

OLD CREOLE

I wasn't sure who lived in the house
By the railroad, it's wooden shuttering white and bright
Against the evening glow, that eerie dusk between day and night
Where crows squawk their warning in final descent
Leaving the combing for other predators,
The slaying that only happens when us in our bed.

On the road to Santa Fe, the tumbleweed dustbowl
Our eyes squinting and shining, the Buick a pick-up
Of supplies and people sat four square, one with banjo
Accompanied by happiness, and southern sow,
Before Uncle Sam arrived wearing his stars and stripes
And message of distraction and political hype.

At Mill Turn where loggers and woodmen drank
A beer for Guthrie's folk tales and some by Hank,
The chuckwagon discarded for trucks with poles to head west,
In the days of gumbo and salt and ash and orange zest.
And the creek where old Mooty, the alligator rests,
Laid out in the sun calming his stress.

And onwards to Albuquerque, crossing
The Railroad that passes the house of white and bright
The air is thin here in blocks of concrete and clay
Displays of finesse that can only bring decay,
The noise and street hack and money a bet
The queue to meet Uncle Sam and sign away for a cigarette.

And soon I am billeted, buckled and braced
And taken to a bar for a brawl and a case,
That is the way of Uncle Sam's boys
Uniformed, and misled to fight in haste
Viet Cong a-watching us and we should not give chase
I dream of the house, of white and bright grace.

I bury my purple heart at the foot of the hill
Wrapped up in Uncle Sam's calling bill.
And a station stands where the house once stood still
It is painted white and bright for goodwill
I am wounded, but there's gumbo for my fill
And no doubt the crows search for a kill.

So, I write of the creole of my youth, of snake bite and hoedown.
My words, my song, my life gone to ground.