SAIL

Studies in American Indian Literatures

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From the Editor

aya aya niihkaania!

I want to begin this message the way I was taught to begin any endeavor in which I have been given the honor of being accountable to a larger community: I want to apologize to my elders for the mistakes that I will inevitably make as I learn and enact my new responsibilities, and I want to respectfully ask them to please point out those mistakes so I can avoid making the same ones next time around! Also, I want to thank my elders for their love and support, and for the guidance and wisdom they have always so generously offered.

You'll notice some stylistic and format changes in this issue of *SAIL* and in the coming months. We've made some changes that will regularize what the journal looks like when you receive it in the mail. And, these changes will have some consequences for folks who write for *SAIL* as well in the form of more detailed style sheets and submission guidelines. We hope that these new guidelines will clear up much of the confusion that contributors often experience and that they will also make it easier to put each issue of the journal together. Because of ASAIL's long-standing commitment to keeping subscription and membership costs as low as possible, we need the help of contributors to keep the production end of the process economically efficient.

We are also adding some new features and regularizing some old ones. For example, we'll be publishing a limited number of book review essays (8-15 pages) in addition to regular book reviews (2-4 pages). Also, we'd like to begin a real "Comment & Response" section made up of reader comments on writings that appear in *SAIL*. This means that we need you to send in your comments! If you'd like to contribute to this section, just send us an e-mail at sail2@unl.edu — make sure to put "comment & response" in the subject line. Ideally, I'd like to at

least represent some of the rich dialogue taking place in the English Studies corner of American Indian Studies within the pages of *SAIL*.

Additionally, we're working to include more voices from tribal colleges by starting a "Postcards from the Tribal College" feature in each issue. Ideally, this will be an informal but informed forum for issues that are critical to the survival of Native writing and literature in tribal college settings. If you're interested in contributing to this section, or if you know someone we should encourage, send us an e-mail at sail2@unl.edu — this time put "postcards" in the subject line.

A few years ago I was visiting with some Miami relatives in Miami, Oklahoma. There was corn soup, frybread, and plenty of coffee in the kitchen that day, and plenty of teasing between the men and women sitting around the table. One of the women, Sharon Burkybile, was telling a story about Miami women in "the olden days." She claimed that during council, the men would form one circle and the women would form a circle of their own around the men; if there was a discussion going on that a woman wanted to participate in, or if she disagreed with what was being said or decided, she would just take a stick and poke the man in front of her in order make her contribution! Now, I don't know how Sharon's account would hold up to "scientific" inquiry, but I believe that she was trying to make a point about the importance of women in Native communities. And I want to use her story to make a point about the importance of this *SAIL* scholarly community and the inevitable discomfort that results from getting poked in the ribs.

This double issue of *SAIL* is full of interesting and provocative writings, important contributions to our intellectual conversation from both established and "new" scholars. I hope that this will always be true of the issues of *SAIL* that I bring to you. What I hope that all of my work for this *SAIL* community adds up to is a reflection of the very exciting changes going on in our field. For the past three years many of us have been engaged in a wide-ranging debate about the future of

studying Native literatures, about the entrance of more and more Native scholars into a field previously dominated by non-Natives, and about how the work that we do can have a positive impact on the lives of Native people. I want to bring these debates — in all their awkwardness — into the pages of *SAIL* and to show how our conversations can (and will) create the kind of intellectual work that we, as participants in a community of varied folks who write about Indians, can be truly proud of and invested in. These are difficult times but they are very exciting times as well. So, I'm asking everyone to remember that being poked in the ribs occasionally is part of being a member of a caring, vibrant community. (And, yes, I know very well that when I say this I'm bound to find myself on the object end of a stick in, as my Grampa used to say, "the near-to-middling future"!) Also, please remember that I need your help! Let me know what's working and what's not. Send me the announcements and opportunities that should appear in our pages. Set aside a few minutes to participate in the discussions ASAIL is having online. Encourage new scholars to submit to *SAIL*. If you're at a conference where you hear an interesting paper, let me know so that I can encourage that scholar to submit to *SAIL*.

You'll notice that throughout this letter I use the word "us" quite a bit. That's because this journal is a community venture, both in terms of the editorial board work that contributes to each issue and in terms of the wider community of readers, scholars, and writers who make the very stuff that *SAIL* is committed to. All of you, niihkaania (friends), are the "we" and the "us," though I am, as the saying goes, the person upon whom the, um, stuff rolling down the hill will inevitably land! Please feel free to contact me (sail2@unl.edu) before that "stuff" gets too stuffy. And, please, don't sharpen that stick before you use it.

I appreciate your help.

Malea

Call for Letters of Application

The Editor and Editorial Board for
SAIL: Studies in American Indian Literatures
is currently accepting letters of application for the position of **Editorial Board Member**.

Appropriate candidates will have at least some experience and expertise in the field of American Indian Literatures and will be willing to serve a 5-year term on the Editorial Board.

The *SAIL* Editorial Board is made up of the General Editor, the Book Review Editor, the ASAIL Treasurer, and three general board members. Duties of the general board members are varied but include assisting the Editor with decisions regarding the style and content of *SAIL* as well as assisting with various managerial duties associated with the daily operations of the journal, including but not limited to soliciting advertisers, attending professional conferences, encouraging manuscript submissions, and reviewing manuscripts.

Interested parties should send a 1-2 page letter of application and a current c.v. to:

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"Mother Of U.S. Senator An Indian Queen": Cultural Challenge and Appropriation in *The Memoirs of Narcissa Owen, 1831-1907*

Stephen Brandon

It is no longer remarkable that the mother of a United States senator might be of Native American descent or of putative nobility; however, in 1911, when the headline "Mother of U. S. Senator an Indian Queen" blazed across the front page of the Sunday supplement of the *New York Times*, surrounded on either side by pictures of Indians in full Plains Indian regalia, Narcissa Owen and her son, Robert L. Owen, Jr., were still more than a curiosity to the public; they were unique. At the time, there was only one other Native American serving in the Senate, but this senator, Charles Curtis, did not have the added panache of being descended from an Indian king. After the death of Narcissa, Robert Owen, Jr., the first senator from Oklahoma, was to use his notoriety to mount a formidable bid in 1920 to become a Democratic presidential candidate. However, despite the one-time notoriety enjoyed by both Narcissa and Robert Owen, despite Robert's three decade long, influential career as a senator, and despite the remarkable life Narcissa records in her *Memoirs* (1907), both Narcissa and Robert Owen, Jr., have been, essentially, forgotten by the public, that is, except by a few, quite specialized historians and American Indian literary scholars.[1] This essay is a step toward changing this unfortunate oversight, but it is only a first step along the path to full recovery and appreciation of Owen and her place in the native literary tradition. In this paper, I will argue that Narcissa Owen's *Memoirs* deserve more critical attention than they have, heretofore, received, because they offer unique and discriminating insights into the American Indian and White societies in which Owen lived and constructed her self identities. However, there is much work still to be

done on both Narcissa Owen and the other too often neglected writers of the Indian Territories.[2]

It is not easy to escape the fact that Owen's *Memoirs* are a difficult text to evaluate by current critical standards. Below, I would like to concentrate on one aspect of this difficulty, namely, the fact that, from the point of view of those interested in Native America ethnology and literature, much of what Owen says about her Cherokee ancestry is, to place her contentions in the best possible light, questionable. However, rather than dismissing the *Memoirs* because of their failure as an accurate ethnographic record, I would like to take this supposed failure as a useful entry point. Moreover, I will argue that these failures themselves offer singular insights into the text, the lives of both Narcissa Owen and her son, Robert, and the rhetorics of race and status that informed the cultures in which Owen wrote.

Robert Darnton, outlining a methodology for doing just such a project—what he calls historical anthropology—suggests that the best starting point for the investigation of a cultural discourse foreign to us in both time and world view is to look for what he terms "points of opacity" (78). Such points are those which seem the most foreign to our own ways of interpreting the world. Hence, in the well known essay "The Great Cat Massacre," Darnton begins a discussion of seventeenth-century French cultural discourse by looking at the question of how the massacre of cats could be considered amusing.

One such point of opacity in Owen's *Memoirs* is the odd moment in chapter one—the chapter in which Owen reviews the legends and beliefs of the Cherokees—where she suggests a close kinship between the Cherokees and the Powhatans, two nations from entirely different language groups (22-3). Here, Owen surmises that the Powhatans were one of the seven clans of the Cherokees based on the fact that Pocahontas's brother is portrayed in a painting in the U.S. Capitol's rotunda as having six toes, and Owen herself had known Cherokees who had six fingers or toes (22-3). The point of opacity I wish to consider is not so much the strange use of evidence or the equally strange logic employed by Owen, but, instead, the question of why

Owen goes to such lengths to suggest a connection between the Cherokees and the Powhatans.

When one notes that the source which Owen quotes to both ground and introduce this line of speculation, Charles Royce's 1887 Bureau of Ethnology Report, *The Cherokee Nation of Indians: A Narrative of Their Official Relations with the Colonial and Federal Governments*, Owen's efforts seem especially strained. Royce says of efforts to establish the idea that the Powhatans were Cherokees that: "The whole story is of the vaguest character, and if the remainder has no stronger claims to credibility than their alleged identity with the Powhatans, it is scarcely worthy of record except as a matter of curiosity" (136). While it is difficult to accept that Owen's evidence of a shared heritage of six-toed ancestors somehow meets Royce's invitation to "stronger claims to credibility" (136), it is equally difficult to believe that Owen somehow overlooked this comment, especially when one notes that this is precisely the portion of her own quotation of Royce which she neatly obscures with an "etc." (22).

I do not mean to suggest that Owen was insincere. I consider her belief that the Cherokees were connected to both the Powhatans and the Navajos[3] to be perfectly genuine. Instead, I want to foreground the question of why establishing such connections was so important to Owen, even to the point of introducing a less than credible line of reasoning and disregarding the opinion of the very authority she uses to ground her suppositions. As I suggest below, the answer to this question may lie in the unique set of historical, cultural, and personal circumstances that surrounds Owen as she constructs her cultural identities.

As the *Memoirs* portray it, Narcissa Owen had an eventful life. Born in the Arkansas Indian Territory shortly before the Trail of Tears (54), she attended several good schools (52-3, 56-8), became a teacher herself (59-60), then married a railway construction engineer—Robert Owen, with deep family roots in Lynchburg, Virginia (60-3). Moving to Lynchburg, where her husband became president of the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, Narcissa Owen—despite her Cherokee heritage—became a community leader during the Civil War; and, by

her own account, she foiled a Union attack on Lynchburg by providing false information to enemy spies (71-82). Robert Owen died in 1873, leaving the family destitute; however, by working as a music teacher and obtaining scholarships, Narcissa Owen managed to secure a college education for both of her sons—one became a surgeon, the other, a lawyer. In 1879, following her oldest son's, Robert L. Owen, Jr.'s, graduation as valedictorian of Washington and Lee University, Narcissa Owen, taking advantage of her dual United States/Cherokee citizenship, returned with Robert, Jr., to the Indian Territories (85-7). There, she accepted an invitation to teach music at the Cherokee Female Seminary, and he became principal of the Cherokee Orphan Asylum (88).

However, even in this extraordinary life, the years preceding the publication of her *Memoirs* in 1907 were remarkable, not only for the events Owen reports, but also for those which she leaves unmentioned.[4] Owen recounts such details of her life as the almost miraculous recovery of a medal, given to her father, Thomas Chisholm, by Thomas Jefferson, a medal that had been lost to the family for years and was rediscovered in a distant cave in the Wichita Mountains by a prospector in early 1905. The rediscovery of the Jefferson Medal became a minor media event, gave Owen a small measure of fame, and was reported by newspapers from Saint Louis to Washington. However, the narrative of the medal's recovery is intertwined in the *Memoirs* with mundane events exciting only to a very limited audience, namely, a discussion of her growing interest in painting, the successful reception of her portraits of Jefferson and his descendants, the award of an honorary diploma in 1904 by the St. Louis World's Fair, sights seen in Washington and around her country home above the Little Caney River, a description of a 1906 gas fire, and a description of a May Day picnic where, at 76, Owen is named May Queen. What Owen never mentions are the events that brought about the change in lifestyle from destitute, Reconstruction-era, aristocratic Confederate widow-*cum*-music teacher to a genteel society matron dividing her time between painting, music, a country home, and a studio in Washington.

What makes this lifestyle change possible is the growing success of Owen's sons, especially that of Robert, Jr., with whom she had a close relationship. Between 1879, when she and Robert, Jr., arrived in the Indian Territory, and 1885, her son worked as the principal teacher at the Cherokee Orphan Asylum, then as a lawyer, editor of a local paper, and an entrepreneur. In 1885, he was appointed head of the United States Union Agency for the Five Civilized Tribes (Brown 235; Keso 13-4), providing him with a range of contacts throughout the Indian Territory and in Washington. During this period, from 1885 until his marriage to Daisy Hester in 1889, Narcissa Owen lived with Robert, Jr., ran the agency residence, and acted as hostess. When, in 1889, the Cleveland administration left office and Owen lost his position as Indian Agent, he began a very lucrative career as a lawyer-lobbyist in Washington, representing Indian tribes for six-digit fees (Brown 235-6). He also organized and became president of the First National Bank of the Indian Territory, bought a ranch with thousands of cattle, and speculated in mining and oil (Brown 236; Keso 14). Dividing his time between his interests in the Indian Territory and Washington, Robert Owen, Jr., presumably with Narcissa accompanying him, began to live the life of a socially elite territorial aristocrat (Brown 236)—that is, precisely the life Narcissa Owen described in the later portion of the *Memoirs* and to which she had been born, but too often been denied, first by the death of her father—when she was only three—then by Reconstruction and the death of her husband, Robert, Sr., in 1873. After too long an absence, Narcissa Owen had come home.

However, the identity of a socially elite, Southern aristocrat seems far removed from the Cherokee identity that Owen foregrounds in the first chapters of the *Memoirs*. To reconcile Owen's own reconstruction of her cultural hybridity, it is useful, first, to understand why Robert Owen, Jr., was elected one of Oklahoma's first senators following statehood in 1906 and the role his "being Indian" played in this election, then to understand the racial discourses which could make such an oddly constructed cultural identity rhetorically effective. In *Oklahoma Politics*, Scales and Goble note that "From his mother, who

was one-eighth Cherokee, Owen received the Indian blood that was a priceless asset" (33). While the details of Oklahoma statehood politics are beyond the scope of this article, it is necessary to have some background in order to understand why "being Indian" was such a priceless political asset at this time.

During the years just before statehood, progressive Democrats succeeded in wresting power from the Republican party, a party which was perceived by most within both the Oklahoma and Indian Territories as being irrefutably linked with the political influence of the railroads, corporations such as the Standard Oil Company, and the territorial patronage system (Scales and Goble 5-11, 18, 29-30). Democrats accomplished this quiet overthrow of entrenched territorial power by becoming identified with a progressive state constitution that declared corporate monopolies illegal, insured direct election of most public officials, taxed corporations heavily, insured compulsory education, and promised an eight-hour work day in many fields (Scales and Goble 31 and 24-5). In short, Democrats came to be perceived as the champions of the people, while Republicans were portrayed as lackeys of Washington party politics and big corporations.

The Democrats' power play began not in the Oklahoma Territory but in what was then the Indian Territory (Scales and Goble 16). There, a small cabal of powerful individuals, including Robert L. Owen, Jr., met without federal authority to draw up a constitution for a state which was never to be—a state separate from Oklahoma called Sequoyah (Goble 192). Scales and Goble argue that the leaders of this movement, those who were to become so central to the Democratic takeover of early Oklahoma state politics, must have known the futility of trying to establish a separate "Indian" state when both the U. S. president and Congress had come out in favor of combining the two territories (16). Scales and Goble suggest that these leaders, who produced a constitution for Sequoyah that became the model for the Oklahoma constitution and the basis for the Democratic alternative, were after precisely what they got, namely, the political prominence derived from being the authors of a document that framed the Democrats' reform agenda (16). In short, the Sequoyah convention

served as a means of articulating an alternative platform, as a forum for publicizing this platform, and as a means of establishing individual political reputations. The fact that the convention took place in the Indian Territory also meant a necessary linkage to pride in Native American heritage and the championing of Native American causes.

As one of the leaders of the Sequoyah convention and, thus, already associated with Progressive politics, Robert L. Owen, Jr.'s, candidacy for senator was readily supported by the Democrats of the Indian Territory. They recommended him as a statesman, lawyer, businessman, and, most importantly in terms of this analysis, "as an Indian" (Keso 18; *The Muskogee Phoenix* 3 Feb 1907). Despite the fact that he would later refer to himself as being primarily of Scottish-Irish ancestry,[5] Owen ran on a platform rich in "Indian" issues, namely, quick payment of federal money to the Eastern Cherokees, the removal of restrictions on the sale and lease of Native American land, and a negotiated settlement with the Choctaws and Chickasaws to insure fair value for their lands which contained coal and asphalt (Keso 19). At least one paper, *The Shawnee Herald*, argued that Owen's experience as a Cherokee, an Indian Agent, and Indian lobbyist in Washington made him the best candidate (10 May and 22 May 1907; Keso 19). Moreover, there was an informal agreement among the Democratic leaders that one senator would come from the Oklahoma Territory while the other would come from the Indian Territory, and it is questionable whether the candidate from the Indian Territory could have been elected if he lacked Native American affiliation (Scales and Goble 19 and 29). Everything considered, much of Robert Owen's appeal as a senatorial candidate depended on his public persona as an "Indian" with a recognizable interest in Native American affairs and experience on a national level handling these affairs.

However, while "being Indian" was a decided asset in early Oklahoma politics, its value in Washington and America at large was, to say the least, mixed. In his sketch of Owen's Senatorial career as a Progressive, Kenny Brown notes that in 1907, "Few senators knew what was coming. . . . Owen was an unknown entity from a new state with a rough frontier image" (232). As Theodore Jojola argues, in the

introduction of "*Moo Mesa*: Some Thoughts on Stereotypes and Image Appropriation," "By the turn of the century, 'playing Indian' had become a national obsession" (263), with organizations such as the Boy Scouts indexing this fervor (Jojola 263; Green 40-1). However, counterbalancing the craze for things Indian (Owen 102) was a decided re-entrenchment of stereotypical views of Native Americans. Rayna Green notes that it was in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth that the Wild West show forever fixed the stereotype of the Plains warrior as "*the* Indian in the American imagination" (37-8). In this imaginary world view, verified by Sitting Bull, other "show" Indians, and children's games such as Cowboys and Indians, the Native American was locked into the role of savage warrior (Green 38-40). It is against this background that Narcissa and Robert Owen came to Washington.

As I mentioned above, only one other Native American, Charles Curtis, served with Robert Owen in the Senate. Curtis and Owen were each described, in a 1908 character sketch in *Current Literature*, as "sure-enough Indians," whose "mere presence adds a beautifully picturesque splash of color" (*Picturesque Senators* 375). Drawing on the popular misconception that Native Americans were all warriors, this same character sketch highlights a supposed, onetime "blood feud" between Curtis's (a Republican) and Owen's (a Populist Democrat) ancestors (375); and their exchanges on the senate floor are characterized as "warfare" (375). The authors of the sketch leave the impression that they are somehow disappointed that Curtis and Owen do not live up to the savage stereotypes of the Native American. For instance, the caption under Owen's picture reads, "The *Cherokee* Senator From Oklahoma" (374) [italics mine], and it continues in smaller print to offer Owen's white and Indian names and to characterize him as "a good fighter" (374). However, the author of this article seems unsure how to handle the fact that Owen looks "like a leading man in a society drama," was raised by a railway president in Virginia, got his degree from Washington and Lee, and made his rebuttals in the Senate with eloquence (375-6). The authors end up contrasting Owen's background with Curtis's more democratic roots,

saying that "Owen is a different kind of Indian" (375) and "There is a foundation of good drama" in his and Curtis's differences (375). In short, despite clear evidence that Curtis and Owen were eloquent, well-educated lawyers, the authors of *Current Literature* fall back on stereotypes of Native Americans as warlike, tenacious, "picturesque" fighters. They invite their reader to imagine Curtis and Owen on the floor of the Senate as a kind of pocket Wild West Show, thus reducing characterization to caricature.

While Narcissa Owen did not have political ambitions, she did have the social ambition of being accepted in Washington society; so, Robert Owen, Jr.'s, problem was precisely that of Narcissa Owen, namely, how to be taken as Native American and still be taken seriously by a power structure which refused to recognize fully the individual behind the savage stereotype. Narcissa Owen was no stranger to dealing with the tensions inherent in having a background that contrasted with popular stereotypes of the Native American, and she brought this knowledge with her when she came to Washington with Robert. The chapter of the *Memoirs* that Owen titles "Modern Misrepresentation of the Indians" best characterizes one of Owen's strategies for dealing with such misrepresentations. She would point out misleading stereotypical portrayals of Native Americans as savage and offer herself as an instance that disproved the stereotype. In one of the incidents Owen describes in this chapter, she contrasts a newspaper description of the St. Louis World Fair's Indian exhibit with what she labels as "the facts" (102-3).

Owen contributed seven portraits of Jefferson and his descendants to the Indian exhibit, for which she won a medal and was awarded an honorary diploma. The newspaper article that Owen quotes describes the exhibit as one of "queer pottery, beadwork, war and hunting arms" and says of Owen's work that it is "it will surprise any artist to be told that it was the work of an old Indian woman" (102-3). In an astringent response, Owen offers her version of the story, saying:

> The facts are the Indians of the Indian Territory are civilized, educated Christian people. I myself, the

> "Cherokee 82 years old," was born on October 3, 1831, and my painting was not done in a tepee, but on Pennsylvania Avenue, in the Corcoran Building, opposite the Treasury, at Washington City. (103)

While it is less than clear what upset Narcissa Owen more, the fact that the newspaper listed her age as 82 rather than 73 or their mischaracterization of Native Americans, it is clear that she vehemently insisted that "the general public has been misled as to the conditions of life prevailing among the Indians of the Indian Territory" (102).[6] Owen's rhetorical tactic is clear: by choosing to emphasize the "ancient implements and handiwork" (102)—instead of work such as hers—Owen insists that the media has misled the public by reiterating stereotypes of the savage instead of recognizing the fact that many Native Americans, such as Owen herself, were "civilized, educated Christian people" (102). Owen gains credibility two ways: first, by reiterating her own status as civilized, educated, and Christian and, second, by weakening confidence in Anglo stereotypes of Indians as savage.

In many respects, the *Memoirs* can be read as a demand that savage stereotypes of Native Americans be reconsidered in light of Owen's biography. Indeed, Owen herself invited such a reading in several forums outside of the *Memoirs*. As a *Washington Post* writer commented in 1905, "From Mrs. Owen's conversation one would imagine that her life had been spent in the salons of royalty instead of on the frontier."[7] Consider the incidents and details of Owen's life that are highlighted in the *Memoirs*—details such as the gift of Washington's cut glass to the Smithsonian (112-4); her work with the poor during the Civil War (71-5); the description of her "country home," Monticello (118-20); the medal given by Jefferson to her father (45, 50-1); the Owen family's continued relationship with the Jefferson family (47); her relationship with Andrew Carnegie (105-10); even the fact that Owen was married to the president of the Norfolk and Western railroad (60-6). Each incident and detail marks Owen as a member of an American social aristocracy connected to the founding fathers, and

each detail demonstrates the hollowness of a monolithic acceptance of the Native American as savage. Moreover, because her native identity serves as the basis for many of the details and incidents she relates, Owen's native identity itself sanctions audience identification, even respect, from her white readers.

However, accepting without question the interpretative frame Owen offers us—to be precise, the resume of her pedigree as an Indian aristocrat—invites a misreading of Owen as well as Native American culture and history. Having now come full circle, and given the background outlined above, I can offer an informed answer to the question I raised in the introduction, namely, why was it so important that Narcissa Owen establish a connection between her Cherokee ancestors and the Powhatans? In "The Tribe Called Wannabee," Green suggests that the popularity of the Wild West Show whetted the appetites of Americans for things Indian. Reformists such as Sarah Winnemucca took advantage of this appetite to create roles such as her "Princess Sarah," which would be palatable to white audiences and would offer the opportunity to articulate a message of Indian rights (38). During this same period, white women began to play the part of Indian Princesses, dressing up in costume and performing for social and political events (Green 38).

In insisting on a close link between the Cherokees and the Powhatans, Owen is constructing an identity based on the popular archetype and the most famous of the Indian Princesses, Pocahontas. As S. Elizabeth Bird argues in the introduction to *Dressing in Feathers*, the story of Pocahontas is about making a myth palatable to a white, mainstream audience, a myth that figures the belief that "good" Indians recognized the inevitability of conquest and acculturation (2). In short, Owen constructs an identity which makes her acceptable to a white, mainstream audience, one that resonates with her social ambition to be accepted as the aristocrat she believes herself to be, and one that, ironically, uses white myths of conquest to justify a kind of reverse cultural colonialization. Owen's rhetorical deployment of this mythic Indian Princess identity goes far toward explaining her rather odd

reconstruction of Cherokee culture and history, a reconstruction that focuses on the role of cultural intermediaries—figures such as Powhatan, Pocahontas, Oconostota (for whom she named Robert Owen, Jr.), and her father Thomas Chisholm, as well as Owen's insistence on her status as "royalty" in the introduction:

> I write for them [her family and the Cherokees] some of the stories and traditions of the dim past taught to me by the elderly Cherokee women, whose duty it was to instruct the rising generation and keep it informed who the rightful hereditary rulers of the various clans should be, as well as to teach them the traditions and the past history of the seven Cherokee clans, of whom the eldest son of the "Arni Ki-law-hi" clan are always the principal chief. (9)

It seems little coincidence that Owen insists that Thomas Chisholm, her father, was the "last hereditary chief" (11), that she identifies herself with the "Arni Ki-law-hi" clan in her dedication, or that she assumes the role of the cultural intermediary responsible for instructing the raising generation about their responsibilities to their hereditary rulers. The implication is clear: Owen and her sons are Cherokee aristocrats, aristocrats who are descended from a long line of "good" Indians, that is, mythic Indians who have served as mediators between whites and Indians. However, the bald truth is that Owen's reconstruction of Cherokee traditions is largely inaccurate. To be precise, just as Owen's linking of the Cherokees to the Powhatans is, interpreted charitably, questionable, so is Owen's contention that she and her sons are Cherokee aristocrats, because the Cherokees, despite the wishes Owen and of white Wannabees (Green 38; Quinn 153), never invented or adopted the institutions of European feudal society, including that of "king."

While some priests among the Cherokees were once chosen on the basis of belonging to a certain lineage, by the mid-1700s the roles of all priests were largely ceremonial and confined to preserving ancient teachings and practices (Champagne 13). Second, from the early 1700s on, the political influence of the priesthood was largely displaced by

prominent warriors, who gained and maintained their power not so much through lineage but through charisma and community recognition (Champagne 12-4). Third, while village headmen were often members of specific clans, national politics were never organized around clan affiliation (Champagne 15). Finally, the idea of kingship was one forced on the Cherokee by whites who were used to centralized authority and who thus found it difficult to deal with the plethora of village headsmen and influential warriors.

