

ABSTRACT

BLACK ELK HAS A WORD WITH WALT WHITMAN

In 1969, W.S. Merwin wrote in *Naked Poetry* that what poets called “form may be simply that part of the poem that had directly to do with time: the time of the poem, the time in which it was written, and the sense of recurrence in which the unique moment of vision is set.” Merwin suggests that the interior of a poem, its story and its style, interacts inescapably with its exterior, its historic period, its poet’s theoretical influences, and the emotions the poet felt at the moment of inspiration. He alludes in his essay to the mysterious urge that drives all art and is, in the end, the subject of the artist: what is it to be human, and how it is one evokes the human condition in a work of art. My own poetry explores this subject by building on Merwin’s sense of a poem as not an objectively fixed disembodied item, but a work of resonance, echoing other poets and forms, echoing the concerns of my time, and echoing in particular the human emotion that both precedes and infuses the written poem with power.

David Randle Hurst
May 2006