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CORRECTION: In the bibliographical information for Mark Turcotte's *The Feathered Heart*, reviewed in *SAIL* 8.2 (Summer 1996) and again in 8.3 (Fall 1996), we provided some erroneous information. The publisher should read "MARCH/Abrazo"; the actual year of publication was 1995; and it is 64 pages rather than 61. Our apologies to Mr. Turcotte and his publisher for these errata.

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A Popoloc Riddle

Annette Veerman-Leichsenring

Introduction

The following tale was recorded in Los Reyes Metzontla in the state of Puebla, Mexico, during fieldwork in 1984.[1] It was recited by Norberto Baustista Cortés, one of the most gifted Popoloc speakers and a native of that village. He was about 60 years old then. Most of the approximately 1,200 inhabitants of Los Reyes Metzontla speak Spanish. A minority of older people still speak Popoloc.

The Popolocs of Los Reyes Metzontla are no great storytellers. "The only story my mother told me," reported one of my female informants, "was to get wood for the fire, to look after my little brothers, or to grind the corn. We had no time for storytelling." This condition was possibly a common one in the village and could explain the general absence of traditional stories, stories that reflect the cultural legacy of the ethnic group. Accordingly, the texts I recorded were mostly accounts of the daily life in former times, of lost customs and practices that were still remembered by the elders. These accounts were narrated in everyday speech, without stylistic figures or embellishments. In contrast to these reports of daily life, the topic of the following story here presented is a literary one, one that goes back to Greek mythology. It is a version of the riddle that Oedipus solved to save the city of Thebes from the Sphinx and which is referred to by Sophocles in *Oedipus Rex*, among others. As is characteristic of riddles, the tale is a metaphor: a human's life equals a single day and the human being starts life as an animal, sucking and creeping around, and depending on others in the final phase of life.

Assuming its Greek origin, the riddle must have been introduced by literate visitors to the Popoloc village: possibly by Catholic

missionaries, shortly after the conquest, or by teachers in more recent times. In connection with the pursuit of national unification, the then Secretary of Education, José Vasconcelos, sent well-prepared teachers to the Indian villages to educate the children in a unified way. This happened in the period 1925-1935 approximately. The names of some of those teachers are still remembered with esteem by the older people. They taught many practical things, such as how to construct furniture and forge utensils. They taught them to read and to write Spanish, and, unfortunately, they contributed also to their alienation from the Popoloc language and culture. However, the repeated phrase that it was God who created the animal (lines 63 and 73) suggests that the riddle was introduced by the clergy. Moreover, the narrator explains several times that his grandfather told him the riddle; that suggests that the riddle was orally transferred by at least three generations, long before the teachers entered the village for the first time. Several traditional figures of narrative speech do indicate that the riddle must have a narrative tradition in the village, for example the repetitive character of some phrases (lines 13, 14, 15, 17, and 19) and the formulaic reference to the grandfather as the previous teller of the riddle.

The story shows a multiple layering of related persons. In the first place there are the actual storyteller and the listener. This relation is directly referred to in the beginning of the story: "I will tell you . . ." (1), "I shall tell you too . . ." (31), "That is what I am saying to you . . ." (48). The narrator invites the listener to reflect on the used metaphors and to solve the riddle: "Will you tell me . . ." (24). Then there is the grandfather of the narrator as the previous storyteller; it is all told by his grandfather and he refers to this fact several times (lines 1, 6, 9, 21, 22, 25, 29). It is beyond all doubt that the animal has the leading part in the story. The noun *kū*, "animal," is used again and again and the corresponding co-referential pronoun *bā* is not omitted in a single case. The use of these two elements gives the riddle the shape of traditional formula. A secondary part is played by a little boy, who could be interpreted as the remainder of the Oedipus personage, often referred to as a young man in classical literature. This boy knows the animal, although he is not able to explain what kind of animal it is (46, 47). His knowledge contrasts with that of the grandfather, who might be able to explain because of his wisdom, although he does not know the animal (68, 69). The concept consistently translated as "to know" corresponds with two different roots in the Popoloc original tale: *čų́-* and *nū-*. The first root is used in active verbs which specify the person of the subject (I know, you know, etc.), whereas the second root is used in impersonal forms specifying the person of the indirect object (it is known to me, to you, etc.). In the tale there exists an antithesis

