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SAIL is published quarterly. Subscription rates for 1990 are $8 within the United States, $12 (American) outside the U.S. *SAIL* does not accept retroactive subscriptions, but back issues of volume 1 are available at $12 the volume ($16 outside the U.S.).

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Joseph Bruchac, Poetry/Fiction Editor
The Greenfield Review Press
2 Middle Grove Avenue
Greenfield Center, New York 12833

ISSN: 0730-3238

Production of this issue was funded by the University of Richmond.

SAIL

Studies in American Indian Literatures

Series 2 Volume 2, Number 3 Fall 1990

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PRICKLY PEARS
by Greg Sarris

Mabel McKay is the last living representative of the Cache Creek Pomo, the easternmost tribe of Pomo Indians who once lived in the hills above Clear Lake in Lake County, California. Among the Pomo, Mabel is the last of many things: Bole Maru (Dream Dance) dreamer, sucking doctor, and traditional weaver, that is, a basket-weaver whose work is associated with power and prophecy."Prickly Pears" is a chapter from the forthcoming book, The Last Woman From Cache Creek: Conversations with Mabel McKay. *It is the story of Mabel McKay telling Greg Sarris the stories of her life.Mabel McKay is not interested in leaving a mere record of her life; she tells her stories so that they might continue and have relevance in her listener's life. Greg Sarris is an Indian of mixed-blood heritage (Pomo-Coast Miwok, Filipino, Jewish, Irish-German) with a Ph.D. in Modern Thought and Literature from Stanford University.*

I arrived at Mabel's promptly at 10:30 in the morning, just as we had planned. I could see through her screen door that the house was open, that she was expecting me. Before climbing out of the car, I checked my tape recorder and plastic bag of six tapes, in case she wanted to do some recording on the way to Sacramento.

Mabel was dressed for the occasion. She wore a light mauve-colored summer dress with a modestly ruffled collar and sleeves, and as I moved closer to her in the dark, cool room, I saw just below her collar a corsage of imitation violets. A new patent leather handbag hung from her arm and matched her shoes. I am ready, she seemed to be saying, as if she knew somehow she would be on display at the museum opening, even though I guaranteed her that would not be the case.

While Mabel enjoys talking to people and teaching basket weaving, she is not fond of public spectacles, particularly ceremonies in her honor. Once Governor Jerry Brown hosted a dinner on her behalf in the state capital, and later, when I asked what she thought, she shrugged her shoulders. "He's O.K.," she said and changed the subject. Another time, an official from the Archdiocese of Monterey tele-phoned me to say Pope John Paul had requested a personal meeting with Mabel McKay during his visit to Northern California. He asked if I would contact Mabel and confirm her audience with the Pope. I was excited, to say the least, imagining my own opportunity to meet the Pope, since I would escort Mabel to the meeting. But Mabel was less enthusiastic. "What's he want to do, bless me?" she

asked. I wondered if she was aware of the Junipero Serra controversy, of the Indians' protesting the canonization of Serra, the notorious missionizer of California Indians. I mentioned as much, and as if she didn't hear me, she said, "You see, he has his rule and I have mine." Then she capitulated. "Well," she said, "you could bring him up and maybe we could go to lunch." I pictured Mabel and myself in Woodland, having a fried chicken special and salad bar at Happy Steak with Pope John Paul. I extended Mabel's invitation to the church official.

It was a warm June morning. Already I could feel the heat that would again reach over the one-hundred mark. Driving with Mabel over the last five months, I watched the hills turn green. I saw the fields bloom with poppies and lupine, bright orange and purple patchwork in the grass, then fade below towering stalks of wild oats. Now the landscape was dry, the hills and fields a brittle yellow. In the creekbeds you saw nothing but white rocks and sand. Mabel removed her glasses and with a handkerchief patted around her eyes and brow.

"In the old days did the creeks run all year?" I asked.

"Some," she said.

Just beyond the one-store town of Guinda we passed over Cache Creek. Here great amounts of water flowed between concrete banks as part of the irrigation system for the surrounding area and larger Sacramento Valley. A sweet, humid fragrance rose from the green alfalfa fields on either side of the road, then vanished as we came into dry, open hills again.

Mabel put on her glasses and tucked her handkerchief under the purse sitting upright on her lap. "One time though there was a drought. A REAL drought. Even THIS creek dried up. I think that was the time appeared that snake you know, the one at Long Valley, at Lolsel. That's how it come down the creek, hardly any water . . ."

I heard this story before. Every time Mabel tells the story she mentions how the huge snake with the head of a deer appeared and stopped just below the village. Mabel repeats details of things, as many old people do, as if she were telling the story to you for the first time. She gestures with her hands, looks straight ahead, as if she is there, centuries ago, standing on the banks above a large fawn-colored monster lodged in the creek bed. She tells how her ancestors sacrificed the snake, using song and prayer, then ground its remains into a deadly white powder which was sold and traded to villages near and far, throughout the valley and over into Lake County and Ukiah. It was sold, traded so everyone would have the powder. But many of the neighboring villagers never believed the people of Lolsel truly

gave away equal amounts of the powder; they believed the Lolsel people kept the best of it for themselves, and they spread this rumor as far as the Lolsel people spread the powder.

"That's why nobody talked about my grandmother's brother to the white people," Mabel says. "You know, the one you was talking about that time."

She means her great uncle, old Sarah's brother, the man who in the winter of 1871 called all the Pomo and Southwestern Wintun groups to the eastern shores of Clear Lake to witness the end of the world. The event initiated the revivalistic Bole Maru and Bole Hesi movements, comparable in many ways to the Ghost Dance movements that would follow on the Great Plains a decade later. Neither S. A. Barrett nor A. L. Kroeber nor Cora DuBois, all of whom studied the Pomo and Wintun during the first half of the century, could positively identify who or what initiated this important event in the history of these people. DuBois comes closest when she writes in 1939: "The Bole Maru probably originated with the Hill Patwin prophet Lame Bill, who also supported the Earth Lodge cult." At the time Barrett, Kroeber and DuBois interviewed Pomo and Wintun about the subject, certainly many people knew of the event, perhaps some people listened to Mabel's uncle reveal his dream. Yet, no one breathed a word; not a single Indian in the area, even after intense questioning, spoke the man's name for fear of upsetting, or betraying, the people of Lolsel. One day as Mabel was telling this story, before mentioning something about her uncle, I was able to put two and two together. "Yes, same man," she said, as if nothing about it, or the telling of it, is significant. "Sarah's brother."

It makes me think about Kroeber and Barrett and DuBois. I picture them sitting on chairs in clapboard reservation houses or outside tents where Indians camped for work in the hopfields and orchards. I wonder if the old-timers sat on the ground, in customary style, or if, for the scientists, they sat in chairs and answered questions over food and drink. The anthropologists came in the summer when it is hot; I see them sweating under thick clothing, hats shielding their faces, as they earnestly write what they hear the old people saying. When I was young, I saw the white people come for stories; even as young as I was, I sensed so much of what the old-timers left out, so much that was other stories.

But now I was in a predicament not unlike the anthropologists. I was trying to put together Mabel's life stories and I was finding it difficult to discern an overall pattern in the stories, or to grasp a perspective that might help me discern a pattern. "Get some distance," my advisor at Stanford suggested. "Talk to other people in the

community and see what they think of Mabel."

Inadvertently, he touched on something crucial. I knew what many other people thought of Mabel, and that was just the problem. As I left my advisor's office, I thought of a man we used to call Old Uncle. I was a kid, maybe eleven or twelve, and the machinations of Old Uncle put the fear of "Indian business" in me once and for all. One minute Old Uncle would be sitting on the front porch of my friend's house and then, hardly five minutes later, when you were uptown in the car, you'd find him sitting on a park bench in Old Courthouse Square. He'd be sitting just as you saw him on the porch, in his heavy suit all buttoned up, no matter how hot it was, and that Stetson hat he wore pulled down over his eyes. "Uncle's got wings under that suit," people said.

He never was friendly. Since I was fair-skinned, maybe he figured I was white. He never budged, never acknowledged my presence in the slightest manner. I dreaded walking past him to get to the front door of my friend's house. I listened when my friend's mother, his niece, told how he pulled bones from a dead woman's eyes, then blew smoke through her temples, causing her to breathe again and awaken. One night he stepped out of his home and, raising his hands to the sky, pulled down a chain of green lights that surrounded a reservation near Ukiah.

So it surprised me when he got up and vanished as I approached the house one day.

This was much later, after I had been away to college and stopped back to visit my friend and her mother. Old Uncle was there on the front porch as always, dressed in his suit and hat. He seemed a little darker, shrunken maybe. I didn't have much time to look; he was gone. He stood up and slipped through the front door.

I didn't think much of it at the time. I was too busy catching up on news and talking about my college experiences. He never did show his face, though, and I remember now that his sister, my friend's grandmother, did not appear either. In the past, the old woman had always been friendly, even if she was quiet, reserved, typical of many old Pomo.

About two years after that Mabel mentioned something about Old Uncle, whom she called by his proper name. I mentioned this last incident and Mabel laughed: "He thought you was going to hoodoo him. Because you're with me. He thinks you carry poison for me. He thinks I'm that way."

Just beyond Capay, on Highway 116 about five miles from the 505 overpass, there is a row of trees whose branches arc over the highway.

Mabel always points to the trees and tells how she used to pass under them in a wagon with her grandmother when only a dirt road led into Woodland and Sacramento. I picture a young girl crouched beside an old woman holding the reins; I see the wagon moving through newly planted grape fields, the old woman bundled in nineteenth-century attire, a full-length Victorian dress, a bonnet or pack of scarves over her head, wrapped around a dark face. But then the stories come. Where were they going? What of Mabel's sickness, her dreaming, or her grandmother, Old Sarah, traveling from place to place, washing white people's clothes, working in the fields, to support Mabel and herself? The picture, like any story Mabel tells, has a rippling effect, circles and circles widening in a larger sea of stories. Now, though, her story--her telling about the snake--had only one effect--I felt guilty, as if in some way I had betrayed her.

I kept telling myself that Mabel would not have to do anything she didn't want to do, that she would not have to partake in the ribbon-cutting ceremony to open the museum doors or make a speech or anything else. I promised nothing. In fact, I told the museum curator that Mabel did not like public events and could be counted on for nothing. "Just see if you can get her here," the woman asked.

When the curator first called, she informed me that she listed Mabel's name on the program and that when she called to invite Mabel all Mabel said was, "I'm busy that day." "Can you help me?" the curator pleaded. "A good portion of the museum is dedicated to her and her work. I thought . . . well, naturally she would come."

So I thought myself a peacemaker. I told Mabel that we would go just for the ride. "You don't have to do anything," I assured her, "we can just check things out." I told her I wanted to see the pictures of her in the museum and that we could talk, perhaps do some recording for her book. "O.K., just for the ride," she said.

But there was more.

Mabel didn't particularly like the curator, which was one thing. What Mabel didn't know, and what I hadn't told her, was that the woman to be honored with her was Ella Simpson, a weaver from a neighboring tribe, a woman Mabel clearly did not like.

Mabel continued talking about the trees--the same details and then something about the trees' fruit. "I can't think now what you call them trees," she said. "Anyway, I forgot."

As we approached the 505 overpass, she stopped talking, perhaps seeing another picture, another memory. So far, I'd heard about the snake and the trees, and before she started on something else, I thought I'd break the news. Of course, with Mabel you never knew if you were telling her anything she hadn't known all along. "I know

each day what I'm going to do. I pray about it the night before," she once said. She was talking about her doctoring, but you figure if she knows who she's going to doctor, she could also know anything else. By mentioning Ella, by trying to be artful about it anyway, I might only be more foolish.

"You know, they say Ella is going to be there," I said finally. There, it was out, and I waited.

Mabel acted as if she hadn't heard me. Then all at once, as if just hearing what I said, she asked nonchalantly, "Oh, is SHE going to be there?"

She wasn't perturbed. I shifted gears and came down off the overpass. "Yes," I said.

Then Mabel seemed to collect herself; she sat upright in the seat, focused. "Well," she said, "Ella done a wrong thing. She used my design again, someone told me, I forgot who. That's very wrong thing. She's not a traditional weaver, nohow. She can't do that. Anyway, she's sick now, they say, I don't know."

As usual, the litany of faults and then the punishment. A pattern in many of the stories, particularly about enemies. I was surprised I didn't hear about how Ella was once embarrassed about being Indian, about how Ella would hide when her mother and grandmother sat at the County Fair demonstrating basket weaving before the general public.

I wondered what people said about Mabel; I remember once Old Uncle's niece said to me, "Your Mabel, that lady you stay with, she's like Uncle, too." Somehow I never paid attention.

Mabel became quiet. Yet she did not seem angry, not with me anyway. She talked about Ella as if she were talking about a minor incident, maybe about what she had eaten for dinner the night before, which was of little consequence to either of us. Then she started, not about Ella, but about a friend of Ella's, and I heard again an old story verbatim.

