**Naming Relatives**

Conrad Shumaker

I heard the learned anthropologist say,

“Indians call things kin from fear;

A rattlesnake can kill, but Grandfather

Might not hurt me.

They offer the name

in the hope he’ll leave them alone.”

I walked away

knowing this:

Growing up wild in the Sonoran Desert,

I killed rattlers when I feared them,

then learned to look and saw

living liquid stone flowing

between gray creosote stems.

Love for that couldn't be named

in the language I was taught.

“Grandfather,”

I would have said if I had known how,

“Bless me as you go.”