between the narrator, who expresses his lack of knowledge by either one of the two verbs, and the boy, whose knowledge is generally referred to by the passive verb. Most probably the two verbs have different meanings which are difficult to translate into English. We may tentatively propose that *čų́-* refers to a conscious knowledge, whereas *nū-* approximates a meaning of an intuitive knowing, by acquaintance, more proper to the nature of a child. The role of a third party, the gentlemen, can possibly be seen as that of an evoked audience, invited to prove its capability or willingness to solve the riddle.

All in all the tale is well constructed: an opening, the first part of the riddle, an interruption, the second part, and a final concept: God created the animal. It might be that the riddle was introduced into the village in a version already structured this way. However, whether the tale maintained or adopted this structure in the course of the years is immaterial; in either case it is the effect of oral tradition. The characteristics of the riddle presented here may show convincingly that textual features of oral traditions are applied to stories alien to one's own culture. Characteristics of a specific oral tradition do not necessarily imply a local cultural origin of a story.

The Popoloc language

Popoloc is spoken in the southern part of the state of Puebla. Several dialects can be distinguished, but none is dominant. Along with Chocho, Ixcatec (nearly extinct), and Mazatec (with the largest number of speakers), Popoloc forms the Popolocan language family, which belongs to the Otomanguean phylum. The name Popoloca was applied by speakers of Nahuatl and means "barbarian, unintelligible language." It should not be confused with Popoluca, a language spoken in the state of Veracruz, which belongs to the Mixe-Zoque phylum. As most of the Otomanguean languages, Popoloc is a tonal language; the Metzontla dialect distinguishes three tonemes. Tones are used to distinguish words (*ní* three, *nì* corn cob), grammatical categories as person, time, etc. (*thànuá* I laugh, *thànuā* you laugh), and sentence types. The morphology is rather complicated. Affixes, enclitics, and substitution of tonemes and phonemes are used to refer to person, number, tense, aspect, mood and voice, instrument, source, and companionship. A basic word order VSO (Verb-Subject-Object) is frequently disturbed for pragmatic purposes. A preverbal subject or object may be repeated after the verb by a co-referential element (CO). For example, the element *bā-* that frequently occurs in the riddle co-refers with the noun *kū* "animal" and animal names beginning with the classifier *kū-*; *šá* co-refers with nouns including the classifier *ší-* as in *ší-čáxą* "boy." The marker glossed NA has different functions. It is used as a focus

marker, delimits adverbial phrases, or can have a coordinating function. The use of personal pronouns is emphatic, which may be reinforced by the focus marker NA, "as for me." For further phonological and grammatical information, refer to Veerman-Leichsenring, *El Popoloca de los Reyes Metzontla*(1984) and *Gramática del Popoloca de Metzontla* (1991).

In 1978 the language was spoken in eleven villages by approximately 11,200 people, most of them elderly (Veerman, *El Popoloca* 16). Nowadays, Popoloc is used in daily communication in four villages only: San Felipe Otlaltepec, San Luis Temalacayuca, San Juan Atzingo, and San Marcos Tlacoyalco; in some other villages, it is still used but exclusively by the aged. The language is threatened with extinction in two ways. In the first place, as the language is no longer taught to the children, the number of speakers is decreasing. Emigration in search of work accelerates this process. A second form of decay involves the structure of the language itself. Spanish words and syntactic structures increasingly substitute the Popoloc ones. Refer to Cook de Leonard's "Los Popolocas de Puebla" (1953), Hoppe et al.'s "The Popoloca" (1969), and Veerman-Leichsenring's *El Popoloca* (1984) for more general information about the Popolocs.