"See, Ella is a friend of hers . . . Well, how it happened, she [Ella's friend] poisoned me. Done me that way. She got me at the store. Good thing Essie come that day or I would never have made it.

"See, how it happened I was standing at the meat counter. You know, that little store we went to [in Santa Rosa]. I was standing there and I felt somebody's arms around me from behind. I turn around and it's her; I see her. She says, 'Oh, how pretty you look.'

"How can that be, I am thinking. I just got off the cannery, from the apples. I was sticky, all smelling of apples. Old clothes, not clean. And she keeps saying that: 'Oh, how pretty you look.' And she's touching me, all over, on my shoulders, here, there." Mabel gestured

with her hands.

"Well, then I went down [chuckling]. Well, not right there; when I got home. Just like that: I feel dizzy, funny, and I go down, right on the floor. Like I'm lying there. I know nothing, what I done with my groceries, where you kids was, nothing.

"Then Essie come. It was the scientist that bring her, the one from Berkeley. I forget his name, anyway. He's the one dropped Essie off. She was working with him there, in Berkeley. Something about plants, or something. Lots of times he would drop her off during that time. Then Parrish, he come take her back to Stewart's Point later.

"Well, Essie, she finds me like that. What happened to you, she is saying. By that time I couldn't talk, nothing. Then what it happened she started praying; singing for me right there. Then SHE says what it happened to me. When I come to, then she tells me, 'You been poisoned by that woman. She's the one killed my niece. She done you like that,' Essie is saying. 'You got to watch her.' That's how Essie is talking to me, and I say, 'yes.'

"That was the first time that woman got me.

"Then another time it happened. That time we was all weaving together somewhere, I forget now what. Some place, maybe the fair. I don't know. But her and some other ladies come to my house after. Then I seen her pressing on my roots, with her fingers. [Mabel curling her fingers, as if squeezing something.] Like that she was doing. See, I had my roots in the sink; I was washing them there, or something. Anyway, I left them there, I guess. Then I'm looking, seeing her over there, and she's doing like that. What is she doing, I'm saying to myself.

"Then I went down. This time I made it to the couch. I guess I was used to it by this time [chuckling]. It was a while, too, after all them ladies left. Maybe even next day. I go to the couch and I tell somebody, 'Call Essie.' I don't know who. Somebody was there with me then.

"So Essie comes and finds me that way. 'Not again,' she says. I say, 'Yes, again.' I was talking yet. Then she prayed AGAIN for me. Then she says it again: 'She's the one killed my niece. She done you like that.'

"Well, I knowed THAT woman for a long time. First time I seen her I was a kid yet, the time that man, he spooked me. You know who I'm talking about, that man . . .

"Well, how this happened, that man, he wanted me to go with him. Oh, I was only about twelve or so, somewhere along there. We was picking grapes. Us Indians, we camped in tents; where we was working, picking the crops, we camped in tents. Let's see, this was

before I gone with the white lady.

"My cousin and me, we go walking off to the bathroom. The outhouses, they was near the camps. We're going there before we go to bed. Then I seen him, that man. I look over, see him there in the grapes, just standing there, his head and top part of him just showing. 'I'm scared,' my cousin says. 'Me too,' I say. 'Let's go back.' [Laughing] I was even more scared on account of her being older than me and scared.

"Well, this man, he is in the grape fields, along the rows. In the rows, I see him, and then, all at once, he's jumping into the air, straight into the sky. Like that, straight up into the air, so you don't even see him no more, then landing on the other side of the row there. Like that, he's doing.

"Then next thing I know he's standing right in front of me. Now them grape fields, where he was standing, they're maybe some ways away, two hundred feet, I don't know. I blink my eyes and he's standing right in front of me, like that.

"Then he starts talking. 'How are you?' he says. 'Fine,' I say. What else am I supposed to say? [Laughing] I don't know. I'm so scared I can't think about it; I wasn't thinking. 'How would you like to come with me?' he says then. 'I can't,' I say, 'I stay with the white people,' I say. 'I live with the white people.'

"Well, I wanted my cousin to say something but she says nothing. She was so scared of THAT man she wet her pants.

"You see, that man, he knew I was dreaming. He wanted to work with me, I guess. I don't know. Maybe help me, give me some songs. But I was fighting it yet. Not seeing about this whole deal. 'No,' I said.

"Then he got mad. 'You'll be dead in nine months,' he is saying. Then I look, and I don't know where it come from, but it's a wagon appeared there. And this lady, the one I'm talking about, she's sitting on the wagon. I remember I seen the moon on her hair. It was long, wavy, her hair. Parted, like on the side. I know I was looking because I didn't want to look next to her where there was an empty seat for me. See, there was other ladies on that wagon, too. My eyes, they go to that empty spot, which I don't want to see. So I just look at that pretty lady. She was beautiful. I remember that even though I was scared.

"Then she went off; they all go off in that wagon.

"I didn't see her for a long time, then. But I would hear sometimes about her. I was seeing her later times, how she was looking at me. What's she want, I was thinking."

Mabel rested her hands on her purse. "Yeah, it's hot today," she said.

We were stopped at the light in Woodland. She looked back and forth, as if checking where we were. "That store there used to be a hotel," she said.

I wondered what pictures about the hotel ran through her head. Then I thought again of Ella Simpson's friend. I can't remember the first time I heard about her. It was later, sometime when I was in college, when I first heard how Mabel had seen the woman on that man's wagon, but I'd heard of the woman long before that. Mabel always said, "Don't take nothing from her. We don't take nothing from her."

I remember spying on the woman one afternoon while she was demonstrating basket-weaving with Ella at the County Fair. I think other women may have been there also. I was about thirteen or so; I could still spend my summer days wandering the County Fair. I remember I came upon her quickly and was startled. It was in the exhibit building, among displays of new blenders, juicers, flotation chairs, that I recognized something familiar: old Indian women and baskets. They sat around a display table, and behind them, on a peg board make-shift wall that separated the booths, hung baskets of all sizes and designs.

When I spotted this woman, when I saw who she was, I backed off, disappeared behind the spectators. I had seen her before; Mabel pointed her out at an Indian event at the junior college. I knew her by the thick wedge-shaped glasses she wore, and the way she held her head, as if looking up over those glasses. She seemed old to me then; her hair was grey, a thick flap of skin collected below her chin, and she appeared slumped, shrunken under her paisley mumu. She had a glass of water in front of her and, unlike the other women who were focused, concentrated on their weaving, she looked up now and then from the basket and awl in her hands. I saw her nod pleasantly to someone.

I went behind another row of booths where I could watch from a distance without being seen. If I had been with friends I would have just passed by, kept my cool somehow. Sometimes we kids told stories about old people and "Indian stuff," stories we might have heard from our parents or grandparents, but we shrugged them off as superstitious, or old-fashioned, from the old days.

The woman's glasses reflected the lights above the booth, masking her eyes. I could see the entire display booth much better from where I was hid. A sign over the back wall read POMO BASKETRY. I saw black-and-white photos below the baskets. I thought I saw one of Mabel, but I was too far away to tell. Then I saw that the old woman was talking to someone, a spectator, and she had her hand around the

glass of water. Was she offering it to him, I wondered. Was she going to *poison* him?

Outside of Woodland, Mabel dozed. She woke as we entered Sacramento, just in time to give me directions to the museum. It was noon, the heat intense, the few merciful breezes you felt along the open highway cut off now by tall buildings. Blinking lights signalled detours, and in the shade of a steamroller, construction workers ate their lunch. Mirages rose from the pavement.

"I don't know how people stand this," I said.

"They get used to it," Mabel rejoined perfunctorily. I wondered if she was thinking about Ella, if she was anticipating seeing her. Again, you never have any way of knowing what Mabel knows or what she is up to. And whether or not she schemes and plans things out, it doesn't matter. Something might happen and you are trapped, or tied up, in the event, like it or not. She is a time bomb whose clock you can't read, and whose explosion can have any number of effects, heard and felt in the most unimaginable ways. When I was first in college, I told a professor who had "done some work on the Pomo" that I knew Mabel McKay. He wanted to witness a doctoring ceremony. I asked Mabel if I could bring a professor to see her doctor. She said yes, and I never did tell the professor that I myself had never witnessed such a ceremony; that before, when a patient came to the house, I would leave.

So what happens? Mabel seats me right in the line of action and sets the professor on a couch behind her and her singers. He sees nothing, he hears the songs and attempts to interview Mabel afterward. "It's a long story," she tells him. Then one of her singers, Susie, known for her outlandish behavior, slugs the man with all her might, nearly knocking him out of his seat, and whispers into his ear with a mysterious voice, "This Indian business is kinda kookey, ain't it?" I had to ride back, nearly four hundred miles to L.A., with a disgruntled professor. I called Mabel and suggested she got me in trouble. "Well," she said, "he can use his imagination for what he didn't see, I guess. They always do."

Another time I took her to meet a friend's mother. My friend, Francisco, and his mother are Mexican Indians, from Sonora, Mexico. His mother, whose name is Ofelia, is a *curandera*, a healer, like Mabel, and both women wanted to meet one another. My friend translated for Ofelia, who spoke no English. She was nearly blind in one eye; her eye festered behind heavy lids, as if she was always squinting. I thought maybe Ofelia wanted Mabel to doctor her. But then Mabel began complaining about her arthritic knee and shoulder.

Ofelia placed her hand, just briefly, on Mabel's knee.

About two weeks after the visit, Francisco pulled me over to the side of the road. I did not recognize him at first; he was honking wildly, cutting through rush hour traffic in his old pick-up truck to catch up with me. Out of his truck, he ran up to my window. "Why did she do that?" he asked. He seemed frenzied, almost angry; he was panting, his eyes bulging.

"Do what?" I asked.

"She tried to test my mother, she played with her. Your . . . Mabel, she tested my mother, man. Why did she do that?"

I thought of Ofelia's hand on Mabel's knee. "You think Mabel was doing that?" I asked.

"My mother was upset, man. They are both *curanderas*, why the games, man? My mother believes in Mabel."

When Mabel and I left Francisco's house that day, she mentioned that Ofelia had great power in her hands, and that Francisco did also. She said Ofelia would lose both eyes if Francisco did not help her keep up her traditions. "He doesn't believe, he drinks, puts on a good show. That's all."

As I pulled back onto the road, after seeing Francisco, I felt embarrassed, angry that Mabel pulled such a stunt. Yes, she had found out about Ofelia's hands, and she talked Ofelia right into it. Mabel hoodwinked her.

I called Mabel on the telephone and asked about the incident. I told her how Francisco stopped me, what he said, and how excited he was. Mabel laughed. "Sounds like he believes now."

Francisco may have believed, but he wasn't particularly friendly after that either. While Mabel's stories on the way to Sacramento worked in me guilt and signalled a possible disaster, I was also angry. I was torn between my loyalty to Mabel and what I thought was a more reasonable course. At the end of their lives, two ladies bickering, at a place where they were both being honored. It seemed petty. And I blamed Mabel. She was the obstinate one, at least from my perspective.

The museum is located in a park, and as we arrived we could see large crowds facing the podium where what looked like a state official was giving a speech. We were obviously late. I could tell by the way people slumped in the folding chairs set on the lawn that they had been sitting for some time.

The curator rose and introduced a local Indian artist who, she said, was to be the last speaker before the ribbon-cutting ceremony. From the podium she saw us--she caught my eye--but she continued her presentation, reminding people that they could not enter the

museum today unless they had a personal invitation. I noticed people checking pockets and purses. They were a mixed crowd, many museum types, the sort that attend museum openings. There were also a few Indians who sat in small groups on the fringes and away, under the tall oaks that shaded this grassy area.

The curator stepped down and from the sidelines began madly waving her arms and pointing to the empty seat between Ella and the state official at the head table. Mabel sat down on the nearest bench. She set her purse on her lap, found a cigarette, and lit it.

The speaker, a tall Indian man wearing a red scarf around his head and a string of beads, outlined the rich tradition of California Indian art. He spoke of the Chumash cave paintings in Santa Barbara and then about the world-famous Pomo basketry. He mentioned Mabel and Ella. "Rich spiritual traditions underlie the works of these two women who are being honored today," he said. "Mrs. McKay will not make a basket unless she has a dream first, no matter how much money you give her . . ."

Mabel leaned into me and said admonishingly, "What's he doing talking about the spiritual? He cannot do that."

I thought she would have been upset about the man speaking for her, mentioning her name. It seemed she wasn't listening. She spoke as if she had only heard him mention the word "spiritual"; and then she did not hear the word in context, for, as far as I could tell, what he said was correct. Maybe she thought he was talking about Indian spirituality in general.

That always upset her. I said nothing. Mabel was concentrated, adamant.

