

## Hershman John

### A Lonely Navajo Studies Under the City of Spires

*For my Oxford professor, Helen Kidd*

Dear young Deer Spring and Towering Houses  
Follow a Diné elder down a rabbit hole:

My Pembroke crest begins gleaming,  
A pub at 4 PM, then more Irish pubs ...  
Intellects argue quadrants insanely.  
To learn the collections of Oxford;  
Punt over canals, tourist traps!  
Water splashing mallard songs—O  
Float frosty flowers for Mr. Carroll,  
Graduate non-yielding, swapping  
Then admiring more crimson florals,  
Muscle tension relief, thank aspirin tabs  
Red marks, bow ties, Kelly flannel,  
Deltoid flex soreness, tie black patents,  
I miss Mexican food and road runners.  
Avoid red wine, woody notes.  
Grab a crisp shirt, Mayflower white,  
Blue blazers and gloves, seasons deep.  
Finally, bowties are cool. Écoute!  
Stone flower carved calculus  
Adorn windows, high ictuses—  
O're many emblems, clouds toil rain  
Streaks, high marks, read statistics,  
Professor speaks on more bombings.  
Regents publish laconic verse—  
Snack a second lunch: fish and chips,  
Not called French, oui, oui, oui,  
Beggars wrap and waddle,  
Wander cobblestone to the left,  
Arches above limestone arches,  
Damn exchange rates, Euros  
For two American dollars,  
For one pound, a crown bespoke,  
Calculate thick Marble Castles,  
Doctor of Science, Pembroke motto  
Aspires to the sky, mention ethos,  
Monks in doorways by mushrooms,  
More monks in air, Cheshire cats—  
Lord, a Coke costs two pounds  
In Wonderland, across stained glass,

4 AM night cap with Alice of Loxley.  
And Golden Savoy's Cornish clotted cream.  
At high tea, her long blond hair tosses,  
it smells of white butterflies.  
His Baitsbite filling that tight red wet  
thoroughbred short-shorts on a boatie,  
sweat gleaming off this vascular Cambridge  
Bachelor, *Pardon me*, he knocks me over—  
in boxes, elm tree quads, *et moi, monsieur*,  
to migraine exams, more high marks,  
red neckties, bagpipes, kilt fabric,  
touristy double-decker bus full of Doctors.  
Bolo ties give way to paddle oars.  
For Queen and Country, Windsor knot,  
as chamomile soothes her Tea Party.  
All tucked seamlessly away at a Garden  
Party. Your Majesty, long live reigns,  
integral longevity for Elizabeth, sepulcher  
breve over Oxfordshire to Bath  
to Stonehenge vortices, to burnished dome  
queue up the summer solstice.  
Shakespeare by the river Thames,  
reading by candlelight, with a date,  
bows and curtsies, heels and new Oxfords,  
litter cottage streets, bulldogs bark,  
bog men, bog women sleep ...  
*Où est la rue rouge?*  
Apollo by my side fumbling for Scotch,  
stark and starry reflections of tragedies.  
Red Coats and discarded parchments,  
reciting Irish poets, philosophy, raven bones  
to smooth Elgin Marbles whispering,  
verbatim Churchill, proofing theorems  
et al. Greek studies of so long ago ...  
peat people are my friends, *Hey Pete!*  
in 1000-year sleep, Lords, a leap,  
and Ladies dreaming of bonnets,  
that stuck immigrants clean, polishing

Silvery fairy tale carriage love  
 Only for you whom Quasimodo bells toll.  
 With stick and ball, cricket whack!  
 Past English subjects and fellows:  
 More potato recipes, more than mash,  
 Luminous Big Ben survives, United!  
 Off the bus, the landscape Mordor,  
 Past neo-gothic railing the train to Paris,  
 There you are Helen, most beloved.  
 Our friend, lost in ancient pentameters,  
 Return one last time, nigh Stygian,  
 Explicating in the chapel quad,  
 All those airy spires, scansions,  
 Lounge in the blooming court.  
 History cram on Suicide Sunday:  
 To go for a higher doctorate.  
 Take your mind off vacation, here  
 I need book grants and more chips.  
 Of men dressing as women,  
 Do you hear the piano concerto?  
 Valkyries are thundering on this day:  
 Ready to powder keg years of football.  
 In copious amount, below recent memory,  
 Making surgeon steady hands,  
 Fairies exist too, ferry, fares, foggy, Henry V.  
 Filmmakers on grass green, angles  
 Below the channel waterline, a lady's hand,  
 I oversleep the bounding London's train.  
 So, run across the backs to class.  
 I just miss the nightly doner kebab truck.  
 Lastly, Latin is studied, *répéter VERITAS*.  
 While being chased by three lions  
 To alas exam: *Dinétah* to *Bonne Chance*,

with gargoyles watching over horses.  
 For a kettle and cakes, cakes and Earl Grey  
 Polo and Royals silent in monument, fire  
 ovens wait for warm Yorkshire pudding,  
 munch, counting stars, hash, medieval bake.  
 Now "Cry Havoc!" the German sirens,  
 Blitzkrieg from past window shutters.  
 American kids try finding the loo?  
 Touch the water, fight for that sword,  
 gilded-age Arthur emblazoned new ideals,  
 in the same seat, praising mums  
 writing on Market Street starving,  
 truancy is shredded purple petals today.  
 "Long Live a Queen!" Sword drawn onward.  
 Rewrite, revise, revision, and the tele,  
 Seamus floats by line breaks / colours,  
 to Middle Earth or Hogwarts' scarlet-gold.  
 Let us leave it at that, King James I,  
 then dressing as men for comedy.  
 Bach, Mozart, Pomp and Circumstance,  
 giving out champagne bottles charging.  
 Remind me to queue up again for caffeine,  
 IRA bomb scares, chain-smoking ciggies  
 Celts, clover, four-leaf, little people—  
     Look up! Spires in the dazzling,  
 unfurling white linen as contrast  
 under Dover's pebbles, a dark heart voyage.  
 Professors will parry a blade!  
 Run, *don't Jabberwalk!*  
 Distinctive letters, handshakes over pitas.  
 I miss the road to Kidlington again,  
 through thorny thistles and rose bushes  
 to Pembroke, alma mater most radiant.