The presentation and transcription of the text

The text is presented in numbered units of two lines. The first line gives the Popoloc text in a word by word analysis. In view of the complicated structure of the verbs and nouns, some morpheme boundaries are indicated by a hyphen. The transcription of the text is phonemic by means of symbols which agree largely with those used in English orthography, with the following exceptions: *ą*, *ę*, *į*, and *ų* are nasalized vowels; *7* represents a glottal stop and *x* a velar fricative; *c* and *č* represent affricates like in "tsar" and "choose" respectively; and a dot under the consonant refers to retroflection. The *š* symbolizes a palatalized sibilant as in "ship," and *M* and *N* are voiceless nasals. The symbols *ch*, *th*, *čh*, and *kh* refer to aspirated consonants and *mb*, *nd*, *ng*, etc. to prenasalized consonants. The tones are indicated on the vowel by diacritics. For example, *á* represents the vowel *a* with a high tone, *ā* with a mid tone, and *à* with a low tone. Unmarked vowels are semivowels or symbols of lengthening. A hyphen is used with affixes and a little arch with enclitics. The second line gives the English translation or the function of each word. Grammatical glosses are given in small capitals. **RESTR** is a restrictive element, which has the approximate meaning of "only." **CL** refers to prefixes that classify nouns: *čhà-* beloved, *sé-* respected, *šī-* unmarried male, etc. **INCL** glosses the clitic *nī*, a plural marker of the first person including the listener. **R** glosses a reverential form of the third or second person.

The form of the third person *sé* may refer to plurality. An English version of the text (in italics) and some special notes are interspersed.

The riddle

1. xą̈7à ngē c7ékī7á sá čhà-sé-bēlúná
   I thing I'll tell you R CL-CL-my grandfather

2. čá ndá7à nà k7uèkīnà sę́
   more formerly NA he told me R

3. šī tùxí7ī ngū kū nà . . .
   that is born one animal NA

4. ngū n7iū má thāk7ē bā
   one day not more it settles CO

I shall tell you how my beloved and respected grandfather told me, in former days, that an animal was born . . . to be on earth for only a single day.

5. n3iā túndú nà ú t7ę̄ bā
   when it darkens NA already it dies CO

6. uíčá k7uèkīnà sę́ pero xą̈7à nà čù-7ā bā
   ---- he told me R but I NA I know-not CO

   [**note**: *uíčá* is an uncertain form. Here it has the approximate meaning of "thus, in this way."]

7. ndácū sę́ xē7ē sę́ nà ísī tí kū̆è nà
   he said R he R NA that this animal NA

8. sīí bā cítą́ú nùndè čàsēndāNí . . . nūnà-7ā
   exists CO on earth world I know it-not

When it darkens, it is already dead. Thus he told me, but I don't know it. He said that this animal exists on earth . . . I don't know.

9. pero tí kū̆è nà ndáčū sę́
   but this animal NA he said R

10. n3iā n7àndá tīngásaniā nà tùxí7ī bā nà
when hardly it dawns NA it is born CO NA

11. tīngāngákhę̄ c7ē bā
it drags along its belly CO

But this animal, he said, when it is hardly dawning, when it is born, it goes dragging along its belly.

12. súumá cı̨7ī súā nà
little no more rises sun NA

13. ú nūú tùt7é bā chīsī bā
already four its foot CO it will go with CO

14. thìxī tùn7iū nà yú má tùt7é bā
arrives noon NA two no more its foot CO

15. chīsī bā
it will go with CO

When the sun rises a bit more, it goes on four feet already. At noon it will go on two feet, no more.

16. súumá t7āndā čūngísī nà ú
little no more passes noon NA now

17. ní tùt7é bā chīsī bā
three its foot CO it will go with CO

18. súumá túxı̨ nà ú túchī bā íná
little no more late NA now it creeps CO again

19. nūú tùt7é bā chīsī bā íná
four its foot CO it will go with CO again

20. n3iā thiātą̄ú súā nà ú k7uę́ bā
when hides sun NA already it died CO

When noon has passed a little, it will go on three feet. A little later and it goes creeping again, on four feet it will go again. At sunset it is dead already.

21. mé čīga cū sé-belúná
thus as says CL-my grandfather

22. xą̄7à nà čù-7ā bā pero . . . ndácū sę́ nà
I NA I know-not CO but he said R NA

23. īšī asta xīì sīí tį́ kū ̣à
that till now exists that animal

24. sūyá ndácuā sá . . . k7áčù7ā sá ngē7ē kū tį̀à
you R say R (if) you know R what animal that

That is what my grandfather said. I don't know the animal. But . . . he said that the animal still exists. Will you tell me . . . if you know what animal this is?