I avoided the curator's gaze. Several people sat at tables on either side of the podium. They wore name tags with blue and gold ribbons. Ella wore a tag also; behind her seat I spotted a wheelchair, presumably hers.

When the speaker took his seat, the curator appeared with a special announcement. I hadn't noticed how short she was; her mouth barely met the microphone on the podium. I was looking when I all of a sudden heard what she was saying--a special person had just arrived and wanted to say a few words. No. I shook my head. No. No. No. Then, to my relief, a state assemblyman took the podium and made a brief, obligatory speech about "our Indian heritage."

As he spoke, people began milling about, moving slowly in the direction of the museum building. Some wandered near us. We were seated at the back of the crowd, and I could see people had spotted Mabel. She looked straight ahead, nonchalantly puffing her cigarette and tapping her ashes to the ground. By now I wanted to leave; my

heart still pounded from the thought of the curator calling Mabel to the podium. Earlier, as angry as I was at Mabel, I would have turned around, headed back to Rumsey, if Mabel said as much. Now, I was simply going to ask if she wanted to stay, when I turned and found a woman leaning over Mabel, attempting to get her attention.

"You were supposed to pray," the woman said. She slung a Gucci bag over her shoulder and pointed with a painted fingernail to Mabel's name on a schedule of events. The first one to break the lines, I thought to myself. I held my breath.

Slowly, Mabel turned half way around and faced the woman. In the theatre you would say Mabel took a silent beat, a pause. "Now tell me," she said, "how can I do that?"

The woman looked dumbfounded.

"Aren't you Mabel McKay?" Mabel dropped her cigarette and rubbed it into the grass with the ball of her foot: "How can I go bless this museum again?" She nodded to the building. "I done it forty years ago."

"Maybe our curator didn't know that. I don't think she's forty years old. How could I even know?" A tone of defiance rose in the woman's voice. "Mabel, I'm not even forty myself. I'm here to . . ."

Mabel broke in, irritated. "You see, you can't just go up and bless things. Maybe some people does. I don't know. That's what you call modern." Then Mabel started laughing out loud, amused by what she said. "It's not just what YOU see. There's a lot to this Indian things."

"I see," the woman said, recoiling. "Well, somebody blessed it already, anyway."

Mabel chuckled and, turning her back on the woman and large crowd gathered around, said, "Well, that's nice."

Mabel opened her purse and patted her neck and forehead with her handkerchief. "You see," she said to me, "people don't have no respect no more. You can't just go up and bless things. How do I know what rule other people, other places have? I only know my rule. Well, I pray for Essie's family because Essie dedicated me in up there [Stewart's Point]. She fix me for that. We work together, pray about it.

"You just don't pray around, all day, any place you want. That's not respecting the spirit of that place. Everybody got some kind of spirit, maybe even bad spirit. You don't know. Somebody might *poison* you even they don't want to. You might touch something of theirs. Maybe you pick up a basket, acorns, something of theirs, and that's full of rule. Got stories to it. It could fix you, *poison* you that way. So you take care of your own self, where you are. That's how you respect, how you know something." Mabel looked up, out to the

crowd that was dispersing. "People do crazy things."

I was glad no one could hear Mabel lecturing me. Actually, she was speaking plainly, matter-of-fact, but it was as if she were talking to a stranger.

I watched relatives, or friends, helping Ella off the stage. Slowly, in people's arms, she made her way down a make-shift rampway. Then the curator came bursting in our direction, her official's ribbon flapping on her chest. I stood up immediately. No. No. No. No. Mabel will not participate in any of this--she will not cut the ribbons. Don't ask her. We are about to leave.

But by the time the curator reached us, Mabel was on her feet, straightening her dress, picking at her corsage. "Which way do I go?" she asked, looking back.

Helpless and unbelieving, I watched as Mabel followed the curator toward the museum building.

I followed about ten steps behind. I saw Ella across the lawn. She was moving slowly, surrounded by family and friends. I felt foolish, ashamed that I let this curator person lead Mabel off without me, or, that Mabel let herself be led off without me.

The curator pushed her way through the throngs of people gathered on either side of the walkway leading to the front doors. Yellow and blue ribbons crisscrossed the entrance way. The curator then situated Mabel next to Ella and gave both Mabel and Ella a pair of scissors. The press jumped the lines and began taking pictures. Each woman posed, smiling and holding the scissors toward the ribbons. Ella appeared quite feeble. She braced herself with one arm on an aluminum hospital cane. She had been heavy once, but now she seemed small, her loose-fitting dress like a table cloth hung from round her slumped shoulders. She smiled blandly, pleasantly. Mabel smiled the same way.

I lost Mabel in the rush of people, then found her peering into a glass display case of her basketry. She was surrounded by admirers and she was talking. I was about to rescue her when the curator grabbed my arm, thanking me for bringing Mabel.

"Even if she didn't sit with us, the ribbon-cutting ceremony was the main thing," she said, still holding my arm. "And if Mabel wants she can sit with us and have lunch."

No. Mabel will not have lunch, I wanted to say. I was looking for words, some way to explain how this museum business was wrong, how there was so much more to the baskets than meets the eye. Perhaps I was also looking for a way to retract my complicity in this event. Actually, as I think back, I probably wanted to say Mabel was not the way she seemed; Mabel was not really compliant. She was

really putting on a show, she was up to something. But what? And how could I say anything? She was there, moving down the hallway now, and I was here, a ways back.

She was gracious, accommodating. I couldn't believe it. She talked and laughed as if truly enjoying herself. Her cordiality attracted more and more people.

"She seems to be having a good time," the curator said before latching herself to the city mayor.

"Congratulations," he said to her. "A major success."

Seems, I thought to myself. Seems, I wanted to believe. Above the display cases of Mabel's baskets was a life-size picture of Mabel in the willows. She was peering at branches she might cut for basketmaking. On the adjacent wall, above a display case, was a life-size picture of Ella. It was a homey picture: a woman sitting on her front porch, looking down with great satisfaction at a newly-completed basket on her lap. You might think, oh, a happy Indian grandmother. In the picture Ella looked younger, far less frail and debilitated than she did today. As if to confirm my thoughts just then, Ella moved into my line of vision. She stopped in front of her display case, below her picture, not so much to look, it seemed, but to rest. She was aided by the same woman who helped her off the stage. She seemed to be catching her breath. Then I saw she was looking past me toward Mabel who was at the end of the hallway, blocking the exit with her throngs of fans.

Mabel was victorious. She was healthy, walking. She garnered the attention of the majority of the spectators. Is that what she wanted? Was this the big surprise for the day? Now even the Indians who lagged in the background watched Mabel. They didn't point; they followed her with their eyes.

I looked back once at Mabel; I'd lost her in the crowd. I went outside. I sat by an enclosed pond where two ducks chased one another in circles, making a lot of racket. My head hurt.

I made a plan. I would wait a while and then, when Mabel was outside the building, I would whisk her away. I didn't think whether she was really happy gabbing with the crowds or not, then. I pictured us driving someplace, maybe back on 116 beyond Rumsey, in the other direction, toward Lake County. She would tell stories about places and people she remembers, stories I'd heard, maybe some new ones. We'd go to the lake--she always liked that: I'd drive her up on that narrow road above Rattlesnake Island where Old Sarah danced with the Sulphur Bank people. That's what I would say to her. Let's get lunch and go to Clear Lake. It might be cooler by the water.

Then it occurred to me that she might be waiting for me. I had

lost track of how much time had passed. From where I was sitting I could not tell if she had come out of the building. I pictured her back at the bench, waiting.

But it was not exactly like that.

When I found her, she was waiting, but not at the bench. I ran back through the museum and, as I came outside, past the exit, I saw to my disbelief that she was on the stage, standing behind her seat. "There you are," the curator said, coming out of nowhere and taking my arm. "Mabel has been looking for you."

She led me up on the stage, to the seat next to Mabel. "Oh," Mabel said, seeing me. "I lost you. Here, sit. They're going to give the lunch. Dances, too, I am told." Mabel chuckled but I could not tell who or what was funny.

I was more confused than ever, self-conscious now, too, as I was seated before the entire crowd. The assemblyman--I forgot his name--next to me introduced himself. I told him I was with Mabel. The park rangers served us a lunch of chicken pot pie and salad. I ate, occasionally glancing at Mabel who picked over her pie with her fork. Otherwise, I ate, watching the rangers clear the area in front of us of chairs and benches.

I had no sense of Mabel, or myself, for that matter. I was eating with Mabel as if we were anywhere. And yet I was before several hundred people, somehow one of the noted guests.

The curator announced the Wintun-Maidu dances. I watched the singers call the dancers, who came forward dancing, their eagle feather skirts shaking as they turned and twisted. With their eagle feather skirts and orange and black flicker feather headdresses, they looked similar to Pomo dancers. Yet, even the familiar singing and rhythmic pounding of clappers lent an illusory air to the entire scene.

Then there was movement. Mabel was moving, asking if I was ready to go. It was a most inauspicious time to make a move. The dancers were stopped, lined up in front of the singers. Everybody seemed to be waiting. As Mabel stood up, reaching for her purse, I caught a glimpse of Ella who, I had forgotten, was sitting next to Mabel.

Mabel started down the ramp. Then midway along she stopped, surveying the crowd once, before reaching in her purse for a cigarette. I was behind her now. I thought she might have been looking to say goodbye to someone. I don't know why, but I looked back at Ella, who was peering over her shoulder in our direction. She looked tired, forlorn.

"Mabel," I said, "You ought to say goodbye to Ella."

"Hmm?" Mabel asked, as if she didn't hear me. Then she leaned into me, chuckling in her inimitable way. Even before she spoke, I

saw the familiar sparkle in her eyes. "No," she said, "she'll think I'm going to hoodoo her."

She started laughing out loud. She tossed her head back, exhaling her first puff of smoke. I heard her purse click shut. Something was final; I felt my feet planted on that plyboard ramp. Unable to move, backward or forward off the ramp, with everyone watching, I knew exactly where I was then, and felt Mabel take my arm, like a bride her groom, and lead me off stage.

"Now maybe we can go for a ride," she said, "just for a ride, someplace."

We left Sacramento and drove past Davis along Interstate 80 instead of taking 116 to Woodland. Not far beyond Davis I pulled off for gas. Mabel got out of the car and went into the restroom. A gas-station attendant inside the building watched her, a small Indian woman in a cool-looking mauve-colored dress, making her way to the side of the station.

We didn't get back on 80. Mabel directed me down a country road. I drove for half an hour, not knowing where I was, and wondering if even Mabel knew. The sun had lowered, casting late afternoon shadows on this side of the distant hills. The valley looked barren, dry; spots of cattle in the distance grazed the burnt yellow stubble. A slight breeze blew over the land, or maybe the open spaces simply gave the illusion of a breeze. It was still hot.

"Where are we?" I asked finally.

"I think we turn up here a ways," Mabel answered, gesturing with her hand. Then she laughed. "This must be the ride part."

I shifted in my seat. What could I do? The stories, all Mabel ever told me, were my stories also. I didn't want to be responsible. I wanted things to work out at the museum as if Mabel would not be Mabel, as if she would be one way or another, simple. Driving along, I thought again of my advisor's suggestion to "get some distance." Then I thought of the red-faced gas-station attendant looking at her, a little old Indian lady dressed up in her Sunday best making her way to the side of the station.

"You know," she said, "I was thinking, them trees we pass. Well, you know, you ask me one time what they was. I always forget. Then I think about it. Now I think of it. Prickly pears. You got to watch how you touch them things."

Yes, I thought. Prickly pears.

We were passing dusty almond orchards and Mabel was gazing at the wilted trees.

"You want to go up to the lake?" she asked. "It's cooler up there, maybe."

COMMENTARY

Report on ASAIL Business Meeting: 12/29/89

The meeting opened with a number of announcements. Andy Wiget announced that the *Dictionary of American Indian Literatures* was 90% complete. He secured authors for the remaining items. Susan Scarberry-Garcia passed out the current issue of *ASAIL Notes*. She noted that the *Notes* had inadequate funds to publish and that she had to use $300 of her own money to publish this issue. She hoped that ASAIL would be able to reimburse her at some point in the future. She also noted that members needed to contribute more information to the Notes.

Ken Roemer reported that MLA was beginning a review of all affiliate organizations. It plans to review membership and charters in the next few years. MLA also plans on moving all sessions sponsored by affiliated organizations to time slots before the convention or after the convention.

A motion was made in absentia by Kay Sands and passed unanimously:

> I move that the Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures, by acclamation, voice our appreciation to Helen Jaskoski, Dan Littlefield, and Jim Parins for the fine job they have done of coordinating, editing, and publishing the new series of *Studies in American Indian Literatures*. We are grateful for their generous service to the field of American Indian literatures and congratulate them on the quality of both the content and the format of the first issue.

