HAVEPOETRY.COM

AL PURDY

SAY THE NAMES

— say the names say the names
and listen to yourself
an echo in the mountains
Tulameen Tulameen
say them like your soul
was listening and overhearing
and you dreamed you dreamed
you were a river
and you were a river
Tulameen Tulameen
— not the flat borrowed imitations
of foreign names
not Brighton Windsor Trenton
but names that ride the wind
Spillimachèen and Nahanni
Kleena Kleene and Horsefly
Illecillewaet and Whachamacallit
Lillooet and Kluane
Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump
and the whole sky falling
when the buffalo went down
Similkameen and Nahanni
say them say them remember
if ever you wander elsewhere
“the North as a deed and forever”
Kleena Kleene Nahanni
Osoyoos and Similkameen
say the names
as if they were your soul
lost among the mountains
a soul you mislaid
and found again rejoicing
Tulameen Tulameen
till the heart stops beating
say the names