25. kàabí k7uèkīnà sę́ nà īšī tį́ ku ̣è
too he told me R NA that this animal

26. n3iā tùxí7ī bā nà nē-7ā bā
when it is born CO NA it eats-not CO

27. sino tāagé bā
but it sucks CO

He told me too that, when this animal is born, it does not eat but it sucks.

28. c7ekī7á sá kàabí
I shall tell you R too

29. šī ndácū bēlúná tį́ kū ̣à
that he said my grandfather that animal

30. n3iā tùxí7ī bā nà tāagé bā nà
when it is born CO NA it sucks CO NA

31. čīgā ngēšé7í kū
like any other animal

And I shall tell you too, that my grandfather said that when that animal is born, it sucks like any other animal.

32. n3iā ú xié bā nà nē bā
when already big CO NA it eats CO

33. kù t7ī bā n3iā ú čá xié bā nà
and it drinks CO when already more big CO NA

34. č7ē bā ša7 č7ē ba ša7 nà
it does CO work it does CO work NA

35. íšī sàčà bā ngē sūnē bā
in order it will earn CO thing it will eat CO

When it grows up, it eats and drinks. When it is older, it works. It works in order to earn its food.

36. kù ān3í ān3í n3iā í šāxuā-y7ā
and little by little when already it can-not

37. č7ē bā ša7 nà n3iā ú chīsī
it does CO work NA when already it will go with

38. bā nūú tùt7é bā nà í šāxuā-y7ā c7ē bā
CO four its foot CO NA now it can-not it does CO

39. ša7 ā t7íné-7ú bā íšī ngē
work but one buys for it-**RESTR** CO in order thing

[**note**: *t7íné-7ú* is a fused form of *t7íné7ē* "one buys for it" plus the restrictive element *ú*.]

40. nē bā ke í šāxuā-y7ā č7ē bā ša7
it eats CO that now it can-not it does CO work

And little by little, when it cannot work anymore, when it goes on four feet, it cannot work anymore, and they must buy food for it, because it cannot work anymore.

41. nā7àšē ú thiātą́í sía nà í k7uę́ bā
whilst now hides sun NA already it died CO

42. čú-7ā˯nī bā pero sàn3āngú7ī˯nī
he knows-not˯INCL CO but he will ask him˯INCL

43. ngū ke tɨ́ sɛ́ čʊ́sī bā nà
one that the **R** he knows **CO NA**

44. ān3e7ší cùcūngā sɛ́ ší ngē kū tɨ̂à
perhaps he will inform **R** that what animal that

When the sun sets, he is already dead. We do not know about it, but we shall ask one of the gentlemen who knows about it. Perhaps he will explain us what animal that is.

45. mē tɨ̂à mē ša7thuā sá
well that well I say to you **R**

46. kù c7ékī7á sá kàabí . . . ngū ší-čą́xà nà
and I shall tell you **R** also one **CL**-boy **NA**

47. ngū ší-čą́xà chū skwela nà čhą̀ ndí šá
one **CL**-boy he will go school **NA** child little **CO**

[**note**: in this sentence the verb expresses future time for unknowr reasons.]

48. pero ú nū7ē šá ngē kū tɨ̂à
but already he knows **CO** what animal that

Well, that is what I am saying to you and I tell you also . . . th boy, a schoolboy, he is still a little child, but he knows already wnat animal this is.

49. xē7ē šá cū šá nà īšī ú nū7ē
he **CO** he says **CO NA** that already he knows

50. šá ngē kū tɨ̂à
CO what animal that

51. xą́7à ndáchą7 šá cùčéngā˯nà šá
I I said **CO** he will inform˯me **CO**

52. ngē kū tɨ̂à pero
what animal that but

53. čʊ́-7ā šá cūngā šá ngē kū tɨ̂à
he knows-not **CO** he informs **CO** what animal that

54. čų́-7ā šá cūngā šá pero xē7ē šá
he knows-not CO he informs CO but he CO

55. ndácū šá nà īšī ú čų́šī šá bā
he said CO NA that already he knows CO CO

He says that he knows already what animal that is. I said to him that he might tell me what animal that is. But he does not know how to tell what animal that is. He is not able to explain. But he said that he knows it already.