I do not want to imply that Owen was insincere in her insistence on her "royal" heritage; rather, Owen was largely removed from her Cherokee heritage and received it largely through interpolation from Anglo culture. She was born into a progressive family, one with more in common with a white, planter elite than Cherokee village culture. Her father, a primary link to her Cherokee heritage, died when she was only three. She was raised by a Scottish-Irish mother and within a series of missionary boarding schools. When she was twenty, she left the Cherokee Nation, and a year later she married Robert Owen. She lived most of her adult life in Virginia, and it was a quarter of a century before she was to return to the Cherokee Nation. The *Memoirs* themselves indicate that her informants on the Cherokee traditions she reiterates were removed from Owen, the author, by a gap of almost seventy years (10). Her informants as to Cherokee traditions were, hence, seventy-year-old memories of stories told by servants and acquaintances (10). Indeed, Owen tells us herself that much of the history she knew of her people was derived from reading of the Cherokees in the Congressional Library—a suggestion supported by quotations from the pages of the Smithsonian's *Bureau of Ethnology Reports* (10 and 22-3). In short, the traditions Owen relates, however sincerely, are blurred by a lifetime of cultural distance and interpretations appropriated from Anglo culture.

If we cannot accept the validity of the historical and ethnographic details Owen relates, what then is the value of her *Memoirs*? The 1911 *New York Times* sketch of Narcissa Owen used the same portrait as that which stares back at us in the frontispiece of her *Memoirs*, but the *New York Times* captioned the portrait "Mrs. Narcissa Owen, 'Quatsis,'

Hereditary Ruler of the Cherokee." So, by 1911, Owen has completed her transformation into Cherokee nobility. In her portrait, Owen appears seated, facing slightly to her right; she holds reading glasses in her right hand, and she looks remarkably like later portraits of Queen Victoria. In her staid formality, there is just a hint of what a 1905 *Washington Post* interviewer called "genial humor," but there is only a hint. This is a formal portrait, a self-conscious self-presentation.

In short, Owen looks like a society matron, a mother of a Senator, or like the queen she portrays herself to be. As her readers, we are left with her portrait. The value of this portrait, as well as the portrait contained in the pages of the *Memoirs*, lies not in the wealth or accuracy of ethnographic and historic detail, but in the self-consciousness of the act itself and in the sure knowledge that this is self-portrayal. Owen's *Memoirs* should be read for what they say about how Native Americans were constructed by the Anglo culture and how Anglo culture has forced Native Americans to represent themselves. Owen speaks to us not so much about her self as about the way she *had* to speak of her selves. She tells us of what Native Americans were forced to do to be heard. She tells us of the conventions of a racial discourse where Native Americans were always seen through stereotypes. She tells use how she shrewdly negotiated multiple cultural identities for herself and her sons, deploying each identity as necessary for audiences almost always more comfortable with monolithic stereotypes. She is our witness to a moment of cultural conversation, one that appropriates stereotypes to both challenge them and simply to be heard, one where Owen successfully performs a transformation that Anglo prejudice would deny—a transformation from Native American, into Indian Princess, into American Queen.

NOTES

[1] There has been remarkably little scholarship devoted to such an influential family as the Owen's. Robert Owen, Jr., has received fairly substantial biographical coverage and some historical examination; see, for instance, the work by Kenny Brown and Edward Keso in the works cited. Narcissa Owen has received next to no scholarly attention and none at all from literary scholars, that is, with the happy exception of two articles written by Janet Shaffer, from Lynchburg, VA, the long-time home of the Robert, Sr., and Narcissa Owen. However, both of Shaffer's articles suffer from relying, uncritically, on Owen's own account of her life for their historical content. There have been two other editions of the *Memoirs* published since the initial 1907 edition, however both were published for the Siloam Springs Museum, in Siloam Springs, AR, another onetime home of Narcissa Owen; and, both appeared in very limited editions, with the 1983 reprint of the 1979 edition being but a photocopy of the 1979 edition. See works cited for further bibliographical information. All is about to change; the majority of Owen's *Memoirs* will be excerpted in the Karen Kilcup's forthcoming *Native American Women Writers, c. 1800-1924: An Anthology*, making Narcissa Owen readily available for classroom use for the first time.

[2] For instance, because of the limitations of having access only to East coast archives, I have been forced to consider Narcissa Owen's construction and self-presentation of her hybrid identity as primarily a function of her relationship to White society and its ideologies. Those who have more ready access to Oklahoma archives (and who are not subject to the problems of doing under-funded research on a graduate student budget) will be in a better position to further Owen's recovery by uncovering the many complexities of her relationships with the American Indian, Cherokee and the emerging literary community of the Indian Territories. Moreover, much work remains to be done on the complexities of the place of the elite Indian community in the Cherokee Nation and the Indian Territories at the turn of the last century. As I have researched the Owen family and their emergence as an entrepreneurial and political force in the Indian Territories, I could not help but notice their rise to power seemed founded on their support and exploitation of the Dawes Act, allotment, and the dissolution of native

nations. In light of their support of allotment, much work remains to be done to answer the question of where the political and economic support came from that maintained Owen's privileged position in the native community.

[3] In the next paragraph, Owen introduces a Cherokee tradition to ground her supposition that a branch of the Cherokees were the ancestors of the Navajos. Then she returns to the supposition that "There is good reason to believe that Powhatan and the names of his two sons sound very much as though they were of Cherokee origin" (23). She does not offer her reasons.

[4] As no publisher or publication date is given in the frontis-material, I assume, given the full title, *Memoirs of Narcissa Owen, 1831-1907*, and the date of its dedication, October 3, 1907, that the *Memoirs* were published in Washington in late 1907.

[5] In a letter to E. Alban Watson, 1 July 1936, in the Owen family collection at the Jones Memorial Library, Robert Owen notes that "My mother was of Scotch-Irish descent." Then he goes on to note that *her* great-great-great-grandfather was a Cherokee chief. Given such statements as this, it is difficult to gauge how Robert Owen saw his own cultural identity. Raised in Virginia, Robert Owen was in his early thirties before moving to the Cherokee Nation, and most biographical sketches note his Virginia roots before mentioning his Cherokee heritage. However, while he was a senator Owen fought for many Native American causes, signed his name in both English and the Sequoyah syllabary (see, for instance, the copy of Keso's biography in the Z. Smith Reynolds Library, Wake Forest University), and, as subsequent discussion in this article indicates, much of his success as a politician depended on his being perceived as "Indian."

[6] Owen was upset enough at the coverage given the exhibit by the St. Louis paper that, almost a year later in a 1905 *Washington Post* interview, she commented, "A St. Louis paper, in speaking of my exhibits at the fair, said they were the work of an old Indian woman. Now is that very respectful?"

[7] This article is on file among the papers pertaining to the Owen family in the Jones Memorial Library, Lynchburg, VA. To date, I have been unable to locate the article in the *Washington Post*. I am indebted to the anonymous author of the 1905 *Washington Post* interview for pointing out the aristocratic tone of Owen's self-presentation.

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Sherman Alexie's Challenge to the Academy's Teaching of Native American Literature, Non-Native Writers, and Critics[1]

Patrice Hollrah

Writing in the mystery genre, Sherman Alexie (Spokane/Coeur d'Alene) offers a critique of the academy in *Indian Killer* through the character of a Spokane Indian, Marie Polatkin, who is a political activist and a University of Washington college student. In chapter seven, "Introduction to Native American Literature," Marie questions the syllabus for a course taught by Dr. Clarence Mather, a white male anthropologist and Wannabe Indian who "wear[s] a turquoise bolo tie, and his gray hair tied back in a ponytail" (58). As Susan B. Brill notes, "Dr. Mather's syllabus, lectures, and interpretations of Indian literature demonstrate his erroneous and disturbingly romanticized misconceptions about Indians and their cultures and literatures" (10). During the first class, Marie engages Dr. Mather in a debate about the reading list he has chosen for the course, making an argument for the kinds of texts and authors that *should* be taught in a course titled Native American literature. As an example of a contemporary female warrior, Marie feels empowered "to harass a white professor who [thinks] he [knows] what it [means] to be Indian" (*Indian* 61). Also, through the issues that Marie raises, she offers an opportunity to explore what Alexie proposes beyond his critique of Dr. Mather's reading assignments, texts which Marie believes are neither authentic nor the most appropriate examples of Native American literature.

In *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions*, Robert Allen Warrior (Osage) writes that possibilities open up to American Indians when they remove themselves from the dichotomy of "a death dance of dependence, on the one hand, abandoning [themselves] to the intellectual strategies and categories of white, European thought and, on the other hand, declaring that [they]

need nothing outside of [themselves] and [their] cultures to understand the world and [their] place in it" (123-24). He goes on to state, "the struggle for sovereignty is not a struggle to be free from the influence of anything outside [themselves], but a process of asserting the power they possess as communities and individuals to make decisions that affect [their] lives" (124). Marie Polatkin perfectly illustrates the possibilities that can open up to a Native woman who refuses an "either-or" detrimental model such as the one that Warrior describes.

Marie exploits mainstream education and political activism to her own advantage and that of urban Indians. An English major in her senior year (*Indian* 34), she is also the "activities coordinator for the Native American Students Alliance at the University" (31). Although she grew up on the reservation, she feels somewhat isolated from her Spokane Tribe because she neither speaks Spokane nor dances nor sings traditionally, elements often attributed as signifiers of authentic Indianness (33). Still, she remains firmly grounded in her tribal connections, as evidenced by her surprise visits home to see her parents and her welcome to Reggie Polatkin, her distant urban cousin whom she has not seen in over a year (34). Marie willingly shares her dinner of Apple Jacks cereal and allows Reggie to spend the night on her couch (90-91, 95). Additionally, through her involvement in protests over Indian issues and her work with the Seattle downtown homeless shelter, Marie builds community among urban Indians (38-39). Marie's intellectual sovereignty resides in the contexts of her Spokane and urban tribal connections, her academic involvement, and her political and social activism, all aspects of the process of asserting the power she possesses as a member of a community and as an individual to make decisions that affect her life (Warrior 124).

Alexie also sees Marie as a powerful woman. He does not see women in the traditional Euro-American patriarchal paradigm of subordination. Rather, he seems to see women through the lens of gender complementarity as discussed by anthropologists Laura F. Klein and Lillian A. Ackerman who see it as balanced reciprocity: "They conclude that worlds of men and women [are] different but not generally perceived as hierarchical. In other words, while there are

different roles expected of men and women, neither men's roles nor women's roles are considered superior; the efforts of both women and men are acknowledged as necessary for the well-being of the society" (14). Further evidence of Alexie's critical views on women's roles in labor and religion in a patriarchal culture are found in two poems from his most recent collection *One Stick Song*. In the poem "Water," he comments on both women and men working as airport security: "I'm pleased this airport has progressed / beyond an antiquated notion of gender roles" (66), and in the poem "Why Indian Men Fall in Love with White Women," he describes a woman working in a donut shop as "a blessed and gifted woman who wanted to be a priest, a Jesuit / an Ignatian, of all things, but was turned back by the Catholic / Church / and its antiquated notions of gender" (75-76). Clearly, Alexie does not limit the possibilities for women based on their gender, in work or religion, and Marie is evidence of his vision.

According to Ron McFarland, Marie's "family name associates [her] with Chief Polatkin, one of whose daughters was married to Qualchan, who led the Spokane, Palouse, and Coeur d'Alene tribes in 1858 against Colonel Wright" (34). Perhaps this daughter is the model for the wife of Qualchan that Alexie constructs as a female warrior in *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* (98-99). In Thomas Builds-the-Fire's retelling of Qualchan's hanging, Alexie includes his wife's role, that of a traditional female warrior:

> It was then I saw the hangman's noose and made the fight to escape. My wife also fought beside me with a knife and wounded many soldiers before she was subdued. After I was beaten down, they dragged me to the noose and I was hanged with six other Indians, including Epseal, who had never raised a hand in anger to any white or Indian." (*Lone* 98-99)

Although Alexie does not name the wife and devotes only one sentence to describe her actions, she is not insignificant. Plainly, she acts as an independent woman, exercising her own power to be a warrior, an example of gender complementarity. Her response does not surprise

anyone, and tribal members do not condemn her behavior. This example of a strong female warrior, who fearlessly attacks soldiers, fighting along side her husband in an attempt to prevent them from hanging him and successfully wounding "many" of them before they can restrain her, paints a picture of a woman who is not limited by her gender but who is valued for her fierce loyalty, courage, and bravery. Additionally, Qualchan's wife points to the contemporary version of a female warrior in the character of Marie Polatkin. The idea of physically powerful and mentally keen women, who are grounded in the context of gender complementarity and valued for their strengths, spans one hundred-fifty years in Alexie's fiction.

About Marie, Alexie has said, "She's the strength in the book" (Interview Chato). Answering an interviewer's question about the characterization of Marie, Alexie responds: "I wanted to write [. . .] an Indian woman character [. . .] who was like *most* of the Native women I know [. . .] a very intelligent, very ambitious, very dedicated, very politically active Indian woman" (emphasis added, Exclusive Interview). Alexie connects his view of strong Native women to those he knows, presumably Spokane historical figures, those on the Spokane Reservation, and those in an urban environment.

Enrolling in Dr. Mather's course gives Marie the opportunity to demonstrate her power. She challenges "[his] role as the official dispenser of 'Indian education' at the University," thereby privileging her Native knowledge and authority (*Indian* 58). Mather's attitude completely illustrates what educator Paulo Freire describes as the "'banking' concept of education" in which

> knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry. The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence. (58-59)

Marie enters Mather's classroom, however, refusing to participate in the academy's patriarchal narrative or to accept the role of receptacle that Mather assigns to her; she will not allow him as narrator to fill her with his narration, one that she knows is false (Freire 58). As she so eloquently surmises after seeing his reading list, "Dr. Mather [is] full of shit" (*Indian* 59). She aggressively confronts the basis of Mather's knowledge: "You think you know more about being Indian than Indians do, don't you? Just because you read all those books about Indians, most of them written by white people" (247). Marie decenters his teacher-centered classroom, subverts his role of authority, and resists the idea of a knowledge hierarchy, one in which dominant mainstream knowledges are considered more valuable than others. In sum, Marie promotes an agenda of tribal intellectual sovereignty.

Marie identifies herself as a fighter, someone who believes that "being an Indian [is] mostly about survival" (34, 61). Therefore, her right to confront Mather stems mainly from the personal level, the fact that she is a Spokane Indian, a cultural insider, who understands the importance of working for the continuance of all Indian peoples. Moreover, with her educational background and political protest experience, she has the intelligence and self-confidence to defy Mather's oppressive ideology, one that claims superior knowledge not only over students but also over Indians. While she recognizes that some people, such as the white student David Rogers, see her only as the exotic Other, like Pocahontas, another brown female minority to colonize by sleeping with her, Marie does not limit her possibilities because of her ethnicity or gender (61, 69). In fact, her political work allows her to create lines of communication that mediate among the communities of Native students, homeless people, and urban Indians with mainstream institutions of power represented by the university, the police, and the press. She is a powerful contemporary female warrior, fighting with words, who says, "'I'm talking like a twentieth-century Indian woman. Hell, a twenty-first century Indian" (247).

Examining Marie's objections to Mather's reading list provides insights to Alexie's philosophy of what instructors should teach in a

Native American Literature course. First, Marie criticizes Mather's selection of *The Education of Little Tree* (1976) by Forrest Carter, pointing out that the author's claims of Cherokee ancestry are fraudulent (59). Thus, rule number one for instructors compiling Native American literature reading lists would be to select those books authored by people with legitimate claims of Indian identity. The issue of what constitutes legitimate claims of Indian identity, at least according to Alexie, would best be left as a topic for a Native scholar to examine.[1] However, suffice it to say that within the context of *Indian Killer*, Alexie uses Marie as his mouthpiece, a Spokane woman who was raised on the reservation. So, in this case, a person with reservation origins qualifies as one with legitimate claims of Indian identity.

The second objection that Marie raises deals with the issue of autobiographies co-written by white men, such as *Black Elk Speaks* (1932) as told to John G. Neihardt, *Lame Deer: Seeker of Visions* (1972) by John Fire/Lame Deer and Richard Erdoes, and *Lakota Woman* (1990) by Mary Crow Dog and Richard Erdoes (*Indian* 58). Perhaps the fact that publishers categorize these books as "autobiographies" as opposed to "told-to-" or "told-through-white-men" books is what most annoys Alexie. It appears, however, that he would continue to oppose these books on a Native American literature reading list even if instructors were careful to inform students about the inherent problems of filters involving white recorders. Therefore, Alexie argues that any book co-written by a white man should not be taught in a Native American literature course.

Finally, Marie makes basically the same observation about the rest of Mather's reading list, books all associated in some way with white people:

> The other seven books included three anthologies of traditional Indian stories edited by white men, two nonfiction studies of Indian spirituality written by white women, a book of traditional Indian poetry translations edited by a Polish-American Jewish man, and an Indian murder mystery written by some local

> white writer named Jack Wilson, who claimed he was a Shilshomish Indian. (58-59)

Marie protests books classified as Native American literature that are edited, translated, or written by white people and argues that they do not meet the criteria of Native American literature. She also takes exception to authors who claim to be Indian but cannot prove membership in a tribe, thereby exploiting questionable Indian identity connections to further their literary careers (67). Marie argues that for texts to be classified as Native American literature, the author must truly be Native American, and when called into the department chair's office, she goes further by asking, "Why isn't an Indian teaching the class?" (312). Thus, Alexie strongly objects to what the academy teaches in Native American literature courses and even questions who teaches it.

Craig Womack (Muskogee Creek/Cherokee) shares Alexie's concerns regarding Native American literature and makes a similar argument when he writes, "one can teach courses on Native lit, and now even on Native literary criticism, assigning as texts, books authored exclusively by Native people. [. . .] the minimal requirement for a Native studies course should be that every classroom text is written by a Native author; otherwise, how can we possibly lay claim to presenting Native perspectives?" (10). For both Alexie and Womack then, the determining factor for a Native American literature reading list is that the text represent an "authentic" Native American perspective, one that only "authentic" Indians can deliver.

Marie's critique of the academy's teaching of Native American literature, white professors, and white writers in *Indian Killer* is not an isolated incident in Alexie's fiction. His complaint of white people speaking with authority for and about Indians appears frequently in his work. In his review of Ian Frazier's *Off the Rez*, Alexie writes, "Frazier's formal use of 'the rez' marks him as an outsider eager to portray himself as an insider, as a writer with a supposedly original story to tell and as a white man who is magically unlike all other white men in his relationship to American Indians" ("Some of My Best

Friends"). Alexie rejects white writers who believe they understand the lives of American Indians, and by writing about Indians, white writers perpetuate the colonizing act of telling the reading public what Indians are "really" like.

In his short story "Dear John Wayne," Alexie skewers the white anthropologist, Spencer Cox, who wants to interview one hundred-eighteen-year-old Spokane Indian Etta Joseph, born on the Spokane Indian Reservation and now a resident of the St. Tekawitha Retirement Community in Spokane, Washington. Currently, Cox is working on a "study on the effect of classical European ballroom dancing on the indigenous powwow," but Alexie has Etta control the interview, subvert Cox's agenda, tell her story about her love affair with John Wayne, and good-naturedly poke fun at the ridiculousness of Cox's self-importance (*Toughest* 193). Cox considers himself more of an expert on the Salish than the Salish themselves as he cites his qualifications that identify him as an authority in academic circles: "I am a cultural anthropologist and the Owens Lecturer in Applied Indigenous Studies at Harvard University. I'm also the author of seventeen books, texts, focusing on mid- to late-twentieth-century Native American culture, most specifically the Interior Salish tribes of Washington State" (190). Again, Alexie makes his point that no matter how many books Cox has published, he never will be able to speak authentically about Spokane Indians' lives. Etta tells him that his books are filled with lies and he will never know about her. To survive, she has had to live her life in a white world for "fifty-seven minutes of every hour," and when Cox asks about the other three minutes, she responds, "That, sir, is when I get to be Indian, and you have no idea, no concept, no possible way of knowing what happens in those three minutes" (194). As a strong female elder, Etta is a powerful woman who does not allow Cox to colonize her life: "Those three minutes belong to us. They are very secret. You've colonized Indian land but I am not about to let you colonize my heart and mind" (194).

In his short story "One Good Man," Alexie blasts another white professor from Washington State University, Dr. Lawrence Crowell, not because he is a Wannabe who spent time at the 1969 Alcatraz

occupation and the 1973 Wounded Knee occupation but "because he thought he was entitled to tell other Indians what it meant to be Indian" (*Toughest* 227). In these examples, Alexie seems to object most to the arrogant attitudes of whites who think that just because they study, research, write, publish, and teach about Indians or their literatures, they suddenly become experts on what it means to live one's life as an Indian, contrary to the intellectual sovereignty that Alexie uses in his own writing.

Alexie voices a familiar and legitimate complaint when he says, "Indians rarely get to define our own image, and when white people do it, they often get assigned all this authority, and I guess that's what my problem is, that Indians are never even allowed the authority to self-define" (Barnes & Noble.com 2). This same theme appears again in the poem "The Unauthorized Autobiography of Me," where he notes, "Successful non-Indian writers are viewed as well-informed about Indian life" (*One Stick Song* 22). In the same poem, Alexie goes on to discuss the economics of publishing when he critiques the whites who write about Indians: "A book written by a non-Indian will sell more copies than a book written by either a mixed-blood or an Indian writer," and "Most non-Indians who write about Indians are fiction writers. Fiction about Indians sells" (21, 22). Alexie has suggested that white authors who write fiction works about Indians at the very least should donate ten percent of their royalties either to the American Indian College Fund or to the tribe about which they write (Interview Tomson). He admits, "I'm resentful that there are many writers out there making careers off Indians and [. . .] doing absolutely nothing in return. [. . .] People ask me and I give hard-core answers. You're making money, give it back" (Interview Tomson). Consequently, Alexie's objections to whites writing about Indians can be attributed not only to their arrogance and their sense of authority to define Indians but also to the profits they gain from their fiction works about Indians.

By introducing the general reading public to the issues surrounding how whites teach Native American literature in the academy, Alexie raises their awareness. This is the first step in effecting change, but Alexie does not seem to offer anything more beyond his critique of

white-man arrogance. Nothing can be inferred as a solution to poor choices by either unknowingly or willfully ignorant professors. He does not offer any solutions or suggestions for white scholars. His only advice recommends deferring to Native scholars and writers because they have the authority of cultural insider status. In an interview for *Indian Killer*, he expresses the following wish: "I would like to reach a larger audience and using a popular form like the mystery might enable me to do that" (Exclusive Interview). He also has said, "First and foremost, writers like to get attention" (Purdy 11). Alexie's desires to reach a larger audience, get attention, and at the same time realistically expect that white scholars will not write about his works as they teach them in Native American literature classes call for changes that seem unlikely to happen simultaneously in the near future. Alexie chooses the character of Marie Polatkin in *Indian Killer* to voice this political discourse on education, writing, and publication in Native American literature, which demonstrates her resistance to the politics of power.

According to Alexie, non-Native scholars are left without entry into the criticism of his work because they cannot speak with authority as cultural insiders. True, they are limited by their position, but at the same time, not all of them attempt to speak with the authority of cultural insiders. There are white scholars who consciously listen to what the Native scholars and critics prescribe in terms of approaches to the literature, whether those are tribal-specific cultural and historical contexts, issues of sovereignty and connections to the land, and/or literary criticisms developed from the literature of the tribe in question. On 21 October 2000, my research assistant attended the book fair in Seattle, Washington and presented Alexie with the question, "What would he recommend for white scholars who want to study Native American literature?" To date, he has not responded.

In a more constructive fashion, Womack briefly addresses the roles of white critics through one of his characters who asks, "How can white Lit Critters become helpers, rather than Indian experts? How can they promote the work of Native people over their own, and still was [sic] keep us their own good efforts at contributing to Native literary development?" (127). In writing about American Indian history,

Angela Cavender Wilson (Wahpetonwan Dakota) suggests that white scholars consult American Indian sources for the cultural insiders' perspectives, and if they do not, they should acknowledge the limitations of their white perspective in their work (26). In the same way, perhaps white scholars writing about Native literatures should consult Native sources or admit the limited perspective of their work.

White scholars observing all these caveats about teaching Native American literary texts in an academic climate that demands expertise, knowledge, and authority in their specialization may encounter problems. Negotiating the academic culture and the requests from Native writers and scholars, asking that white scholars observe the most basic considerations of the field, can be difficult but not impossible. Duane Champagne (Chippewa) argues that "there is room for both Indian and non-Indian scholars within American Indian studies," but he also remarks that those involved in American Indian Studies experience difficulties because their "academic colleagues operate from different values and cultural perspectives" (181, 188), or as Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (Crow Creek Sioux) says, "the esoteric language of French and Russian literary scholars [. . .] has overrun the lit/crit scene" (137).

Sherman Alexie maintains a sense of personal identity with connections to his Spokane tribe while engaging in a critical dialogue with the academic and larger community. In *Indian Killer*, he accomplishes this task, in part, through the character of Marie Polatkin. Alexie has argued, "there are no models of any success in any sort of field for Indians. We don't have any of that. So there is no idea of a role model existing" ("Dialogue" 5). Without a doubt, Alexie creates the role model of a successful Spokane Indian woman in the character of Marie Polatkin. She is a strong, powerful, autonomous, intellectually sovereign woman who, among other things, challenges the academy about who teaches Native American literature and what that person assigns to be read. As a female voice, Marie's challenge develops from a context of gender complementarity in which she knows that her community will value her role as a contemporary female warrior of words. Non-Native scholars need to heed her message.

Notes

[1] This essay was first presented at the American Literature Association Symposium on Native American Literature in Puerto Vallarta, November 29-December 3, 2000. I wish to thank the symposium participants who attended the session on Sherman Alexie for their feedback and discussion following the presentation of papers on that panel.

[2] The question of Indian authenticity is a complicated issue that I will not address here, but suffice it to say that there are various federal, state, tribal, and cultural definitions used to determine who is an Indian, and they carry different degrees of validity depending on who makes the judgment. For more information, see M. Annette Jaimes, "Federal Indian Identification Policy: A Usurpation of Indigenous Sovereignty in North America," *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, Ed. M. Annette Jaimes, Race and Resistance Series (Boston: South End, 1992) 123-138.

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Calling A Spade A Shovel: Tribal/Ethnic Studies vs. University Policy

Sid Larson

It is not uncommon to observe friction in university departments housing Ethnic or Tribal Studies Programs, and to note the talk of discrimination that often exists as well. Although blame is usually placed on the "hot temper" of the Indians, or Chicanos, or Africans, more realistic causes include gross departmental mismanagement, violation of university policies, and the oldest of colonial divide-and-conquer strategies – unequal treatment of groups and individuals competing for resources made deliberately scarce.

