

Song for Machigonne

Machigonne, your truest name before the French and English came to
raid the land of her tallest trees and pull the fish from her blue knee.
The fur they took in trade for pots and drink and rusty blades, could not sate
their endless hunger or abate their supernatural greed.
Oh, Machigonne, your name is dust.
You have begun to bleed.

Casco, now, is how they call the great neck as the mighty trees fall.
Land divided among men is stolen once again.
Weymouth kidnaps five of us before Gorges and John Mason arrive
to claim the eastern lands, and now we die and die.
Treaties cannot last when traders block the fish from moving past,
cows trample our corn, yet you say we are a thorn in your side.
You are the ones who cannot abide by your own laws.

When we fight, we have just cause to grieve for Machigonne
and those who now walk beyond this world.
French or English, we must choose or so you say, if not to
lose the land we hold most dear.
We come away only to starve anew and now our hearts are hard.

In spring of 1690, we gathered with Castine, our anger
risen like the streams you choked with nets to starve our kin.
We followed one trusted chief whose child the Baron sought to keep.
Madockawando leads the men and killing will begin.
Just for today we are many and shall break our anger on your flesh,
burn your walls to nothingness.
Four hundred fighting men and more, with French to
batter down the door, we come to Machigonne to prove
Fort Loyal cannot stand against our warring hand.

An English is a worse brigand than any Frenchman, so they tell us
when we fight and burn your forts down in the night.
We are not the ones you trusted to survive, white flag waved before your eyes.
That was Burneiffe, in charge of keeping order and giving quarter.
Trust is almost always wise but not to trust your English lies.
Thus you learn the bitter price you pay for our forgiveness.

Six wars were fought here, laying claim to land that
many tried to tame until we finally surrendered,
Penobscots, Micmacs, Malecite, Abenaki with little left
you had not plundered from our dawnland home.
The "Beaver Wars" were fought for pelts,
King Philip's War, abuse of trade, and Squando's child,
drowned just to see if he could swim, like some wild river otter.
Then scalp hunters seeking bounty in the south returned to seek us out.

King William's War, fought for land, Fort William Henry could not stand against
Abenaki and French, who drove the English from the lower Kennebec.
In 1701 Queen Anne's War came to our shores, when,
once again French and English wanted more and more and more.
Greedy bullets, dripping blades, smoking battlements laid waste and always
we must take a side, knowing we can no longer hide from settlers
thick as leaves on trees, coveting everything they see.
Dummer's War for William Dummer, who sent Colonel Westbrook to
burn our homes and fields and starve us out.
Norridgewock fell, one hundred dead.
Pigwacket too, and if you wore the other shoe it would be dipped in red.
At last your war with France burned high, for seven years, we had
nothing left to lose when forced to choose between
the evils that befell our people.

Three in four of us was dead, gone to the wind.
Finally you said the line was drawn in seventeen and fifty-nine,
those words you give to white man's time.
Our demise, battle victorious, so-called history and glory,
we fought for land paid in blood and bone.
Machigonne, just one of many, first become Casco, then Old Falmouth,
years wore on and Portland Maine became the name.
The massacre you blame us for is but the story of your shame,
those sins for which you must atone.
Machigonne was not your own.

-- Mihku Paul