56. xē7ē sę́ ndácū sę́ desde ndí šá nà
he R he said R since little CO NA

57. ú nū7ē ša ngīšá tùxí7ī
already he knows CO how is born

58. tí kū˯ì ngīša t7ángí bā mēša7
this animal how it grows CO that's why

59. ndácū tí ší-čą́xà nà ke xē7ē šá cùčéngā˯nà
said the CL-boy NA that he CO he will tell˯me

60. šá ngū n7iū nà ngīšá kuì tí kū˯ì
CO one day NA how it came this animal

The gentleman said that the boy knows since he is a little boy how this animal is born, how it grows up. That is why the boy said that he will inform me one day how this animal came to be.

61. tí kū˯à nà desde n3iā xuák7èšī
that animal NA since when was created

62. čàsēndāNí nà desde mē k7únā bā
world NA since well was made CO

63. t7é˯nī dio kuíč7énā bā
his father˯INCL god he made CO

64. īšī khí bā cítą́ú čàsēndāNí
so it lives CO on world

65. nā7í ngūk7uá bā sino kuāyē bā
no a single CO but many CO

66. kuāyē bā kuāyē bā ú kąú bā čàsēndāNí
many CO many CO already full CO world

67. čīgā cū ší-čąxa
as he says CL-boy

That animal, at the time the world was created, at that time it was created. God our Father created it so that it lives in the world. And not a single one but many of them. Many, many, the world is full of them, as the boy says.

68. xá7à íčá xù7u nà kù
I still more old me and

69. nūnà-7ā ngē7ē kū tĵà
I know-not what animal that

70. xē7ē šá nà nū7ē šá
he CO NA he knows CO

I am older than the boy, but I don't know what that animal is. But he knows.

71. desde n3iā xuák7èšī čàsēndāNí nà ndácū šà
since when was created world NA he said CO

72. īšī ú čāší sīí bā
that already of itself it exists CO

73. i dio kuíč7énā bā
and god he made CO

Since the world was created, he said, the animal has existed, by itself, and God made it.

NOTE

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Women Aging Into Power: Fictional Representations of Power and Authority in Louise Erdrich's Female Characters

Susan Castillo

Some years ago, when I was casting around for a topic for my Ph.D. thesis, I was struck, as I read so-called canonical authors, by the number of female protagonists in American literature who come to unsavory or untimely ends. Heroines, particularly those who challenge prevailing social and cultural norms, are all too prone to every sort of disaster: they are either condemned to social ostracism (as is the case with Hester Prynne in Nathaniel Hawhorne's *The Scarlet Letter* or Sister Carrie in the novel by the same name by Theodore Dreiser) or die in ways which are more or less aesthetically appealing (as is the case with Hawthorne's Zenobia in *The Blithedale Romance*, Henry James's heroine Daisy Miller, Kate Chopin's Edna Pontellier, and so very many others).

In our own century, however, it is curious that female protagonists who actually manage not only to survive but actually to prevail and even prosper can be found in significant numbers in popular fiction and in fiction by so-called "ethnic" or minority writers. Perhaps for this reason, I have found novels by Native American women particularly attractive. When I began to read Leslie Silko's *Ceremony*, for example, I was fascinated by the roles attributed to women. The narrative is focused through a female deity, Ts'its'tsi'nako, Spider Woman, weaver of ideas and source of discursive authority. The women in the novel own land and work magic, and it is they who are largely responsible for the cure of Tayo, the male protagonist. In novels by other Native American women writers, we can encounter similar portrayals of Indian women as figures of strength and power. Some of the most fascinating examples of this phenomenon can be found in the texts of Chippewa writer Louise Erdrich.