For decades mainstream domination was so complete all blame was placed on the Other, to whose incompetence, maladjustment, and recalcitrance were attributed the source of conflicts. In the past few years, however, ethnic and tribal cultural critics and theorists have provided terms and concepts by which cultural difference may be more properly understood. The historical record and criteria contained in such work are helpful to understanding troublesome aspects of American Indian Studies.[1]

To begin, reading institutional conflict as a social text promotes understanding of the deeper meanings of such things as corridor talk, which, in the case of Tribal/Ethnic Studies, functions as an underground network resisting pernicious policies of silencing, suppression, and denial. Situations are allowed to arise where an empowered group is pitted against the Others, and a symptom of the resulting tension is the way universities always react to protests with surprise, while those who are part of institutional gossip networks are aware of the inevitable process leading up to confrontation.

American Indians are almost always at the bottom of the university totem pole, even among groups of color, seldom enjoy favorable treatment, and often complain about it. Although they are correct in

asserting discrimination with regard to practices that devalue, exclude, or stereotype them, such claims are consistently re-described by departments as sabotage, trouble-making, or "flying off the handle."

As discrimination directed at American Indians is further illuminated, additional symptoms emerge, including departmental insistence on mainstream education policy and practice when alternative methods would be more appropriate; the reluctant housing of affirmative action, or "diversity" hires; and various forms of condescension toward communities of difference and their literatures. One example of cultural disdain is the assumption that student demand for diversity courses can be met by any faculty with an interest in doing so, or who might be unlucky enough to draw the assignment. Such superficial approaches also allow universities to avoid employing tenured specialists in American Indian Studies, leading to the all-too-common revolving lineup of temporary professors, lecturers, and speakers.

Looking still deeper into departmental structures reveals requirements heavily skewed toward Western European disciplines, and an almost total lack of "other" courses, faculty, or students. The minuscule percentages that do exist are devalued at all turns, including second-rate scholarship support, the barest minimum of qualified faculty to teach and mentor students, and a general assumption that ethnic/tribal students and faculty are inherently incompetent and in need of departmental "protection." Departmental attitudes are also Calvinist, and minorities who reject the role of needy victim can then expect their benefactors to react in a harsh, unforgiving, and authoritarian manner.

Such systemic discrimination not only leads to lack of support for students, but the few American Indian faculty who exist are usually quickly relegated to service jobs, where they become the draft horses of the university: sitting on committees, serving as a buffer against outside minority communities under the guise of outreach, and teaching large lecture sections of courses such as "minority literature," "multi-cultural literature," or, "literature of the oppressed."

Such courses are intentionally limited in many ways, allowing the university to maintain power and control over content and materials while maintaining an appearance of openness. One powerful rationale for maintaining such control, and one that is in direct conflict with the business model currently in vogue, is the result of mainstream departments observing an increasing lack of enrollment in their Western European classes, while, for example, American Indian literature classes consistently turn away students because they are so popular. If universities now exist to serve clients on a free market basis, refusing to make popular products available for consumption is either extremely inefficient or the result of some other agenda, which appears to be blatant racism.

Nevertheless, English departments monopolize the teaching of literature even as student enrollment in arcane classes continues to decline, and, although probably the most supportive of American Indian literatures, they appear to have been so primarily as a means of governing them from outside the field. A common strategy is the multi-cultural approach, a generic perspective on ethnic and tribal issues wherein minority groups (like all Indian tribes) are perceived as essentially similar. This approach not only ignores the dramatic differences between, say, American Indians and Latino/as, it also tends to be overwhelmingly ahistoric, avoiding tribal or ethnic expertise as a means of facilitating departmental appropriation of cultures and materials they cannot ignore. As a result, English departments commonly support tribal courses and professors in principle but not in practice, because to do otherwise would be to give up power, which they never do willingly.

A seeming obvious solution, creation of American Indian Studies Departments, is strongly suppressed because of these kinds of power relations, leading to largely ineffective programs masquerading as representatives of American Indian issues. This is most effectively accomplished by the practice of mainstream departments having final say on American Indian Studies hires. Such appointments usually reflect compromises that American Indian Studies Departments, acting on their own, undoubtedly would not accept. Since minority studies

programs end up with faculty hired by traditional departments, they end up representing the interests of those departments rather than the interests of the minority groups they supposedly represent.

Perhaps the most effective strategy for containing minority studies, and certainly American Indian Studies, is division and separation. For example, AIS faculty seldom have opportunities to discuss the day-to-day activities of their programs, let alone make decisions on hiring, funding, recruitment, and other activities. Larger decisions are commonly made by a mainstream administrator, with perhaps an ethnic program director in a "consulting" role, which turns the process into one of rubber stamping. Isolation and dis-empowerment, combined with minimal budgets and the fewest faculty possible, combine to create a situation of academic apartheid.

There is no doubt that these kinds of dynamics are prejudicial, discriminatory, and that they are based on racism, all of which are proven beyond a doubt by university reports and statistics consistently reflecting dramatic under-representation of minorities at all levels of American universities. For example, the Office of Institutional Research of a major mid-western university, in its 2000-2001 Fact Book, shows the total of tenured and tenure-eligible American Indian/Alaskan Native and Hispanic employees by Race/Ethnicity at 0.6% and 1.8%, respectively. It also shows 0.0% Academic/Administrative employees without Faculty Rank from both groups.

The primary way institutions deal with such documented discriminatory practices is to issue disclaimers that never admit to racist acts, but instead immediately re-describe them as misrepresentations and misinterpretations. For example, racism by commission that can be proven by statistics, proper naming, and obvious lack of support for minority educational activities is deflected by introducing discussions of such things as quotas, or the increasingly popular financial straits that can be blamed on legislative budget cuts. Hidden in this framework is racism that functions best in the absence of a perpetrator, proven by the fact that universities will acknowledge racism only if it remains hidden. Such obfuscation is necessary,

because not to do so would be to expose oppression and inequality throughout entire institutions whose very foundations are based on fostering and supporting liberty, equality, and justice for all.

Another academic strategy is to point to a mythic future in which such things will no longer happen, a future that will occur when a new president arrives, a political party is deposed, or when the economy improves. What is most significant about this strategy, other than the fact that it is never an attempt at compromise, is the fact that better futures for dis-empowered people have historically only been gained by confrontation.

In the absence of confrontation universities absolutely refuse to make more than minimal efforts to support diversity, one manifestation of which is the policy of acknowledging only those who do not complain. Silence, however, is enforced by both external and internal pressures, with the institution either carefully masking its actions or aggressively labeling those who assert their rights as "troublemakers," and minority individuals themselves suffering guilt, anxiety, and confusion that is created by a shell game where they are constantly kept off balance. Perhaps most discouraging are administrative remedies, such as the university grievance procedure, or the Affirmative Action complaint, which are, after all, internal review processes intended to protect the institution by endlessly assessing problems rather than offering remedies. The hapless victim only realizes at the end of exhaustive procedures that if she actually wants anything done she will have to hire her own attorney, who likely might not find a grievance or Affirmative Action complaint of any use in an actual adversarial proceeding.

Until they gain more experience, victims of systemic discrimination usually try to avoid the anger that is an inevitable by-product, because it appears to deny intellect and confirm accusations of hot-headedness. There are cultural factors at work as well, however, such as the fact that while education oftentimes provides the only means of upward mobility, it also can effectively separate the individual from his or her family and community. Such dynamics are exacerbated by the fact it is not only minorities who fear losing their

identities, but that universities suffer a similar thing expressed as fear their standards will be lowered by contamination from the Other.

The fact that these kinds of things are unstated policy in an educational system supposedly designed to train future generations to live together reinforces the urgent need to find strategies other than confrontation by which to correct gross inequities. It is a fact, however, that confrontation is presently the only truly effective remedy, as demonstrated by minority pressure brought to bear on California universities such as Berkeley and UCLA, who subsequently have responded with substantive support rather than empty rhetoric.

It is interesting that California university officials have also complained bitterly that they felt as though they "had a gun put to their head," an attempt to assume the role of victim within systems that only respond to pressure, even in settings where, as at University of California Irvine, administration was so impractical as to attempt to maintain 12% minority faculty on a campus where the minority student population is consistently upwards of 60%.

Hopefully, applying pressure can be accomplished by non-confrontational means. For minority educators such as myself, however, who can now not only see the end of their careers approaching, but who also realize they have been the shock troops of American Indian higher education, there is a strong urge to not end up like the ineffectual Indian overseers of the Bureau of Indian Affairs plantations of old. One of the ways to begin working toward better solutions, which is also based in oral tradition, is to start by telling the story of a career as a member of one of the first waves of Indian educators.

My grandmother, Maggie Shambo, was an original allottee of the Gros Ventre tribe of north central Montana. That makes me also a descendant of the Gros Ventre Otter Robe family, as well as the white man Louis Shambo (aka Chambon, Chambeaux), my great-grandfather, who, among other things, was unfortunately the government scout who found Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce people for General Nelson Miles.

After many years of working very hard to survive, as well as searching for a workable identity, I was pointed by my spirit guide to American Indian higher education, where I have spent the last twelve years of my life. In these twelve years I have progressed from teaching assistant in freshman composition, to tenured professor at a major western American university, to Director of American Indian Studies at a major mid-western American university. Along the way I have published two books and numerous scholarly articles; have developed a blended tribal/mainstream teaching pedagogy while receiving consistently superior teaching evaluations from students; and organized and administered a national literary conference.

Nevertheless, I have not even come close to overcoming the stereotypes of American Indians as incompetent, incapable, maladjusted people who, most importantly, do not possess sufficient numbers to be taken seriously. From the ugly assertion "you look like you've got a little Indian in you," to the meddling attention of liberal white female administrators who dropped me like a hot rock at the first sign of trouble, to the wink-and-a-nod interviews with university Deans who mistook my silence as acceptance of their offer to be an overseer in the plantation, racism and discrimination have consistently stood in the way of obviously more important matters such as writing and teaching.

In July of 2000 I published *Captured In The Middle: Tradition and Experience in Contemporary Native American Writing. Captured In The Middle* was not only my "tenure book," it was an attempt to bother the margins of elitist, disciplinary higher education, which I have increasingly perceived as a means of controlling what is taught in American universities. The book was written during a five year span, during which time I earned tenure at a major western American university, but only after that university tried very hard to prevent that from happening. I remember it well, five junior faculty going up for tenure in the same cycle; my case, (the only ethnic candidate) being pulled out of the cycle for "further review"; finally, my case being reinstated immediately upon being accepted for representation by a law firm with an excellent reputation for interrogating such matters.

Having my case pulled out of the tenure cycle was the most dramatic incident during those five years, but perhaps most instructive was meeting four other ethnic faculty working in the college of Liberal Arts & Sciences. The first was a Latina whose health had failed after being pressed into service to lead the Ethnic Studies Department and who then was fired for getting behind in her publishing requirements; second was an American Indian who had recently undergone a stress-related quadruple bypass; third was an African-American near retirement who had subordinated his university identity to that of local jazz musician after repeated university snubbings; and, finally, there was the talented African-American woman who was hired at the same time I was, and who didn't even try for tenure, opting instead to flee to a position where there was a Black community after only three years.

I not only published a book during my time at this place, but a number of articles, as well as proposing a minor in American Indian Literatures and organizing and administering a national American Indian Literature conference. These accomplishments not only failed to overcome the presumption of incompetence regarding American Indians and American Indian scholarship, but they seemed to outrage the department, the college, and the Assistant Provost-in-charge, who, as soon as I rejected the role of needy inferior, demonstrated open hostility. Again, by open hostility I mean that had I not immediately availed myself of the legal system, I believe this university would have denied me tenure, which would have seriously affected my career.

It may come as no surprise that I took great satisfaction in rejecting my tenured position less than one month after it was awarded, to accept the position of Director of American Indian Studies at a comparable university. At the same time, I feel it important to point out how hard I worked to find ways to overcome the discrimination I encountered, and to remain at the Western location. I also remember that process vividly: the department chair smiling paternally and saying, "well, that's just the way they are;" the Provost refusing to even speak to me; the Assistant Provost buying me a drink at a local tavern and warning me, "If you play the race card, by God, I'll just quit, I'm not putting up with that stuff;" and, finally, the Dean of Arts and Sciences offering me

the merit raise I was due to receive anyway, and a T-shirt to stay at the university.

Although the reaction among my inner circle of friends to my assuming the Directorship of American Indian Studies consistently was something like, "you do realize where you're going, don't you," I felt the opportunity to do program development was worth pursuing, even if it was in a notoriously "white" part of the country. I arrived early, stayed late, and put together a small but respectable American Indian Studies Program that I felt would compliment the Anthropology Department's 30-year social experiment, and was quite happy with what I had accomplished until the first item of substantive business arose.

This item concerned one of two joint appointments that came with the program; one in Anthropology, the other in Religious Studies. Toward the middle of my first semester on the job, one of the jointly appointed faculty, a white female, approached me with her desire to clarify her joint appointment. She felt, even though she had been hired to teach half-time in the American Indian Studies Program, which she preferred to do, she was in fact working full-time in her "home department,"Anthropology, which she did not prefer to do.

I approached the person to whom I supposedly report, an Associate Dean, with the situation, and she seemed delighted, informing me that this was just the sort of thing that had been in need of resolution for some time. We agreed that probably all that was needed was to assert the Indian Studies Program's desire to utilize the jointly appointed faculty, and I subsequently informed the Anthropology Department that the jointly appointed faculty would henceforth be assigned half her teaching duties by the American Indian Studies Department Director. The head of Anthropology, however, objected, citing the fact his department had come to rely on the person for its own needs.

The Anthropology Head advocating for his department came as no great surprise; after all, that is what Department Heads do, but the Associate Dean's response was very surprising. After agreeing to do so, when the matter was presented to her for arbitration, she not only

refused to make a ruling, she intimated that she was surprised that American Indian Studies would choose to create such a problem.

At about this time I also had occasion to remind the Associate Dean that the school year was well underway and I had not yet received the program budget. Apologies fell like rain, we took lunch, we talked educational philosophy, and still the budget did not appear. Nor was any help forthcoming regarding the jointly appointed faculty's request to have her teaching assignment clarified. Once again I keyed in a polite email request for resolution of these matters, and suddenly there issued a palpable change of tone delivered in a terse, authoritarian email response that left no doubts in my mind the honeymoon was over.

The Head of Anthropology, sensing trouble ahead, withdrew his resistance and I clarified the position by presenting the matter to the American Indian Advisory Committee for approval, proclaiming it done, creating a paper trail memorializing the proclamation, and sending letters to all involved. The immediate response on the part of the Associate Dean was to call the jointly appointed faculty person into her office and invite that person to join a complaint that I was over-aggressive, derelict in my duties, and an enemy of academic freedom. The invitee declined the invitation and instead reported the matter to me, warning me that the Associate Dean appeared to be "really mad."

Shortly after this incident I received word that the other American Indian Studies Program faculty person, a Chippewa Indian, also jointly appointed, had been fired by his "home department." Furthermore, he had been fired less than three years into his six-year probationary period, on grounds that the department felt he did not have the potential to live up to their standards. Based on the precipitous nature of the firing, and the fact I had provided a strong evaluation of the individual's teaching, service, and scholarly potential, I objected and requested that the firing be overruled.

A lengthy dialogue between myself and the other involved parties ensued, wherein I reasserted my objections each time the department offered additional rationale for their decision. The matter having not been resolved at the department level, it became obvious that an outside

decision-maker would have to take action, and that person would be the Dean of Liberal Arts & Sciences. The Dean's first official input into the case, however, was to inform me that he felt I had been unprofessional in my support of the fired faculty member. I expressed my amazement, and we then articulated our incompatibility in a verbal exchange ranked by classified staff who know such things as being "up there" among similar incidents.

Although this brief sketch by no means includes the entire overlay of gory details associated with the last few years, it is sufficient to indicate the degree of dysfunction suffered by American Indian Studies and by Ethnic Studies in general during the post-modern era. Perhaps California's recent re-affirmation of affirmative action values signals a return to good faith and fair dealing, or perhaps one day soon enough stories will be told so that the education universe can begin to right itself.

In the meantime, if the separation between university activities and the communities upon which they are based can be lessened, America's universities can move toward genuine education rather than indoctrination, and the tremendous potential of the multi-cultural world can be directed at solving environmental and social problems looming everywhere.

Mary Katharine Duffie and Benjamin Chavis Muhammad have articulated this state of division and separation recently in their article "American Indian studies and its evolution in academia": "Who, if anyone, is documenting what is occurring presently in American Indian communities if up to 80% of the research is being done in libraries?"[2] It is not hard to see how dysfunction can become self-perpetuating under such circumstances, nor is it hard to understand that opening the doors to dialogue and a bi-directional connection with real life is probably the best way to interrupt the cycle.

More specifically, Duffie and Muhammad have identified structural, personnel, and curricular problems that have largely derailed continued development of American Indian Studies. With regard to structure, they state unequivocally, "The ideal Indian Studies program should possess official departmental status"; regarding personnel, "at

least 6 tenured/tenure-track lines"; regarding curriculum, "a Native American Studies minor and major. The core of required classes should include a wide variety of course offerings in the subjects of politics and law; native literatures, religion, art, society; business and economics; education; regional studies; and environment and health."[3]

Duffie and Muhammad are most interesting for two reasons. First, they have a very good sense of the acute needs of American Indian Studies Programs across the country. With some few exceptions, however, such as the University of Arizona, these needs, which have been known for some time, are astutely avoided in favor of the destabilizing activities described above. I brought a similar program to my present position, for example, ready to be implemented, and instead spent most of a year asking to see the budget and battling to keep the faculty from being diverted or fired.

Second, although the content of the article is heartbreakingly familiar to those of us who have been slogging along in the culture wars for years, it is significant to see such information appear in a mainstream journal, apparently articulated by mainstream scholars (they do not identify themselves as tribal members at least, a common practice among American Indian writers). Perhaps, having been taken up by the mainstream, the issues can now be acted upon.

If this should happen, we will know we are once again in the presence of Trickster, who, time and again, has found ways for Indians to not only survive, but to advance those things which are critical in their struggle to once again be free.

NOTES

[1] See my book, *Captured In The Middle: Tradition and Experience in Contemporary Native American Writing* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000) for a more thorough discussion and list of relevant sources.

[2] Mary Katharine Duffie; Benjamin Chavis Muhammad, "American Studies and its evolution in academia," *The Social Science Journal*, October 1997 v34 n4 p446.

[3] Ibid., 446-47.

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Alexander Posey's Nature Journals: A Further Argument for Tribally-Specific Aesthetics

Craig Womack

Alexander Posey, Muskogee Creek poet and journalist, lived from 1873-1908. His work is an important part of Creek literary history and aesthetics because he produced a very large body of dialect letters that provide revolutionary narrative patterns with the potential to make us rethink how we approach Indian Studies, even today. Persona letters in Creek English are a Muskogee national literary institution with a traceable history that precedes Posey, with the Cherokee writers publishing dialect letters in the 1880s and 1890s, as well as Creek author Charles Gibson and his "Rifle Shots" newspaper column that appeared at the same time in Oklahoma newspapers as Posey's Fus Fixico letters. Dialect writing is a written narrative tradition that still survives because, in the decades following Posey's death, other Creek writers, such as Thomas E. Moore, writing under the *nom de plume* William Harjo and publishing in Oklahoma metropolitan papers in the late 1930s, took up Posey's calling. More recently, various Muskogees have written me hilarious letters in dialect in response to my own work, letters that are often more skilled than my own feeble attempts at this most Creek pursuit.

That these men and women have imagined a Creek literary language, importantly, a recognizably Muskogeean literary conceit in English, has profound implications for Muskogee Creek literary nationalism, as well as for the literatures of other tribal nations. It argues that Indian worldviews are possible in English. It corroborates the arguments for the validity of modern day Native Studies, and contemporary Indian authorship, both of which, after all, are undertaken in the English language with the assumption in mind that Indian viewpoints and philosophies will still be meaningful in translation.

It reminds us that all this talk regarding the "language of the colonizer" has missed a key point: English ceased to be the language of the colonizer the minute it landed in the New World where it acquired vocabulary from Indian tribes, creole words from the Caribbean, African words from slaves, and many other features unique to the Americas. The colonizer lost control of his mother tongue. English ran amok, a little like the Creek story of Rabbit stealing fire, spreading the embers all around as he darted off with his new discovery. It may be that Indians, and other groups, colonized English rather than the other way around. It would be a huge stretch to see the Fus Fixico letters, for example, though written in English they may be, as labored down with the chore of subverting the language of the colonizer. This is an Indian language, a Muskogee Creek language, in English.

Most importantly, to Muskogee Creek readers, Posey's dialect provides a language that is immediately familiar to Creek ears; one that resonates with the sights and sounds of Creek country. It provides a vehicle for Creek thought that is meaningful to a Creek audience. It deprioritizes outsider discussion *about* Creeks in favour of dialogue within the community toward the end of an evolving Creek intellectual and cultural and political life.

One of the greatest marks of the integrity of Alexander Posey as a tribal author is his ability to write about the landscape of his own nation. Posey kept a 1901 journal[1] of a boat trip down the Canadian River, a major tributary in eastern Oklahoma central to the location of Creek towns. Posey intended the journal as notes to be developed later into sketches of the outdoors. Given that Posey wrote about Creek landscape in many different forums — this river journal, his "Notes Afield" which contain his observations about the natural world, letters to friends, his poetry, the Fus Fixico letters — it seems reasonable to speculate that he understood that one of the distinctions of being an Indian writer is the ability to write about the land of one's own tribe.

This marks an integrity that is fundamental to a contemporary ethics of Native writing. Sovereignty depends on safeguarding jurisdiction and culture over a particular landscape guaranteed by treaty. The land is at the center of everything, not only the legal realm

of federal Indian law but the imaginative world of contemporary Native fiction, drama, and poetry as well. Acts of the imagination can and should serve to define, protect, preserve, and renew tribal relationships to the landscapes of the respective sovereign nations of tribal writers.

Simply put, to write effectively as a Native writer, at least to write toward the end of contributing to an intellectual discourse within one's own tribe, means knowing something about home. The most accomplished Native creative work has come from those authors writing tribally-specific work. The early wave of recent late-twentieth century Native literature, including accomplished works such as *Ceremony*, by Laguna writer Leslie Marmon Silko, *House Made Of Dawn*, by Kiowa writer N. Scott Momaday, *Winter in the Blood*, by Blackfeet-Gros Ventre writer James Welch, and *Love Medicine*, by Chippewa writer Louise Erdrich are superlative because of their concentration on a treaty-based landscape and the cultures that occupy them. Artistic vision, for these authors, comes from personal knowledge of and experience living in the places they narrate.

The second wave of Native literature after these promising beginnings has not always achieved the same level of excellence. In some regards this is healthy, a sign of natural growing pains as the breadth of the subject matter increases and Native writers look for new Indian stories. Of concern, however, is a kind of genericism that has crept into creative work lately which becomes "Indian" to the exclusion of any real exploration of just what that means in terms of locales, treaties, languages, tribal governments, land redress, economic development, Indian education, and many other matters. While fictional characters, under the auspices of art, reserve the right to act like individuals, not topical essays on Indian subjects, some of the writing has devolved into a pan-tribal blur, a giant lump of a Pillsbury redboy.

Some might argue that the tribeless and placeless vaguely "Native American" work that has sometimes arisen in literature and criticism provides a way in for a non-Indian (or Indian) audience less familiar with tribally-specific cultures, a more comfortable and familiar reading turf, not so threateningly Other. Even if this is true, one might query,

"yes, but what does this kind of writing do for the tribes?"

I would point out that it is in the examination of particulars that the universal is most effectively made manifest, that a sense of place and specific culture creates a vivid fictional world for the reader, even when it is a foreign one. The genius of a Ray Young Bear, or an Isaac Bashevis Singer, is each author's ability to delve deeply into their respective Mesquakie and Jewish worlds, and, in doing so, to present characters and places and psychologies so well-developed that the reader is compelled to discover and learn, foreign as these worlds may be to those who are not Mesquakie or Jewish.

Their fictional characters are both Mesquakie or Jewish *and* fully realized as individuals, often acting in surprising and unpredictable ways that transcend reductive anthropological assumptions about culture. Fiction makes this paradox possible: characters fully immersed in a culturally-specific history may, because they are human, contradict that very history and culture. Simply put, in fiction, a Cherokee may not always act like what a "good" or a "real" or a "traditional" Cherokee is supposed to act like. (This happens outside of fiction too!). Humans are unpredictable.

Locating characters in a specific time and place is the very thing that makes meaningful *both* an understanding of culture as well as the very human tendency to deviate from cultural norms. The points of difference and unfamiliarity in these writings are their very attraction, what makes them worth reading. Genericized writing provides no basis from which culture can be either confirmed or transgressed. The vaguely Indian writing, where identity is obscured, may confirm much of contemporary literary theory quite nicely, but I have my doubts as to whether it does anything for tribal sovereignty.

I would like to point out a few of the instances that exemplify Alexander Posey's abilities as a Creek author who can depict Creek land, noting the degree of specificity and his skill at relating Creek landscape to broader issues of Creek culture and language. What is striking is the amount of detail Posey is able to muster in relation to the land he loves, chronicling its changes across seasons, as well as the way the land differs in various locales throughout the nation. The

following passages from F. S. Barde's publication of Posey's June 1901 river journal,[2] show Posey's degree of concentration on Creek landscape and geography:

> We have travelled forty miles, but are only fifteen miles from Wetumka. A short distance below the crossing, the flight of a couple of Indian boys cause us to think deer are running in the woods. A white renter on the bank seems to wonder "who the hell ar' you'ns an' where the hell ar' you'ns goin'?"
>
> Moccasins and cotton-mouths are plentiful. A moccasin leaps from a willow over Thornton's head, after which Thornton does a war dance. Mountains on either hand, "pointing" down to the river alternately, and at a distance looking as if dove-tailed. The banks are lined mostly with cedar. Wild ivy and grape hang gracefully from the overhanging limbs of cedar, oak, walnut, and cottonwood and sycamore, giving the woods a tropical appearance.
>
> Herons are flying before us all the way — now and then a duck, catbird, cardinal, downy woodpecker, flicker, crested titmouse, pileated woodpecker, crows and buzzards are plentiful. I cut a moccasin in two with my rifle.
>
> . . . A turkey gobbler arouses us from our slumbers. He gobbles defiantly over toward the old Dowdy Ranch. I hunt for him, but return empty-handed. Hear a wolf. Wolves are more numerous in and about Tulledega than in many years.
>
> Visit the rapids at the mouth of Piney. Doc and I climb two tall pines; see Bald Hill, Lenora Prairie, Checotah Prairie, and hills along the Canadian.
>
> . . . There is an old bullfrog in a hole of water near us, and every evening he blows on his bass horn. The whip-poor-will makes a peculiar noise when flying after the female, that I have never heard before. He utters a hoarse caw, and at the same time audibly claps his mandibles together. This sound is made only during courting season. The crows caw continuously in a wild, rock gorge making out into the mountains above our camp. I suspect there are

> young crows up there. Doc brings two young flickers to camp. We take them back to their home — a hole in a dead birch limb. Mother delighted.
>
> . . . We are drifting on idle oars, eaves dropping on nature. Doc calls my attention to a strange whistle way out in the mountains, and says it is the woodspirits. The old Creeks tell of Cha-cha-nah, who whips trees. He is tall, heard only at night, and seen only when the sun looks small in mist. Whoever sees him straightway becomes a good hunter.

