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In Time

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gious energy to serve a Protestant imperialism, expanding their own communities and enterprises against the Indians with the energy of Indians.

The idea of an incensed God and the preoccupation with hell in the Great Awakening were fed by images of the dances and fires of avenging Indians. In the theories of hell advanced in the Great Awakening, internal misery and future damnation were fair punishment for the greed of self-righteous, self-appointed Christians. Thus in an indirect, internalized sense, awakened colonists sensed their own wrongs in some relation to the rightful claims of the Indians. But this sense of indebtedness remained in the underworlds of hell and of unconscious guilt. Because the Indians haunted and avenged them, American Protestants could not awake to a conscious sense of dependence on and gratitude toward the Indians for their gifts of agriculture, medicine, and spiritual liberation. Jonathan Edwards argued that sinners tried to escape hell and rise above internal misery by self-flattery and good intentions. Using an analogous argument, one could say that American Protestants sought to cover their internal miseries of guilt and fear toward the Indians with the delusion of ethnic superiority and the flattery of religious self-righteousness. But if the failures of American society have fed off this dilemma, there is a reservoir of religious experience working underneath and through this tragedy. Many Americans have woken up beyond themselves, at least momentarily, to the spiritual voices of their environment. Perhaps one could say that the love of a Great Spirit dwells at the very bottom of the American heart.



Joe-Anne McLaughlin was educated at Syracuse University, where she held a Creative Writing Fellowship and the Cornelia Ward Fellowship. In 1978 she received an Advanced Study Grant for academic excellence and, in 1979, an Academy of American Poets Award. Her work has appeared in several small magazines including *New Letters*, *Three Rivers Poetry Journal*, and *Southern Poetry Review*. She is currently employed as a cleaning woman in Vermont.

In Time

From a chair on the dark side
 Of his study a drowned man
 Watches his body surface.
 It's wedged in the rocks now
 And he can tell by the fit
 He's back in his own chair.
 And the hand that taps the arm
 Is cold; is his own hand.
 He wants to breathe on the hand,
 He would keep it alive. Only
 There in his chest the sound
 Of water rushes between rocks.
 This is the sound the blood makes
 As it plunges into the heart
 Of a man who believes he has drowned.
 Quiet. Listen. Inside. O God. There.

—Joe-Anne McLaughlin