Helen Jaskoski reported that she had topics, guest editors, and some material already set for future issues of *SAIL*. Robert Nelson reported that the University of Richmond was ready to pick up the production and publication of *SAIL*. Some money has been made available from his Dean to cushion the transfer of the production, and to supplement subscription money until *SAIL* generates adequate funding.

1989 President Ruppert reported that in the name of the organization, he had accepted an invitation to participate in the American Literature Association. ASAIL has been asked to organize two sessions at the ALA conference; Helen Jaskoski has agreed to serve as chair.

A motion was made to extend the term of service of the officers from one year to two. It was also suggested that these terms be

staggered and that the Vice-President would not necessarily succeed to President after serving as Vice-President. Consequently, Franchot Ballinger will serve as President for 1990 and 1991. The Vice-President will serve for 1990, with a new election to be held in December 1990. The membership voted to reinstitute the positions of Secretary and Treasurer and to combine them into a new position Secretary/Treasurer for 1990 and 1991. The Secretary/Treasurer will organize the membership roll and manage subscription money. The Vice-President will be asked to handle public relations and information inquiries. Andrea Lerner was elected Vice-President and Elizabeth McDade-Nelson was elected Secretary/Treasurer.

It was agreed to establish ASAIL membership dues. The money from dues would be used to fund *SAIL* and *ASAIL Notes* with some set aside for the Association. It was agreed that in recognition of the present independent subscription status of the two publications that the institution of membership dues would be put off until 1-1-91. A tentative fees schedule was proposed: $12 for graduate students, members without academic affiliation, and special hardship situations; $25 for standard membership; and $35 for foreign or institutional membership. Anyone with suggestions concerning a dues schedule should contact President Ballinger or write a letter to the *SAIL* editor.

The question was presented as to future sale of our mailing list. The sense of those in attendance was that we wouldn't want our addresses released for unrelated junk mail, but that we would welcome announcements concerning publications, etc. A motion was made and passed to empower the officers to make decisions on a case-by-case basis concerning the sale of the ASAIL membership list.

An ad hoc committee was created to investigate incorporation of ASAIL. Franchot Ballinger, James Ruppert, Larry Abbot, and Kate Vangen will serve on that committee and report back to the Association at the next meeting.

Discussion on a motion to have ASAIL establish its own conference was tabled due to a lack of time.

James Ruppert

From the Editors

We are especially pleased that *SAIL* is receiving more articles from young American Indian scholars. Greg Sarris's "Prickly Pears" is one such piece; it offers innovations and challenges, beginning with his original designation of it as "bi-autobiography." We look forward to seeing the completed book that Greg is preparing on Mabel McKay and her stories. And more: we hope that Greg's work in *SAIL*

will come to the attention of other young Native American scholars and critics, and will stimulate them to try their own creative approaches to the riches of traditional literature.

As *SAIL* expands in readership and content, we receive ever more books from publishers for review. Publishers pay attention to what *SAIL* reviewers say, and several have written to acknowledge the acuity and judiciousness of discussions of their publications. If you would like to review books for *SAIL*, please send a current curriculum vitae to Helen Jaskoski. If you have a book that you think should be reviewed, please let us know that, also. Some works are controversial, and we hope in the future to be able to offer alternative views of some publications.

Several projects are on-going, including special issues and a major subscription campaign. Future numbers will include new translations of oral tales with essays on traditional northwest literature, articles on pedagogy by Ken Roemer and Joe Bruchac, among others, and new interviews with poets and fiction writers. In addition, we are soliciting new articles for a special issue on early written literature, as described in the announcement below.

Our current subscription campaign is aimed at libraries. We would like to increase our library subscriptions, and are using as many means as we can to bring to the attention of serials librarians the existence and importance of *SAIL*. We would like to encourage all our readers to contact a librarian and encourage a subscription to *SAIL*: at the price of $8 per year it is an offer that few should be able to refuse. Public as well as academic libraries, especially in certain areas of the country, could be encouraged to consider subscribing.

Finally, we'd like to bring up a practical matter for contributors. Bob Nelson does our typesetting at the University of Richmond (one way we keep costs down), and he uses an optical scanner. For best results, he needs letter quality, black ink copies. If possible, we would like your submissions in letter quality type. At present, we can also accept 5 1/4" diskettes with text files in WordPerfect 5.0.

Helen Jaskoski
Bob Nelson

SAIL Special Issue on Early Written Literature

We would like to publish a special issue on literature by American Indian writers who published before 1950. We encourage articles on a wide range of genres: in addition to discussion of fiction and poetry we would like to see consideration of other texts such as histories including autobiographical texts that combine personal, family and tribal history; essays; satire; published letters, diaries and journals;

polemical writing; ephemeral and periodical publications; performance scripts and religious treatises. We also encourage a variety of approaches, including (but not limited to) historical or biographical themes, comparative analysis, conditions of production and publication, reader-response approaches.

Deadline for finished papers: April 1991.

Please send all submissions and inquiries to Helen Jaskoski, Department of English, California State University Fullerton, Fullerton, CA 92634.

MLA Committee on the Languages and Literatures of America

The Committee on the Languages and Literatures of America is actively seeking more involvement in its organizing of panels at the annual MLA convention.

The Committee on the Literatures and Languages of America consists of nine scholars or writers representing research and teaching in the literatures of five American ethnic groups: African American, American Indian, Asian/Pacific American, Chicano, and Puerto Rican. Each year at the MLA convention CLLA sponsors panels or sessions dealing with these five American ethnic literatures or with interethnic perspectives. The committee particularly invites panels on linguistic and multilinguistic topics; in the past there has been a dearth of panels dealing directly with language issues.

When submitting a proposal for a panel, consider the following guidelines:

1. The term "America" refers to the continental United States and its territories, including Puerto Rico and Hawaii. The committee cannot consider sponsoring whole panels that deal *solely* with national literatures outside the boundaries of the United States, even when these may be directly related to the ethnic groups we represent (for example, Mexican literatures). An acceptable panel, for instance, would address issues of differentiation or of cultural identities in which *both* United States and Mexican Native American groups are examined.

2. The responsibility for checking panelists' MLA membership status belongs to the organizer, not to the committee.

3. Any other paperwork related to the panel must be completed by the organizer, not by the committee. Requests for travel funds, membership waivers, or special audiovisual equipment must be addressed directly to the convention office.

The committee does not provide funds for sessions. Sponsorship is solely by name; in addition there is the benefit that, on the committee's approval, the panel is integrated into the convention

program without having to go through the special sessions review process.

Although we were unable to assemble complete information on the Committee in time for the 1990 convention, we urge interested *SAIL* readers to contact committee members with your ideas and suggestions. Presently Joy Harjo and Jarold Ramsey serve on the committee; their addresses are:

Joy Harjo, Department of English, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ 85721

Jarold Ramsey, Department of English, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY 14627

Present committee members nominate individuals to serve on the committee in the future; if you are interested in serving or would like to suggest the name of someone else to serve on this committee, you can write to either of the people mentioned above, or to Ms. Carol Zussass at the national offices of MLA, 10 Astor Place, New York, NY 10003-6981. Nominations generally include the nominee's curriculum vitae, plus a statement giving the name, institutional affiliation, department, rank and statement of qualifications for the position.

REVIEWS

Spider Woman's Granddaughters: Traditional Tales and Contemporary Writing by Native American Women. Edited by Paula Gunn Allen. Boston: Beacon, 1989. 242 pp. cloth, ISBN 0-8070-8100-0.

As we approach the 500-year anniversary of Columbus's landing on these shores, we will do well to remember what Paula Gunn Allen says in the introduction to this volume: American Indian women carry with them "the experience of being in a state of war for five hundred years" (1f.). The title and subtitle of the book do not express one of its special features: "The stories I have chosen are women's war stories or woman-warrior stories" (18).

Allen ingeniously combines traditional tales, contemporary stories, and explanatory comments for each contribution. She points out in her general introduction that writing is one of the ways in which Indian women resist and survive all historical and contemporary attempts to wipe out their culture. They do so by employing "aesthetic processes from both the oral and Western traditions, choosing elements from each in ways that enrich both" (2). The result is often a blurring of traditional genres, a disregard for the Aristotelian unities of time, place, and action, and the absence of an individualistic hero. Native stories might contain a plurality of characters, settings, and themes in a pattern of "regularly occurring elements that are . . . employed to culturally defined ends and effects" (5).

Allen distinguishes two main kinds of Native stories: those "told to people"--which can then be recorded in writing--and those "told to the page." Both are literature through certain aesthetic structures that are "spiritual at base" (9) and that "make communal transcendent meaning out of human experience" (7). Whereas a "singularity of consciousness" is typical of Western fiction, "commonalities of consciousness" are basic to Native fiction, and blood relationships are only a reflection of a more comprehensive bonding with all the forces of the cosmos.

The stories by "Spiderwoman's granddaughters" are not to be read as "women's literature" but as "tribal women's literature" (20). As such, they grow out of a collective unconscious that encompasses historical trauma and the awareness that "as American Indian women, we are women at war." "War, in a traditional context, is as much a matter of metaphysics as of politics," and "these stories of women at war are about the metaphysics of defeat" (20f.).

Allen divides the book into three parts: "The Warriors," "The Casualties," and "The Resistance." The introduction to the first part

defines what "war" means in tribal terms:

> In English, the term "war" means soldiers blasting away at military targets for the purpose of attacking or defending territory, ideals, or resources. In the tribal way, war means a ritual path, a kind of tao or spiritual discipline that can test honor, selflessness, and devotion, and put the warrior in closer, more powerful harmony with the supernaturals and the earth. (25)

It is from this perspective that Allen's selected stories can make an eminent contribution to our understanding of war and war narratives in any culture. That does not mean falling into the trap of "universalizing" what is in fact a very unique experience of colonized and oppressed Native women, but by analogy we can discover the social conventions and mythological underpinnings of war in other cultures. We can also observe the "intertextuality" of war narratives--which for Native stories implies the use of tribal traditions (17).

Three basic concerns are expressed in these stories: an attempt to understand the "nature" of war, the power of war narratives to impact and change this so-called nature, and the role of women warriors.

The first part, "The Warriors," comprises ancient traditional stories (Oneida, Mohawk, Okanogan), stories by transitional writers (Pretty Shield, Zitkala Sa, Pauline Johnson, Ella Deloria), and some by contemporary writers (Louise Erdrich, Soge Track, Anna Lee Walters). "A Woman's Fight," by the Crow wise-woman Pretty Shield, is a short, powerful story about Strikes-two, a woman sixty years old, who in the midst of battle is riding around the Crow camp on a grey horse, carrying a root-digger and singing her medicine-song. While Lakota bullets and arrows are flying around her, she calls on everybody to sing along with her, and the Lakota, afraid of her medicine, run away. While that story will delight most modern readers, Zitkala Sa's "A Warrior's Daughter" has a more jarring effect: "The warriors are in the enemy's camp, breaking dreams with their tomahawks." A young beauty, grieving for her lover who was taken captive, with cunning and courage rescues the young brave by sticking a knife into one of his enemies. Allen wisely suspects that the author "is having her little vengeful joke on the white women she spent so much time with, trying to get them to work for Indian rights." Allen's prefatory comments on the next story, however, are insufficient for understanding a traditional Chippewa tale. "Oshkikwe's Baby" appears to the uninformed reader more like the story of a male identity crisis than of the spiritual warfare of two women. It becomes much clearer in reading it in its context of related tales and their interpretation in

Victor Barnouw's *Wisconsin Chippewa Myths and Tales*. Fortunately, however, Allen follows up this tale with Louise Erdrich's "American Horse" in which the defiant struggle of a mother for her endangered son is superbly drawn in contemporary as well as tribal terms.

The rest of the stories in this section on warrior women follow the same pattern: traditional Oneida and Mohawk tales in which courageous women wield creative powers are followed by a turn-of-the-century story (from Pauline Johnson's *The Moccasin Maker*), by an excerpt from Ella Deloria's *Waterlily* (completed 1944), and two contemporary stories by Soge Track and Anna Lee Walters. Since all these stories vary between expressing calculated violence (Pauline Johnson's woman narrator poisons a faithless white lover) and a gentle-tough warring for spiritual beauty and integrity (Anna Lee Walters' Pawnee women), it is important to notice in Allen's interpretive comments the varieties of tribal attitudes toward war, including those of "conflict-phobic cultures":

> Many gynecentric societies did not engage in the warpath. . . . When Pueblo people did participate in warfare, long purification ceremonies were required before the combatant was allowed to reenter village life. (67)

We can learn here that the struggle over "just" wars is not a Western invention. From pre-historic traces of battle to modern nuclear conflicts, the attempts to justify, explain, and end war have never been without a mythic dimension. But the difference between tribal and modern Western warfare lies in a basic difference of world-view and a tremendous inequality between the adversaries in modern wars between "First World" and "Third World" peoples. Anna Lee Walters's story, "The Warriors," is a powerful expression of the tragedy that evolves when a tribal warrior for "beauty" has to fight, e.g., in the Korean War of the U.S. Native Americans are forced to take on the work of their colonizers and often are crushed in the process. But, as Allen reminds us, "the one who tells the stories rules the world" (27). As American Indian war experiences are turned into stories and are becoming part of the tribal tradition, they are capable of releasing the same power of creation as the original tribal tales. In expressing "the metaphysics of defeat," they indicate a spiritual victory that can have concrete cultural and political consequences.

