

Roman, T.F. (Ed.). (1994). *Voices under one sky: Reflections in Fiction and non-fiction*. ON: Nelson Canada.

The Old Man's Lazy

BY PETER BLUE CLOUD

*The old man's lazy,
I heard the Indian Agent say,
has no pride, no get up
and go. Well, he came out
here and walked around my
place, that agent. Steps
all thru the milkweed and
curing wormwood, tells me
my place is overgrown
and should be made use
of.*

*The old split cedar
fence stands at many
angles, and much of it
lies on the ground like
a curving sentence of
stick writing. An old
language, too, black with
age, with different
shades of green of moss
and lichen.*

*He always
says he understands us
Indians,
and why don't
I fix the fence at least:
so I took some fine*

*hawk feathers fixed
to a miniature woven
shield
and hung this
from an upright post
near the house.*

*He
came by last week
and looked all around
again, eyed the feathers
for a long time.*

*He didn't
say anything, and he didn't
smile even, or look within
himself for the hawk.*

*Maybe sometime I'll
tell him that the fence
isn't mine to begin with,
but was put up by
the white guy who used
to live next door.*

*It was
years ago. He built a cabin,
then put up the fence. He
only looked at me once,
after his fence was up,*

*he nodded at me as if
to show that he knew I
was here, I guess.*

*It was
a pretty fence, enclosing
that guy, and I felt lucky
to be on the outside
of it.*

*Well, that guy
dug holes all over his
place, looking for gold
and I guess*

*he never
found any. I watched
him grow old for over
twenty years, and bitter,
I could feel his anger
all over the place.*

*And
that's when I took to
leaving my place to do
a lot of visiting.*

*Then
one time I came home
and knew he was gone
for good.*

*My children would
always ask me why I
didn't move to town
and be closer to them.*

*Now, they
tell me I'm lucky to be
living way out here.*

*And
they bring their children
and come out and visit me,
and I can feel that they
want to live out here
too, but can't
for some reason, do it.*

*Each day
a different story is
told me by the fence:
the rain and wind and snow;
the sun and moon shadows,
this wonderful earth,
this Creation.
I tell my grandchildren
many of these stories,
perhaps
this too is one of them.*