

INDIAN SINGING IN 20TH CENTURY AMERICA

BY GAIL TREMBLAY

*We wake; we wake the day,
the light rising in us like sun —
our breath a prayer brushing
against the feathers in our hands.
We stumble out into streets;
patterns of wires invented by strangers
are strung between eye and sky,
and we dance in two worlds,
inevitable as seasons in one,
exotic curiosities in the other
which rushes headlong down highways,
watches us from car windows, explains
us to its children in words
that no one could ever make
sense of. The image obscures
the vision, and we wonder
whether anyone will ever hear
our own names for the things
we do. Light dances in the body,
surrounds all living things —
even the stones sing
although their songs are infinitely*

*lower than the ones we learn
from trees. No human voice lasts
long enough to make such music sound.
Earth breath eddies between factories
and office buildings, caresses the surface
of our skin; we go to jobs, the boss
always watching the clock to see
that we're on time. He tries to shut
out magic and hopes we'll make
mistakes or disappear. We work
fast and steady and remember
each breath alters the composition
of the air. Change moves relentless,
the pattern unfolding despite their planning —
we're always there — singing round dance
songs, remembering what supports
our life — impossible to ignore.*

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*Gail Tremblay (Onondaga and Micmac) is a visual artist
and poet who teaches at The Evergreen State College in
Olympia, Washington.*