



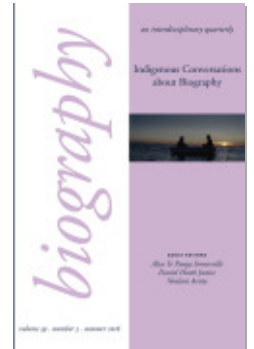
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Night Ceremony

Mārata Ketekiri Tamaira

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NIGHT CEREMONY

MĀRATA KETEKIRI TAMAIRA

A response to Elle-Máijá Apiniskim Tailfeathers, “A Conversation with Helen Haig-Brown, Lisa Jackson, and Elle-Máijá Apiniskim Tailfeathers with Some Thoughts to Frame the Conversation.” *Biography* 39.3 (Summer 2016): 277–306

The truth about stories is that that's all we are.

—Thomas King (2)

This is sacred ground,
the place where words and memory are birthed,
where rebel tongues, newly inscribed,
are released from silence.

I stand in this place as a witness to transformation.

Three shadows move against the cave wall, shifting through each other, spirits
entwined.
They rise and fall in cadence with the light of a ceremonial fire,
vermillion embers glow radiant and then recede.

The spectral travelers shift shape,
becoming flesh and blood as they take their place beside Mother of All,
who holds in her hands the instruments of her profession.
She lifts her eyes to acknowledge the women;
the gravitational pull of her maternal authority drawing them in tight around
the fire.

Smoke ascends.

The Old One stands and begins her recitation, a prayer to grant her daughters strength for the ordeal they must soon endure.

Chant the first ritual, make it known!

*Life originated in the Void, the Great Night, and that is where it
will conclude, an infinite spiral of beginning and ending,
expanding and contracting, venturing out and returning.
I summon you, Void. You who formed the feminine night,
who set the celestial bodies in their place, and who breathed life
into all things, large and small, seen and unseen.*

Hear this incantation!

Chant the second ritual, make it known!

*Steady these consecrated hands, guide my tools as they strike skin
and activate spirit. Strengthen my daughters for the pain that
will come through the purifying tip that carves truth into knowing,
that writes story into being. Prepare them for the task they must complete,
for the blood they must give as a sacrifice to you.
Let the waters from the mountain summits quench their thirst and heal their
wounds.*

Hear this incantation!

Chant the third ritual, make it known!

*Let the words weigh heavy on their tongues, so that the message will
be released to the people, so that liberation will be delivered to them in a time of
devastation and grief. Salvage the memories from the abyss of shame;
churn the waters and let them rise to the surface in triumphant rage.
Let the people carry their stories in their bodies, as water not stones.
Each affirming the truth of the other, each standing in unity, not alone.*

So ends this incantation. Let the ceremony begin.

Tap—tap—tap.tap.tap.tap Tap—tap—tap.tap.tap.tap Tap—tap—tap.tap.tap.tap

WORK CITED

King, Thomas. *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative*. Toronto: House of Anasi, 2003. Print.