The second part of Allen's book is concerned with the "casualties." The victimizers are "Owlwoman" or "Ogre" in the traditional stories, but their role is taken over, for example, by white people in Mourning Dove's "The Story of Green Blanket Feet" or by the Roman Catholic Church in Mary TallMountain's "The Disposal of Mary Joe's Child-

ren." A superb story about child abuse as it relates to Indian abuse is "Grace" by Vicky L. Sears. Linda Hogan's "Making Do" is a beautiful expression of the power of art to heal and sustain a wounded woman.

The last part of the book concerns "The Resistance." Elizabeth Cook-Lynn's "The Power of Horses" "is about soul-theft, the theft of magic, of wonder, from the people" and about reclaiming that wonder. Three "Yellow Woman" stories are fitting introductions to the final "ultra-contemporary" stories of the book, as Allen calls them (198), because Yellow Woman is that ever-shifting persona, "a Spirit, a Mother, a blessed ear of corn, an archetype, . . . an agent of change . . . a wanton, an outcast," that leads us to understand the modern Native women who are half-lost in urban deserts and yet still resist in feeling gripped by ancient tribal forces.

Spider Woman's Granddaughters challenges us to find answers to some ancient questions: Are there wars worth fighting? How do war stories--those of the victors and those of the victims--change the definition and "nature" of war? What is the role of women in war? The answers will be very different for tribal and for Western people, but the wisdom stored up in the stories of Native women who have been at war for 500 years is important for all of us. Just as the Crow woman Strikes-two could win a battle by singing, today's women can change the face of war by writing about it.

Kristin Herzog

* * * *

Blood Salt. Doris Seale. Little Rock: American Native Press Archives/ U Arkansas at Little Rock, 1989.

The first volume in the new poetry chapbook series initiated by the American Native Press Archives at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock is this brief collection by Doris Seale, who traces her ancestry to a Santee/Cree grandparent. Seale's name may ring familiar to those teachers and parents lucky enough to have encountered *Books Without Bias: Through Indian Eyes*, which she compiled along with Beverly Slapin. Not enough copies of that massive spiral-bound text were printed and it ought to be reprinted soon. [Ed. note: *Books Without Bias* is reprinted and will be reviewed soon in *SAIL*.]

Seale's poetic voice could easily be ascribed to the realm literary critics might call *ethnopoetics*. It is a natural and unadorned voice and her brief line-statements are like chanted phrasing. Her ironical tone

turns cynical at the bitter experiences and lessons of Native women messed with by white men. A reader might wish Seale would break into extended expressions, because her strength comes in the parallel development and interpolation of song modes. The musical "Little Sister" offers an example of how quickly she perceives imagery and conveys it. Slower to unfold is one of the chapbook's nine untitled poems beginning "You see me." The five lines of "Noon Woman" are imagistic and have clever rhyme.

Seale hits hard in the title poem as she refers to the taste of blood from a tongue cut out. Other polemical pieces have already been published. She advises the white man in "The Boss": "There's nothing give you more trouble/ Than a woman with something on her mind/ And nothing to lose." One of *Blood Salt*'s better poems, "The Things That Survive the Whiteman," endears those things he calls

> Rank, coarse, scavenger,
> Vermin.
> . . . .
> The skunks
> That sweeten city streets,
> And crows--

The speaker here shares this reflective state with "Sister rat," yet another being whose life is determined by hardship. The poem "His Half-Breed Wife" appeared in the anthology *A Gathering of Spirit* in 1984 and its portrait is memorable still: "Only her eyes gave her away;/ They were little grey birds/ In cages."

Doris Seale's poetry avoids any elaborate versification and imagery. Her voice is distinct in tapping common root sources in Native perception. Let's hope she can break through the limitations she seems to have set for her form.

Ron Welburn

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Coyote's Journal. James Koller, 'Gogisgi' Carroll Arnett, Steve Nemirow and Peter Blue Cloud, eds. Berkeley, California: Wingbow Press, 1985. 157 pp., $6.95 paper, ISBN 914728-38-5.

It may seem slightly unusual in 1990 to review a book which was published in 1982, but *Coyote's Journal* enjoyed a second printing in 1985 and still seems to maintain a certain popularity. Hence, a few

commendations and cautions are in order.

In the seventies and perhaps even the early eighties, interested scholars, teachers, and readers were generally delighted to find any new source of Native American writing, especially one such as *Coyote's Journal* which, at a glance, seems to promise a selection of pieces chosen from a variety of literary styles, cultural sources, and verbal genres, all descriptive of the central icon--coyote. And for readers new to Native American literature, *Coyote's Journal* is a disingenuous introduction to that ubiquitous trickster.

In the hands of a well-prepared and knowledgeable teacher, *Coyote's Journal* would be useful for junior high and high school students who have never heard of coyote tales or are unfamiliar with Native American literature in general. Thinking of the uninitiated reader, I liked Will Staple's "when coyote/ is dropped out of an airplane/ on a moonless winter night/ does he land on his feet?/ no./ on his heart." And I liked the universalist impulse in Robert Aitken's koan-like excerpts from "Coyote Rōshi Goroku": "The student asked, 'How can Essential Nature be destroyed?' Coyote said, 'With an eraser.'" And this: "Everybody knows how Coyote Rōshi loves to collect Buddhist images. Once a disciple of Rajneesh wrote to him, saying, 'You are always looking for wooden Buddhas. You should come to India and meet a living Buddha.' Coyote mentioned this letter to his students, and remarked, 'Living Buddhas are all over the place, but a good wooden Buddha is hard to find.'"

Essays like John Brandi's "How Many Ways Are There to Tell of Coyote?"--which runs an eclectic gamut of coyote sources from direct personal experience to J. Frank Dobie's literary meditation to song-writers and poets to paleolithic memories--help further the sense that coyote is everywhere and involved in everything. The casual reader is further attracted to the volume by Harry Fonesca's drawings of hip, insouciant, downtown/uptown coyote which adorn the cover and illustrate some of the selections. But I was confused by pieces such as Jim Hartz's "Shambhala National Anthem": "May my heart/ Be empty, O Karmapa;/ My wallet full" and Philip Daughtry's "The Dragon Singer": "BAAAAAA! Am back,/ When ah slithered oot of Jarrow Slats/ aye, ye knew this world wasnae ye/ ah fed ye fire and fear/ beast giv ye/ craft tae warlock wi, boon ta mek/ song iv deed an stone/ for a beast ye kept awake, on the rim. . . . an each bairn bore a castle tae heard the flame." Are these Native American or what? In their attempts to universalize coyote, the editors give us no real clue.

The editors write in a minimal introduction that they "tried to contact as many writers as possible, by letter and by public announce-

ment in newsletters and magazines." They asked, "Who or What is Coyote anyway?" From the "numerous" responses they selected pieces--poems, prose, and fiction--from fifty-five "contributors from all corners" as the blurb on the back cover proclaims. Even though these contributors (some of whom have since become quite well-known) are named in the table of contents along with the titles of their contributions, we are told nothing else about the contributors. The editors' grass-roots "call for coyote tales" reinforces the notion that coyote belongs mainly to an easily accessible, mainstream public discourse tradition, that legends and anecdotes circulate internationally but essentially anonymously, and that it is the content, even just the "gist of the story," that is important rather than the craft of the representation or the genius of the author/artist. I would prefer that any collection of coyote tales include an introductory essay that engages itself with these complex issues.

Besides wanting to know more about the individual contributors--i.e., who are they? from what culturally or ethnically influenced point of view do they write? do they see themselves as inventors or conduits of their coyote tales?--I would like to know something about the original context or starting point of the coyote tale, especially of the ones which seem obviously to have a tribal source. Is it a re-telling of a myth or legend or sacred story from "time immemorial"? Has it been translated from a tribal language? How has the author changed or added to or subtracted from it? To borrow Alan Dundes's distinctions: What is its Text, which is essentially paraphraseable content; what is its Texture, which is the linguistic and paralinguistic dimensions of any oral performance which are often given up in the translation of Text; and what is its Context, which is the social situation in which the performance takes place?

Appended to Peter Blue Cloud's prose piece--"Coyote's Discourse on Power, Medicine and Would-Be Shamans"--is the note: "recorded by Peter Blue Cloud." Such a notation only raises questions such as "recorded where, how, when, why, from whom?" rather than supplying any real information. William Shipley does tell us that his "How Old Man Coyote Married His Daughter" was recorded by Roland Dixon, a Harvard professor, and that the storyteller was H'anchibuyim, "perhaps the last great Maidu raconteur." Shipley writes that "in the present translation I have tried to respect both languages . . . I hope it has been a relatively successful one." What follows is a smoothly written, grammatically correct-in-English story with no trace of the original Maidu--no "accent" in the translation. I find the lack of context and explanation throughout the book to be a type of "playful savage" sentimentality.

Finally this collection raises the question of just what is "coyote"? The *Journal* proposes a broad-based, eclectic sense of "coyote." Coyote is any joke or trick or glitch in one's life; "coyote is the miss in your engine," says Peter Coyote. According to the *Journal* Coyote is any gambler, prostitute, comedian, dharma-bum, Zen master, or trickster anywhere. This approach certainly universalizes Coyote and makes the concept more fun, especially for a younger audience. Critically, however, the editors of the *Journal* commit the intentional fallacy of seeing Coyote wherever they look.

Gretchen Ronnow

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American Indian Autobiography. H.David Brumble III. Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: U California Press, 1988. ISBN 0-520-06245-0.

H. David Brumble's *American Indian Autobiography* is the fourth monograph to be published on American Indian autobiographies, which makes this genre one of the most comprehensively discussed in the critical literature on American Indian verbal arts. Lynn Woods O'Brien's 1973 essay on *Plains Indian Autobiographies* for the Boise Western Writers Series remains an essential reference point: O'Brien was the first to analyze such forms as coup tales and tipi paintings as autobiographical texts. Gretchen Bataille and Kathleen Sands' *Native American Women: Telling Their Lives* and Arnold Krupat's *For Those Who Come After: A Study of American Indian Autobiography* (treating only male autobiographers) followed in 1984 and 1987, respectively. *American Indian Autobiography* enlarges this discourse with a specific agenda in relation to the preceding works.

Brumble is most indebted to O'Brien in furthering examination of traditional oral forms and the influence and transmutation of these forms in collaborative (as-told-to) and written autobiographies. His opening chapter traces "Preliterate Traditions at Work" in autobiographies of White Bull, Two Leggings and Sarah Winnemucca. The chapter is illuminating with respect to both the traditions themselves and their manifestation in written works. However, Brumble's dismissal of LaVonne Ruoff's theory that slave narratives could have influenced Winnemucca is not entirely persuasive (especially in light of his own later discussion of Sam Blowsnake and peyote convert testimonials): slave narratives were an oral form being performed and collected even as late as the 1930s, and it is not possible to rule out

Winnemucca's having heard such tales, even though it may be unlikely that she had read any.

Brumble also draws on Krupat's approach in analyzing the impact of oral traditions in written works (as seen especially in Krupat's discussion of Black Hawk and Yellow Wolf), but is at some pains throughout *American Indian Autobiography* to extract and focus on what he perceives to be influencing native-tradition forms, and he does not make use of Krupat's application of Northrop Frye. Brumble's avowedly historical approach relates written works to religious oratory, scientific discourse and other contemporary oral and written "texts," and does not attempt to trace a linear genealogy of the genre (indeed, Brumble tells us in his introduction, his expectation of an internal development through a series of influencing works of American Indian autobiography as a genre was upset with the "comic" revelation that N. Scott Momaday had not read Indian autobiographies before composing *The Way to Rainy Mountain*).

The method works best when Brumble is discussing non-collaborative works. He is extraordinarily sensitive in assessing the texts that may have been available to authors, and the means whereby they might have absorbed particular formal modes of discourse. The chapter on Sam Blowsnake is the best discussion to date of that Winnebago writer's artistry, making a case for Blowsnake's debt to both traditional Winnebago tales and the Christian-influenced Peyote testimony introduced by John Rave. Brumble's comparison of Blowsnake's use of confessional form with Augustine's is also illuminating.

The chapter on Albert Hensley is likewise exemplary in showing Hensley's formulation of two autobiographical statements with reference to his perceived audiences and to familiar verbal arts. In making his case for Hensley's formal models, Brumble demonstrates the prevalence of another subgenre, the "Carlisle success story." This chapter, like the discussion of Blowsnake, is characteristic in another way of Brumble's approach throughout the book: it brings out important points of comparison between American Indian autobiographies and texts from classical antiquity as well as the later Western tradition. In this respect Brumble joins critics like Karl Kroeber, Arnold Krupat, and T. C. S. Langen in placing American Indian literature in a context of world literature.

