

THE ONLY GOOD INDIAN IS A DEAD DEAD DEAD DEAD INDIAN

Forgive my impatience
for nostalgia, your penicillin or wine,

your muddling through pleasure
as a map whose compass was inked

by men who put darker men
to the lash, your map whose edges

extend only to motherhood untroubled
by this skin deep fear my babies

won't have the sharp squint
that is a song to the cradleboard,

that is a song to the red of me.
All right, I'm tired of your nursery rhymes,

language as white language consumed
in its own syllables. What's at stake besides being

human? Motherhood for me looks like a storm
where I demolish the whole school

in the whiplash of my war cry
after my little one crafts a paper turkey

whose feathers, when reversed
become a fine headdress. That day

my daughter returns home, perhaps
my logic will have evolved to make

lyric her not dark enough, the way
I try to explain my own skin.

It has become increasingly apparent
which side of this audience I'm on,

whose side of the church I've shown up for,
as the poet makes her toasts to Kant,

Gutenberg, motherhood, language
which is already un-coded for the bridal

party, not so much for the groom.
I'm not bewildered by your inside

jokes, no, I grew up in a two-story house,
I ate fresh green beans, apple pies;

I know what it is to be like snow—
at some point I can even remember

what it was like to be as though
motherhood were just another language

I had yet to learn, as though my words
were like anyone else's, as though anger

were not a liability, not a red thing crumpled
into the smallest, blackest ball inside.