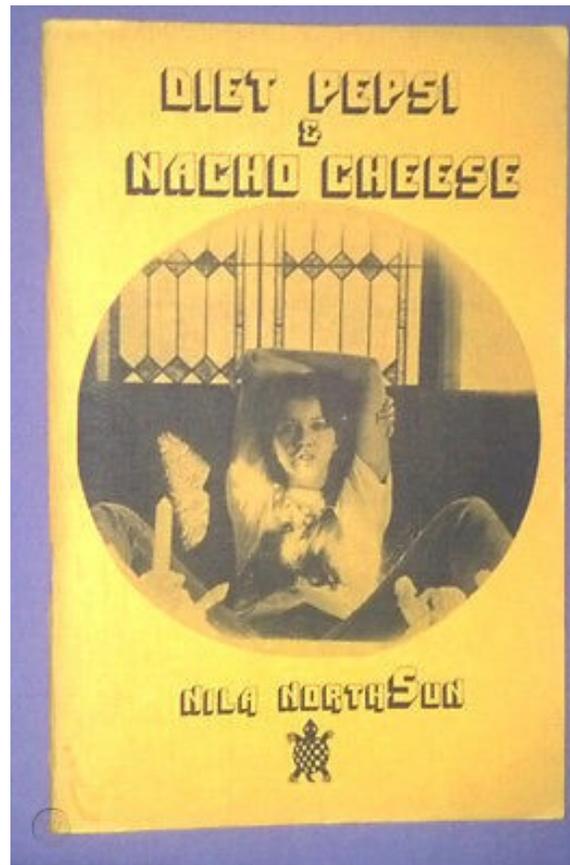


nila northSun. Vignettes



Nila Northsun, of Shoshone-Anishinaabe descent, was born in Shurz, Nevada, and raised in the Bay Area. She completed her BA in art at the University of Montana-Missoula. Some of her volumes of poetry are *Diet Pepsi and Nacho Cheese* (1977), *Small Bones, Little Eyes* (1981, with Jim Sagel), the anthology *A Snake in Her Mouth* (1997), and *Love at Gunpoint* (2007). In 1980, Northsun also authored *After the Drying Up of the Water: A Tribal History of the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone*. In 2000, she was awarded the Silver Pen Award from the University of Nevada Friends of the Library, and in 2004 she received ATAYAL's Indigenous Heritage Award of Literature. She lives on the Stillwater Indian Reservation in Fallon, Nevada, where she works as a grant writer. Nila has shared the following poems with *Siwar Mayu*. Although “falling down to bed” and “The coat” are renowned among her works (see the video below), here is the first time that they are translated into Spanish. The other four poems are unpublished. A conversational, intimate and sarcastic tone is sustained throughout Northsun's poetics. Her verses question romantic perspectives on indigeneity through day-to-day-life-vignettes in the reservation.

rez cars

it's always one thing
or another
fuel pump out this month
radiator blown next
bald tires of course
paint faded and clear coat peeling
from no garage
crack so long on the windshield
you're afraid to take it
to one of those car washes
with the big whirling brushes
but there is a sweetgrass braid
on the dashboard
an ashtray full of sage
an eagle feather dangling from the
rear view mirror
and some sort of native decal
on the back window
your ride is 'protected'
from everything except
mechanical failure.

falling down to bed

i used to look at with disgust
these indians laying around
on the dirt & grass
passed out drunk
their bodies littering
the pow wow grounds
or city parks
i'd look at their crumpled bodies
laying in the noon sun
still sleeping where
they fell
but one time
i went to the 49
after the pow wow
& got shit faced drunk
then got sleepy
& fell in the dirt parking lot
it seemed nice
the ground was clean in the darkness
the stars were vibrant above
the night air was cozy
'get up get up' they said
'no no leave me here
i want to sleep here'
luckily they shoved me into
the car
or i would have been
the drunk somebody looked at
with disgust
at least now
when i see them
i understand.

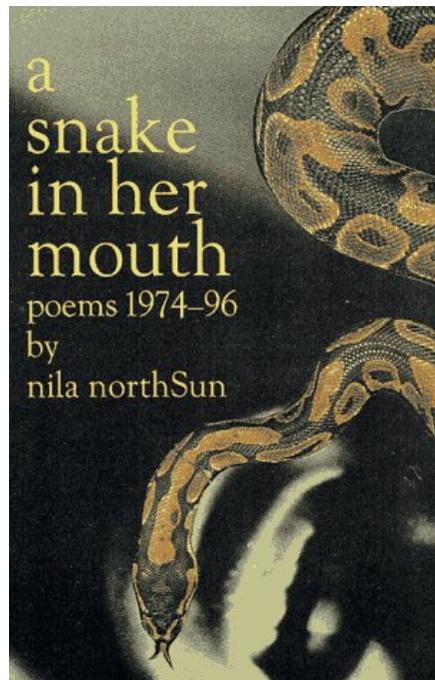
The coat

his coat hung in the closet
the coat he wore
for funerals
and court appearances
the dark somber coat
waiting for his return
as did we
never really understanding
his lengthy absences
in jail
or just partying in another town
with another woman
days became years
until all we had left
were faded photographs
and his coat in the closet

→ nila northSun reads
"The Coat", "Falling Down to Bed",
and "The Art of Living Poorly"
[HERE](#)

marry me or I'll suicide

I had this friend
since high school
that I saw maybe once
every 5 years
he was a tribal guy
and when I last saw him
in his 40's
he said he wanted to be
married before he was 50
but not to any white women
that he seemed to attract
he wanted a tribal woman
so when he was at ceremony
there would be his native woman
waiting for him
bringing him food
making him proud
he said if I don't get married
by the time I'm 50
I'm going to suicide
so
will you be my bride?



walmart

it is finally there
just on the other side
of the freeway
located on our tribal land
our poverty is over
we get all of the sales tax
besides the lease on the land
it is a fact
our unemployment rates
will decrease
an elder is a greeter
her white hair brilliant
against the blue of her
walmart smock
she smiles at me and
says 'welcome to walmart'
minimum wage is
better than nothing.

Medicine bundles.....for cheri

As we sat around the table making
Little yellow bundles of tobacco, cedar,
And sage tied with red string to help her
With a peaceful passing
We talked about how she'll be the
first one of us to find out what death is like
is it going to heaven and meeting god?
Is it being reincarnated into something else?
Is it nothingness?
Will there be ghosts and spirits?
Will she be turned into energy that floats
With the dinosaurs?
Will she mingle with the stars in the universe?
And the 10 year old says 'lucky'.

More about Nila NorthSun

- <http://nativeamericanlit.com/northSun.html>