This journal entry shows Posey's commitment to basic competency in Muscogee Creek land knowledge through his ability to narrate the particulars of his Creek environment.

In another passage, this one from Posey's journal "Notes Afield," written in the Spring of 1902,[3] the author entitles a passage "Creek Spring Flowers": "The curlish spring flower — so far as I have observed — is the Bluet (Houstonia). In Creek it would be called Ho-lot-to-che. Common in open woods and unplowed fields during February and March, the ground in places being over sprinkled with them." Here Posey makes the connection between Creek land and Creek language, naming his flower in Creek, just as in the preceding passage he ends with a discussion of the Creek word for the woods spirit, *Cha-cha-nah*.

This movement from Creek landscape to Creek language and Creek culture represents Posey's work more generally in which he attempts to dramatize the smallest details of daily life in regards to exploring their Creek significance. He makes a similar connection in the river journal published by F. S. Barde when he says,

> About 2 o'clock we reach the mouth of Piney, up which we turn for half a mile, and seek a camping place in the shadow of the pines. I failed to mention the largest and most beautiful island we have yet seen. It was several miles below Dog Town. It rises up from the middle of the river with its rounded miniature forest of willows, sycamores, etc. We name it Yahola, the name of my boy, meaning "echo"

in Creek.

One of the important stylistic feature's of Posey's writing is his mock-epic style often discussed by Posey scholars because it is such an important part of the Fus Fixico letters. Posey playfully elevates events, meetings, committees, socials, conversations, and, so on, around Eufaula, and other places in the Creek Nation, to grand proportions. These tendencies can be traced to the nature writings.

Overall, the nature journal captures Posey's romanticism. In my view, this romanticism is not merely a subjectivity that is the result of reading sentimental British poets (though I think these literary influences play into it), but a deep part of Posey's Creek personality, as well as his natural individuality, in line with his boyishness, his love of pranks and tricks. It is no wonder that Posey identified so strongly with *Choffee*, the Rabbit in Creek storytelling who embodies comedy and mischief, especially meaningful to Posey because of his invented Creek persona *Chinubbie*, an important literary beginning in his early attempts at writing at Bacone.[4]

Choffee's presence can be felt everywhere in "Notes Afield" and the river journal: Posey's dreamy delight at his discoveries in Creek country, his enthusiasms, his young spirit, his willingness to watch nature and dramatize small events. There is a link between Rabbit's abandon and creativity. In fact trickster impulses, which can sometimes be oppressive and antithetical to liberation, are at their peak when they are turned into creative activity.

When Rabbit steals fire, he hides out in a hollow stump and watches the chaos ensue that he put into motion when he ran around the woods and set everything a-blaze. People are running around trying to put the fires out. Rabbit creates his own heightened sense of drama, an epic, and steps back to watch. Posey himself takes up this vantage point by taking time to observe the natural world and creating an epic in his imagination and his writing. This attitude contributes significantly to Posey's mock epic style. One can see a version of the epic in nature in this passage from "Notes Afield" about a battle Posey witnessed in which he describes the fate of a wasp:

> June 26. I have just witnessed a tragedy — a struggle to the death between a black wasp and a leaf worm three times as long as the wasp — a great burly fellow. I was lying in my hammock reading when all of a sudden something fell on me out of thick foliage above. In investigation I found a black wasp and a leaf worm struggling in my hammock fiercely. I shook them out and so separated them; but in a moment the wasp flew at the worm and fastened itself to its neck. The worm plowed, squirmed, wriggled, and coiled around his antagonist heroically but to no purpose. The wasp ate into its head rapidly and soon overcame it. When the worm ceased its struggle somewhat, the wasp fastened to it about midway of its body and gnawed out a pellet of hide and flesh. Then it flew up, circled several times around the hammock and disappeared. I wondered if it would return. Sure enough in about five minutes it came back and cut out another pellet and bore it away as the cause of the first. I went to dinner. The flies, ants, gnats, etc. were industriously working [a]way with the worm's carcass in the wasp's absence. I suppose the wasp deposited the pellets in the cells of its nest. The wasp never used its sting during the combat.

Posey will employ this same method in the Fus Fixico letters to dramatize human events around Eufaula, and it seems evident that his tendency to keenly observe the smallest of details in the natural world and turn them into epic corroborates his ability to turn the local vicissitudes of his fellow countrymen into the stuff of high drama. This ability of Posey's to make narrative from intimate observations of nature, and to do the same with the lives of his rural compatriots, has its roots in his profound knowledge of his home landscape.

Another feature of Posey's writing in the Fus Fixico letters that has often been discussed is his unique phrasing, his ability to turn around clichés or well-known aphorisms by subverting them with Creek English, and to represent in dialogue really unusual expressions. Posey

could take something from Browning or Shakespeare or the scriptures, put it in the mouth of his Creek-English speaking characters, and so thoroughly Indianize it that many readers would not be able to recognize the quote's European origins. It is almost like Posey has taken a dare: "Give me the most stereotypical European phrase you can think of, and I'll make it so Creek you won't know it's European anymore." There is a spirit in Posey that cannot be reduced to the clichéd hybridity, mediation, and bicultural composition theories that have dominated contemporary Native literary analysis because Posey's writing often involves transformation rather than mediation as he takes European material and paints over its white background, creating a new canvas of his own making.

That Posey had an eye and ear for strange things, another aspect of his *Choffee* personality, can be attibuted to this ability to write so specifically in regards to Creek land. Take this arresting image, for example, from "Notes Afield."

> April 5. While Mr. Atkins and myself were rowing on Wewoka today we witnessed what we never before saw or heard of — a swamp rabbit sitting shoulder-deep in water among the gnarled roots of a beech tree as if that was his house. He never moved until we jammed the prow of our boat against the roots of the beech — when he hopped through the water to the bank and disappeared in the woods. Perhaps he was hiding from dogs or feeding on the tender bark of the beech roots.

It is no accident that Posey pays special attention to the antics of Rabbit, of *Choffee*, and his ways of evading dogs, given that *Choffee* and his trickiness is a deep part of Posey's own personality. The same committment to things queer, a spirit to search out deviations in nature, as in this passage about Rabbit hunkered down in the beech roots, also pervades Posey's prose writing as he searches for the unlikely Creek phrase, the startling bit of dialogue that takes the reader by surprise, just as Posey is taken aback by this strange sighting of *Choffee*.

Posey's very writing style, I would say, is influenced by Creek landscape in that he seeks out oddities in the natural world and turns the images into the surprising and unusual speech of his characters. Charles Hudson, in the ethnographic classic *The Southeastern Indians*, gives much attention to the power of things anomalous to both challenge and reify categories of thought.

Posey's intimate knowlege of nature in Creek country extends to Creek geography for which he can recite the history of Creek towns. In a March 23, 1905 letter to Hains, the editor of the *Muskogee Democrat*,[5] Posey recites this town history:

> Originally Dustin was known as Spokogee, and I have been curious to know why the change in the name was made. Upon inquiry I have learned that the change in the name was made to humor the whim of President Dustin of the Fort Smith and Western Railroad, who had signified a wish to have some town along the line named for him, holding out as an inducement a promise to contribute liberally to the substantial upbuilding of the town so named. Somewhat after the fashion of the women of the ancient legend who sacrificed their beautiful hair for bowstrings, Spokogee changed its poetic and musical name to Dustin for a division point on the Fort Smith and Western Railroad. But it is observed that the passenger trains of the eastern and western divisions remain overnight at Weleetka after making their daily runs. Only the local freight trains spend the night at Dustin.
>
> . . . Speaking of Dustin recalls Hanna and Slumka. The last was founded by Tony Proctor and named for a fullblood Indian woman — the wife of Hopyoche, who is high in the councils of the Snake faction. At present, this new town is in its swaddling clothes and consists only of a postoffice and a grocery store, all under one roof. Its chief claim to notice is that it is located on historic ground — the old Weogufky Square.

When Posey writes fiction in the form of the Fus Fixico letters, he does not abandon this geographical realism, he employs it just as fully, using his knowledge of the specifics of these actual places as the jumping off point for his imagination. His ability to let his fancy run rampant and yet, literally, keep his writing tied to the earth, through the concrete naming and description of places within the Creek Nation, as well as its families, town histories, and traditional narratives, is one of the strong points of his artistry. Imbedded in this kind of writing are clues as to what constitutes Creek critical contexts. In contemporary Native literature, these techniques are still relevant — some of the best writing has been that which advances sovereignty through naming and describing concrete, regonizable places within tribal geographies and relating these to the practices of nationhood.

It is interesting to note that being familar with his home landscape, and making it the subject of his writing, also corroborates with Posey's ability to write about Creek and Indian Territory politics. Being grounded in the land enables him to narrate the politics of the land. There is a striking difference between the direct political discussion in the Fus Fixico letters and the somewhat political conservatism of many contemporary Native works, at least in terms of the way they usually emphasize narratives of personal recovery rather than overt tribal politics. Compare, for example, the direct naming and commentary in the Fus Fixico letters regarding the territory committees, the separate statehood movement, individual members of the Dawes commission, U. S. Congressmen, railroad interests, Creek political office holders, the Creek National council, the Snake resistance leaders and so on. I am wondering what would be the equivalent of this in contemporary Native literature?

Posey's work might call us to some kind of return to the evocative rendering of landscapes coupled with artful discussions of politics. Surely there are ways that fictional prose can serve both ends, especially for the purposes of tribal writers creating works of the imagination to contribute to the on-going survival of their cultures. Posey's political discussions do not weaken the aesthetics of the Fus Fixico letters. In fact, the very basis for many of the stories and

characterization arises naturally out of political events. This is an amazing accomplishment. Posey saw an opportunity to bring his fiction writing skills to bear on the campaign for the separate state movement.

My plea for tribal specificity, I hope, is not a denial of the need for new Native stories that break with old patterns or an attempt to claim only one kind of Indian story as "authentic." Contemporary Native fiction should reflect the broad range of Indian diversity. One cannot deny, for example, that the majority of the U. S. Indian population now lives in urban areas away from reservation and home communities, and it is necessary and natural for fiction writers to represent this post World War II diaspora.

Yet urban stories, just as homeland stories, require a sense of place; urban stories happen on streets and corners and in houses and restaurants in specific locales — on Hennepin in Minneapolis or May Avenue in Oklahoma City or the industrial docks of Oakland. There are Indian communities in all these places that should be part of the backdrop of Indian fiction that takes place there. Indians have a history in these cities, as well as a history back in the places of their origins. Further, as a baseline requirement, narratives that claim to be tribal, it seems to me, must demonstrate some kind of connection to tribes. If a story has no connections to a specific landscape, in what sense can it be an Indian story? What are we to make of fiction in which one cannot discern what city or geographical location the story takes place in, what tribes the characters belong to, what Indian communities they are a part of?

Some might argue that a discernible "Native philosophy" still pervades the story, but, how, if the relationship between narrative and landscape is so severely ruptured? What happens to tribal sovereignty when narrative is cast in the context of such geographical and cultural ambiguity? Is a pan-tribal sense of indigeousness enough if national roots are abandoned in order to achieve such a unifying consciousness? Might pan-tribal unity be strengthened by a strong sense of grounding in home culture and land? These questions seems to me important to issues in Native literature.

In Posey's case, his river journals and "Notes Afield," as the titles indicate, are sketches that he intended to develop more fully later. Had he lived long enough, it would have been interesting to see what became of Posey's nature writings, especially given that he was a better prose writer than a poet. Perhaps he would have come to a place of such retrospection and introspection that he could have, for instance, produced a work as accomplished as Osage writer John Joseph Matthews *Talking To The Moon*,[6] Matthews's recollection of ten of his years living among the Blackjack trees of Oklahoma Osage country during the 1930s.

Matthews's masterpiece establishes something of a benchmark for tribal writers in terms of naming concrete details about their home landscape and exploring the significance of those details. Whether or not Posey could have written as artistically and evocatively as Matthews will never be known because of Posey's early death, yet he certainly had as much life-long experience in Creek country as Matthews had in Osage country. Admittedly, Posey did not achieve this level of artistry in the nature journals because of their fragmentary nature when compared to Matthews's very well-developed, long-term view of personal and tribal tenure on Osage land in *Talking to the Moon*.

What Posey caught as brief glimpses in his nature writings, Matthews developed into a well-articulated philosophy. The very structure of Matthews's book is based on a description of each Osage moon of the year and how the landscape changes during this time period. He is able to make these observations based on ten years of living in Osage country watching what happens in the various seasons, not to mention his childhood growing up on Osage land before he was a writer interested in documenting such things in print.

His month-by-month description of life in the Blackjacks depends on *summary*, on having observed those months over a period of many years and summarizing his observations over time. Posey's experiences across Creek country were certainly as substantial as Matthews's on Osage land—from Posey's childhood on his father's ranch and leased farmlands to life in Eufaula as a country journalist to

political offices in the Creek National council to floating down the *Oktahutche* — Posey had the raw material to produce a superlative work on the meaning of Creek landscape. He never had the chance, due to his early death.

The Fus Fixico letters,[7] however, are another matter. Posey's unusual — even cutting-edge — creativity which he demonstrates in the letters might indicate that he could have written a superlative work on the Creek natural world as well, had he lived long enough to develop his nature journals. (And, from the perspective of some Creek traditionals, had he not become involved in land speculation after statehood, buying and selling tribal allotments, an unsavory activity that may have cut his life short).

Men like Posey and Matthews are examples of writers capable of exploring the landscape with a rare intimacy, a Native artistry that is timeless, just as relevant to today's contemporary Native writings as to their own time.

The importance of this kind of groundwork, I believe, is increasing over time because the land provides a constant against cultural deterioration; which is to say, no matter what happens with language and culture, the land remains, and, if jurisdiction over the land is protected, the people always have somewhere to return. Some element of culture will always remain, if a relationship to the land is maintained. Native authors, through their writings, must create this sense of place and preserve and re-invent these relationships to tribally-specific landscapes, for the continuance of the tribes.

Tribal specificity is a central issue that reaches beyond fiction and poems. The second wave of Native creativity, which has continued to produce some works of brilliance, has also fostered some junk literature. Not surprisingly, we also see some junk jobs, junk job candidates, junk critical perspectives, and junk teaching pedagogies.

Sometimes one of the most important job qualifications these days to land a job that is specifically advertised as a Native literature position is having no experience reading, writing about, or teaching Native literature. I do not think I need to point to examples of major universities who have hired persons, both Native and non-Native, who

have no connections whatsoever to Indian communities and who have no experience in the field of Native literature. In short, they lack the kind of experience Posey and the tribally-specific writers have always cherished. The last MLA session I went to — I have not returned since — was a panel where scholar after scholar stood up during the question and answer period and made the following statement: "I am teaching Native American literature at (pick your major university). I have never read any Native literature before. Do you all think there is anything I should read?"

Today's theoretical madness, which suggests there is no such thing as race or identity or culture outside of people's imaginations, fully supports such hires. In fact, I can virtually guarantee to young scholars when they sit face to face in front of a search committee during a job interview, the first question coming out of the starting gate will be "What can you do for us other than teach Native literature?"

They will hound you to teach Postcolonial Theory, Creative Writing, anything but Native literature, especially if you are applying for a Native lit position. It is bad enough being the only Native literary specialist in the entire university, and then, once you are there, they like to keep their Indian boys running, to coin a phrase. You end up teaching most everything but Native literature. Because you only get to teach one or two Native literature courses, your approach to the subject, by necessity, has to be a survey, given you have one or two classes in which you have to say everything there is to say about Native writings.

Dreams of developing a regular sequence of Native literature courses according to genres and time periods becomes a hazy, distant memory since most of your time is taken up with Postcolonial Theory or Creative Writing or The Minority Experience in the U. S. or other such courses. Specific grounding in a particular tribal community usually works against you in terms of actually getting hired for one of these jobs. These frustrations can be interpreted in a number of different ways, one of which might be a serious lack of commitment to tribal-specificity in hiring.

These are not happy times.

Little wonder weak teaching techniques that emphasize "the Native

perspective" or "the Native paradigm" as one monolithic body of knowledge with little attention to specific tribal histories become the order of the day. Sometimes we have time to do little else, even knowing that the real value of these rather reductive terms are when they work by means of exemplification, that is to say grounding "the Native perspective" or "the Native paradigm" inside the histories of tribal nations.

Criticism has some catching up to do as well. We have yet to see a major book-length assessment of the history of Native literary approaches, a much needed examination of the critical turf. We have all the oral tradition people who believe that contemporary writing is grounded in oral stories. Maybe. But what about the Institute of American Indian Arts, for example, and the fact that they have trained poets and dramatists alongside painters? More than three thousand Native artists came out of that school, a tremendous impact given the size of the Native arts community. Did IAIA influence Native literature? Why is no one talking about this? Again, these are histories, rooted inside specific communities, that need to be examined. Simply claiming the authority of a Native perspective cannot substitute for doing the necessary groundwork to bring to light these particulars.

To continue this line of thought for a moment, what about the fact that the oral tradition has its own literary history; that is to say, stories change over time. The stories people tell today in my community are different than the stories they told one hundred years ago. If modern writing is rooted in orality, then wouldn't the literary history of that orality have to be taken into consideration if an oral analysis is going to be applied to contemporary written works?

Is the writing of Carlos Montezuma, the most radical assimilationist of the Society of American Indian Writers from earlier this century, rooted in orality? If not, should Montezuma's writing simply be ignored? These few examples are limited in scope, given the complexity of literary criticism, but I hope they are useful in terms of pointing out the need for some very solid historical work and work grounded in tribal communities.

Finally, in terms of hegemony, by now it should be pretty darn

obvious that the powers that be who control Native literature are not going to step back and allow Indians to take over their work, head their MLA committees on Native Literature, edit their Native literary handbooks, and so on, no matter how much we complain, whine, get pissed off, or stand around and look pitiful. The real battle to be waged, where we can have some actual impact, is in our home communities, promoting Native literature among our own people through our exploration of tribally-specific intellectual legacies.

I think there is hope. I really do. We can sometimes land these university gigs, and, as long as they don't fire us, we can at least continue work that is relevant back home even if life on campus is nothing more than an uphill battle. And if they do fire us, we can go somewhere else. Because we can always imagine home.

Anywhere.

Even on a raft.

Notes

[1] All the Posey materials I am citing for this article come from the Alexander Posey Collection in the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. In a conversation with the librarian, she stated that she preferred that materials be contextualized by date rather than folder numbers since the folder numbers change as new work is added to the collection.

[2] F. S. Barde, of Guthrie Oklahoma, was a correspondent for the *Kansas City Star*. This journal of a June 1901 float trip down the Canadian was published in 1915, seven years after Posey's death in 1908. This journal, which Posey intended to develop more fully into sketches of the outdoors, is also found in the Alexander Posey Collection in the Gilcrease Museum.

[3] These are dated journal entries from March 7, 1902-July 13, 1902. The date of this particular entry is not specified, though obviously it is sometime in Spring 1902. This is housed in the Alexander Posey Collection of the Gilcrease Museum like the other Posey materials quoted in this article.

[4] A good discussion of the *Chinubbie* persona can be found in Alexia Maria Kosmider's 1998 University of Idaho Press publication entitled *Tricky Tribal Discourse: The Poetry, Short Stories, and Fus Fixico Letters of Creek Writer Alex Posey*.

[5] Although these letters to Hains are also part of the Alexander Posey Collection at the Gilcrease, they are separate materials from "Notes Afield" or the river journal that F. S. Barde published.

[6] Matthews, John Joseph. *Talking to the Moon.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1945.

[7] Posey, Alexander. *The Fus Fixico Letters.* Eds. Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr. and Carol A. Petty Hunter. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993.

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REVIEW ESSAY

The Chippewa Landscape of Louise Erdrich. **Edited by Allan Chavkin. Afterword by A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999. 213 pages. $34.95 (cloth). $16.95 (paper).**

Vanessa Hall

The first edited anthology of criticism to focus exclusively on Louise Erdrich's fiction, *The Chippewa Landscape of Louise Erdrich* is an extremely important addition to Erdrich scholarship. Since the publication *of Love Medicine: A Novel* in 1984, Erdrich—a prolific writer of fiction and nonfiction books, essays, and poetry, many in conjunction with her late husband and collaborator, Michael Dorris—has enjoyed both popular and critical success. As A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff points out in her "Afterword," "[c]urrently more scholarly articles are published each year about her work than about that of any other contemporary Native American author" (182).[1] While Erdrich resists being categorized or "pidgeonholed" as a Native American writer, and Ruoff argues that her writing explodes ethnic categorization, pointing out some of her "attempts to locate her novels outside a reservation or Indian community" *(The Beet Queen, Crown of Columbus* (co-authored with Michael Dorris), and *Tales of Burning Love),* Chavkin claims that the essays of this volume share "the tacit assumption... that Erdrich's American Indian heritage is at the foundation of her literary art" (185, 2).[2] However, Rouff's emphasis on the "non-Indian" aspects of Erdrich's fiction can be viewed as ironically deconstructing the central premise of this book. Ruoff obviously aims to counter the "'reverse discrimination'" Erdrich sees in scholars' selection of texts for classroom and critical attention (185). Despite books like *The Beet Queen's and The Crown of Columbus's* popular success, scholars tend to favor her "more Indian" novels: *Love Medicine, Tracks, and The Bingo Palace.* This collection of eight

original essays, plus an introduction and conclusion, generally follows this pattern, although its first two essays, John Purdy's "Against All Odds: Games of Chance in the Novels of Louise Erdrich," and Robert A. Motace's "From Sacred Hoops to Bingo Palaces: Louise Erdrich's Carnivalesque Fiction" incorporate discussions of *The Beet Queen* and *Tales of Burning Love.*

Chavkin explains that the purpose of this collection's emphasis and its resulting favoring of certain texts over others is because the Chippewa aspects of Erdrich's fiction are "the source of her greatest originality," and "because [they are] the source of greatest difficulty for the vast majority of non-Indian readers unfamiliar with Chippewa myth, tradition, and culture" (2). Although Ruoff draws this critical premise into question, her "Afterword" also shares in the overarching critical purposes of this volume: bringing increased critical attention to Erdrich's fiction, and demonstrating the variety of different lenses through which Erdrich's texts can be. insightfully interpreted, thus emphasizing the literary richness of her work and her status as "one of the country's most important writers" (1). Because these essays focus on the Chippewa aspects of Erdrich's fiction, the majority of the essays in this volume, though from an array of critical and aesthetic perspectives, confront the supposed American Indian stereotyping and apoliticism that Erdrich's work has been charged with.

This charge of apoliticisim and stereotyping has been expressed most famously by Leslie Marmon Silko in "Here's an Odd Artifact for the Fairy-Tale Shelf." In her review of *The Beet Queen,* Silko berates Erdrich for her lack of political and historical insight into the conditions of American Indians, for her post-modem "self-referential writing" in which "no history or politics intrudes to muddy the well of pure necessity contained within language itself' (180). Erdrich contests this attack in her 1993 interview with the Chavkins by claiming that Silko misread her novel, and that"[a]ny human story is a political story" (238). Although Erdrich stresses in her interviews that she does not want her fiction to become polemical, she also argues that "making [her] readers identify with Native American characters is political" (Chavkin xvi).[3] That Erdrich is concerned with countering common

stereotypes of American Indians becomes apparent in Chavkin's argument for the political motivations behind Erdrich's revision *of Love Medicine* and in Annette Van Dyke's essay, which focuses on the powerful, tradition "transformational power" of Erdrich's central female characters.

In "Visions and Revisions in Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*," Allan Chavkin focuses on Erdrich's republication *of Love Medicine* in 1993, a substantial revision that Chavkin argues demonstrates a "new political commitment" on Erdrich's part, as well as a desire to avoid too common misreadings of this novel, such as reviewers seeing her Native American characters as stereotypical rapists, whores, and drunks (112). Using Jack Stillinger's theory of multiple versions, Chavkin claims that each of Erdrich's texts demonstrates a "unique... aesthetic character and authorial intention," concluding that a value judgment "depends on the individual's specific political and aesthetic values" (88, 113). Focusing on the revised and added sections *of Love Medicine*, Chavkin shows how these changes depict American Indians resistance to complete cultural assimilation, offer a more affirmative vision of American Indians' situation and potential for political action, undermine stereotypes of American Indians, and offer a vision of feminism in accord with traditional American Indian culture. Also concerned with countering misreadings of Erdrich's female characters and American Indian visions of feminism, Van Dyke, in "Of Vision Quests and Spirit Guardians: Female Power in the Novels of Louise Erdrich," argues that Erdrich's central mother/daughter pairings (Fleur/Lulu, Marie/Zelda) demonstrate a "transformational power," or shared power, that embodies sexuality and the ability to take on characteristics of animals. Despite the "cultural bifurcation of Native American women," who are caught between traditional native and Euro-American definitions of womanhood, Van Dyke argues that Erdrich presents women who "exemplify a kind of power central to life on the reservation" (130-31). While several parts of Van Dyke's reading overlap Chavkin's, particularly in her discussion of Erdrich's revision *of Love Medicine* and her political motivations, Van Dyke also makes clear the importance of readers having some grounding in Chippewa culture and

mythology. Without this information, it becomes easy for some readers to misread Erdrich's female characters as "sluts" or victims, as early reviews of Erdrich's fiction indicate.

