

SINGING ROCKS

Grasslands National Park, Spring 2006

Limp, dusty short grasses,
 Curving gently to earth, weak still from winter sleep.
Spirit rocks, coated thickly in yellow, orange and white
 bountiful growth, bright, beautiful and sad
Silent for more than a hundred years,
 longing for the touch of a woolly buffalo.

A brief caress communicates the news -
 the buffalo are coming back.
The spirit, released by the message,
 Wails as it soars and scatters in the still air.
A brief reminder
 of the patience of rocks
waiting decades to feel the thunder of hooves
crossing short grass and...
the rub of warm thick fur
 that covers life
 that rubs away the lichens
 that revives the spirit.

- Gloria Goulet

THE RELEASE

(May 17, 2004, Old Man on His Back, Saskatchewan)
for Sharon & Peter Butala

We have no measure for their vanishing.

I listen in four directions though I can't remember dreaming
sky, and earth. Say it humbly, *the bison have returned*.
We stand behind straw-bale blinds our eyes follow lines
we have no story for. The bison crest the ridge,
uncertain at the gate.

Fifty yearlings, ragged in their winter coats, they balk,
heads swinging. The riders close behind, their horses step
muscles straining to the south. Just north of here men once shot
bison from rail cars. So many they barely had to aim, brandy
and cigar at hand, and the gentlemen felled
the bison at the speed of steel.

A scruffy heifer passes through, then breaks, the herd follows,
running the fence-line before wheeling around to pass before us.
Their fierce hooves praise the earth; this thunder turns into north-wind
and from their throats comes a kind of weeping, the thrust of a long singing
once heard but not understood. Now the bison walk above and below
the stars and the lichen and the grass and the rain and the stones

and all is returned to them and returned again.

- Paul Wilson