The subject of women and the exercise of power has been, as one might expect, the source of intense polemic. In the anthology *Women, Culture and Society*, anthropologist Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo has come to some insights which I feel can be useful not only for the field of anthropology but also for the analysis of representations of gender roles. Rosaldo, drawing on the work of Max Weber and M. G. Smith, distinguishes between the concepts of *power* and *authority*. In this perspective, power is "the ability to act effectively on persons or things to make or secure favorable decisions which are not of right allocated to the individuals or their roles" (Smith, qtd. in Rosaldo and Lamphere 21). Authority, on the other hand, is socially validated and implies a hierarchical chain of command and control. In this view, women have always exercised considerable power (particularly in the domestic realm), while men have retained authority, which is a culturally legitimated phenomenon.[1] Among many Native American groups, women in traditional narratives are accorded both power and authority. However, in contemporary America, when Native American women are marginalized by traditional patriarchal structures not only because they are women but also because they are Native American, it is often the case that the texts they produce will portray women of power, though not necessarily of authority. It should also be noted, nonetheless, that in recent years increasing numbers of female characters who exercise both power and authority have begun to emerge in Native American fictional narratives.

Within the corpus of Louise Erdrich's fiction, two female characters have always held a particular fascination for me: Marie Lazarre and Zelda Kashpaw. Like most of Erdrich's characters, both Marie and Zelda are complex, often maddening, full of contradictions, and above all eminently real.

Marie's childhood is the antithesis of a Norman Rockwell-style Anglo-American idyll. She is the illegitimate daughter of Pauline Puyat, who appears in Erdrich's novel *Tracks* as a member of a family of "mixed bloods, skinners in the clan for which the name was lost" (*Tracks* 14). Pauline is an immensely powerful (though not authoritative) figure, though she uses her power toward negative and often self-destructive ends as she struggles to become assimilated into so-called mainstream America. She becomes pregnant by Napoleon Morrissey, described as belonging to a family of mixed-bloods who had profited from acquiring allotments that more traditional Chippewas had not known how to hold on to. Marie, the product of their union (if such it can be called), is delivered with spoons instead of forceps. After her birth, Pauline leaves her to be raised by her grandmother Bernardette Morissey and then enters a convent as Sister Leopolda. Marie ends up

living in the woods with her Lazarre relatives, who have a reputation for being dishonest, dirty, and indolent.

Marie, however, is anything but a typical Lazarre. She is a bewildering mixture of toughness and compassion, of tenderness and astringent candor. Perhaps inevitably, she enters her mother's convent. There Pauline/Leopolda, who is totally deranged but nonetheless radiates a certain dark power, terrorizes the unsuspecting Marie by claiming that the devil is within her and, finally, by pouring boiling water into her ear in an effort to exorcize evil. Marie, despite her apparent docility, is no weakling either and retaliates by attempting to push Leopolda into a bread oven in an episode that reminds one of Hansel and Gretel, who end up cooking the Wicked Witch. Leopolda's wrath is terrible to behold, but Marie is not cowed:

> She was fearfully silent. She whirled. Her veil had cutting edges. She had the poker in one hand. In the other she held that long sharp fork she used to tap the delicate crusts of loaves. Her face turned upside down on her shoulders. Her face turned blue. But saints are used to miracles. I felt no trace of fear.
>
> If I was going to be lost, let the diamonds cut! Let her eat ground glass!
>
> "Bitch of Jesus Christ!" I shouted. "Kneel and beg! Lick the floor!"
>
> That was when she stabbed me through the hand with the fork, then took the poker up alongside my head, and knocked me out. (*Love Medicine* 53)

Needless to say, this is hardly an idyllic vision of the mother-daughter relationship. The surreal imagery of Pauline with blue inverted face, holding aloft the fork and poker as she whirls like a demented dervish, is one of immense tragicomic impact. Erdrich describes her as an adolescent made of "angles and sharp edges, a girl of bent tin" (*Tracks* 71), and the description still holds true of her as an adult. But Marie is her mother's child in many ways, and she has inherited Pauline's courage as well as her power, though fortunately not her insanity. This enables her to stand up to what would often seem a mad or profoundly unjust reality. Though "mainstream" society would dismiss both Pauline and Marie as persons without authority, as merely an addled nun and an insignificant half-breed girl, both are powerful and disturbing characters who stay vivid in the reader's mind.