In "Sacred Hoops to Bingo Palaces," Robert A. Morace offers a Bakhtinian reading that seems particularly apt for Erdrich's richly diverse and colorful fiction. Although Morace resists any "conclusive conclusion" in critical readings of Erdrich's work and argues for the limitations of critics and reviewers treating Erdrich's works in terms of "survival and affirmation"—a goal which Chavkin argues Erdrich implicitly works for in her revision *of Love Medicine*—like Charkin, Morace shows the importance of Erdrich's American Indian vision of feminism and community and demonstrates how Erdrich's complex and multifaceted characters and fiction resist stereotypes or easy categorization (42). Influenced by Paula Gunn Allen's positing of traditional Native American gynocracy in *The Sacred Hoop,* Morace argues that Erdrich's "use of camivalizing techniques supports the communal, egalitarian values that... characterize traditional Native American culture and thereby offer an alternative to... monologic Euro-American culture" (36-7). Because Morace extols the open, democratic, and inconclusive "camivalesque power" of Erdrich's fiction, he objects to the more political "extremities" of Allen's writing, as well as of Erdrich's own. His criticism of *The Bingo Palace* indicts its consistency, limited communal voice, and its implicit treatment of the gambling debate and the American Indian Movement. The most "topical" of Erdrich's novels, Morace concludes that *The Bingo Palace* is Erdrich's most "limited" novel, her least camivalesque. In turn, Morace's argument here, and almost exclusive reliance on Bakhtinian theory, seems limited given the complexity and centrality of these issues in American Indians' lives, which Erdrich seeks to portray imaginatively and realistically.[4] Also, Erdrich's treatment of these issues and political concerns certainly reaches no "conclusive conclusion," although they may point to a potential Native American "victory" over circumstance, as Nancy Peterson demonstrates.

While Morace's discussion of Erdrich's "comic grotesquerie," which plays off "the bodily points at which self and world intersect,"

emphasizes how humor functions in her novels to reinforce communalist ideals, in "Indian Humor and Trickster Justice in *The Bingo Palace,* Nancy Peterson argues that through her deployment of humor, Erdrich "insists that readers recognize Indians not as tragic victims but as comic actors and agents" (39, 162). Although, as Peterson argues, *The Bingo Palace* resists resolution and "strikes a kind of balance between rebirth and death that is analogous to the situation of contemporary Native Americans," she also locates an "unprecedented development" in this novel, the movement from humor as a "survival strategy and healing ceremony" to "a new kind of Indian humor rising out of a triumphant laughter and (postmodern) trickster justice" (175, 164). Central to Peterson's argument is the belief that Native American culture and traditionalism need not be viewed as antithetical to postmodernism, as critics such as Owens imply: "[Native American writers] work for the most part consciously outside the concerns of postmodern theorists" (19). Focusing largely on the "postmodern insistence upon the fragmented sense of self," Owens argues that many Native American authors work toward recovery of selfhood by realigning their characters with their traditional past and cultures (19). Peterson, however, distinguishes between "the aesthetic effects of postmodernism... and the historical situation of postmodernity"; adapting Native traditionalism to contemporary American and global postmodern cultural and historical reality are both possible, and perhaps necessary "oppositional strategies" for contemporary Native Americans (Grewal, Kaplan 4).[5] This is illustrated by Erdrich's own employment of the language of postmodernism, emphasizing "gaming, chance, play," as well as her tricksters' occasional success at "manipulating mass media and various postmodern technologies for their own purpose"; Fleur's "indecipherable," "elusive" laughter at the end of *The Bingo Palace* signifies Flenr's foreseeing of "bingo justice" as a means to regain stolen tribal lands (172-73, 176).

Peterson's essay thus counters the "vanishing Indian" stereotype still prevalent in the American imagination and reflected in the media, a mythology central to continuing American colonialist perspectives and

treatment of American Indians and contributing to the absence of recognition and reprisal for the genocide and colonial conditions American Indians did, and continue, to encounter. Emphasizing the need for a "useful" critical analysis of contemporary Indian life, Sidner Larson contends that there has not been "sufficient discussion of the continued genocide under which most of the survivors of the American Holocaust still exist" (48-49). That "loss need not be irrevocable; colonialism can be countered," as John Purdy argues in "Against All Odds: Games of Chance in Louise Erdrich's novels" is an underlying theme in Erdrich's work, and another unifying concern of many of the essays in this volume: via external means and intervention, through Erdrich's employment of "ethnic signs" in an effort to "trap" her reader, as Catherine Rainwater argues; as Peterson argues in the essay discussed above; and as Purdy demonstrates in his in-depth discussion of chance, luck, and gambling in Erdrich's novel (9). In this context, Rainwater's complex essay proves particularly interesting. Contrary to critics' charges of Erdrich's political apathy, Rainwater demonstrates how Erdrich's artistic subtlety becomes a countercolonial, reappropriative act, shifting many readers' Euro-American perspective to one m sympathy with a Native American worldview. She claims that Erdrich's employment of ethnic signs, through the tropes of drowning, and visual and aural snares, becomes a "'[h]ook' . . . help[ing] to clear a space in the reader's mind for expanded interpretive possibilities; it redefines the position of the reader with regard to the text, now conceived of as an opportunity to participate in, or to resist, the designs of the storyteller" (157).[6]

Lacking the implicit or explicit political interest of the essays I have so far discussed, William Scheick's and Robert F. Gish's essays seem somewhat out of place in this volume, and also the least successful, although they contribute to the anthology's diverse approaches and incorporate discussion of the Chippewa aspects of Erdrich's writing to varying degrees. In "Narrative and Ethos in Erdrich's 'A Wedge of Shade,"' Scheick applies an approach from art criticism to Erdrich's work, attending to detail (Erdrich's short story 'A Wedge of Shade') "to see better what is reprised throughout Erdrich's

work as a whole, [to maybe] perceive better the ethos informing her subject matter" (118). Expressing his discontent with the "absence of satisfying integration of character identity and overall narrative design," the '"lost coherence'" of Erdrich's work, Scheick concludes through a close reading of "A Wedge of Shade" that Erdrich's seeming antitheses in the story, her "fragmented narratives, are "broken circles, piecemeal arcs, [are] all apparently mysteriously inclined toward some distant completion or revelation" (126). Scheick concludes that the reader's discontent with the incoherence of Erdrich's work may induce a sense of marginality, and thus enable "compassionate intuition" for others in the same position; overall, Erdrich's technique allows the reader to "sense the mysteriousness of being" (128). This reading seems somewhat contrived, particularly applied to what Morace terms Erdrich's "carnivalesque fiction." The cultural "bifurcation" and confusion that Van Dyke (influenced by Paula Gunn Allen) locates as the central dilemma facing Native American women seems to be the underlying reason behind Erdrich's characters' fragmentation. Her characters' strength seems to result from their adherence, to whatever degree possible, to traditional values, or when they, as Peterson argues, "figure out how to set in motion traditional strategies and goals adapted to contemporary conditions" (172). The multiple, complex, and shifting perspectives and conditions of Erdrich's novels and characters would seem to resist Scheick's idea that the "key" to Erdrich's often puzzling novels could be located in one short story. Given that Scheick focuses on the confusion of identity in Erdrich's fiction, his own confusion of characters' identities in *The Beet Queen*—he claims that Dot's mother, Celestine, and her "Aunt" Mary are sisters, whereas the beginning of the novel establishes that there is no biological connection between the two friends; Aunt Mary is white, like many of the characters in the novel is ironic, indicating, perhaps, the lack of careful reading which Erdrich claims resulted in Silko's criticism of her work.

In "Life into Death, Death into Life: Hunting as a Metaphor and Motive in *Love Medicine,"* Robert F. Gish focuses on the chapters "Wild Geese" and "Love Medicine" to argue that the hunt is a "controlling metaphor" of *Love Medicine,* and to "demonstrate how

much of the motive and metaphor, the sequence and linkage of the 'love stories' of Nector Kashpaw and Marie Lazarre, of June Morrissey and Gordie Kashpaw are established amidst the polarities and associations of hunter/hunted, the crucified and the resurrected" (69). He concludes that "the motives and metaphors of the hunt, life into death, death into life, converge into the regenerative and reaffirming potency *of Love Medicine"* (82). Most troubling about Gish's reading is his uncritical combination of Christian imagery (with the motifs of crucifixion and resurrection, and the comparison of Eli and Nector to the Old Testament Esau and Jacob) with the "obscure traditional Cree (and Chippewa) mythic ways" (69).[7] Although Erdrich certainly employs Christian imagery in Love Medicine, her treatment of Christianity, explicitly Catholicism, is far more critical and ambivalent than Gish's essay would lead the reader to believe. Gish's description of the novel's male hunters being "long removed from the older, more authentic, and triumphant traditional time of Cree/Chippewa elders and ancestors," seems both to romanticize the Indian past and imply that these traditions are diminished or dying—claims that implicitly support the "vanishing Indian' mythology so destructive to contemporary American Indian culture. In her interview with the Chavkins, Erdrich demonstrates the danger of trying to view Chippewa traditional ways and Christianity synthetically, when native people faced with these far different religious beliefs are "[t]orn... honestly torn" (230). Later in the interview, Erdrich speaks of the political events implicitly treated in *Love Medicine: "the* effects of Roman Catholicism, missionary zealots, terminations, boarding schools, The Great Depression, World War II, Vietnam, and the siege of Wounded Knee" (252). The company that Roman Catholicism and missionary zealots keep here seems to work explicitly against the easy blend Gish seems to find between these two far different religious and ethical perspectives; a synthesis contrary to many of the writers' approaches in this volume, which locate the characters' fragmented identities as resulting from these competing worldviews. As Sidner Larson points out, "Christian theology that advertises a bad end for this world anyway, encourages... individuals to devalue and exploit it"—a far different relationship to the world and

hunting than that embedded in the traditional American Indian worldview, and one that Larson believes can ultimately "rationalize... moral wars or justifiable genocide" (60). Rather than finding the possibility for rebirth or resurrection in a blend of Christianity and Native American mythology, Larson concludes that "ambivalence and tension" resulted, sometimes in paralysis (92).

Despite these few criticisms, *The Chippewa Landscape of Louise Erdrich* proves to be a valuable resource for scholars and readers interested in Louise Erdrich's fiction. Written by some of the most distinguished scholars of Native American literature, these essays, through a wide range of critical approaches and perspectives, succeed in enriching readers' understanding of Erdrich's work, and in providing the historical grounding and contextualizing necessary for fully appreciating her novels and the depth of her aesthetic, political, and humanitarian insight. This anthology also provides a valuable selected bibliography of Erdrich's books and essays as well as an extensive list of selected criticism.

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Notes

[1] The MLA Bibliography verifies this claim. Overall, more scholarly essays have been published on Leslie Marmon Silko's work. Perhaps surprisingly, more criticism has been published to date in scholarly journals on Erdrich's work than on N. Scott Momaday's.

[2] As interviews with Erdrich attest, she resists ethnic categorizations because they implicitly marginalize her writing and render her writing less accessible and therefore less relevant to "mainstream" Americans. Erdrich's claiming of her multi-ethnic heritage and the broad ethnic assortment of her fictional characters demonstrate her aversion to essentializing her Native American identity. In her 1985 interview with Laura Coltelli, Erdrich claims, "I don't distinguish the two. I don't think American Indian literature should be distinguished from mainstream literature. Setting it apart and saying that people with special interest might read this literature sets Indians apart too ..... I want to be able to present Indian people as sympathetic characters, nonstereotypes, characters that any non-Indian would identify with" (Chavkin *Conversations* 25, 26).

[3] Ironically, as Lois Owens points out in *Other Destinies*, Silko "certainly does not assume in her own fiction" the rhetorical and political stance she seems to demand of Erdrich in this review" (206).

[4] For a far different perspective on Erdrich's work, see Elizabeth Cook-Lynn's "The American Indian Fiction Writers." Writing from a tribal, American Indian nationalist perspective, Cook-Lynn argues that Erdrich's (along with other prominent American Indian fiction writers')

lack of grounding in the traditional culture she writes of, her representation of characters assimilation and fragmentation, and her lack of *overt* anti-colonial politics, misrepresents the "meaningfulness of indigenous or tribal sovereignty in the twenty-first century .... lea[ving] American Indian tribal peoples in the country stateless, politically inept, and utterly without nationalistic alternatives" (85).

[5] Peterson distinguishes between the "theoretical and linguistic" postmodernism of Vizenor and Erdrich's interest in "using native storytelling modes in postmodern, postindustrial contexts" (179). For a more extended discussion of postmodernism versus postmodernity see Grewal and Kaplan's "Introduction" in *Scattered Hegemonies.*

[6] For an expanded discussion of Native American authors' narrative management of power, see Rainwater's "Acts of Deliverance: Narration and Power," in *Dreams of Fiery Stars: The Transformation of Native American Fiction*, which incorporates much of this essay and further contextualizes it.

[7] Also disturbing for this reader is Gish's opening attack and gross generalization on those "zealots who know animals mainly as pets [and] clamor stridently for animal 'rights' in protest of the crass huntsman—Indian or non-Indian characters, real or fictive, regarded with the same abhorrence directed to medical researchers who experiment on dogs and monkeys" (68).

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BOOK REVIEWS

Moore, MariJo. *Red Woman with Backward Eyes*. Candler, NC: rENEGADE pLANETS, 2001. ISBN # 0-9654921-7-6.

With the publication of this collection of short stories, MariJo Moore has securely established her position in the ranks of the top American Indian writers. The ten stories in *Red Woman with Backward Eyes* are written with style and finesse. They bear the mark of an experienced and gifted craftsperson. The book's epigraph, from Gabriel Garciá Márquez's *Of Love and Other Demons*, is more than appropriate:

> 'At my age, and with so much mixing of bloodlines, I am no longer certain where I come from,' said Delaura. 'Or who I am. 'No one knows in these kingdoms,' said Abrenuncio. 'And I believe it will be centuries before they find out.

But this compilation is not simply another rehashing of the mixed-blood identity question—which is admittedly an issue in many of our lives all throughout Indian country and has played a significant role in the body of American Indian literature. While the characters, some mixed, some full-blood Cherokee, are throughout superbly wrought, with all of the struggles brought about by both the cultural and genetic blendings emerging from colonization, the book moves far beyond that, showing our strengths and ample evidence of our proud survival. Rather than being a whining litany, it is instead a cure for the broken strands of our lives, weaving Tsalagi oral tradition and culture deftly throughout the fabric of the text with subtlety and grace.

Moreover, from the title story that opens the collection to "Suda Cornsilk's Gatherings" that closes it, Moore's use of mythical realism completely captivates the reader. "Red Woman with Backward Eyes" is a vignette focusing on the orphaned daughter of a drowned woman

who is living in her grandmother's, Mama Mamie's, house, a less-than-happy situation due to the presence of a couple of harping old aunts who continually remind her of her mother's suicide and her dependent status. Despite Mama Mamie's attempts at being a nurturing, loving caretaker for the girl, the real heroine of the story is the narrator—one of the Nunnehi, the Spirit People, the Red Woman with Backward Eyes of the title. When the girl questions the cause of Spirit Woman's appearance, we get the connection between the forces of colonialism that made the girl's mother "dead long before she walked into the haven of that water" and those that shaped our ever-present ancestors:

> When I was a young girl, I was taken away from my home, from my family. Put in a place where they tried to take all of the Indianness out of me. The people there made me get on my knees, clasp my hands, look up into their heavens, and pray to a god I didn't know and could no way understand. I asked my beliefs that my eyes be rolled backward so those who were making me pray their way would leave me alone. My eyes stuck. No one bothered me after that. (24-25)

Accompanied by three black snakes, loosely reminiscent of the Uktena, and wearing her necklace of clattering bird bones, Red Woman frightens us no more than she frightens the girl, her supernatural manifestation appearing as naturally as it should within a traditional Tsalagi worldview. Yes, the hairs rise on the back of our necks with the seven circling crows and the screech owl signaling that crossing of worlds; however, the ending of the story ends up being one where the reknitting of family is an eerie, but nonetheless comforting resolution.

"Siren's Voices," the second story of the collection, features a young poet who hears—and smells—spirits, spirits who encourage her to "run away from [the] crazy people" who make up her family. But it also highlights a bit more than the first story the current of humor that runs throughout the book alongside, or perhaps wrapped up in, the pain,

just as it does in contemporary Indian existence. When Siren wants to know if her mother, whom "she had never seen . . . read anything except True Confessions and TV Guide occasionally to see if any Clark Gable movies were coming on television" got her name from Homer's Odyssey, her mother replies "between juicy chews of gum":

> 'Naw, I never read that . . . I named you Siren 'cause I heard one siren after the other going off on the night your daddy made love to me over and over 'till he was sure I was pregnant. There musta been a huge fire or robbery or somethin' somewhere in town 'cause them sirens went off all night long.' (31)

And Siren's teenage poetry, written at the behest of her ghostly visitors, brings roll-on-the-floor laughter to join the tears we shed for her:

The Rain
by Siren

Thanks for the rain
the beautiful falling silver rain.
Give us a strong storm of consolation
strong beating winds of affirmation
tiny, tiny drops of tantamount receptions
and a pot to piss in.

Rain rain rain down like a son-of-a-bitch
scattering lightning and
scaring us all into asking deeper
questions of our intentions.

Clamoring down
down down
like a whore on a hundred dollar bill
or a baby after a new thought (33-34)

The funniest story of all, however, has to be "Indian When Convenient," though not for the reasons the title might imply. Maybe it reflects a twisted sense of humor on my part, as the story starts out with a deadpan "I killed my husband this morning." However, this is coming from a woman angry that her sister—the "quiet one" whom she has "never heard be so loud"—is trying to defend her as *not* meaning to have stabbed her husband, when she *did*. "Damn, I wish she would shut up. Hell yes, I meant to. I meant to kill him and I'd do it again if I caught him doing what he was doing this morning. I should have never married the bastard. He was doomed from the moment he was born. I knew it but I've always been a sucker for a loser with dark eyes" (52).

Perhaps the humor here arises from the fact that this character says and does those things that frustrated women in abusive marriages, overloaded from every direction by everyone whom they love, co-dependently or not, *think* but don't *say* or *do*. This character takes direct action against all of the negative forces of colonization that have taken power away from some once very culturally-powerful women. Now, by no means am I, as a woman of Cherokee/Choctaw/Creek descent, saying that Cherokee women are today powerless. I personally was raised with the idea that I was certainly the equal of any man and that the household I would run someday when I grew up would be *mine*, that my children would be *mine*, some pretty traditional Cherokee thought, despite the relative assimilation of my family. And, certainly, I have seen the strong example set for me by other Cherokee women all my life—from my grandmother and great aunts in the home, to my students, Rebecca Roach and Angel Ragan, in my classroom, to Gayle Ross and MariJo Moore herself in the world of writing and storytelling, to Valerie Red Horse (we're ignoring her Lakota ancestry for a moment as this is a Cherokee essay) and Wilma Mankiller in the spheres of business and public affairs. Indeed, the personal strength exhibited by Cherokee women such as Ginny Carney and Sandi Tahmahkera gives me, in my mind, no room to make excuses for myself in regard to overcoming the obstacles in my path in life. But if you'll read Theda Perdue's *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture*

Change, 1700-1835, for instance, you'll find that Cherokee women once had much more power than we have even today. Prior to colonization and assimilation, Cherokee women, on the whole, never had to tolerate spousal abuse. Quite to the contrary, in fact, there were circumstances under which it was absolutely acceptable for Cherokee women to publicly "beat" their husbands for certain offenses (45). And this notion has survived in a particular kind of culture-hero story, ones like the one handed down to me by my grandmother in which a Cherokee woman takes a broom to her husband who has come home drunk one too many times. "Indian When Convenient" is, to me, of the same genre.

But the main character in this story doesn't just act out against a bad husband (whom, if it relieves you any, doesn't die ultimately). This woman has gone over the edge and become an anti-colonial, anti-racist, anti-misogynist warrior. "Didn't you used to be married to Sheila Big Feather for about fifteen minutes one time?" she asks the 'apple' cop from whom the story takes its name. She thinks to herself, "He's one of those who thinks he can be white by riding around in a fancy four-wheel drive and marrying a white woman. That it's OK to fuck an Indian woman, knock her up, marry her for a while, then leave her for a white woman with money" (53). Yes, this is pretty strong language—and not because of the four-letter words. And it may be too much for some to take. But it is language that takes back not only the kind of sovereignty talked about in tribal politics, but even the kind of sovereignty Chaucer wrote about, the kind women in Europe wanted when we, over here, already had it.

Each of the stories in this collection has its own merits. And, as a whole, the book is as enjoyable of a read as Sherman Alexie's *Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* or the more recent *Toughest Indian in the World*. It is well worth one's time in terms of sheer pleasure, and the complexity of the cultural allusions and magnificent use of mythical realism certainly merit more in-depth scholarly analysis. Like Suda Cornsilk in the last story, MariJo Moore clearly has the gift of story, story that continues to sustain and give life to the people. "Respect, share, remember, and persevere," the words braided

into Suda's hair, are clearly those which guide Moore's work as well. She is a writer whose work shows the promise of continuing to give us more and more as the years progress.

Kimberly Roppolo

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A Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee: with notes on the Florida and Oklahoma Seminole dialects of Creek. Jack B. Martin & Margaret McKane Mauldin. Studies in the Anthropology of North American Indians. University of Nebraska Press, 2000. 359 pp, $60 (cloth).

In and of itself, the documentation of American Indian languages is rich with historical and cultural significance. From almost the moment of their arrival in these lands, a disparate bunch—the infamous James Adair, the besieged Timberlake—recorded snippets of these languages in word lists or bemused travelogues. By the 19th Century, translation of Indian languages had become central to the work of missionaries, who often formed productive collaborations with native speakers. In time, both nonnative scholars and speakers themselves were producing works of every sort. Tugwasdi, Butrick and Brown, Pickering, Worcester and Boudinot, Boas—these are only a few of many responsible for centuries of documentation for these languages.

The resulting legacy is a singular mix of historical curiosity and thoughtful analysis, a few works published, still more collecting dust

in the backrooms and archives of universities and museums throughout the world. The value of these works is immeasurable These are treasures to be studied late into the night, like spiritual property for those with the passion. They hold mysteries and, if we're lucky, maybe even an answer or two.

Margaret Mauldin and Jack Martin's *A Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee: with notes on the Florida and Oklahoma Seminole dialects of Creek* draws directly from this rich tradition. Mauldin, a native speaker and the Creek-Seminole language teacher at the University of Oklahoma, explains that, for her, the work " . . . is like a drowning child. Do you debate how to save the child?" The simple truth and practicality of her words capture an attitude evident throughout this work. This is not just a collection of words and their various meanings. Well written, informative and accessible, it sets a standard. The authors have compiled over 11,000 entries from an array of sources, and successfully distilled potentially excruciating information into deceptively simple form, making this a valuable resource not only for scholars, but Creek students at every level of their studies.

The collaboration between Mauldin and Martin, a student of Creek since the 1980's and a respected linguist, began after an accidental meeting in 1991. Mauldin, who had just begun working on her language, went to deliver a questionnaire she had translated. Martin happened to spot the exchange and impulsively asked Mauldin to lunch. He had never met anyone who could read or write Creek. Their work together began at that lunch, like so many successful collaborations, a fortunate gift of coincidence.

From his earlier studies, Martin had come to see that Creek and Seminole were the same language. His study of Loughridge's 1890 Creek dictionary led him to suggest he and Mauldin collaborate on a new dictionary, one which would draw from both historical and modern sources. They began their work in earnest in 1994. According to Mauldin, it consumed their lives.

Among the sources drawn upon are a cache of thirty Creek stories discovered in the archives of the Smithsonian and numerous documents

from the Oklahoma Historical Society. Interviews with speakers were conducted to gather more textual data, including stories, and to check for dialectal variation and accuracy of form and meaning.

The dictionary begins with a short, but informative, post-contact history and discussion of the Muskogean people and languages, and an explanation of the sound system and orthographies. Entries are given in both Loughridge's traditional orthography and Mary Haas' phonemic form, and include over 7,000 Creek-to-English forms. In addition, there is a section on Creek placenames and an appendix with illustrations by Mauldin's daughter, Deanna.

The care taken in both the conception and production of this work is apparent at every step. The result is not simply a much needed aid for all students of Creek, but a worthy model for anyone who works with an American Indian language. These are languages to be taken seriously and treated with the same respect we give to French or Russian. Mauldin and Martin have accomplished this worthy goal.

Just as importantly, despite its relative vigor, like all American Indian languages, Creek is in grave jeopardy. As Mauldin states " . . . the work simply needs to be done", despite the difficulty of the task. This dictionary is a welcome step in the right direction and will, no doubt, serve both students and scholars of Creek for many generations to come.

Linda Jordan

***Understanding James Welch*. Ron McFarland. Understanding Contemporary American Literature Series. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 2000. ISBN 1-57003-349-8. 212 pages.**

This book offers a general overview of the career of James Welch (Blackfeet/Gros Ventre) and an introduction to the major works of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction Welch has produced over the past thirty

years. Like the other volumes in this series, *Understanding James Welch* is designed primarily as a tool for students and other "uninitiated" readers of contemporary American literature. It will likely be of most use to readers of *SAIL* as a teaching aid and classroom resource; it will be of limited interest to scholars and graduate students familiar with Welch's work and with the extensive critical response it has provoked. McFarland briefly surveys this criticism (and he includes a helpful annotated bibliography), but he develops few original readings.

Chapter one covers Welch's biographical background and the trajectory of his literary development. McFarland includes quotations from several published interviews with Welch, and he juxtaposes these with quotations from published criticism to demonstrate a certain tension between Welch's own readings of his works and those of various critics. Chapters two through seven then focus on individual texts, in the order of their publication: *Riding the Earthboy 40* (1971), *Winter in the Blood* (1974), *The Death of Jim Loney* (1979), *Fools Crow* (1986), *The Indian Lawyer* (1990), and *Killing Custer* (with Paul Stekler, 1994). McFarland's purpose is pedagogical, and his critical methodologies are largely conservative. In each chapter, he offers detailed summaries of content or plot, and he links the major work by Welch to a literary classification derived from the dominant Euro-American tradition. Thus, the poetry collected in *Riding the Earthboy 40* is discussed in terms of surrealism, *Winter in the Blood* is designated as an "American Picaresque," *The Death of Jim Loney* is read as tragedy, *Fools Crow* is aligned with the European epic tradition, and *The Indian Lawyer* is seen primarily as a "novel of intrigue." These classifications allow McFarland to define a number of literary terms for students and nonacademic readers, to speculate on Welch's possible literary influences (which McFarland describes as primarily European and Euro-American), and to compare Welch's strategies to those of authors from the European and American canons.

McFarland's readings provide an accessible and useful introduction to each of Welch's major works. The mostly conventional nature of his approach, however, will disappoint those readers

interested in exploring the possible links between Welch's literary production and American Indian oral and written literary traditions, in situating Welch within a context of American Indian activism or identity politics, or in reading Welch through the lens of contemporary multicultural, postcolonial, or "indigenous" theories. To my mind, McFarland's discussion of *The Death of Jim Loney* is the most interesting of the chapters, for it is the only one that resists offering a tidy resolution to the complex questions raised in the text, such as the motivation for Loney's assumption of guilt for the shooting of Pretty Weasel.

Welch's latest novel, *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* (2000), was still in production when McFarland was finishing his book. Nonetheless, he discusses this work briefly, based on correspondence with Welch, in chapter one and in the conclusion, including the speculation that, with its international setting, *Heartsong* "might very well prompt some comparisons with the novels of Henry James" (170-71). Although he surveys the body of Welch's work, including a synopsis of the new novel, McFarland offers few overarching conclusions or suggestions for further inquiry. He ends his overview with the safe argument, clearly directed at a mainstream audience, that the primary concern of Welch's writing to date has been an investigation of "the intricacies of personal identity" (172). While surely it has been that, it also has been so much more.