Brumble's discussion of Charles Eastman's *Indian Boyhood* sees Eastman's work in relation to 19th-century scientific thought, demonstrating how the perspective in *Indian Boyhood* on traditional Indian life is congruent with theories of Herbert Spencer and other proponents of social Darwinism. The discussion is carefully nuanced;

besides providing an insight into a possible foundation of Eastman's work, it reminds the reader that bad science is not necessarily the result of evil intention. However, in contrast to his thorough treatment of the genesis of other texts, Brumble does not discuss or even mention the possible collaboration of Elaine Goodale Eastman in the writing of her husband's autobiographies; such an investigation might qualify or alter the assertions Brumble makes here regarding Eastman's thought.

The chapter on Momaday treats *The Way to Rainy Mountain* primarily as autobiography, again in terms of the book's reference to traditional modes of discourse. Brumble suggests a powerful model for future study in characterizing *The Way to Rainy Mountain* as a collaborative product of author and reader (rather than author and amanuensis): "Momaday leaves to his readers the task of constituting a self out of all these stories" (176). The emphasis on the task of the reader in constituting the text opens an important perspective on all American Indian autobiographies--and American Indian literature generally--in relation to its perceived and actual audience, and one which merits much more study than it has so far received.

While *American Indian Autobiography* provides essential new readings of the written autobiographical works of Winnemucca, Blowsnake, Eastman, Hensley and Momaday, Brumble's treatment of collaborative ("as-told-to") works in chapters on "Editors, Ghosts and Amanuenses" and "Don Talayesva and Gregorio" is less persuasive. *American Indian Autobiography* places works in historical context, and Brumble employs history-of-ideas strategies to document the relationship between text and text, and text and ideology, school or social context. However, the book does not adhere to the rigorous descriptiveness of classical history-of-ideas method, but makes a highly prescriptive argument for judging autobiography, including American Indian autobiography, according to subjective standards. In his "Concluding Postscript" Brumble quotes Pascal on "the attractions of autobiographies" as offering "unparalleled insight into the mode of consciousness of other men" and goes on to stipulate that "We read autobiography because we are interested in seeing things with the eye of the other; we are interested in seeing how people represent their lives, how they understand their lives; we are interested in seeing another personality from the inside" (181). This assertion summarizes and generalizes Brumble's rationale for judging individual texts, and it raises the question of what constitutes the "we" for whom the writer speaks with such assurance.

The strongest statement of this assumption about readers' experience in reading autobiographies appears in the two chapters on

collaborations. In "Editors and Amanuenses" Brumble attempts to sort out different approaches by editors to the collaborative process, distinguishing between what he calls the Absent Editor (Ruth Underhill, Leo Simmons), the Self-Conscious Editor (Willard Schultz, Frank Linderman, Lucullus McWhorter) and the unlabeled, excessively intrusive editor represented by Vincent Crapanzano. In addition to distinguishing the different approaches, he then evaluates them. The Self-Conscious editors do the best job, and Schultz is the best of those discussed: he is able to give the reader the vicarious experience of actually being present in a long-gone world: "We probably cannot do much better than Schultz if we want to experience something like the excitement preliterate people felt listening to hunting stories and war stories, stories of raids and remarkable encounters told informally, for uplifting entertainment" (86).

Again, in contrasting the autobiographies of Don Talayesva and Gregorio, Brumble finds Gregorio's story much more satisfactory because it is "a window back through time" (109), whereas Talayesva has, according to Brumble, been so influenced by Leo Simmons's questions and demands that he has been moved farther and farther "from being a typical Hopi" (109). Brumble's judgments lack credibility in his use of purely speculative grounds to characterize Underhill's, Linderman's and Crapanzano's methods, when he invents a series of questions they might have asked to elicit material for a purely imaginary autobiography and then suggests that the resulting non-existent work is inferior. Speculation replaces argument again in the discussion of *Sun Chief*, where Brumble tells us that "even if we were reading the unedited material [of *Sun Chief*] in the order in which it came to Simmons, we would still be able to work out much of the order for ourselves" (114).

A more substantive difficulty with Brumble's approach comes in the adoption of an affective position as an evaluative basis to determine the quality of literary works. The early pages of *American Indian Autobiography* devote considerable space to arguing against Bataille and Sands' attempt to distinguish literary versus non-literary qualities in the autobiographies according to criteria such as length, or the presence or absence of devices like metaphor or direct discourse; Brumble characterizes their approach as a "checklist" method which is unsatisfactory because, he says, it is culture-biased and inappropriately quantitative. But is it really more sound to believe that any text--and especially such thoroughly mediated and translated texts--will provide the sort of experience of "authentic Indian life" that Brumble asserts is the touchstone for value?

Let me emphasize that Brumble's taking the affective position to

speak for his own responses is not at issue here. The best of what Brumble has to tell us, and the best telling, comes from personal insights like the one that opens the book, in which we learn that the first paragraph of *Sun Chief* "startled me, and it still has that power now" (1). This discussion, by providing a way into Brumble's own consciousness and sense of self, enlarges my understanding and appreciation of Don Talayesva, his book, and literature in general. I have no difficulty accepting that Brumble feels that he has a window on Navajo life, or that reading Schultz has transported him to story exchanges of warrior expeditions and buffalo hunts. What gives me trouble is the assumption that he speaks for all readers, that "we" all read autobiography for just the reasons he says (or that we might have made the same assumptions about the influences on Scott Momaday), and that these reasons are the basis for judging the merits of autobiographies as products of the imagination. (There is a pervasive sense, as well, that the "we" of Brumble's argument is not really "we" as in "everybody," but "we" as non-Indian, academic--and male. Missing from the argument on collaboration is the evidence of Nancy Lurie and Mountain Wolf Woman or Florence Shipek and Delfina Cuero--both collaborations that counter Brumble's low rating of the "absent" amanuensis. Women's written autobiographies are largely ignored as well, with the exception of Sarah Winnemucca, who is noted mainly for adapting coup stories in her autobiography.)

These more provocative aspects of *American Indian Autobiography* may well be the most valuable, as they point up once again the engaging and, as Brumble terms it, powerful character of these narratives. The collaborative autobiographies especially offer both challenge and opportunity. They resist conventional analysis, and their interpretive challenge is the possibility of creating new critical frameworks for all of literature. Brumble has made a significant contribution to that creation by giving us a model of sensitive, carefully documented retracing of verbal art forms and traditional philosophy in the written texts we have.

One last word should be said regarding the book's scholarly apparatus, which is superb. The general bibliography is preceded by a generously annotated bibliography of American Indian autobiographies. Although the index lapses in at least one place, chapter notes, an appendix with an autobiography relevant to Brumble's critique of Levi-Strauss, and the layout and printing of the entire book are of the highest quality.

Helen Jaskoski

***Landmarks of Healing: A Study of* House Made of Dawn**. Susan Scarberry-García. Albuquerque: U. New Mexico, 1990. 208 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-8263-1192-X; paper, ISBN 0-8263-1193-8.

This is the first book-length study of *House Made of Dawn* and the only full-length study that treats the novel in the context of its traditional American Indian mythic antecedents. It addresses the vacuum created, in a sense, by Matthias Schubnell's study of Momaday's creative vision: where Schubnell places Momaday and *House Made of Dawn* in the context of Anglo-American literary traditions, Scarberry-García analyzes Momaday's text (and creative vision) as being at once "both a narrative of illness and a narrative of healing" (1) against the backdrop of such textual sources as Matthews, O'Bryan, Wyman, and Haile, as well as pretextual sources such as the origin stories from which those texts, and the Chantways they transcribe, derive. For those of us who try to teach the novel, this is a very welcome book.

Its title, *Landmarks of Healing*, immediately implies three of the basic concepts underpinning both Scarberry-García's critical vision and the creative vision informing *House Made of Dawn*. One is that the novel is "about" healing, about a disease Abel suffers and about a model for its cure. A second is that the novel is about landmarks, about places on or in the landscape of Abel's life as that life takes shape in the novel. The third is that in the novel, as in American Indian healing traditions more generally, these landmarks serve to locate the sources of both the disease and the cure Abel seeks. At the heart of her analysis is the proposition that

> sacred stories from oral tradition, especially origin and creation myths, have a healing dimension because they symbolically internalize images of the land within the listeners. Through participating in the story, the listeners learn about their own relationship to the cultural/geographic history of their homeland. . . . Within the narrative, Black Mesa at Jemez and Tségihi Canyon in Navajo country are landmarks where a reconstitution of life takes place. (7)

According to Scarberry-García, "Momaday draws upon Pueblo and Kiowa traditions for the novel's design, but he primarily structures the novel around Navajo healing patterns" (8); accordingly, the landmarks of healing to which her title refers are mainly those encoded in the healing stories (particularly Nightway, Mountainway, and Blessingway) sacred to the Navajo--located, that is, in *dinė bikeyah*, the landscape encompassed by the four sacred mountains of traditional Navajo

creation stories.

This focus on the geographic implied in the title quickly gives way, however, to a focus on the "hermeneutically puzzling mythological traditions that unify the novel" (2). And in keeping with her contention that "The title of the novel makes it clear that the world [in the novel] is conceived of in Navajo terms through exertion of language on place" (85), most of what she has to say about the underlying myth structure of Momaday's novel has to do with specifically Navajo analogs. Chapter 2 examines significant pairings of characters in the novel--Abel and his dead brother Vidal, Abel and Ben Benally--within the contexts of the Navajo story of the Stricken Twins (informing the Night Chant as recorded by Matthews) and, to a lesser extent, the perhaps more germane Pueblo story of the Warrior Twins (as recorded in Tyler). Chapter 3, "Bears and Sweet Smoke," treats Abel's disease within the context of Abel's faulty relation to the animal spirits he comes into contact with, showing how the Bear Maiden story branch of the Mountainway (as recorded in Aileen O'Bryan's transcription of Sam Akeah's version of the story) may function as the pretext for Momaday's development of the characters of Abel and Angela. The fourth and final chapter, "Story Made of Dawn," argues the healing power of Ben's songs (titled in Astrov's anthology "The War God's Horse Song" and "A Prayer of the Night Chant"), showing how in traditional Navajo oral tradition the Horse Song derives power from the "reassemblage" motif of its broader context, Blessingway, while the song from the the Night Chant is, in its original context, an utterance of the Stricken Twins which compels the Yei to take pity on their suffering. Throughout, the author manages to preserve the difficult distinction between pretext and subtext in her treatment of such materials as sources of the novel. As Scarberry-Garcia presents it, Momaday treats such materials as sources of "storysherds," elements to be disassembled and mixed with new material to be reassembled as Abel's (rather than the Stricken Twins' or Reared-Within-the Mountains') story, and ceremony. This is a welcome and valuable critical analogy, acknowledging as it does Momaday's sometimes Eliotesque use of Navajo, Kiowa, and Jemez materials while at the same time acknowledging the pattern of transformation by fragmentation and reassemblage (91-92) that informs traditional Navajo healingways--and American Indian oral tradition generally.

Some of Scarberry-Garcia's assumptions about how, in the text, healing occurs for Momaday's protagonist seem to me less warranted than others. For instance, the author consistently takes it for granted that the long narrative passages italicized in the text of the novel represent vocalized utterances; I suspect, however, that Momaday

consistently uses quotation marks to indicate the spoken word, reserving italicization to denote interior monolog. Taking the position that such passages *are* interior monologs, then, seriously weakens Scarberry-Garcìa's proposition that these passages function the way the songs and chants and stories of traditional Navajo healingway function, to bring the auditor (Abel, in Scarberry-Garcìa's line of analysis) back into harmony with the mythic psychostructures underlying such passages (which include Ben's Horse Song and Francisco's deathbed visions). There is also a perhaps disproportionate concern with the role of Bear energy as a factor in the healing process; I'm still inclined to suspect that Abel's disease in the novel has as much (or more) to do with his faulty relation to the Snake spirit of the land as it does to do with the Bear spirit, and that therefore the Younger Sister branch of Enemyway (Beautyway) might be as important as the Older Sister branch (Mountainway) as a source of "storysherds" in this novel. For another instance: as Scarberry-Garcìa points out early, "Story emerges from the land" (9), and the specifically Navajo stories and their associated songs and healingways grow out of the landscape of *dinė bikeyah*. The problem here is that neither of the two settings in the present of Momaday's novel--the landscape of the Jemez reservation (and its immediate environs) and the city of Los Angeles--lies within the pale of *dinė bikeyah*. I am not contesting Scarberry-Garcìa's premise that at least one Navajo Chantway (Beautyway, the Younger Sister branch of the Enemyway) encodes some of the landscape of Jemez (in fact, I'm a little surprised that she doesn't mention Momaday's own description, in the novel, of the annual visit/return of the Diné to Walatowa); I'm only skeptical of her implied notion that the healingways of the Navajo, so carefully and even explicitly designed to bring an ailing Diné back into identity (and thus healing) with the land (and by extension the life) of the People, would have the power to heal just anybody whose life "took place" just anywhere. Better, I think, to look to the landscape of Walatowa itself, and seek *there* the constellation of powers (and stories of those powers) that have, there, the power to heal. This is more than a minor quibble: in the process of mapping the novel to bring it into congruence with Navajo preconceptions, the author violates a couple of Jemez landmarks that Momaday's text happens to respect. For instance, her reading of the final scene of the novel has Abel "running into the dawn" (37), becoming a fused image of the Navajo Stricken Twins "who runs home into the house made of pollen" (38). Given Navajo mythic motifs, it is tempting enough to leave the impression that, because Abel is becoming healed, he is moving eastward here. But both within and without the novel, the

course of the winter race at Jemez moves, not eastward "toward the dawn" and the "Black Mesa" out of which the sun rises there, but rather northward--towards his own Jemez origins, the village of Walatowa and, given the way the land happens to be configured there, on a heading which parallels the Jemez River back towards it sources in the Jemez Mountains, regarded in Jemez tradition as the home of the ancestor spirits.

