



2013 *White Buffalo* *Native American Poet Laureate*

We Run, The Deer and I

...after "Pocahontas" by Annie Leibovitz

by Gail Denham

Hair, black as caves; eyes, full of forest. Why this loose captivity—leading pale, whiskered men who brag of free land. I wonder. What do they covet? All streams, trees, fish, deer meat offerings, mountains are free to every man. The people, my people, roam and give thanks for it all.

These hated men, wearing more daily clothes than the old women of the tribe shivering under their blankets in freezing winter winds. Trying to hack through thick river woods, these over-dressed men with their buttons and clasps become stuck on branches, trip over bushes.

And the food. If my grandmother hadn't given that man, called Clark, lessons on preparing quick root vegetable stew, using forest tubers, the company would starve. The small packet of herbs grandmother sent with me dwindles daily. Secretly I sprinkle some on my bowl each night, as I thank the forest and eat.

Right now I must run, race with my deer friends, feel fresh air on my face, away from the smell of boatfuls of men, full of talk, so filled with importance and seeming to know the world, my world. The deer and I know. We run and laugh. Other creatures cheer us from the trees.

They know the answers.



2013 *White Buffalo* *Native American Taff Award*



Molly Ockett, Indian Doctress
by Carol Leavitt Altieri

I was born on a spit of land below Saco Falls in Maine. Indian Island some called it and I never knew the year, though I was around fifteen at the time of Rogers' raid on St. Francis Mission in Quebec in 1759.

My father and grandfather were chiefs who survived the colonial wars, sometimes on the French side but more often on the English. In the Androscoggin Valley, I lived with a small party of Indians

who joined mixed colonists - wintering with them in the cave we dug by the river. At times, I was called to help cure are settlers' dysentery. For that, I used a blend of inner bark of spruce.

I nursed many sick people back to health and acted as a midwife for birth of a white child. For my cures, I used roots, herbs, barks, and potions. Near my cave, I found Solomon's Seal and pounded its roots to treat wounds.

I shared some concoctions, but others I would not reveal. Henry tufts called me *the great Indian doctress*. Others saw meet cloaked with magic powers. Hannibal Hamlin, too, was one of my healed ones who grew up

to be a vice-president. Some thought of me as a witch even though I had close friendships with many settlers and cured many of their illnesses. I had Catholic ties and attended Protestant services, not being bound by religious conventions.

If they tried to turn me away, I would find a stool and sit in front of the altar. Once, I buried a cache of possessions on Hemlock Island and a thief stole them. I soon recognized my hatchet in the culprit's home and placed a curse on him.

If settlers tried to take our land, I scared them with foretelling dark July days so hot, water would boil in their wells, glass melt in the windows, and farm animals would die from drought.

My reputation grew as I tried to bring the settlers and Indians together, teaching them basketry, moccasin-making, pottery, and weaving. I fell ill in the spring of 1815 and my Indian groups stayed with me until they had to leave, hunt, and fish.

During my last months, I knew that I would die soon. I insisted on dying in a camp of fragrant cedar and was pleased that Captain Bragg built one for me. I'd learned that I didn't have the strength to carry on and I knew I always walked a straight path and was the last of the Pequawkets. Over in the farmland, the cornfield's blazing spread like a conflagration.

My religion is from the Great Spirit. I followed the Biblical verse from Matthew: *Straight is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth to life eternal; and few there are that find it.*



2013 *White Buffalo* *Native American Calf Award*



White Man's Foot, White Man's Flies

by Lee Pelham Cotton

white man's foot and white man's flies
plantain green, bee gold in flight
far to the west our village lies

the bee, a-buzz with laden thighs
a golden, honey-making wight
white man's foot and white man's flies

plantain's broad leaves that soothe sore eyes
appear like footprints formed in night
and to the west our village lies

deer, at queer humming, starts and shies
but soon crops plantain with delight
white man's foot and white man's flies

bear, drawn by sweetness, utters cries
its greedy raiding turned to flight
not far from where our village lies

they're here to stay, these feet and flies
like iron axe and glass beads bright
white man's foot and white man's flies
surrounded thus our village lies

(n.b. Thomas Jefferson, in Notes on the State of Virginia, observed that Virginia Indians knew that when the white man's flies (i.e. bees) arrived at a hitherto remote village, the colonists were not far away. White man's foot is a name given by native peoples to the prolific, broad-leaved greater plantain (*Plantago major*), also introduced by the English.)