As one might expect, Marie ends up fleeing from the convent. In doing so, she literally crashes into Nector Kashpaw. Nector, who describes her as "the youngest daughter of a family of horse-thieving drunks" (*Love Medicine* 58), is convinced she has robbed a pillowcase from the convent, and thus stops her in order to recover the stolen

goods. Marie, after calling him "you damn Indian" and telling him "You stink to hell!" (*Love Medicine* 59), kicks him as hard as she can. But after this most unpromising beginning, she and Nector marry. Nector is an amiable weakling, a man who is clever and charming (all too charming, as things turn out, especially to the sexy widow Lulu Nanapush). He plaintively expresses his feelings for Marie (and indeed for Lulu) in the following terms: "Her taste was bitter. I craved the difference after all those years of easy sweetness. But I still had a taste for candy. I could never have enough of both . . ." (92). He is prone to indolence and to a certain tendency to drink more than is good for him. Marie decides to use her *power*, however, to propel Nector into a position of *authority*:

> I had plans, and there was no use him trying to get out of them. I'd known from the beginning I had married a man with brains. But the brains wouldn't matter unless I kept him from the bottle. He would pour them down the drain, where his liquor went, unless I stopped the holes, wore him out, dragged him back each time he drank, and tied him to the bed with strong ropes.
>
> I had decided I was going to make him into something big on the reservation. (66)

Indeed she does: Nector ends up as tribal chairman. Significantly, though Marie is by far the stronger figure of the two, she does not aspire to a position of authority on her own behalf.

Marie's daughter Zelda, when she appears in the novel *Love Medicine*, is similar to her mother and grandmother Leopolda in that she is fascinated by the all-female world of the convent, a realm in which women exercise both power *and* authority. In one unforgettable scene, Marie takes Zelda up to the convent to meet Sister Leopolda. Marie flaunts her respectability and social clout on the reservation before Leopolda. Regarding Nector's position as tribal chairman, she states baldly, "He is what he is because I made him" (*Love Medicine* 118). We can paraphrase the words "because I made him" in two ways: because she has literally forced him to achieve the chairmanship, and also because he is very much her creation. Leopolda reacts by diving under the bed for an iron spoon (as we recall, Marie had been delivered by two iron spoons) and then making a fearful racket on the iron bars of her bed. Marie wants desperately to wrest the spoon, the emblem of power, from her:

> I wanted that spoon because it was a hell-claw welded smooth. . . . *It had power*. It was like her soul boiled down and poured in a mold and hardened. . . . Every time I held the spoon handle I'd know that she was

> nothing but a ghost, a black wind. . . . I would get that spoon. (*Love Medicine* 120; emphasis added)

In the end, though she struggles with Leopolda for the spoon, Marie is overcome by the force of her own compassion. She has perceived that Leopolda's power is the power of death, of negativity.

When they return home, Zelda finds a note on the kitchen table which reveals her father's plans to leave Marie for the seductive Lulu Nanapush. Marie is stunned. She reacts by stripping the wax from the kitchen floor. Symbolically, she has been brought to her knees by love for Nector and by her own insecurities. But suddenly Marie seems to realize that she is a person in her own right. Power, after all, lies within us, while authority is conferred by others, and Marie does not need the reflected authority of Nector's position to exercise her own power:

> But I was not going under, even if he left me. . . . I would not care if Lulu Lamartine ended up the wife of the chairman of the Chippewa Tribe. I'd still be Marie. Marie. Star of the Sea! I'd shine when they stripped off the wax. (*Love Medicine* 128)

Zelda, rather than entering the convent as she had wished to earlier, ends up getting pregnant by a man called Swede Johnson from the nearby boot camp, who promptly goes AWOL for good. Her only comment in later years is to state drily, "Learnt my lesson. . . . Never marry a Swedish is my rule" (*Love Medicine* 14). Later, her daughter Albertine tells us, she remarries. Her second (Swedish?) husband's name is Bjornson, and she lives with him in an aqua-and-silver trailer on the reservation. Albertine mentions her "rough gray face" (*Love Medicine* 13). Zelda and Albertine get on each other's nerves: Zelda asks her daughter about possible Catholic boyfriends and is horrified that Albertine might wish to be what she calls, in terms which remind one of Fifties films about secretaries with long painted fingernails, a Career Girl. Albertine is furious at her mother for not telling her about her Aunt June's death, but she eventually goes home to visit, saying, "I wasn't crazy about the thought of seeing her, but our relationship was like a file we sharpened on, and necessary in that way" (*Love Medicine* 10).