Chadwick Allen

***The Dark Island*. Robert J. Conley. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995. ISBN 0-8061-3277-9 (pb). 181 pp.**

Like each of the ten novels in Robert Conley's Real People series, *The Dark Island* (Vol. 6) provides its readers with an unforgettable look at Cherokee history-this time, through the eyes of Asquani, a

young man whose identity crisis almost results in disastrous consequences for the entire Cherokee Nation.

Asquani, as readers of *The Way South* (Vol.4 in the series) will recall, is the son of Potmaker, a Timucua woman who was impregnated by an unknown Spaniard-one of the hundreds of ruthless, gold-seeking explorers who invaded Florida—during the early sixteenth century. Potmaker is rescued from the Spaniards by a young Cherokee trader named Carrier, who subsequently marries her and takes her north to his own people. Although Carrier is a loving father to Potmaker's light-skinned, red-haired son—even teaching him the sacred writing symbols of the Cherokees—Asquani grows up feeling sorry for himself because he is not really one of the Real People.

The Dark Island is not simply the story of a young man caught between two cultures, however. It is a complex weaving of alliances and conflicts-between the Cherokees and other Indians, as well as between Indians and European invaders. In fact, it had been Carrier's dream of forging an alliance of southern Indian tribes against the encroachment of Spanish explorers that had led him to Florida and, ultimately, to the Taino captive Potmaker. Now the Spaniards are threatening to invade the land of the Real People, and a fully-grown Asquani has run away to be with the people of his biological father.

In a saga that might have been titled, "What Happens When a Rez Boy Decides to Become White," Conley takes his readers on an unforgettable visit to the Dark Island—a place the Spaniards have claimed as their own, and the island on which they hold the young Asquani captive. In the company of the Spaniards, Asquani's dream of learning to ride the *caballos*—of wearing the Spanish armor and carrying a shiny sword—dissipates rapidly. Instead, he is renamed Fortunato and assigned a job as assistant to Father Tomás, the island priest.

Very quickly, Asquani learns that it is not wise to question the teachings of Father Tomás, especially when they conflict with what he has been taught by the Real People. It is much safer to accept whatever he is taught and to prove himself a devoted convert to the Catholic faith. As Craig Womack points out, however, "When an Indian

converts to Christianity, not all of him gets converted, no matter how thorough his newfound convictions" (*Red on Red* 183). Certainly this is the case with Asquani, and disillusionment gives way to depression as he observes one of the "Christian" Spaniards mercilessly beating one of their Catawba slaves.

> The image of Alonso Velarde lashing the helpless *Indio* kept replaying in his mind. And even worse was the image that his imagination kept conjuring up against his will, the image of the wretched, nearly dead man being thrown to the vicious big Spanish dogs. 'Squani had heard the order given, had seen the man dragged away, and later he had heard the screams of the man and the baying and growling of the dogs. 'Squani had seen some violence in his lifetime . . . but nothing like the calculated, calm cruelty of the Spaniards. (79)

Not until Asquani himself becomes victim to the violence of the Spaniards, however, does he abandon his fantasy of becoming one of the white men.

> He had tried to be Spanish, and he had learned a great deal. He could speak the language with any Spaniard. He knew the Christian stories. He had even learned to read Spanish a little. He had actually read from the big book, from *La Biblia*. And all the while he had tried to explain away the stories of Spanish cruelty that he had heard from [the Cherokees]. But he had seen the cruelty. He had seen that side of the Spaniards for himself, and there was no denying it any longer . . . He did not understand the Spanish behavior, but he had learned enough to know that he would never be a Spaniard. He had been wrong about that particular desire. (165)

Robert Conley entices his readers with such an absorbing panorama of Cherokee culture and history that it is impossible to dismiss one of his narratives as merely "a story of the past." In fact, many of the issues he addresses in *The Dark Island*—Indian identity, transracial marriage, sovereignty—are as timely today as they were in the sixteenth century.

Whether you are looking for an engaging text to teach in a Native Studies course, or searching for a captivating novel to take with you on summer vacation, you will not be disappointed in Conley's historical fiction. It is only fair to warn you, though—you may find yourself unable to stop until you have read his entire ten-volume series on the Real People.

Ginny Carney

***Rainbows of Stone*. Ralph Salisbury. (Volume 43 of *Sun Tracks: An American Indian Literary Series*) Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2000. ISBN: 0-8165-2036-4. 137 pages.**

I approached Ralph Salisbury's *Rainbows of Stone* with a great deal of excitement and anticipation. As we all know, to read the list of titles from the University of Arizona's *Sun Tracks* series is to read a Who's Who List of some of the very best American Indian authors and poets—Joy Harjo, Simon Ortiz, Carter Revard, Greg Sarris, Wendy Rose, Luci Tapahonso, et. al. It's also the series that gave us Scott Momaday's *The Names* and Joseph Bruchac's celebrated collection *Returning the Gift*. And maybe it's because of this anticipation, and the expectations generated by such an conspicuous series, that Salisbury's work, in the end, doesn't quite measure up. The poetry isn't embarrassingly bad. In fact, in places it can be quite powerful and

moving. But the overall feel of the book is clichéd and unsatisfying—a disappointment in a series where disappointments are rare.

Ralph Salisbury is from Arlington, Iowa and is of mixed heritage—Cherokee, Irish, and English. He served, as he often reminds us, as a member of a bomber crew in World War II. He received an M.F.A. from the University of Iowa in 1951, and spent his working career (1951-1994), with the exception of a Fulbright Scholarship to Norway and a short stint as a lecturer in Germany, at the University of Oregon as a Professor of English. He has published six works altogether, four collections of poetry and two of short fiction. The latest one, *The Last Rattlesnake Throw and Other Stories* (published two years before *Rainbows of Stone* in 1998) received a great deal of positive critical attention. Both his short fiction and his poetry are noted for blending his cultural traditions, both European and Cherokee, and for their confessional-style autobiographical qualities.

Rainbows of Stone, his fourth collection of poems—most of which have the word "rainbow" in the title: *Pointing at the Rainbow* (1980), *A White Rainbow* (1985)—is also said to "interweave family tales with personal and tribal history." The press release calls *Rainbows of Stone* a work that "expresses [Salisbury's] devotion to the Cherokee religion, its fidelity to its forebears, and its harmony with the forces of Nature." In the "Preface," Salisbury describes what he does, saying that although he "often speaks through the persona of an Indian, but [he is] both Caucasian … and Indian." He also says that he is "not part Indian, part white, but wholly both." And, indeed, the tension between the different aspects of Salisbury's sensibility is apparent in his work, a tension the reader feels, but is often unable to reconcile or even fully understand. For instance, there are moments when there is great anger toward America and yet there are other moments when the poems seem almost to celebrate the country's values. This sort of tension—which in itself might be a powerful tool of the poet—never seems to be fully accounted for or resolved in the poems themselves, giving them an unfinished quality, an incompleteness that tends to render them insubstantial.

The work is divided into four sections: "Leaving My People," "A Man Hunt among the Dead," "Vanishing Americans Battle to Regain a Vanishing World," and "Death Songs." Each section has anywhere from twenty to thirty poems, ranging from a few lines to a few pages per poem. The first section, "Leaving My People," is a grab bag of images from Salisbury's childhood and early adulthood, focusing only briefly on his early memories of school and growing up on the farm. The bulk of the section speaks of Salisbury's war experiences, and is often confusing in its stance toward them—expressing the most bitter anger at the war and at the country that so hypocritically used Indian soldiers in some places while at the same time celebrating the overall sense of camaraderie and the poet's own maturing process that the war certainly nurtured. But the lines between these various sentiments are not clearly drawn or even consistent.

The second section, "A Man Hunt among the Dead," is a little less ambiguous. Here, the poet evokes history and makes a litany of the dead—Sacajawea, the Navajo of Canyon de Chelly, the Sioux of the Great Plains. All of the poems, of course, lament the passing of these people and the waning of their cultures. And some of them are compelling, especially the ones that speak directly to the Cherokee experience. One poem, "'Katooah,' We Say," speaks of the phenomenon of adopting a new language and a new name for your people. Salisbury writes: "[b]ut Yunwiya now call each other 'Cherokee,' the Choctaw insult name 'Cave Men,' altered by White contempt, the verbal victor." In fact, when Salisbury drops the grandiose evoking of historic figures, the name-dropping of Indian heroes and Indian fighters, and speaks instead of his own, or even his people's past, his poetry can be quite thought provoking. One of his poems in this section, "Sometimes Likely" has this quality:

> If you look white
> like I do
> and work in the South
> like I do
> and want to go on making a living for

your woman and children
like I do
there are some
of your people you are
sometimes
likely to forget.

If more of Salisbury's poetry had this sort of honesty and direct correlation with his own experience, the collection might have been greatly improved.

The third section, "Vanishing Americans Battle to Regain a Vanishing World," the section which begins with the title poem, is by far the strongest section of the book. In it, Salisbury's message is environmental and consistent in its thrust. This, Salisbury argues, is what Indians can give the world—a more healthy relationship to the environment. And here, too, he celebrates others who carry this message—poets like Jim Barnes and Simon Ortiz, for instance. But the power of this section comes not from the sometimes clichéd environmentalist imagery or from the literary name-dropping. The power of this section comes from an honest grounding in the role of the ancestors in this ongoing process—and in the responsibility Salisbury feels toward them. Poems like "A Father's Bear Dream" convey that responsibility very well. In the poem, the father dreams he's a bear, carrying a child in his mouth, walking over fields of snow, trying to find the "deep dens of the Old Ones." He feels fear, almost panic, that his time will run out.

I must go beyond the end of the trail
my parents made,
my feet in their tracks,
their child between my teeth,
a few breaths, maybe, more until we're there.

The final section, "Death Songs," consists of songs and prayers to relatives and friends who have died—Salisbury's parents, his

grandparents, etc. Many of these poems are moving tributes, but are just as often esoteric and hollow and distant. The collection ends with the poet's own death song and his eventual dissipation into the natural world.

If you read *Rainbows of Stone*, you won't be wasting your time. In fact, you might just find a few poems that will stay with you, pieces worth remembering and coming back to. But some of it will likely seem trite, perhaps even corny, and you'll probably be left wondering which Ralph Salisbury is speaking where, and what does he really think? Sometimes the answer to these questions seems absolutely clear and the resulting poetry strong and lean. But sometimes those questions can't be answered at all and the result is poetry that can often lull and whine to contrary and competing purposes. For a series such as *Sun Tracks*, that probably should have been unacceptable.

Edward W. Huffstetler

***Nationalist Myths and Ethnic Identities: Indigenous Intellectuals and the Mexican State*. Natividad Gutiérrez. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999. ISBN: 0-8032-7078-X (pbk) 242 pages.**

The early relationship between Europeans and Native Americans in Mexico differs notably from that of their counterparts in British North America. In North America, Indians confronted British settlers who sought to displace or kill them, and the two groups remained socially segregated. In modern times, U.S. textbooks have accorded a relatively minor role to Native American history. In contrast, the Spaniards who settled in Mexico wished to exploit Indian labor, often a brutal policy, but not a genocidal one. Unions between Spaniards and Indians were relatively common, resulting in a large and ultimately influential group of *mestizos*, people of mixed European-Indian descent. Mexican history celebrates its Aztec past and venerates Benito

Juárez, a Zapotec Indian who rose to the presidency. Given this situation, one might wonder if the Mexican state would be sensitive to its indigenous groups and if Indian professionals today would feel a substantial stake in the Mexican state.

The answer to these questions is generally "no," judging by research carried out by Natividad Gutiérrez, a senior researcher and lecturer at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. She maintains that although the state ideology utilizes elements of indigenous cultural life and the ethnic past, it does so in a way that ignores the heterogeneity of Indian groups in Mexico. Aztec history is promoted, although as a cultural heritage, it is likely to be claimed only by present day Nahua groups, leaving members of the other fifty-five Indian ethnic groups in a peripheral position within the national culture. In fact, the nationalist ideology has denied all Indians a central place in the modern Mexican nation; this place is reserved for *mestizos*, Spanish speakers who do not identify with indigenous communities.

The book's main focus, found in the middle chapters, is on the myths and symbols central to Mexican nationalist ideology and on the response of three groups of educated Indians to these myths and symbols. Some of the most interesting information comes from interviews with ten Indian professionals involved in activities such as education, publishing, and cultural revitalization, all of whom are bilingual and maintain close ties with their Indian communities. The excerpts from these interviews, although short and sometimes lacking in context, provide a window into the views and attitudes of this elite. The two groups of Indian students—ten students in a master's-level (*maestría*) program and sixty students in a bachelor's-level (*licenciatura*) program—filled out questionnaires. Their responses reflect the attitudes of a younger group than the predominately middle-aged professionals, but their comments are constrained by the questionnaire format, and interpretation is often difficult, especially when nonresponses are taken into account.

Gutiérrez identifies two ethnic myths of national integration. One, which she refers to as "the foundation myth," assumes that the entire Mexican state has its roots in the foundation of the Aztec capital in

1325 at the present site of Mexico City. The other myth, the "myth of *mestizaje*," is a claim to common origin, positing a joint racial and cultural descent from Spaniards and Indians for today's population. As the author sees it, this myth follows a nationalistic agenda aimed at unifying Mexico's ethnically diverse population while ignoring the highly stratified social structure of earlier times.

Not surprisingly, most Indian professionals take a dim view of these myths and the symbols associated with them. They indicate that members of their groups either are ignorant of the foundation myth or do not find it meaningful, since they often have their own foundation stories. The comments of Bartolomé Alonzo Camaal, a Yucatec Maya writer and translator, reflect a widely-expressed alienation toward Mexican society. He states: "The Nahua people are marginal to politics and the socioeconomic structures, like the other Indian peoples of the country. The usage of Nahua stories is a reflection of a nationalistic ideology suitable for the dominant society" (p. 142). In a similar vein, many Indian professionals reject the idea of former president Benito Juárez as a hero. A Tzotzil Maya anthropologist states: "Indian peoples admire those persons who work hard and manage to overcome shortages, not 'heroes'" (p. 175). Others admire historical figures of their own ethnic group. The *licenciatura* students, in contrast, are more favorable to Juárez.

The question of Indian leadership appears again in the last chapter, where Gutiérrez examines the lack of Indian participation in public debates and negotiations over the conflict in Chiapas. She maintains that although the revolt is rooted in Indian demands for economic and social justice, Indian ideas and spokespersons have been excluded from public discussion. Judging from Gutiérrez's observations, this is due in part to the patronizing attitudes of non-Indians, but also to the nature of Indian leadership. She cites Marcos Matías, a Nahua researcher who suggests there is a three-way generational split among Indian leaders and intellectuals, which has prevented Indians from creating a unified voice. On a hopeful note he states: "An incipient thinking voice is emerging, that of a new generation of young people who are marrying the roles of the leader and the intellectual" (p. 196).

Gutiérrez also examines the changing construction of Indian identity since the Conquest, including an analysis of the process by which Indians diverged from *mestizos*. She traces this divergence back only as far as the Liberal period of the nineteenth century, to the point when Indian groups staged uprisings in response to potentially devastating measures including land seizures and forced labor recruitment. It is interesting to note that the professionals hold varying ideas of what it means to be *mestizo*. For some, *mestizos* are seen as alien exploiters, while for others, the question is more complicated, involving issues of Indian identity.

A large part of the book is devoted to an examination of various facets of Mexican nationalism, all placed within a theoretical framework combining a modernist approach with a historical-cultural one. She traces the development of indigenism (those national policies aimed at integrating the indigenous population into the Mexican nation), following its transformation from an emphasis on assimilation or *mestizaje* beginning in the 1920s to the more recent emphasis on pluralism, with its inherent conflicts with traditional nationalist ideology.

The development of public education in Mexico is discussed at length, including the ideology behind it and the political battles accompanying its evolution, as well as its relevance to rural Indian children. One of the most interesting sections is a discussion of the evolution of history textbooks for primary schools. This discussion casts light on the workings of the federal government—particularly the Ministry of Education—and its rocky relationship with the teachers' union. The following chapter is devoted to an examination of the content of the textbooks. Compared to traditional U.S. history books, these Mexican textbooks seem relatively enlightened, according an important role to indigenous culture, particularly prior to the Conquest. However, Gutiérrez is justifiably critical. Early Mexican history is primarily presented as Aztec history, ignoring the background of the numerous other indigenous groups. In addition, the material on the colonial period gives prominence to the contributions of Spanish culture and downplays indigenous contributions. Both the Indian

professionals and students surveyed agree that the textbooks fail to provide readers with an understanding of Indian society.

Another important focus of the book is the emergence of indigenous intellectuals in Mexico, whose intellectual rhetoric Gutiérrez describes as "a passionate search for ethnocentrism—recovery of indigenous cultures and languages and the revival of traditional institutions" (p. 116). Her discussion is interesting and informative, but as juxtaposition, I would have liked to hear more about how the Indian professionals perceive their own intellectual development and the emergence of the group of Indian professionals to which they belong. Their personal histories might have provided valuable insights into more general statements about Indian professionals. In the same chapter, Gutiérrez traces the development of various professional indigenous organizations. She devotes a separate chapter to Indian women writers, drawing on interviews she conducted during the 1992 Third National Meeting of Writers in Indigenous Languages. She profiles five Maya writers, looking at their concept of the crucial role placed by women in maintaining and transmitting indigenous culture.

Along with books such as Linda King's *Roots of Identity* and Fischer and Brown's *Maya Cultural Activism in Guatemala*, this book offers insights into the emerging group of Indian intellectuals in Mesoamerica and their relationship to state systems. Readers interested in a cross-cultural look at the Native American experience in this hemisphere should find both similarities and differences with the North American experience on a variety of topics.

Susan Garzon

***Stories That Make the World: Oral Literature of the Indian Peoples of the Inland Northwest* by Rodney Frey. Norman, Oklahoma: U of Oklahoma P, 1995. ISBN 0-8061-3131-4. 264 pages.**

Rodney Frey recorded the stories of Lawrence Aripa, Tom Yellowtail and other elders as part of a project initiated by the Language Arts Curriculum Committee in Coeur D'Alene, Idaho. His appreciation of storytelling, and his efforts to incorporate oral literatures into the school curriculum, derives from his time spent on the Crow Reservation as a graduate student and instructor of Native American Religion. He conveys his cross-cultural understanding of the requisite contexts through a penetrating use of commentary, intertextual techniques and anecdotes in his presentation of Native stories of the inland Northwest (Coeur d'Alene, Crow, Wishram, Klikitat, Nez Perce, Wasco, Sanpoil and Kootenai).

The book involves an interchange between Frey and the storytellers in that he presents groupings of stories followed by his own explanatory narrative. Frey establishes a crucial dialogue between himself and the storytellers which serves to illuminate the topic itself. The text is vital and engaging because of this critical exchange, the adept transcriptions of the stories and, of course, the stories themselves. Ironically, Frey fails to realize that this is where the real strength of his text lies. Much of his commentary serves to devalue the written word in an effort to privilege orality over literacy. In doing so, he devalues his own text, and the *experience* of reading that text; a text which is otherwise remarkable and accomplished.

Frey has a genuine sensitivity and appreciation of storytelling. He describes the lives of Lawrence Aripa and Tom Yellowtail in a way that connects the reader to the storytellers, rather than simply crediting the 'informants'. He describes his own learning process in an effort to show the reader how to find their way into the narratives. When stories have been published before, he cites the previous versions and offers information about any alterations. For example, he includes a 1916 version of a story that was recorded by Robert Lowie, describes some of the decisions both he and Lowie have made regarding transcription

and translation and also includes a version of the same story as told by Tom Yellowtail in 1993. This provides a sense of the ways in which stories are remembered and passed on, both in Native communities and in written form. When storytellers have told stories in a specific order, he has followed this order in his presentation of the stories (245, n.30). His comments on cultural themes and literary motifs open up the stories and indicate the ways in which "[a]ll linkages are claimed" (173) and how people actively participate in these linkages.

Frey draws on Dell Hymes in his efforts to put oral qualities onto the printed page. His overall approach in this matter is entirely effective and his insertions generally allow for greater access into the stories, as indicated by the following example from Lawrence Aripa's telling of "Coyote and the White Man":

> And I want you to *remember*, . . .
> now *remember* this, ...
> if you . . . give something to a white man,
> and it's going to do him some good, . . .
> *he'll skin you alive*! . . . (slow deliberate voice, followed by tremendous laughter from audience). (91)

The reader gains of sense of the tone and meaning of the story through Frey's mimicking of the phrasing and intonation used by the storyteller. In this case, Frey points out that the skinning metaphor is given in a humorous tone so that the reader understands the meaning behind what could otherwise be interpreted as a frightening story. At other times, however, Frey's well-intentioned efforts to convey the storytelling experience can be somewhat redundant. The following example is from Aripa's telling of "Coyote and the Rock":

> So he did that.
> He run like. . . . crazy, (long pause followed by laughter from audience)

> He run as fast as he could. (laughter continues) (75)

In reading about Coyote, I had a sense that his antics were to be considered funny without Frey telling us to laugh in two consecutive lines. Frey wants us to experience the exact storytelling experience that he experienced and fails to realize that our own experience of that story might be just as valid and enjoyable.

The weakest part of Frey's text is the section entitled 'The Texture: 'Feel It' (141-147) as well as the ideas presented in this section which pervade his overall approach. He asserts that the medium influences the meanings that are derived from either the oral or literary presentation of stories. This is, of course, the case; medium influences meaning. Frey outlines the qualities associated with both oral and print cultures in such a way as to convey that oral stories are somehow not as good if they are not experienced orally. He concludes his book with the admonishment that "[p]articipation must not be mediated by the written word alone. To read from the pages of a book, as with memorization, is 'too rigid'. An element of spontaneity and immediacy necessary to draw the listeners into the story is lost" (215). To be sure, the written engagement with oral literature is different than would be an aural experience of those same stories, but that does not necessarily mean that something is lost *in the reading of those stories.*

Frey asserts that orality involves action, process, context and involvement. He states that "the experience of orality is involuntary" and therefore participatory (147). In recounting his initial failure to engage with the storytelling of Susie Yellowtail, Tom's wife, he contradicts his claims about necessary participation:

> Each weekend, especially during summer months, Susie would be visited by 'friends and strangers' seeking to hear her story. And each weekend I might be on hand to listen as well. Though most interesting to be sure, after a few sittings, I grew restless and sometimes turned away. (154)

Clearly, listeners can either choose to be engaged or disengaged with the telling of a story. Likewise, readers can choose to be engaged in the reading of a story. It is to Frey's credit that he allows for his readers to be involved in the storytelling experience even though they are removed from its original context, but he tries to subvert this enjoyment by suggesting that this is somehow not the 'proper' or 'right' experience.

Initially, Frey felt distanced from Susie Yellowtail's stories. Susie Yellowtail tells stories about her life and Frey acknowledges that these are important stories: "The fact is, Susie was as skilled in storytelling as was Tom, and she had an important story to tell. She was the first American Indian to become a registered nurse in this country" (154). Throughout the text, Frey neglects the stories of women as well as life stories. The stories he has chosen are often about war or other male-dominated activities. He offers several stories about Coyote, but Frey or his storytellers have used the masculine pronoun to designate a figure that is often otherwise ambiguously gendered. In addition, Frey uses male storytellers, with the exception of Mari Watters. These are Frey's choices but, as a reader who appreciates women's life stories, I often found the general disregard for gender issues alienating. To his credit, Frey admits to his privileging of traditional stories by and about men with his recounting of his experience of Susie Yellowtail's storytelling. He recalls that he observed that Susie's husband was continually engaged with his wife's stories. He realizes that "Susie told her stories with such skill that Tom was remembered within them. The stories were alive. And then I too began participating" (154).

Frey provides an insightful analysis of storytelling and the process of learning and participating that derives from an engagement with Native oral literatures. The stories themselves are magnificent and Frey's ability to bring the stories to life is remarkable. He does all of this despite his fear that the stories will somehow be "flat by comparison" (153). Reading these stories, in the manner in which Frey has laid out for us, is a process that is engaging, participatory and contextualized. Frey recounts that "[a]ccording to Mari Watters, a Nez

Perce storyteller, 'everyone tells stories, everyone is a storyteller'" (148). Frey is himself a storyteller and he has told us a most enjoyable story.

Larissa Petrillo

***Tortured Skins and Other Fictions*. Maurice Kenny. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000. ISBN 0-87013-531-7. 237 pages.**

There is little to surprise in this latest collection by Mohawk writer Maurice Kenny, insofar as a prolific and talented poetry and fiction writer has presented us with yet another stunning text for his oeuvre. In this gathering of fourteen stories, Kenny struggles with representations of Native Americans by tribal members and Euroamericans and the repercussions of those portrayals for our everyday existence.

Kenny's stories are peopled by mixedbloods, the mentally ill, historical figures, bears, and spirits, all of whom somehow unite these amazingly diverse tales. Part of what makes many of these narratives coalesce is Kenny's adept use of the recurrent themes of our responsibility to bears and their power to flout human plans. In "Blue Jacket," a mixedblood college professor buys a house whose land is haunted by a nineteenth-century Seneca man who tries to assert squatter's rights on the academic's blackberry patch; when the homeowner puts up a fence in a near-mania to hoard all of the berries, Blue Jacket returns in the form of a bear to harvest all the berries on their first morning of ripeness. Blue Jacket's communiqué to the Mohawk professor is simple: "You gotta share" with your relatives, human and otherwise, whether or not you like it.

Kenny shares both the bear's playful message of caretaking in this story's beginning and in "Salmon," in which ursine partycrashers oust ungrateful fishermen from a salmon run, as well as the serious side of

this responsibility of stewardship in "One More." The main character of this story, a Mohawk elder named Henry, is an amateur veterinarian *cum* historian *cum* horticulturalist *cum* storyteller who tends to the bears, birds, and other creatures in his woods by feeding them weekly and caring for their medical needs. Kenny carefully builds tension in the story between Henry's traditional nature-oriented ethic and the time-driven technophilic Euroamerican ideal represented by the busy tourist road that runs by his house. When a careless vacationer claims the life of one of Henry's bears through reckless driving, Kenny takes us through Henry's mourning of his companion's death, underscoring the reverence we all should feel for the bear and the healing and power it represents.

