

bleach

COOPER SKJEIE

killskinsell
was the motto
once imperialists
reached the plains
cleaved a boundary
salivated at the thought
of the prairie wiped clean
saw two brown things a bar
the buffalo and the plains indian
and every buffalo dead is an indian
gone saw two brown things said they
'd look nicer if white if skinned if bones
bones are white aren't they merchants might
buy these will buy these could make sugar could
fertilize forty or a hundred even four hundred acres
bones are nutritious bones provide jobs a job is a job
just be thankful thankful that's forty million by the time
this putrid land is picked clean said hey don't blame us for
your actions buffalo pounds overhunting or want for a slice of
the hide trade pie no no just hide don't trade go there not here we
'll provide rations promise a promise is a promise just be thankful god
delivered us to expand we are expanding can't you see yes there is room
hereherehereherehereherehereherehereherehereherehereherehere a n d here
stay over there we'll use this land better smarter will make things grow things
things you can eat stay put eat things and not just grasses like these god damned

buffalo
feel grief
for their dead
stay next to mama
baby try to wake up try
paws try hooks try bellows
audible urgent unabandoning
not a stampede but a ceremony
even mourn their other-than-bison
kin an emotional intelligence not yet
reached by the white folk instead pour
fire upon the grieving maintain a century
old crimson red tradition to undo the familial
big sibling buffalo stood up shouldered carnage
first meant for the people but still war on the soul
psyche hearts song and stomach but all these buffalo
return to us now kick dust like freedom climb hills like here i am