

Peacemaking

We long ago made a peace —a treaty—
between enemy neighbors
like this
striped blankets sashes worked with colored beads animal-shaped pipes
of red stone iron hatchets inlaid with lead designs flutes carved to look
like a duck or goose belts woven with colored threads brass bells
copper water vessels red wool rich gifts to seal the peace

Sometimes the deal did not go down

Some wanted more to be upheld as great men (yes—only men)

*We take your names with us to speak in honor of your greatness always
and when we ever hear your name, we will say "That is a great man you speak of"
and we will tell the stories of all the deeds you've done and how fine a figure you
made, how arrayed in fine clothes, and how many horses and how large your voice...*

You get the idea

Except we had to mean it *irreversibly*
Even though those men might have stolen broken families murdered
or maybe it was their thieving sons we killed even then we had to forget
and mean what we said

Imagine how hard it would be to humble ourselves to humanity
Tell their stories as if they were our brothers-fathers-kin folk—with pride
As if just making peace with them made them relatives whose shine
shined on us

We seek your peace now
for futures we cannot gift amends
unless like this
sleep—under blankets beads of bright creatures pollinating flowers animals
red stone iron flute song duck and goose earth full of microbes
and minerals sun stored to serve you wind making light and nights cool enough
water and vessels to drink —all once a given then a gift future riches

You get the idea