One of the central goals of this collection, and Kenny's other works, is revising history, in this case the narrative of Black Kettle and the Cheyenne's decimation at Sand Creek and the Washita River, and he enfolds this collection in that retelling by beginning the story sequence with "Black Kettle: Fear and Recourse" and closing with "Forked Tongues." In "Black Kettle," a documentary fiction reprinted from Kenny's autobiographical compilation *On Second Thought*, the author retraces Black Kettle's last days before the massacre at the Washita and illustrates his sense of foreboding, as well as that of Monahsetah, Custer's Cheyenne wife, who was abducted from her tribe by soldiers during the Sand Creek slaughter. Part of what strengthens Kenny's sympathetic portrait of the historically maligned Black Kettle is his choice to retell this narrative using the Cheyenne language and to speak the historical text in a language resisting oppression: Poneohe (Sand Creek), Moke-to-ve-to (Black Kettle), Wuh-ta-piu (Cheyenne), and other words skillfully build this portrait of Cheyenne resistance and survival.

Kenny ends the collection with another retelling of these events, "Forked Tongues," a one-act that centers around a post-mortem war crimes tribunal in which, it perversely appears, no suspects are being tried and, in fact, the indigenous version of the Cheyenne massacres is being continually silenced. Colonel Chivington, an instrumental figure in the Sand Creek massacre, whom the Cheyenne call Meshane ("the

sick one"), recounts how he learned the metaphysics of Indian-hating, while the Man in White, the supposedly neutral moderator of the hearing, instructs the Cheyenne who try to tell their story that "Most of your testimony is irrelevant and not pertinent. But if you must…" (219). One of the most interesting moves that Kenny makes in this play is the reclamation of Monahsetah, a sort of Cheyenne Malinali Tenepat. Monahsetah, abandoned by Custer before the Battle of Greasy Grass, is the one living person who participates in the hearing, and Kenny transforms her from an emblem of treason to the catalyst that finally makes it possible for Black Kettle to speak his piece at the play's end.

Other provocative and haunting tales from this collection that deserve more attention than this brief space allows include the following: "Visitation," the story of two elderly people's night of enchanted youth as a result of a visit from the spirit of the bear; "She-Who-Speaks-With-Bear," a portrait of the persecution of a girl in boarding school for her traditional beliefs; "Tortured Skins," a chronicle of the last day in the life of a mixedblood with a tremendous phobia of bears; "Hammer," a saga of the stalking of an American Indian professor by a psychotic student; "The Girl on the Beach," a ghost story of the haunting and "murder" of a bigoted, upper-class man by the spirit of an abused *India*; "Ohkwa:Ri," a portrayal of a mixedblood train engineer who dies in defense of bears eating grain spilled by a trainwreck; and "What Did You Say?," two men's miscommunications about race, class, sexual orientation, and other ill-defined topics. In addition to this laundry list of skillfully woven, hardhitting stories, there are two lighter additions: "What's in a Song," a flute player's early morning hunt for a new song, and "Bacon," a humorous take on human/bear interaction from the other biped's point of view.

In sum, it's hard to imagine a better introduction to Maurice Kenny's evocative, yet methodical writing than this collection. In the Preface to *Stories for a Winter's Night*, Kenny observes that "Stories are meant to entertain, but tales are also used as teaching tools" (9), and in *Tortured Skins*, Kenny instructs his readers in the loneliness of the

insane and the pain of silenced histories, as well as the power of bears and strategies for indigenous survival. As Joseph Bruchac once introduced Kenny, this author has "phrases as sharp as flint, as sweet as wild strawberries" (xii), and he uses them ingeniously in these stories to re-imagine Native America in the twenty-first century.

Penelope Myrtle Kelsey

***Here First: Autobiographical Essays By Native American Writers.* Eds. Arnold Krupat and Brian Swann. New York: Modern Library, 2000. ISBN 0-375-75138-6. 420 pages.**

A strong sense of connection, between past, present, and future, between self and family, between family and tribe or community, between writers and other writers, is everywhere present in the latest collection of autobiographical essays by contemporary Native American writers edited by Arnold Krupat and Brian Swann. As with the editors' previous collection, *I Tell You Now*, the twenty-six essays offered here were solicited specifically for the volume, and present a wide range of Native voices, from prominent writers like Sherman Alexie, Louis Owens, and Luci Tapahonso, to lesser known contributors such as Duane BigEagle and Nora Marks Dauenhauer. The writers also come from a range of backgrounds and affiliations, with the experiences of enrolled, full-blood, mixed-blood, reservation, rural, urban, and inter-tribal Native Americans among those depicted. Unlike *I Tell You Now*, which was arranged chronologically to allow the elders to speak first, as it were, *Here First* follows an alphabetical organization. Despite the occasional feeling of randomness this editorial choice produces, most readers will identify a number of common themes and concerns threaded through these very diverse reminiscences.

The issue of Indian identity is explored frequently in these essays, and from multiple perspectives. One concern, raised by Gloria Bird, and echoed by several other writers, is that the very form of autobiography may be "part of a spectacle, a peering into Indian life and thought that is in a sense intrusive (65)." Bird concedes, however, that such exposure may be necessary if writers are to counter cultural "misrepresentations of the 'Indian' (65)." Sherman Alexie's essay challenges readers' desire to "know" him, as well their desire for authenticity in Native American writers, by blurring the boundaries of the real and the fictional, presenting a non-linear narrative, re-presenting ideas and themes found in his novels and stories, and directly confronting the audience: "So many people claim to be Indian, speaking of an Indian grandmother, a warrior grandfather. Let's say the United States government announced that every Indian had to return to their reservation. How many people would shove their Indian ancestor back into the closet? (13)." Carroll Arnett (Gogisgi) takes a different approach, writing movingly about his Indian identity as a process of becoming, rather than a state of being: "I was trying-still am-to grow into what I still refuse to label 'my heritage' because to do so seems presumptuous if not pretentious. Grandma Tennie gave me my name, and I'm eternally, lovingly grateful for that, yet I pray she'd come again just to talk with me and teach me (26)." And Gordon Henry, Jr. resists all forms of classification by offering a long, Whitman-like catalogue of what he is *not* : " . . . authentic, natural, unnatural, deconstructive, white hating, eros or ethos; or pathos; or apollonian, dionysian, radical; or card-carrying, bloodquantum physicist; or an apple, delicious, golden, or rotten, or otherwise . . . (166)"

Krupat and Swann mention in their brief Introduction that the contributors were invited to "speak of their lives and their relation to their art (xii)." A number of writers responded by reflecting on the importance of words, stories, and writing to their understanding of self and the world. For some writers, the words that matter most are those of their Native tongues, whether imprinted on the memory as a first language, caught in snatches from relatives, or learned later in life.

Vickie Sears recalls how her Cherokee grandmother Elisi's words, "*A nv da di s di.*" (Remember)," comforted and sustained her while living with separated parents and in foster homes (313). Luci Tapahonso tells of learning to write in Dine`, noting that for her, "the Dine` language is the language of emotion (349)." John E. Smelcer, who writes poetry in Ahtna and English, proposes that "It's time for a canon in our grandmother's tongues. . . Although the reading audience may be very small indeed, language is one of the key identifiers of cultural identity and differentiation. It's part of claiming our identity (331)." Several writers reflect on the effects of reading literature in English, including Roberta Hill whose "love of language" was nursed in the Catholic Church (199) and Carroll Arnett who found inspiration in Ezra Pound's *ABC of Reading* (22). Literature by and/or personal contact with other Native American authors was significant for many of these writers. For example, Charlotte DeClue (Kawashinsay) notes that the poetry of Simon Ortiz influenced her to write, W.S. Penn pays tribute to the imaginative freedom he finds in the work of D'Arcy McNickle, and Betty Louise Bell credits Gerard Vizenor with teaching her to value the stories and voices of her own experience. For others, reading and writing in English has been a mixed blessing. Kimberly M. Blaeser notes that an academic education has enabled her to share her stories and her perspectives with students, but at a price: "Many times I think I teach to undermine the structure of our educational system; many times I fear it is undermining my own most sacred center (85)."

One of the most fascinating aspects of this volume is the unique way in which each of the writers approaches the form of autobiography itself, reinterpreting, revising and expanding our understanding of its possibilities. Few of the writers follow strict chronology, conventional narration, or what W.S. Penn refers to as "the falsity of logical sequence in a human and humane world . . .a fake coat hanger on which only the emperor's clothes may be hung (291)." Several contributors include excerpts from previously published poetry and fiction to illustrate and extend their rendering of their lives. Almost all of the writers contextualize their lives in relation to family, tribal, and U.S. histories, though, unlike conventional American autobiographies, the

emphasis is rarely on rising above one's family or relations in order to achieve individual success, but rather on the value of lessons learned and the relative unimportance of self in the larger scheme of life. Other formal variations include the use of self-interview (Hanay Geioganah), epistolary (Patricia Penn Hilden), and a word by word explication of a Navajo prayer (Rex Lee Jim). For scholars and students of autobiography, in particular, this volume offers excellent opportunities to consider both thematic and generic issues.

In an ideal world, it would come as no surprise to the general reader that American Indians were not only "Here First," but that they are still here. In an ideal world, readers would not need to be reminded that all Indians do not live, act, or think in the same way, or that writing by Native American artists is diverse, complex, rich, and rewarding. In the contemporary U.S., however, this is a case that continues to need to be made. *Here First* both presents, and implicitly argues for the necessity of presenting, the on-going experiences and varied voices of Native American writers in a compelling and non-polemical way. At the same time, the volume successfully accomplishes the editors' goal of giving all readers a sampling of the powerful literary expression of some of our most gifted contemporary Native American writers.

Deborah Gussman

Work Cited

Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat, eds., *I Tell You Now: Autobiographical Essays by Native American Writers*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska P, 1987.

Writing Indians: Literacy, Christianity, and Native Community in Early America. **Hilary E. Wyss. Native Americans of the Northeast: Culture, History, and the Contemporary. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 2000. 1-55849-264-X. 207 pages.**

As the title suggests, this work examines both literate Indians and those who attempted to define and, therefore, control Indians through the written word. The ambiguity of this title, our inability to quickly determine exactly what Wyss will analyze in this text, exemplifies the ambiguity that surrounds the writings Wyss examines in this book. Wyss struggles with the question that has troubled scholars of Native American writing: can we locate an "authentic" Native American voice? Many scholars have dismissed these early writings because these writers struggled with their changing position within colonial society earning them labels such as "assimilated," "acculturated," and/or "bicultural" Indians.

Wyss uses the idea of marginalia to illustrate the writings of Native Americans in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Indians began their dialogue with their own community, as well as the Euroamerican community, by writing in the margins of their Bibles. In so many ways, this symbolizes not only their status within colonial society, but also their status in present-day academia. Wyss attempts to eliminate this marginalization through the critical recovery of both Native writers and Euroamericans writing about Natives. Wyss situates her project from the mid-seventeenth century through 1829— the year William Apess's narrative, *A Son of the Forest*, was published. She is concerned less with defining the authentically Native than with laying out those "cultural influences that define and are in turn redefined by Christian Indians . . ." (5). Wyss terms these cultural convergences "transculturations" and "reculturations."

Noting the argument surrounding the term "autobiography," Wyss categorizes these writings "auto-ethnography," preferring to situate these writings in the writer's attempts to define various traditions rather than define him or herself. This definition, according to Wyss, became an amalgamation of both Euroamerican and Native cultures.

In an important move, Wyss examines the assumptions surrounding the terms "Native" and "Christian." For too long, scholars have either ignored or dismissed these early Native writings, labeling them as inauthentic because of what these scholars see as no more than physical manifestations of assimilation. Wyss analyzes letters, narratives, and manifestos written by Natives as well as missionary tracts and captivity narratives written about Natives that illustrate the cultural negotiations taking place between the indigenous peoples and their colonizers.

Wyss breaks down her examination into five separate scenes of writing: the events surrounding King Philip's War; Experience Mayhew's *Indian Converts*; the missionary efforts at Stockbridge; the Native Christian community at Brotherton; and William Apess's conversion narrative. In doing so, she sets up a continuum beginning with John Eliot's bid to Christianize "a local Algonquian community in 1643" and ends with William Apess's 1829 narrative designated by scholars as the "first" published Native American autobiography (19).

Although she grants the significance of Apess to the Native American literary canon, Wyss attempts to change our perceptions as to how and when Natives entered the American scene of literacy and literature. By situating Apess at the end of her study, Wyss forces us to acknowledge his predecessors and, in doing so, challenges us to rid ourselves of any essentializing tendencies which would effectively erase the writers who laid the foundation upon which Apess stands.

Chapter one focuses on the writing of John Eliot, especially the confessions and conversion narratives he so carefully recorded for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel; the propaganda surrounding King Philip's War; and the captivity narrative of Mary Rowlandson. These seemingly disparate texts work to support Wyss's thesis that print culture plays an important role in "defining the emerging identities of colonial New England" (50). For the Christian Indians of the late seventeenth century, cultural negotiation was the norm. In their attempt to serve both their communities and their Christian God, Christian Indians were actively creating a new identity that allowed them to exist in this changing society.

Chapter two discusses Experience Mayhew's published account of the conversion narratives of the Wampanoag Indians of Martha's Vineyard. Like Eliot, Mayhew wrote *Indian Converts* to assure the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel that his missionary work was succeeding. However, it was necessary for Mayhew to make these narratives accessible to his English audience. In doing so, he takes part in the act of "reculturation," which Wyss defines as "appropriating and reinscribing the acts and traditions of Native Americans as already part of the dominant colonial culture . . ." (53). Wyss argues that Mayhew's attempts to erase cultural differences are not always successful, that careful reading allows us to hear an unmediated Native voice. Thus, Mayhew's conversion narratives become autoethnographies, writings that allow the colonized to create a place within the colonizer's society.

The Stockbridge Indians, the writings of John Sergeant, missionary to the Indians of Western Massachusetts, and the writings of Mahican leader, Hendrick Aupaumut are the focus of chapter three. Wyss examines Samuel Hopkins's commemoration of Sergeant, contrasting it with Aupaumut's travel journal and short history of the Mahicans. Both, she argues, attempt to define the Stockbridge community, but "their respective documents suggest radically different versions of the history and meaning of the Stockbridge Indians' encounter with Christianity" (82). Sergeant's journals, his records of his successes and failures, illustrate the tensions between the Mahicans and himself. His attempts to eradicate Native traditions ultimately failed as the Mahicans represented by Sergeant's most troubling "rebel" Umpachenee and, later, Hendrick Aupaumut, constructed a shifting identity that "moves uneasily between the opposite poles of the Christian and the Indian" (122).

Chapter four moves from Stockbridge to upstate New York where Mohegan Joseph Johnson and Samson Occom, along with David and Jacob Fowler, established the Native Christian community of Brotherton. Johnson and Occom begin this journey in 1772, and it will be eleven years before Brotherton is finally established, seven years after Johnson's death in 1776. What differs between Brotherton and

Stockbridge (and earlier Native Christian communities) is the unmediated voices of the converts. All four founders were not only literate, but experienced writers who were well schooled in the cultural negotiations that took place between Native communities and Euroamerican society. Free from outside influence, Wyss claims that Brotherton's founders "reconceptualized the meaning of a Native community" by appropriating missionary rhetoric and patriarchal language (126). According to Wyss, patriarchal language does not rest solely in the domain of Euroamericans: Native tradition often uses family terminology in diplomacy as evidenced by the writings of Aupaumut. However, the hierarchy present in the language of the Brotherton founders is a synthesis of Puritan rhetoric and Native tradition. Thus, although the founders attempted to reject the dominant society, their immersion in its rhetoric and patriarchal language caused them to recreate "exclusionary stratifications and hierarchies inherent in colonial structures of power" (153).

Wyss turns her attention to William Apess in the epilogue. As stated earlier, Wyss forces us to acknowledge the Native American writings that came before Apess; yet, she assigns him a prominent position, devoting the last chapter to *A Son of the Forest*, *The Experiences of Five Christian Indians of the Pequot Tribe* and "Eulogy on King Philip". It is his rhetorical power, Wyss claims, that has all but obscured the earlier writings. Nevertheless, he is writing out of a tradition and uses familiar discourses—the captivity narrative, the rhetoric of the revolution, and the conversion narrative—to shape his texts. Although these discourses are firmly established in the Euroamerican tradition, Apess's appropriation marks them as fraudulent: the captivity narrative describes his removal from his community when but a child; the revolutionary rhetoric establishes King Philip as a hero equal to George Washington; the conversion narrative establishes the close connection between missionary and convert. Apess, like those before him, was engaged in the constant redefinition of the Native Christian.

Wyss's work is an important addition to the study of early Native American writings. Many of the writers she has discussed have been

completely or partially ignored by scholars working in Native American studies. My only concern with *Writing Indians* is that it focuses too heavily on the Puritan missionaries. Although Wyss argues that the Native American voice can be heard in the writings of John Eliot or Experience Mayhew, for example, that voice can still be most strongly heard in the writings of the Indians themselves. Nevertheless, this is a minor issue when compared to the importance of this book as it pertains to our perception of Early America and the ongoing negotiations between Indians and Whites. *Writing Indians* removes the Christian Indians from the margins and situates them at the center of the American "text."

Tammy Schneider

***Where the Pavement Ends: Five Native American Plays*. William S. Yellow Robe, Jr. Volume 37 in the *American Indian Literature and Critical Studies Series*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000. ISBN 0-8061-3265-5. 169 pages.**

Where the pavement ends is on an unnamed reservation like the Fort Peck Indian reservation in Wolf Point, Montana, where Assiniboine playwright William S. Yellow Robe, Jr. sets four of the five plays in this collection. Yellow Robe tells his students: "We are not learning to be white playwrights, we are learning to be strong Native writers. We have to be able to validate our own experience for ourselves"(*Seventh Generation* 42). In the service of this mission, Yellow Robe has written more than thirty plays, most of which have received productions or readings; he also teaches playwriting, most recently at the Institute of American Indian Arts on the campus of the College of Santa Fe; and he has served as Artistic Director of the Wakiknabe Theater Company of Albuquerque, New Mexico. The

plays in this collection will speak powerfully, albeit in different ways, to both Indian and non-Indian audiences.

One of Yellow Robe's most interesting techniques is his use of the object of negotiation, a central object that refracts and reveals characters. The star quilt has this function in the play he describes as being the most difficult to write, *The Star Quilter*, written in part to honor the art form practiced by his mother Mina Rose Forest-Yellowrobe. In this intensely focused play of only two characters, Assiniboine Mona Gray and white Luanne interact in a series of meetings over thirty years in a relationship that, as it develops, invites a wider and wider circle of association and interpretation. It is hard not to see in Luanne's relationship to Mona a reprise of Indian/white relations, from the first moment when Luanne barges into Mona's house without knocking, and then through three decades in which she makes false promises, impoverishes Mona and her friends with duplicitous deals, and patronizes Indian people about whom, over the course of all those years, she learns nothing; all this is encoded in negotiations over the star quilts Mona makes and Luanne tries to buy, sell, and steal. Mona's final talk with Luanne leaves ambiguous whether or not a real reconciliation is possible. Yellow Robe describes *The Star Quilter* as summing "up the whole experience" of the "lack of knowledge of Montana's native people"(ix).

If the focus on Mona Grey in *The Star Quilter* makes the play lyrical and provocative, the two plays Yellow Robe ascribes to "the gift my father gave me: humor"(ix) are raucous and profound. The object of negotiation in both *The Body Guards* and *Sneaky* is a dead person. Using a dead person as a character in a play is not unheard of (Joe Orton's *Loot*, Joseph Kesselring's *Arsenic and Old Lace*) but it is surely rare, and even rarer to treat the body with affection, respect, and comfortable familiarity. It is this treatment which distinguishes Yellow Robe's comedy from that of say, Pinter, with its sinister undertow; these are not black comedies, but comedies of body and heart, warmly human, realistic rather than absurd, and deeply serious.

In *The Body Guards* Benny (late forties) and Skin (early twenties) are hired to watch Clarence, whose body is laid out on boards, and who

needs watching because he was murdered and, as Benny explains, "they want to make sure no one touches the body" (46). The play opens with "the sound of gas being released from Clarence's body"(44) prompting Benny and Skin to mutual accusations. Their conversation veers from the body to the job of watching to relationships on the reservation and the relationship between Benny and Skin, inevitably revealing that Clarence is a relation: Skin's mother's second cousin. Talk circles back to the dead Clarence, his life, his women, his face. I will not blow the plot except to note that Clarence has the final say. In its gradual unlayering of relationships, this play goes deep to the heart of reservation life.

The body at the center of *Sneaky* is the mother of Frank, Eldon, and Kermit Rose, and the plot concerns their struggle to bury her in the traditional way—which, here, means wrapping her in a star quilt and placing her in the branches of a tree, in defiance of the town funeral director Jack Spence and white laws requiring embalming. According to Spence, the mother's body is "mine"(161), a claim which the brothers resist, both on cultural and familial grounds. The plot serves as a frame for examining each man's relationship to his mother and to his brothers, and for exploring, through the three brothers, ways of moving through the world: Frank, the oldest, a reformed alcoholic, is the responsible brother; Eldon is successful (not even an apple, says Kermit, but "white all over, in and out"[152]); and Kermit is an alcoholic and rebel. Death itself becomes a familiar character. Indeed, the play pushes the envelope in dealing with the physicality of death: in the funeral home, while looking for the mother, the brothers discover Uncle Joe Yellow Foote (as always, everybody is a relative) with half his face gone, victim of a hit and run accident; then Kermit, in a drunken stupor, cuddles his mother's body, thinking she is a girl. *Sneaky* concludes with both comedy and reverence, in a ceremony through which the brothers come together and clarify their personal and cultural missions.

The Council and *Rez Politics* share the concerns of Yellow Robe's *The Education of Eddie Rose*, a full length play published in *Seventh Generation*. All three plays project ways the next generation can turn

around some of the grief and despair that seems to be their legacy. In *The Council*, a rollicking animal comedy, the hope for healing the circle of life is promised by the behavior of children in the final scene, while in *Rez Politics*, a play unusual for Yellow Robe in its lack of humor, two boys of mixed blood work through the complex layers of racism imbibed from the adults around them.

In most of these plays the mix of farce and reverence, comedy and spirituality, the obscene and the sacred, distinguishes Yellow Robe's work from contemporary absurd comedy that is at once more sinister and more genteel, and surely reflects roots in trickster traditions. In his cultural playing, in his emphasis on comedy and survival—and, undoubtedly, in other ways I have missed—Yellow Robe fulfills Hanay Geiogamah's dictum that "the most important function of the Indian dramatist is to communicate with his own people" (*Stories of Our Way* 5). The plays are accessible to all audiences, however, in their emotional connections and comic energy.

Pat Onion

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***The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*. Louise Erdrich. New York: HarperCollins, 2001. ISBN 0-06-018727-1. 361 pages.**

The traditional Ojibwe tale of Nanabozho and the earthdivers recounts the trickster's recreation of the world after its destruction by a flood—a flood brought on by Nanabozho's own machinations. In this story, using grains of sand retrieved by muskrat, Nanabozho creates an island world that expands into a whole new earth. Trickster thus unmakes his world and remakes it into a different shape. In her latest novel, *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*, Louise Erdrich has once again, like the trickster, unfixed and remolded her own multi-novel fictional world, particularly the early twentieth-century reservation world of *Tracks*. Like *Tracks*, *Last Report* sets this retelling of older stories in a contemporary frame—the 1996 ruminations and letters of the now ancient Father Damien Modeste, who has ministered to his Ojibwe flock for more than eight decades.

In this new novel, both first-time Erdrich readers and those well acquainted with her work will find themselves drawn into her fictional world by the haunting lyricism of her language and images, by her fusion of mysticism and humor, and by her powerfully rendered characterizations. But readers already familiar with this world will also be intrigued by the expansion and alteration of her metastory that they encounter in *Last Report*. Here, for example, shadowy hints from earlier novels about the original Kashpaw—father to Eli and Nector Kashpaw—are expanded into the portrait of a figure far more complex than we would have guessed, a traditionalist who, though "shrewd," finds himself torn and perplexed by the changes that are unraveling his tribe and family, a family itself more complex than previous novels had suggested. In *Last Report* we also encounter that arch-traditionalist and trickster Nanapush (who we discover is Kashpaw's half brother) in a somewhat altered form. Whereas in *Tracks* Nanapush seems to embody almost exclusively the benevolent, culture-hero qualities of trickster, *Last Report* highlights the variety of his trickster-like personality. Trickster's self-serving, manipulative cunning emerges as Nanapush attempts to maneuver Father Damien into helping him take

one of Kashpaw's wives, and in the story "Le Mooz," essentially a retelling of an Ojibwe trickster tale with Nanapush cast as protagonist, he displays trickster's folly and buffoonery, as well as his ability to transcend death.

The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse also answers questions Erdrich's earlier books rather pointedly raise but leave unresolved. One of the most dramatic examples of such resolution is the new novel's unveiling of the mysterious family background of Jack Mauser, only hinted at in *Tales of Burning Love*. *Tales* drops tantalizing hints about tragic circumstances in the life of his mother, Mary Stamper, which trigger periods of depression and catatonia after Jack's birth. It also hints at a connection between Jack and Fleur Pillager, for owners of the land on Matchimanito Lake are said to be his kin. In *Last Report* these cryptic hints flower into a set of revelations that startle Erdrich's previous readers with the sort of shock of recognition they have come to expect from her weaving of internovel patterns. These revelations also open up unexpected connections between Lipsha Morrissey and the baby with whom he is trapped in the snowbound car in *The Bingo Palace*, and they answer additional questions raised in *The Bingo Palace* story "Fleur's Luck"—How does Fleur acquire the fancy clothes and car in which she returns to the reservation, and who (or what) is the pasty-skinned child she brings with her?

The present-day action of *Last Report* revolves around yet another of Erdrich's previously appearing characters, Sister Leopolda, née Pauline Puyat. The novel's frame is the letters—the "reports"—that Father Damien has continued to send the Pope over the decades of his ministry among the Ojibwe. The priest's sense of urgency about revealing the truth of this community's history is heightened in 1996 by his sense of his own imminent death and by the appearance of a papal delegate—none other than Father Jude Miller of *The Beet Queen* and *Tales of Burning Love*—who is doing research toward the potential canonization of the lately deceased Leopolda. Like other parts of Erdrich's North Dakota saga, Leopolda's story also shifts in *Last*

Report as we see her through Father Damien's eyes and gain new information about the tragedies to which she has contributed.

The most dramatic shift in Erdrich's metastory in *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*, however, is her recreation of the identity of Father Damien himself. Although an ordained priest named Damien Modeste is in fact commissioned to undertake a mission to the Ojibwe, this man dies in a 1912 flood of Biblical proportions, and the person who takes his place—the Father Damien we know from *Tracks*—is a woman. Born Agnes DeWitt, later a nun, Sister Cecilia, and then common law wife to Berndt Vogel, the protagonist of *Last Report*, after losing all that connects her to these former identities, takes on the garb, mission, and identity of the drowned priest. The more perceptive of her parishioners sense that there is something unusual about this priest ("too womanly," Kashpaw muses [64]), and those closest to her—Mary Kashpaw, Nanapush, and Fleur—know that she is a woman playing the role of a man. Erdrich anticipates readers' questions about the plausibility of such a "lifelong gender disguise" and in her end notes refers them to a biography of Billy Tipton (357). The issue of situational plausibility, however, may be less significant in evaluating Erdrich's depiction of her protagonist than the question of whether this rendering of a passionate young woman turned priest is psychologically and emotionally convincing. In my mind, it is.

