

Myles, Looking North-Northwest from the Rincons

To the memory of Myles Brand

Southeast of Tucson, I'm told he would take his Appaloosa
And ride up away from things to a ridge above the desert
Where he could see a long ways—maybe miles North-northwest
From the Rincons across the state to the Kaibab Plateau
and to Utah beyond.

Below him, big saguaros, pale green against
the tawns and pinks of the desert,
lipstick red chalices of cholla blossoms,
and the thick bundles of Teddy Bear
like silent bushes about to be set aflame by a sky-blue god.

He might scan the horizon line for a train
Of stormclouds trailing purple skirts of rain,
Or, if it was sunset, hear the *cheep, cheep* of an elf owl
As it alights from its north-facing hollow to hunt.
He might see the witch's broom of a flowering ocotillo
Spreading pale, pointillist hues across the palette of desert ground.

What would enter him as he paused this way?
The ghost of a boyhood in Brooklyn streets
Passing without murmur as bats pinwheeled in the twilight?
A Complete Course in Logic leaving him empty of mind
as he shifted his weight
and his horse chuffed and its spotted withers twitched?

Maybe a plan to bring mercy to the great cities of Indiana
Came quick as a dust dervish rising from thorny ground
Then vanished in the litter from cottonwoods and mesquites
in the arroyos below.

If you need to be sure, then you make the drive from Tucson too,
Take Speedway east as far as you can go,
Then turn south on Freeman Road until you get to Old Spanish Trail.
Turn left, then, and keep going past the Park entrance and the sign that says
"X9 Ranch,"
Cross the cattleguard and head down dirt roads through a dry wash or two.

Bring his ashes and the blessings from a Pendleton blanket
Given to him by the Many Nations Longhouse of Oregon.
Bring the romance of the better nature that he gifted you with.

Keep going.

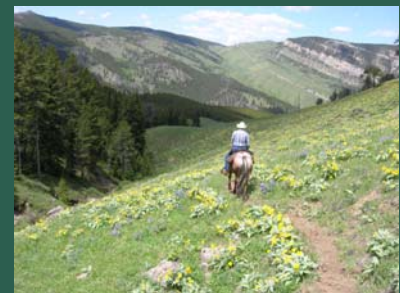
From "Exit to Houghton Road" to 800 miles of the Arizona Trail,
From the crosshatches of Interstates to all your great sins forgiven,
From dead creosote to the sweet green brushes of desert spoon up on the hill,
From all without sorrow or saintliness in the man
through all his truth-battered soul,
What you will know is what you will own
From the kiss of his eyes as they fall upon yours
Like the lip of cloud dripping onto that of land,
As the desert light, like a browsing javelina,
Prays at the tufted blooms of a barrel cactus,
Falling on all fours, and begins its unsure crawl to be born again.

Garrett Hongo

University of Oregon President
1989—1994



Myles Brand
(1942—2009)



Garrett Hongo
Professor of Poetry
Distinguished Professor
in the College of Arts & Sciences
Creative Writing Program
University of Oregon

Myles Brand, University of Oregon president from 1989 to 1994, helped build the Creative Writing Program. With his leadership and support, the Program garnered a large endowment from Walter and Nancy Kidd and established the Kidd Tutorial Program, a competitive yearlong course of study for undergraduates, and the Kidd Memorial Writing Prizes for all undergraduate UO writers.

Brand was an early friend to the Program and remained a friend to Garrett Hongo, Professor of Creative Writing and Distinguished Professor in the College of Arts and Sciences, who was asked by Peggy Zeglin Brand, Brand's widow, to compose an elegy for his memorial. Hongo read "Myles, Looking North-Northwest from the Rincons" at the service on October 28, 2009.