**In Indian Country/Who Am I?**

*Northern New Mexico*

Dick Altman

What to call myself,

here at seven thousand feet,

where home looks out

over Rio Grande’s valley,

Puebloan’s high desert

of conflict enduring

and tenuous survival.

What to call myself,

seduced by mountains dancing

across fiery horizons—

clouds filamentous weaving

tapestries Native fingers harp

into geometries of spare,

boldly hued nobility.

What to call myself,

I who live on what was once

Indian soil, who plants

groves of trees, transplants

boulders from river and plain—

in a poet’s fragile attempts

to belong to earth.

What to call myself,

my modest piece of paper

called title, charting

a handful of generations,

versus Indian Country’s

fluorescence—centuries

before rifle/horse/Great

White Father beget

the Old West, from which,

by slight woolen thread,

Indigenous culture hangs.

What to call myself,

hearing in dreams footfalls

of bells, thrumming drums,

hooves that hammer plains—

and Blues in pursuit.

What to call myself,

who knows only from books

how prairies’ first braves roamed

as plentiful as buffalo, as birds

raiding summer’s sedge—

how none but sallow wind

remains, to scour bone to dust—

promises in each grain radiant

as silver, leaving behind hearts

bled to rust.

What to call myself,

who Indian Country beckoned,

who seeks to be good shepherd,

mindful steward—who prays

the land awake, after his time,

in hands of those whose ancestors

believed its spirit theirs without rest—

and I’m forgiven my trespass.