Such minor reservations about the book, though, merely attest to the power of her study to inform and provoke an interested reader. Susan Scarberry-Garcia accomplishes what she set out to do, "provid-[ing] a significant portion of the multitribal mythic context necessary for understanding the development and depth of healing patterns in the novel" (2). (I might add that I found her study wonderfully helpful while wrestling recently with Momaday's *The Ancient Child* as well.) One hopes that someday, somehow, someone as sensitive to both the Indian pre-texts and the ethical issues involved in using them for a study such as this will complete the picture of the novel by doing with the Jemez subtexts of the novel what she has done with the Navajo ones.

Robert M. Nelson

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The Life I've Been Living. Moses Cruikshank. Recorded and compiled by William Schneider. Oral Biography Series No.1. Fairbanks: U Alaska Press, 1986. vii, 132 pp., ISBN 0-912006-23-4.

"You know, these things that I talk about," begins Moses Cruikshank, "I actually experienced them in my life" (3). An Athabaskan elder and storyteller, Cruikshank narrated these stories to William Schneider, Curator of Oral History at the Alaska and Polar Regions Department, in the Elmer Rasmusson Library at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. Schneider then organized and edited Cruikshank's narratives into written form, the first in a proposed series of oral biographies.

Like many other "as-told-to" life histories mediated by Euro-American editors, this one has a preface. The Rev. Scott Fisher from the Episcopal Diocese of Alaska in the small village of Beaver, Alaska, introduces the reader to the vast Alaskan landscape, to the importance of the Episcopal Church and the "Cruikshank School" (named after Moses upon his retirement in the 1970s), and to the

character of Moses Cruikshank who shares stories of his life "not to herald his own accomplishments, but to teach and to help" (vi). After Rev. Fisher's preface, the book is divided into two main sections: "The Life I've Been Living" and "The Collaboration." The first part, covering the first 106 pages, is Moses Cruikshank's personal history. In the second section (pages 111-24), Schneider provides historical background and a description of his collaboration with Cruikshank.

Moses Cruikshank's oral biography contains an assortment of lively anecdotes, vivid descriptions, humorous stories, and practical advice. Born around 1906 in a native village northeast of Fort Yukon, Moses recounts his "early recollections" of traveling by dog sled and by boat, of hunting, trapping, fishing, and working. When he was five years old, he was sent to the Fort Yukon mission; and when he was nine years old, to the mission at Nenana where he was raised in the beliefs of the Episcopal Church. Cruikshank's stories, then, often focus on mission activities and life on the trail. One spring morning at the mission, relates Moses, they heard Muk, Archdeacon Stuck's well known lead dog, howling. Not waiting to finish their prayers, the students ran outside and found that Muk's "body [had] melted the ice and then his tail froze" to it and he "couldn't get loose" (23)!

As well as many animal stories, Moses tells anecdotes about travel, work, and "real old-time Alaskans" (60). His extensive travel and numerous jobs provide a "great big cache" of stories. He worked on the Alaska Railroad, at a government sawmill, and for the Episcopal Church and the Bureau of Indian Affairs; he built mission buildings, taught school, prospected for gold, served in the U.S. Army, and drove a caterpillar train, loaded with building supplies, to the Arctic Circle. Throughout his narrations, he provides details of the people with whom he worked and the weather with which they contended. In particular, Moses always acknowledges those from whom he learned: Grandpa Henry taught him how to survive "the old-time Indian way" (4); Kobuk Dick taught him "everything about [the] dog team" (32); and Clinton Wiehl, "the cat man," taught him about taking care of cats (the old Army D-7 caterpillars used to build the Alaska Highway). Now Moses Cruikshank works with the Fairbanks Native Association, telling young natives about "those dog team days" (83). "I'm glad to recall things like that," he explains, "because I know that's the only way it could be recorded. And I think it's pretty good that people have interest and if I can in any way help along that line, I'm glad to do all I can to help" (109).

Throughout the book thirty black-and-white photographs enliven the written narrative. Many of the photographs are of people: Cruikshank and his family; co-workers and acquaintances; and

mission, BIA, and Rural Development Project workers. Several are of buildings: St. Mark's mission, the Old Pioneer Hotel and the Model Cafe in early Fairbanks, and village churches Moses helped build. Similarly, there are photographs of boats, a major mode of transportation: the Hudson's Bay Company's boat, the steamer *Yukon*, and the *Pelican*, a boat Moses traveled and worked on several times. General photographs of work such as traveling by sled, laying rails on the Alaska Railroad, and working on the "cat train" are included as well. The captions for the photographs give the feeling of looking through old photographs *with* Moses as he reminisces about bygone days: "Oh yes," begins one caption, "here's Clint and I. Clint, he's the 'cat man.' He's the one that taught me" (102). Finally, along with the photographs, several sketches add a visual appeal.

In Part Two, "the Collaboration," Schneider provides background information about Moses, the stampeders (prospectors who flooded Alaska looking for gold), and the development of the trapping economy and mission schools. Similarly, he discusses mission travel, initiated to pursue "mission outreach" and developed by Archdeacon Stuck with whom Moses traveled often; the history of the development of the interior; and the effect of military service on native Alaskans. In addition, Schneider recalls his "earliest recollections of Moses," an elder and political leader who "stresses the need of villagers and old-time Alaskans to continue their way of life on the land without interference and regulations" (119).

As well as historical background, Schneider discusses the process of his collaboration with Moses Cruikshank. Schneider explains how he "'ordered' [Cruikshank's] stories chronologically," "provided footnotes," and added a context for understanding Cruikshank's accounts and their relationship to Alaskan history (123). In addition, he cut repetitions and combined "elements from similar episodes" (123). Using Jeff Titon's distinction between a "life story" (which emphasizes the orality and autonomy of the narrator) and a "life history" (which is "derived from the narrator's experiences," but reshaped by the editor-scholar), Schneider refers to *The Life I've Been Living* as a "life history based on a life story" (122). In addition, he describes how Cruikshank adapts his stories to persons and occasions and how Cruikshank's oral performance does not transfer into writing. Although Schneider provides a straightforward description of his collaborative process, he never examines the political complexities of such collaboration (particularly the inequities of power) which are now being discussed by anthropologists, folklorists, and critics of autobiography. What linguistic and narrative features are inevitably transformed when a Native Alaskan's oral narrative is reshaped by a

Euro-American editor? Unlike many editors who target their books primarily to an academic audience, however, Schneider says that his "first consideration was Moses," then relatives, friends, and community members, members of the Episcopal Church, and finally historians, anthropologists, and folklorists. Such a reversal is heartening, because if there is ever to be an equitable collaboration between native speakers and non-native writers, both must have equal editorial power.

Moses Cruikshank's life history, *The Life I've Been Living*, contributes a vivid native voice, mediated though it is by a Euro-American editor, to Alaska history. In addition, it suggests a model of collaborative autobiography which respects the voice of the native as well as the pen of the editor. Those interested in Alaskan history, in native Alaskan life, or in oral history will find this book worthwhile.

Hertha D. Wong

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Blue Horses for Navajo Women. Nia Francisco. Greenfield Center, NY: Greenfield Review Press, 1988. 78 pp., ISBN 0-912678-72-0.

When Nia Francisco spent two days presenting her poetry in classes and assemblies at the largest Indian high school in the U.S. (Tuba City, Arizona, 1400 students, 95% Navajo) in October, 1988, everyone was amazed at her energy, and felt the continuity of the Navajo world, from the ancient ones to the students in their Metallica and Guns and Roses T shirts.

She carried her youngest child, Gina, aged about three years, "my liquid, my seed," with her both days. Sometimes Gina's voice and movements came into the poems. Part way through the second day, perhaps on her seventh or eighth presentation, Nia's voice began to give out. She laughed, and took short breaks while a poet from the school read a few of his. She would catch a common thread, and jump up to read her own poem, weaving together the two poetries. The high point for many of her hearers was when she danced the refrain lines of, I believe, "Escaping the Turquoise Sky," and all felt the presence of the holy ones. She brought not only her poems, and her daughter, but also her weavings, which she hung over desks and podiums, such beings as "Flea Bone Daisy" actually there with us in the school. The students were especially moved by her use of their/her language, Navajo, in scraps and phrases, sometimes in her

comments to them and sometimes in whole poems, like "Awe'e'."

Her book, *Blue Horses for Navajo Women*, is divided, appropriately, into four sections for the four directions, each with its sacred mountain: "I. Iridescent Child," "II. A Navajo Woman's Moment is Eternity," "III. Mating of Turquoise and White Shell," and "IV. The Old Woman Sat to the Fire Place." It is characteristic of her being a weaver together of generations, as well as of words and wool, that she includes two poems by children in the "Iridescent Child" section. Though short, both contain Navajo words and syntax.

There is tremendous pain in these poems, the pain of the "heart they ripped out/ of my ancestors a hundred years ago/ leaving our blood spots as legal documents/ of victory . . . the Sun never sees/ BIA and Oltá decapitate a thousand children/in the thickness of sage brush shrubs/ leaving confused faces on the ground." There is the pain of the rape of "My Only Daughter Within Me," pain at the attempted molestation of a six-year-old, of the cultural loss--"I am sorry/ your grandfather's knowledge/ is not experience anymore."

There is the pain of alcohol--

> Friends of Sky people grant salvation to drunken women
> to medicine men
> they have walked away to drink that liquid that eats the brain
> that liquid that takes away the heart and inner land, its people
> that liquid that eats away the wombs and fetuses.

Her "Ode to a Drunk Woman"

> dear lady earth
> with
> swollen lips
> your beauty
> comes and goes
> . . . . .
> dear lady
> with 'roma' delusions
> my ancestors beaded inside you
> you are my mother

not for one moment of eternity denies either the reality of alcohol or the deep, unbroken connection between people, a kinship born of tribe, desert beauty, and the inner patterns of constellations:

> mother see us
> we are sober but drunk
> with pain
> caused by the same damn shame you learned.

Wallace Begay's six powerful illustrations are perhaps at their starkest intensity in depicting the woman of this ode.

But this is, innately and fearlessly, a book from the deepest reaches of the female. And, true daughter, sister, mother, person of Crystal Mountain that she is, Nia Francisco weaves all this pain into the beauty, neither isolating it as this reviewer has done, nor insisting upon it as the ground of anger or bitterness. The pain in these poems is always deeply true, but also always transformed as a part of the pattern of something much larger and infinitely more compelling: a ceremonial life which is the cycle of the people, of the desert land, and of the ancient holy ones born out of rock, water, plants, and stars. She uses her "modern weapon" ("a typewriter in my hands now") to carve language in our hearts like stars in a black desert sky:

a doe licks her fawn
while stars pattern themselves
across its back

and on the black cloth of sky
amniotic fluids transparency
laced with red threads she licks
red of her ever humble life-giving spirit.

Nia Francisco, as a poet, is immeasurably bigger than her current reputation. She stands in the changes that sweep through the Navajo universe with a clarity and intensity bred of the power of the female--to weave, always, like grandmother spider,

webs and webs
of unspoken legends
into looms of Milky Way

she spun
the blackest of Universe
as clothing for the Twins
Night
who is the twin of day
Day
who is the twin of night.

"Like water her voice flows."

Roger Dunsmore

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Near the Mountains. Joseph Bruchac. Fredonia: White Pine Press, 1987. ISBN 0-317-61745-1.

