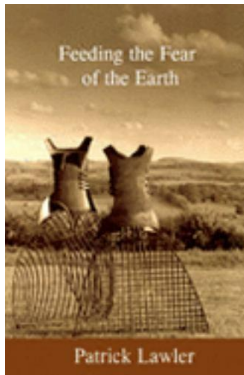


FEEDING THE FEAR OF THE EARTH

(Many Mountains Moving, 2006)



SAMPLE FROM *FEEDING THE FEAR OF THE EARTH*

Tonto has a Dream (Deganawidah Removes a Mask from a Living Tree)

I was watching Tonto and the Masked Man.

Tonto always seemed quiet, but that made him appear wiser--more restrained, as if an inexplicable past were being filtered through him. I'm sure the director thought of that. It heightened the tension. Quite frankly, the Masked Man seemed a little dumb, never sticking around for thank yous. And what the hell did he mean by Hi Ho Silver? I never understood

where he came from.

You see, I couldn't have been at the Trail of Tears,
at Rattlesnake Springs where the soldiers gathered 13,000
Cherokee in the Removal Policy. I wasn't there
when they were forced 800 miles from their home.
I wasn't there at the end when a quarter of them were dead.

I couldn't have been with Jackson when he had his soldiers
count the dead by cutting off the noses of the Creeks.

I was watching TV in the 1950s. I was watching Tonto,
and I never understood where the Masked Man came from.
I mean, why did he have to wear a mask if he was good and all?
It was almost as if he were trying to hide something.

I wasn't there when they took Geronimo away
for twenty-five years as a prisoner of war.
I wasn't even near the Navaho after they were marched
to Bosque Redondo where they were starved to death.
I wasn't at the winter camps on the Washataw River
when Custer came to slaughter.

I was watching Tonto, concerned that for the 1950s
he seemed a little inappropriate. I know he had a sense
that he had come from somewhere, but now maybe his life
was better because of the Masked Man. You got
that impression. At least, some people did.

And even if I lived back then, I wouldn't have believed that stuff about savages. I mean, if they taught it, if important people said it, like politicians and generals and priests, I guess it would have some influence, but not to the point of being paid \$50 for Indian scalps, not to the point of condoning genocide, not to the point of turning belief into action, or if it did turn belief into action at least not to the point where it would be too destructive--I mean, irrevocably destructive.

You see, I couldn't have been at the Sand Creek Massacre where the soldiers slaughtered 200 children, women, and elders--Black Kettle's people. I didn't burn the camp. I didn't cut off the skulls and send them to the Smithsonian in little boxes for someone to study.

I wasn't at Wounded Knee when Big Foot offered the surrender of his 350 starving Lakota people. I wasn't there when they were slaughtered, left dead on the cracked snow.

I couldn't have been. It was the 1950s, for Crissake.