Two devices especially contribute to Erdrich's convincing depiction of this complex personality: the subtle nuances in her shifting patterns of gendered nouns and pronouns and her multi-dimensional rendering of Agnes's passion. In scenes recounting Agnes's early interactions as Father Damien, Erdrich most often refers to her protagonist as "Agnes" and "she" when recording this character's own point of view and "Damien," "he" when referring to external events, especially as they are perceived by others. Hence, when Father Damien first encounters Pauline, we read that "Agnes" notices Pauline but that Pauline stares silently as "Father Damien" puts out "his" hands to the other women (67), and in an early conversation with Sister Hildegarde, we read that "Agnes shut Father Damien's mouth" (72). When the priest first meets Kashpaw's family, however—a scene whose shifting

point of view favors his Ojibwe hosts—Erdrich uses the masculine to record even Damien's thoughts: "All Father Damien could do at first was contemplate the pattern . . . out of which the great logos of his passion was written" (99). Erdrich also uses the masculine to record the priest's reflections as he walks behind a wagon bearing the statue of the Virgin during a festival: "his thoughts leaped. . . . His requests . . . pierced the sun, and his praises melted in his ears. . . . Then, he tripped." The very next words, however, shift to the feminine as the narrative moves to Agnes's later reflection upon these events: "Agnes thought, later, how odd . . . that she should stumble in the full flow of the gift" (1009-10). The transformation of "he" tripped to "she" stumbled reflects a shift in Agnes/Damien's self-perception. During these events, especially as she is lost in prayer, Agnes becomes Father Damien, even in her own mind, whereas later, reflecting on her actions, she sees herself as Agnes playing the role of Damien. Through such subtle linguistic shifts, which continue throughout the novel, Erdrich weaves a convincing portrait of a woman who recreates herself—at times even in her inmost soul—into a priest.

Also contributing to the realism of this portrait is Erdrich's rendering of the power of her protagonist's passion, a depiction in which aesthetic, sexual, and religious passions fuse into a single force that shapes and drives Agnes's life. This novel, in fact, calls attention to passion in much the same way that *The Bingo Palace* highlights luck, through its naming of chapters and sections—"Kashpaw's Passion," Agnes's Passion," "Father Damien's Passion," and so on. In Erdrich's characterization of Agnes/Damien, we recognize one of the notable features of her prose—her lyrical rendering of powerful emotions. The scenes in "Naked Woman Playing Chopin," the opening story of *Last Report*, are particularly reminiscent of the emotional power of Erdrich's images in the opening section of *The Antelope Wife*. In this first chapter of *Last Report*, Erdrich characterizes Agnes's passion for the pianist and composer Frederic Chopin as sexual as well as artistic, a passion that bridges into her relationship with Berndt Vogel and, later, with Father Gregory Wekkle. All these passions are in turn caught up into Agnes's consuming passion for her God, whom

she encounters in a remarkable scene rife with sexual imagery. Out of this powerful and multifaceted passion springs Agnes/Damien's devotion to her Ojibwe flock, for whose sake she determines to keep her difficult, self-sacrificial secret intact even beyond the grave.

The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse has much to offer both readers familiar with Erdrich's other novels and those who are here encountering her fiction for the first time. Her longstanding readers will be intrigued by the novel's additions to and transformations of previously encountered narrative patterns, and first-time readers will find themselves drawn into this fictional world by the power of her language and imagery and by her sensitive rendering of the passionate and complex personality of her priestly protagonist. This is a novel worthy of what we have come to expect from one of our finest contemporary American writers of fiction, a rich mine of introspective insights and artistic skill.

Gay Barton

***Mirror Writing: (Re-)Constructions of Native American Identity*. Thomas Claviez and Maria Moss, editors. Glienicke (Berlin): Galda+Wilch Verlag, 2000. ISBN 3-931397-25-4. 290**

Drawn from a 1999 conference and lecture series held at the John F. Kennedy-Institute for North American in Berlin, the essays in *Mirror Writing* offer an intriguing glimpse into the international state of Native American studies. Divided into three sections, "Approaching the Other: Ethnology and Cultural Contact"; Listening to the Other: Native American Myth and Storytelling"; and "Reading/Seeing the Other: Literature, Photography, and Cultural Identity," the collection includes anthropological, literary, and cultural studies scholarship from Canada, England, Germany, and the United States.

Despite the array of perspectives offered, the collection's title remains somewhat misleading. While its suggests an exploration of "(re-)constructions of Native American Identity," a more accurate summation would be that it provides an overview of contemporary academic approaches to all things Native American. That is the mirror writing within this collection reflects the image of the anthropologist, historian, or literary critic doing the writing as much as any putative "(Re-)constructions of Native American Identity." However, the self-reflective aspect of the collection may be its most valuable feature. A number of the essays provide wonderful examples of a situated scholarship that illuminates the position of the researcher, the ethics of the investigation, and its use value for specific Native American communities.

A more unfortunate feature is the complete absence of essays authored by Native American or First Nations scholars. While the majority of essayists write with sympathetic insight on the problematic history of representations of American Indians, the collection as a whole is troubled by a seemingly unintended irony as it becomes another vehicle for Europeans and Euro-Americans to represent and define "the other." Given the number of American Indian scholars now publishing on the central concerns addressed in this text, the absence of their voices and perspectives is a woeful editorial oversight that prevents the collection from achieving a richer potential.

With this significant lacuna in mind, the collection still offers much to recommend it. Hans-Ulrich Sanner's "Confessions of the Last Hopi Fieldworker," from the first section "Approaching the Other: Ethnology and Cultural Contact," provides a powerful critique of conventional ethnographic practice. Like most confessions, Sanner's arises from a moral awakening. For Sanner it was the realization that "the classic type of 'pure research'. . . designed in the library . . . and basically ignorant of Hopi needs and demands, has become outdated" (42). Sanner explores "the moral dilemma that resulted from how Hopi individuals responded to my presence and my intention to study part of their culture and religion" (42). Sanner attempts to counter what he views as traditional anthropology's tendency to "purify" its reports "of

all the dubious or weird attendant circumstances" (54). In addition, he engages the critical question: "If I was so sensitive to the concerns of the Cultural Preservation Office and Hopi individuals that their religious privacy be respected, why didn't I give up my study altogether?" (59). While Sanner's answer may not satisfy all readers, it's hard not respect his interrogation of standard academic assumptions.

Unfortunately, the other essayists in the first section did not experience the same epiphany as Sanner. Unlike Sanner, these authors seem unaware that "the classic type of 'pure research'. . . ignorant of . . . [Indian] needs and demands, has become outdated." For example, Peter Bolz's study of the evolution of the Lakota Sun Dance over the last one hundred years concludes that changes to the Sun Dance over the past century results more from the influence of outside forces rather than changes initiated by the Lakota. This is a debatable claim. For support, Bolz relies primarily on ethnographic reports compiled by non-Lakota. Sadly lacking in his research is any investigation via oral testimony on the "underground" period of the Sun Dance.

Similarly, Karin Berning's "The Messenger Feast: Myth and Cultural Identity" relies "primarily on ethnographies," as "people were reluctant to divulge information" (23). This observation begs a number of questions: Why did Berning not explore this reluctance? Why was her own scholarly agenda more important than the concerns of the people she is researching? There is little evidence of reflection upon the function of her scholarship, for herself, other scholars, or most importantly the Inupiaq. The other essays in the first section, Marin Trenk's "'White Indians' and 'Red Euro-Americans': Crossing Cultural Boundaries in Colonial North America," and Christian F. Feest's "Mission Impossible? Native Americans and Christianity," also resemble the "classic pure research" Sanner critiques. To be fair, the work of Bolz, Berning, Trenk, and Feest all demonstrate high standards of scholarly rigor, and each offers interesting and reasoned insights into the cultural negotiations of the subject communities. Yet coming in the same collection as the essays of Sanner and other more self-reflective

scholars, their presentations appear academic in the palest sense of the term.

A powerful counterpoise to the essays in the first section are the first two essays in the second section, "Listening to the Other." Both Julie Cruikshank in her "The Social Life of Texts: Keeping Traditions 'Oral' in a Time of Textual Studies," and Dominique Legro in his "First Nation Postmodern Cultures: (Re)Constructing the (De)Constructed and Celebrating Changes," have done just that: listened. Legros' essay poses the question: What role can anthropology play in serving the needs of First Nations people? In responding, Legros enacts a sophisticated critique of anthropology's tendency to measure cultural authenticity by the yardstick of an imagined "traditional" past. He then describes his own experience working with the Northern Tutchone transcribing *The Story of Crow* at their behest. Rather than analyzing the narrative from a western theoretical perspective, Legros transcribed the text to make it available to Tutchone youth who no longer speak their native language. In recounting the story of his experience, Legros demonstrates how the *Story of Crow* continues to serve a social function.

In a like manner, Julie Cruikshank describes working with elders in the Yukon "recording their life stories" (155). Cruikshank complicates the familiar dualism of written/oral to demonstrate how native people in the far north make use of written versions of their narratives to enhance the oral performances. As she notes, "Yukon elder storytellers point to writing as just one more way to tell their stories" (156). Cruikshank examines how the telling of stories frequently arises "at the intersections of power and ideas where global forces impinge directly on local communities" (166). Cruikshank ends her essay on a cautionary note, pointing to the recent trend in the Canadian legal system to reduce oral history to "archival documents" (168) or data from which to construct the "real" written history.

While the ethnographies of Sanner, Legros, and Cruikshank represent significant commentaries on contemporary anthropological work, readers in the field of literary studies will likely find the essays by Thomas Claviez, Arnold Krupat, and David Murray to be of

particular interest. Claviez juxtaposes the ideas of N. Scott Momaday with those of Walter Benjamin to consider the function of stories in establishing a relationship between humans and the natural word. Refreshingly, Claviez does not simply apply Benjamin to Momaday. Rather, he brings their ideas together in a productive cross-cultural exchange.

The argument of Arnold Krupat's essay, "Nationalism, Indigenism, Cosmopolitanism: Three Critical Perspectives on Native American Literature," will likely sound familiar to those who have followed his work. In this essay he divides the study of Native American literature into three camps: A nationalist position, primarily concerned with "the meaning of the term sovereignty" (213); an indigenist position that reads through an earth-centered "traditional or tribal" worldview (220); and Krupat's favored position, cosmopolitanism. According to Krupat, a cosmopolitan critic looks at Native American literature in a global cultural comparative mode, reading it "against the backdrop of other minority or subaltern literatures elsewhere in the world" (224). For Krupat, while aspects of both the nationalists and the indiginest approaches are valid, they exclude other ways of reading. A cosmopolitan umbrella, the critical questions raised by nationalists and indigenists would be equally at home with a number of other approaches that, too, could raise important insights.

David Murray in, "Cultural Sovereignty and the Hauntology of American Identity," considers the debate between a Nationalist/essentialist conception of native identity versus a hybrid fluid concept and finds flaws in both. As an alternative model, Murray draws on the idea of the ghost as symbol for a useable past that can be adapted and applied to the needs of the present. For Murray, the "ghosts" of the past function as a fluid or "strategic essentialism" that could be called forth in order to assert a cultural difference that is both of the past and in the present. Both Murray and Krupat make useful additions to the lexicon of approaches to Native American literature.

As is hopefully clear from these observations, *Mirror Writing* offers a decidedly mixed bag. While the absence of a single Native American contributor is disturbing, the collection overall makes an

important contribution to the field of Native American studies. For students of Native American literature, the essays on oral and written traditions are certainly worth perusing. Yet the most valuable contributions made by this collection are those essays which engage significant questions about the ethics and purposes of Native American studies.

Ernest Stromberg

Contributors

Chadwick Allen is an assistant professor in the Department of English at The Ohio State University and an associate editor of *SAIL*. His book *Blood as Narrative / Narrative as Blood: Constructing Indigenous Identity in Contemporary American Indian and New Zealand Maori Literary and Activist Texts* will be published by Duke University Press in 2002.

Gay Barton is an assistant professor of English at Abilene Christian University, where she teaches courses in twentieth-century fiction by women and Native American literature, in addition to general literature and writing courses. She is co-author with Peter G. Beidler of *A Reader's Guide to the Novels of Louise Erdrich* (U of Missouri P, 1999) and is presently working on a book analyzing Erdrich's narrative technique.

Ginny Carney (Cherokee) teaches English/Communications at Leech Lake Tribal College in Cass Lake, MN.

Susan Garzon is an Associate Professor of English at Oklahoma State University, where she teaches applied linguistics. She is co-author of *The Life of Our Language: Kaqchikel Maya Maintenance, Shift, and*

Revitalization (University of Texas Press, 1998). The Spanish version, *La Vida de Nuestro Idioma*, was published in Guatemala by Cholsamaj in 2000.

Deborah Gussman is an assistant professor of Literature at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey where she teaches courses in American literature, Native American literature, womens studies, and composition. Her article on Pequot womens conversion narratives appeared in *Studies in American Puritan Spirituality*. She is at work on several articles dealing with the rhetoric of reform in early 19th - century literature.

Edward W. Huffstetler is a Professor of English and American Literature at Bridgewater College of Virginia where he teaches (among other things) courses in Native American literatures and cultures, Nineteenth-century American literature, Twentieth-century American literature, and creative writing. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Iowa (1988) and has published a collection of Native myths, *Tales of Native America* (Michael Friedman Publishing, 1996), and articles on a wide variety of subjects from Walt Whitman to *avant garde* primitive poets such as Jerome Rothenberg, to Native American authors such as Leslie Silko and Lousie Erdrich. He also publishes poetry and fiction.

Penelope Myrtle Kelsey is a Ph.D. candidate and MacArthur scholar at the University of Minnesota, and her dissertation is a comparative study of literary sovereignty in the autobiographies of early Dakota and Hopi writers. She teaches courses in literature and composition, and she plans to complete her degree in May of 2002. She is an active member of the Weston A. Price Foundation, an organization seeking a return to tribal/traditional foodways.

Pat Onion is a Professor of English at Colby College, where she teaches American Indian literature.

Larissa Petrillo is in the final year of her doctoral studies at the University of British Columbia, where she has been working on the life stories of a Lakotan couple from the Pine Ridge Reservation.

Kimberly Roppolo (Cherokee / Choctaw / Creek) is a doctoral student at Baylor University specializing in Native Literature and a full-time instructor at McLennan Community College in Waco, TX. Her dissertation applies traditional Native American discourse models to reading Native American literature. She expects to take her degree during the 2001 / 2002 academic year.

Tammy Schneider, Sac & Fox, is a doctoral candidate in Nineteenth-Century American literature at Michigan State University, specializing in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American Indian writings. She teaches courses in Native America literature, American literature, popular culture, and composition.

Ernest Stromberg is an assistant profesor in the Writing Program at James Madison University in Virginia. He teaches courses in American Studies, Rhetoric and Composition, and Native American Literature.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wordcraft

Thirty-three individuals were honored at the tenth annual "Returning The Gift Festival of Native Writers and Storytellers" held in Norman, Oklahoma on October 12, 2001. These individuals were honored for their demonstrated commitment to the vision of Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers: to ensure that the voices of Native writers and storytellers - past, present, and future - are heard throughout the world.

Honors and Awards 2001 Recipients

Wordcrafter of the Year

Kimberly Roppolo (Cherokee / Choctaw / Muscogee)

Wordcraft Circle Mentor of the Year

Allison Hedge Coke (Huron / Cherokee)

Wordcraft Circle Intern of the Year

Jay Goombi (Kiowa)

Writer of the Year

CREATIVE

Poetry

Adrian Louis (Lovelock Paiute) for "Ancient Acid Flashes Back"

Prose

Fiction

Geary Hobson (Cherokee / Quapaw / Chickasaw) for "The Last of the Ofos"

Non-Fiction

Shari Huhndorf (Cook Inlet Yupik) for "Going Native: Indians in The American Cultural Imagination"

Children's Literature

Joy Harjo (Muscogee) for "The Good Luck Cat"

Cynthia Leitich Smith (Cherokee) for "Rain is Not My Indian Name"

Anthology Collection

John Purdy and James Ruppert for "Nothing But The Truth: An Anthology of Native American Literature"

Autobiographical Essays

Arnold Krupat and Brian Swann for "Here First: Autobiographical Essays by Native American Writers"

ACADEMIC

Master's Thesis

Sierra Adare (Cherokee) for "Stereotypical Indian Images in TV Science Fiction"

Doctoral Dissertation

Virginia Carney (Cherokee) for "A Testament to Tenacity: Cultural Persistence in the Letters and Speeches of Eastern Band Cherokee Women"

TECHNICAL

Workbook / Manual

Carolyna Smiley-Marquez (San Juan Pueblo) for "Omaha Managers Workbook" Guide

Robert M. Nelson for "ASAIL Guide to Native American Studies Programs in the United States and Canada"

SPECIALTY

CD Recording

Wade Fernandez (Menominee) for "Wiciwne Apis-Mahwaew in 2000"

Cookbook

Gail Gottlieb Minturn (Laguna Pueblo) for "In Our Grandmother's Kitchens: A Family Memoir and

Cookbook" Journal Editing

EDITOR

Devon Mihesuah (Chocktaw) for editing AIQ (American Indian Quarterly)

Mixed Media

Lee Maracle (Stoh:lo First Nation of British Columbia) and Sandra LaRonde (Teme-aguma Anishinabe First Nation) for "My Home As I Remember"

Syndicated Column

Jim Northrup (Anishinabe) for "The Fond du Lac Follies"

Storyteller of the Year

TRADITIONAL STORIES

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Tim Tingle (Choctaw)

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NATIONAL PUBLISHER

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UNIVERSITY PRESS

American Indian Lives Series, University of Nebraska Press – Gary Dunham, Editor

OUTSIDE U.S. PUBLISHER

Kegedonce Press – Kateri-Akiwenzie Damm (Nawash First Nation), Publisher for "Skins: Contemporary Indigenous Writing - American Indian, Inuit, First Nations, Aboriginal and Maori"

Foundation of the Year

Lannan Foundation, Santa Fe, New Mexico - J. Patrick Lannan, Jr., President

Sovereign Indigenous Native Nation of the Year

Citizen Band Potawatomi, Shawnee, Oklahoma - John A. Rocky Barrett, Chairman

Special Honors

Louise Abeyta (Laguna Pueblo)

Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve (Rosebud Lakota)

Karen M. Strom

For more information about Wordcraft Circle

Contact: Lee Francis (Laguna Pueblo), National Director, Wordcraft Circle

Voice: (505) 352-0650 FAX: (505) 352-9509

Email: wordcraft@sockets.net

American Native Press Archives: the American Native Press Archives' website carries a number of features of interest to students and scholars in American Indian studies. These include a bibliography, hard-to-find texts, indexes to Native newspapers, and other features.

The bibliography of Native American writers, 1772 to the present, aims to be comprehensive. 13,000 plus citations are annotated, and the bibliography is searchable by author, title, subject, time period, and tribal affiliation. This fall, First Nation writers from Canada will be added as well. The bibliography is open, that is, new citations are being added all the time.

Native Writers Digital Text Project is another feature on the website. Introduced in summer, 2000, the project's purpose is to publish hard-to-find texts by American Indian and Alaska Native writers. The first digital texts that are available online are the poems of John Rollin Ridge and selected works of Charles Gibson.

Ridge is the nineteenth-century Cherokee novelist, journalist, and poet whose verse has been out of print for over a hundred years. Gibson is the Muscogee humorist, folklorist, and historian of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries whose works appeared in newspapers and magazines.

In another activity, the archives is preparing indices to important Native newspapers and other serial publications. Among the first to go on line is an index to the complete run of the Cherokee Phoenix, the first tribal newspaper, published at New Echota, Cherokee Nation, from 1828 to 1834.

Other features have appeared on the website over the past few years and still accessible, including those on Indian-Black history and Sequoyah, the inventor of the Cherokee syllabary. Currently, a chronicle of Indian removal is being prepared, including texts of contemporary news and other accounts of what later became known as the Trail of Tears.

Please come to www.anpa.ualr.edu for these features and other information. Comments and suggestions are welcome: contact

Dan Littlefield or Jim Parins at anpa@ualr.edu or at
American Native Press Archives
UALR English Department
2801 S. University Ave.
Little Rock, AR 72204

OPPORTUNITIES

Minority Faculty Fellowship Program at Indiana University

Created in 1986 by the Bloomington Faculty Council, the IUB Faculty Fellows Program responds to the need to increase the number of minority faculty on the Bloomington campus. The program is directed by Alberto Torchinsky, Associate Vice Chancellor for the Office of Strategic Hiring and Support. From 1986 to 2001, 88 fellows in 35 departments have participated in the program.

The purpose of the program is to introduce fellows to the Bloomington campus and to provide them with experience, professional diversity, and the opportunity to teach at "America's New Public University". Some fellows have subsequently been offered tenure track positions at the various Indiana University campuses.

The program funds appointments distributed over both the summer and academic year. Summer fellows usually teach one course during the first (six week) or second (eight week) session, and academic year fellows teach in both the fall and spring terms. All appointments provide an opportunity for Bloomington faculty and fellows to interact with each other on a professional level.

A central goal of the Fellows Program is to assist chairpersons and deans in identifying scholars who might be available for visiting positions.

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Library; Medieval Studies; W. H. Mathers Museum of Anthropology; History and Folklore; Russian and East European Studies; Semiotic Studies; Institute of Social Research; Uralic and Altaic Studies; Victorian Studies; West European Studies.

- Exposure to the creative arts: Afro-American Arts Institute; IU Art Museum; Brown County Playhouse; Chamber, Philharmonic, and Baroque orchestras; Jazz and Choral ensembles; IU Opera Theater; Summer Band.

How does one get selected?

Once applications are received and processed, they are circulated to appropriate departments or schools, who make the hiring decisions. Applications for faculty fellowships are evaluated according to the academic and professional credentials of the applicants and the needs and opportunities of the particular departments and schools.

Applicants must be citizens or permanent residents of the United States. Applicants must have completed a Ph.D. (or other comparable postgraduate degree) within the past four years or be in a position to complete the degree within the next year.

How to Apply

A preferential consideration date of November 30, 2001 is set in order to provide departments and schools ample opportunity to evaluate applications while delineating course schedules for the following year. Applications are accepted year round, but only those received by the above dates are guaranteed consideration by the departments; however, applicants for both programs are accepted all year. The completed application includes the official application form and three reference letters, preferably on the forms included in the packet. Applicants must also submit a current curriculum vitae. A statement of purpose outlining their academic and professional objectives is also recommended. It is possible to apply for both summer and academic year fellowships simply by indicating that choice on the application form. To obtain the application forms or receive more information, please contact:

Storme Day, Program Coordinator, IUB Faculty Fellows Program, Memorial Hall West 108, 1021 East Third Street, Indiana University, Bloomington, IL 47405-7005, (812) 855-0542, or reach us by email at: ffp@indiana.edu.

The Massachusetts Historical Society has announced several fellowship opportunities for 2002-03, including Long-Term Fellowships (application deadline 15 January), Short-Term Fellowships (application deadline 1 March), and New England Regional Research Fellowships (application deadline 1 February). For more information click here or visit the "Get Involved" section of their website at www.masshist.org.

Conferences

Native American Literature Symposium
April 10-13, 2002
Mystic Lake Casino · Hotel, Prior Lake, Minnesota

Papers and panels are welcome on any aspect of Native American Literature. Topics to be considered will include tribal sovereignty, narrative strategies, cultural mediations, interdisciplinary arts, literature and history, cultural contexts, and individual authors. We also welcome panel discussions on pedagogical methods, individual texts, authors, and film. And we are pleased to locate our symposium this year at a tribal venue. Deadline for proposals is 4 January 2002.

All queries, proposals, registration forms, and checks should be sent to the Program Director:

Dr. Gwen Griffin
Native American Literature Symposium
230 Armstrong Hall
Minnesota State University, Mankato
Mankato, MN 56001
(507) 389-2117 gwen.griffin@mnsu.edu

For further information, including proposal and registration forms and housing information, go to the NALC web site:
www.english.mnsu.edu/griffin/nativelit.htm

MAJOR FEDERALLY-RECOGNIZED TRIBAL NATIONS MENTIONED IN THE ESSAYS OF THIS ISSUE

Compiled by Daniel Justice

This list is provided as a service for those readers interested in further communications with the U.S. federally-recognized governments of American Indian nations. Inclusion of a government on this list does not imply endorsement of or by SAIL in any regard, nor does it imply the enrollment status of any writer mentioned; some communities have alternative governments and leadership that are not affiliated with the BIA. We have limited the list to those most relevant to the essays published in this issue; thus, not all bands, towns, or communities of a particular tribe are listed. For example, the Cherokees mentioned by both Craig Womack and Stephen Brandon are Oklahoma Cherokees, and thus only the Nation and Keetoowah Band are mentioned, not the Eastern Band of Cherokees in North Carolina.

References are listed by nation, author, government, address, and the primary governmental officer. Some nations welcome outside scholarly inquiry; others limit the access of outsiders to the intellectual and cultural information to tribal members or non-members with whom there is a long-term relationship. The terms of some tribal leaders may have expired by the time of publication; for more details and information, you can access the BIA web site at http://www.doi.gov/bureau-indian-affairs.html.

OKLAHOMA CHEROKEE (Narcissa Owen, Robert Owen, Jr., Craig Womack)

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Chad Smith, Principal Chief

United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians
P.O. Box 746, Tahlequah, OK 74465
Jim Henson, Chief

MUSKOGEE (CREEK) (Alexander Posey, Craig Womack)
Muskogee (Creek) Nation
P.O. Box 580, Okmulgee, OK 74447
R. Perry Beaver, Principal Chief

OSAGE (John Joseph Mathews, Robert Allen Warrior)
Osage Tribal Council
P.O. Box 779, Pawhuska, OK 74056
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P.O. Box 50, Fort Thompson, SD 57339
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850 A Street, P.O. Box 408, Plummer, ID 83851
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P.O. Box 369, Carnegie, OK 73015
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P.O. Box 194, Laguna, NM 87026
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Sac & Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa
349 Meskwaki Road, Tama, IA 52339-9629
Talbert Davenport, Chairman

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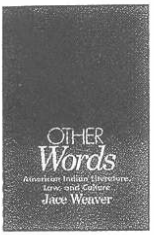

OTHER WORDS
AMERICAN INDIAN LITERATURE, LAW, AND CULTURE
By Jace Weaver

Jace Weaver examines Indian creative output, from oral tradition to the postmodern wordplay of Gerald Vizenor, and brings to light previously overlooked texts. Weaver also tackles up-to-the-minute issues, including environmental crises, Native American spirituality, repatriation of Indian remains and cultural artifacts, and international human rights.

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