The title of Joseph Bruchac's poems perfectly expresses their theme and the nature of his poetic voice: only near the mountains, not in them. Bruchac praises the felt bonds between the speaker and his soil, the child and his ancestors who have passed the land on and for whom it is now the richer because of their absence. The essential reference points here are familiar-pastoral: long-worked fields, stones, springs to be cleaned, streams running down into rural valleys. What is left is partial, an American family tree held together by its remnants: old tools, says the speaker, are "reminders/ of the soil which shaped/ the bones of my lineage." The grandson's hands that fit around his grandfather's ax-helve. Arrowheads. Songs. And in things that grow from the soil:

> It is only in the golden Corn, the twining Beans
> and the bright skins of Squash
> that I can begin to touch the hands
> of the Longhouse People who kept this land. ("Relics")

Feelings in these poems rise from absence, from what is missing and must be called into shape, a process of supplementation. In "Photo of the Old House" the speaker knows the house "though I have never/ been through its doors," and addresses a "you" who has returned to the land, the house: "One hand on the lintel, you lean into the stance of your grandfather's voice." To lean into the ancestor's voice is to give it present form, just as the memory of the speaker's sleeping grandfather is a creative sharing: "what was it he held, while half awake,/ in his circle of sleep/ which I feel in mine?" ("Memories of my Grandfather Sleeping"). What is missing makes what is valuable known, though the concentering voice sometimes speaks out of a sense of meaning unavailable. In "Finding Arrowheads" the speaker never turns them up, unlike his grandfather who works the land with the ancient plow. He can only hope that "when the time is right/ words of stone will find me." In "Stone Maps" he pulls a stone from the earth like those "the oldest people" had used to trace their lives. But he refuses to read this stone, to make it into a "chart," and he reburies it in the earth, "uncertain/ whether I was ready for those directions it might take me."

It is the old people, the grandfathers, who live in the mountains. It is they who hold one side of the "balance," the weighty past.

> He found the stone ax in his field
> plowing one spring to put in corn.

I remember him holding it on his palm,
weathered as that flint chipped by one
whose voice would always be silent to me
as the story he told, weighing it the way
another might heft a gold piece, then
placing it carefully in my hands. ("The Balance")

Here the nice ambiguities of the modifying "weathered" (palm/flint) and the structural parallel of "silent" voice/story extend the stone ax's meaning precariously as the long, elegant sentence places it "carefully" with all its mystery "in my hands." Neither giver nor receiver, however, can tell what it "means" to "weight" and be weighed. Like the stone in "Stone Maps," the ax is a metaphor for the knowledge that comes through hands and mouths but refuses intellection, to come out as roundness, heaviness, hardness. Nor is it certain the voice will always respond to the gift: "My voice, which loses a little more/ of that ease of inflection each/ year . . ." ("Snowing the Go-Back Roads"). Denied meaning is not denied value however: "balancing" is an organizing trope in Bruchac's work.

The first two parts of *Near the Mountains*--"The Balance" and "Old Tools"--give us mythic time in the ancestors, grandfathers, especially, who keep toads from being run over by cars or who stand as distant monitors, cupping the sun in their hands, cutting up potatoes to plant. The grandfathers keep the scale of being, the "balance" of past and present, dead and living, returning to its trembling parallel. The grandmothers are here, too: in "Dead Skin" actually ingested. The child cutting his grandmother's calluses: "even the skin which was horny and dead/ I sneaked into my mouth and ate--/ keeping those impure parts of myself . . ." ("Dead Skin"). In a poetry in which the past is invoked so organically, it is natural there should be many references to mouths that speak, sing, eat; to hands that hold, cup, and evoke through their preliterate tonguing: earlier-planted radishes are

First to leave my hands, first to return
one day in late May when I pull red globes,
my teeth feeling the crisp white flesh
within the biting taste of the skin,
this year's renewal of the old pledge,
between my blood and this soil,
a pact which began long before
I saw grandfather's hand pack down
spring earth brown as his fingers. ("Radishes")

Bruchac's skill moves metaphors softly from root to pledge, blood,

pact, and back to a time remembered still linked to the physical pressure of "pack down/ spring earth brown as his fingers." Generational flow with its weaving together of organic and felt moments makes time into a friend in this poetry: generative, acceptable. Time, in "Fourth Harvest," will bring the grandfather back down the mountainside to "where/ his spirit waits: home." Generational balancing turns up again in "Cleaning the Chimney" where the speaker repeats his grandfather's balancing act on the roof and remembers that of another, a friend of his generation who died in Vietnam. But he doesn't force the possible political connections. The several kinds of balances in the poem are private; he doesn't try for one more handstand on the roof: "Instead I just stand,/ finish cleaning the chimney,/ give one more moment/ to memory and height,/ then, holding that balance,/ go back down the ladder."

The last section of the volume, "Near the Mountains," is the loosest in structures, slighter moments without the complications of more demanding readings of earth. "Finding the Spring," however, is a strong evocation of following the ancestors, here, the father, whose search for a remembered spring in the brush, will be successful, if not now.

> I trail, without complaint, behind
> knowing he'll find his spring again,
> if not for me, then for his grandchildren.

A poem like this at the volume's end reminds us of where we've been, looking back to the ancestor-evocations of earlier sections, going over the land again. The father "vanishes, quick as a trout in the ripple,/ lost in the shoulder-high brush, his legs as young/ as that half-century of following sign." Following, not finding half-images, Bruchac's synecdoches for the eternal return, can only be observed when return is impossible, save in spirit, the denied meaning, after all, each generation repeating and accumulating human promise. These are the pleasures of a text where nothing is forced, everything about to be.

Robley Evans

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Not Vanishing. Chrystos. Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1988. 105 pp. ISBN 0-88974-015-1.

Chrystos' resistance is honest and compelling. She is like many of us who grew up in the cities. Chrystos saw this mix of peoples--Gays, Latinos, Blacks and Asians with relocated Indians in San Francisco--and she developed the gift of telling off the world and telling about us then and now.

She tells us about her people the Menominee, whose struggle for sovereignty and landbase was a victory for all of us. She's a strong and fierce exponent of our endurance. Her poems expose misconceptions others hold of our identity. White guilt gets an extra straightening out but we, Native women, are kept more honest in the presentation of ourselves to our would-be allies or supporters.

She has not become isolated from other Indian women, or Third World Women or political activists. Her readings have been beautiful testimony to the bridging of communities of color and gender. She writes as a Gay American Indian woman, but we are not excluded from the feminist camp which at other times may seem racist, sexist and classist to us indigenous women. Her book is organized after a reading. She ranges in emotions, for we get serenaded, wooed, cajoled, tickled, and schemed into an ultimate surrender to her enticing poetics.

"Table Manners" is about her annoyance at our having to answer the perpetual questions about being Native American. In "White Girl Don't" we picture how:

> Easy
> to be enraged & run off to save
> somebody . . .
> I've got El Salvador & South Africa
> in my throat . . .

The poem "I have not signed a treaty with the U.S. government" shows her knowledge of what the elders tell us about rights. Chrystos is also compassionate towards the victims of child abuse, AIDS or prostitute murders. She has a zany advocacy for the plight of lettuce victimized by "vicious vegetarians." Upon return to the res, she endures not only homophobic reactions but generational differences. Her revelation about how one's family may climb the assimilation ladder while others are left in the dust is a family dynamic not much written about in Indian country.

Not always angry in her writing, Chrystos is a generous legend. Her giveaway poem has been recited by many other poets. It ends

this mighty work with her own honest giveaway of self and sisterly stance. Let us all learn from her militancy, because the time is not for claiming to be a '60s radical but for retracing the steps in our struggle. She allows us to remember the ancestral voices even if we live in the noise and clutter of yuppie dreams. Let her tune up our feminist fiddling. Let's give her the highest praise: "I wish I had said that."

Marie Annharte Baker

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Briefly Noted

A number of noteworthy books and articles have come to our attention this year; without space to review all, we hope these brief notes can assist readers. We are especially interested in hearing of work that has come out from little-known presses or that may have been overlooked by the standard indexes and bibliographies.

Living the Spirit: A Gay American Indian Anthology is presented as "Compiled by Gay American Indians" under the coordinating editorship of Will Roscoe (St Martin's Press, 1988). The anthology includes fiction, poetry and non-fiction prose by 24 authors; selections are grouped under two headings: "Artists, Healers, and Providers: The Berdache Heritage" and "Gay American Indians Today: Living the Spirit." The book is also a good example of combining artist-imaginative vision and social consciousness; besides the excellent bibliography there is a list of contacts and resources, including AIDS services.

Two important collections have come in from University of New Mexico Press. ***This Is About Vision***, edited by John F. Crawford, William Balassi and Annie O. Eysturoy, presents interviews with southwestern writers including N. Scott Momaday, Paula Gunn Allen, Linda Hogan, Joy Harjo and Luci Tapahanso; also of interest to readers of *SAIL* may be the interviews with Frank Waters and Tony Hillerman. ***Blue Mesa Review***, focused on creative work in the Southwest, began publication with the Spring 1989 issue, which included work by Della Frank and Evelina Z. Lucero; this publication, presently an annual, could be a small step to alleviate the shortage of fiction markets noted by Joe Bruchac in our last issue.

Interest in traditional healing and visionary practices continues, as

does controversy over the reliability of those who report on phenomena that challenge empirical scientific methods. ***The Don Juan Papers: Further Castaneda Controversies*** (Wadsworth, 1990), Richard de Mille's sequel to his earlier *Castaneda's Journey*, collects further essays attempting to debunk the works of Carlos Castaneda. De Mille's own labored encounters with representatives of academe are generally boring, but some other contributors offer thoughtful comments on what distinctions may be made between fiction, fact and anthropology.

William S. Lyon cites Castaneda as the inspiration for present interest in shamanism in his Preface to ***Black Elk: The Sacred Ways of a Lakota*** (Harper & Row, 1990). The book is Lyon's redaction of tapes describing Black Elk's spiritual journey and, according to the editor, is thoroughly edited and rearranged from the original telling, intentionally made less "strange" and more "easy to follow" (sell) to the non-Indian reader (buyer). Lyon is as canny as Castaneda about marketing shamanism: the Black Elk here is not, of course, the Nick Black Elk made famous in the book produced with John Neihardt, but Wallace Black Elk, a Lakota who was mentored by the earlier Black Elk and many other "grandfathers" in traditional wisdom. The book very much needs thorough discussion and critique by Lakotas knowledgable in traditional learning.

Jerome Rothenberg also mentions Castaneda, in the Preface to ***Maria Sabina: Her Life and Chants***, written by Alvaro Estrada and translated by Henry Munn (Santa Barbara: Ross-Erikson, 1981). Unlike the mysterious don Juan, peyote shaman Maria Sabina has been thoroughly documented with photographs, recordings (Folkways Record 8975) and a documentary film. Maria Sabina has a refreshingly practical approach to drug-taking: "Before [R. Gordon] Wasson [recorded the ceremony in the 1950s] nobody took the mushrooms only to find God. They were always taken for the sick to get well" (73). This book merits further attention.

CONTRIBUTORS

Marie Annharte Baker prefers to use her middle name as a signature to her poetry, which has appeared in *Conditions, Backbone, Fireweed* and *Seventh Generation*. She is a founding member of the Aboriginal Writer's group in Regina.

Roger Dunsmore teaches one-third time at the University of Montana where he is Professor Emeritus, Humanities. Several of his essays on American Indian literature have appeared in *SAIL*. His latest volume of poems, *Blood House*, is published by Pulp Press, Vancouver, BC.

Robley Evans, Professor of English at Connecticut College, has contributed a number of reviews to *SAIL*. He has published articles on Tolkien and Hillerman and is currently working on a detailed study of a Navajo autobiography, *Son of Old Man Hat*.

Dr. Kristin Herzog works as an independent scholar in Durham, North Carolina. She is the author of *Women, Ethnics, and Exotics: Images of Power in Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Fiction* (Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1983) and of numerous articles and reviews in American literature and in religion.

Helen Jaskoski is professor of English and comparative literature at California State University Fullerton. She has published and lectured in the U.S. and abroad on American Indian and African-American literature and on poetry therapy. She is currently working on a collection of essays on witch wife stories.

Robert M. Nelson teaches courses in current literature as well as in American Indian literature at the University of Richmond. He is currently working on a study of the functions of landscape in Native writing.

Gretchen Ronnow teaches at the University of Arizona. She has published articles on Leslie Silko and John Milton Oskison and is completing a dissertation on Oskison.

Greg Sarris will be joining the Department of English at UCLA following a year of leave to complete his collaborative "bi-autobiography" of Mabel McKay.

Ron Welburn has published poems in *The Phoenix, The Eagle: New England's American Indian Journal*, and several other magazines and anthologies. He teaches in the English Department at Western Connecticut State University and is active on the powwow circuit in the Northeast.

Hertha D. Wong has just taken a position at the University of California, Berkeley. She has published several articles and is working on a book on the Indian captivity narrative as a model for ethnic American autobiographies.