
I dreamed of being free
and out of the earth wherein it lay
my wrongdoing died with the dream
a chant prayer rose to the sun
a new
and living heart
the good power sent
Metacom became my husband
when we sailed from port
the captain of this ship
he's in his cabin praying
they're all dead
save I and the son
the son lives with me
the captain said
when we left land
he intended for pleasure
to use me
whenever his pleasure
pleased
that he had never had
a queen before
and he looked very forward
to it

I said to him
evil man
your spirit is bad
it will never be
for I am Metacom's wife
Metacom's woman
and the good power above
knows me
put her in chains
he said, and laughed
she shan't cheat me, by god
with a willful death
of my pleasure to be
and you, strange one
must pardon my chains
which clank
when we roll with the sea
for the captain is praying
shut in a cabin
and we mustn't be a bother
to his spiritual life
pardon my chains
the rusty old things
for of them
I'll quickly be free
I prayed a prayer to the highest one
and my deliverance comes presently
Metacom!

I remember our love, my husband
I keep our son
close
to my heart
I keep the treasure you trusted on that very night you buried my life and gave back good dreams to me and no one takes it no one touches my heart

all are half-men all pale like ghosts before your memory I have kept close I have kept close the treasure you trusted in me the heart of an eagle the sacred power the power to be truly free the singing people live!

high one, hear me let the good power witness to my last words I am Melia Metacom's woman I hear the eagles' singing