In Erdrich's next novel, *The Bingo Palace*, Zelda reappears. Lipsha Morrissey describes her in the following terms:

> Zelda is the author of grit-jawed charity on the reservation, the instigator of good works that always get chalked up to her credit. . . . Zelda was once called raven-haired and never forgot, so on special occasions her hair, which truly is an amazing natural feature, still sweeps its fierce

> wing down the middle of her back. She wears her grandmother Rushes Bear's skinning knife at her strong hip, and she touches the beaded sheath now, as if to invoke her ancestor. (14-15)

Clearly, Zelda is not a woman to be trifled with. Despite her criticism of Albertine, she has developed a career of her own, working in the Tribal Office. There she uses her authority to enroll her grandson Redford as a full-blood member of the tribe and manages to obtain WIC food to feed him. In her middle age, her passive/aggressive tendencies are even more accentuated, and she attempts to control others through her relentless goodness. Lipsha Morrissey, who has been raised to consider her his aunt, describes her as a medium stout woman in a heavy black velvet, beaded dress and adds, "When women age into their power, no wind can upset them, no hand turn aside their knowledge; no fact can deflect their point of view" (*Bingo Palace* 13).

Lipsha has reasons to fear his aunt's intervention: he is vying with his slick cousin Lyman Lamartine (the son of Nector and Lulu Nanapush and father of Redford) for the affections of Shawnee Ray Toose, the daughter of Zelda's old flame Xavier. Thus, in the convoluted web of relationships on the reservation, Zelda is what Lipsha calls Lyman's "under-the-table half sister" (*Bingo Palace* 17), and Zelda does what she can to further Lyman's courtship of Shawnee Ray. Lipsha is aware that he is up against a formidable adversary, and when Zelda comes to visit the bingo palace owned by Lyman where Lipsha is a waiter, he decides to get her drunk by spiking her tonic water with increasing amounts of gin. His purpose in doing so is ostensibly to mellow her up a bit. But this, predictably, backfires:

> My motive is good—to make Shawnee Ray's life a little easier, for once the slight amounts of alcohol start having their effect, Zelda's basic niceness is free to shine forth. Right and left, she always forgives the multitude. . . . No matter how bad things get, on those nights when Zelda stays long enough, there is eventually the flooding appeasement of her smile. It is like having a household saint.
>
> But you have to light a candle, make a sacrifice. (44)

> I like my aunt, even though I find it difficult to keep from getting run over by her unseen intentions.
>
> Eighteen-wheeler trucks. Semis, fully loaded, with a belly dump. You never know what is coming at you when Zelda takes the road. (45)

Here in one brief sequence Zelda is compared to a queen nodding right and left to an adoring crowd, to a martyed saint, and—perhaps most

accurately—to an eighteen-wheeler truck, in metaphors that convey a volatile mix of regal self-possession, relentless virtue, and power which will flatten you if you get in its way, as Lipsha soon finds out. She begins by telling her nephew "a tale of burning love" (*Bingo Palace* 46), a phrase redolent of Presleyian thwarted romance and Fifties 45 rpm records. It is the story of her rejection of her boyfriend Xavier Toose because of her wish to marry a white man who would carry her away to a Doris Day life in the city. Xavier stood outside in the snow waiting for her to say that she loved him and ended up nearly freezing to death. As a result, he lost his fingers to frostbite. Zelda then reveals to Lipsha that June, his mother, had tried to kill him as a baby by throwing him into a creek in a gunnysack weighted down with stones.

Zelda, curiously enough, has some characteristics in common with her nephew: both are persons of immense power but not a great deal of socially validated authority. Also, throughout her life Zelda shows a certain coldness of the heart, a fear of love and vulnerability; she literally freezes Xavier out. Lipsha, an androgynous character who is often feminine (though not effeminate) in his behavior, is also cold at heart. Though he is obsessed by his love for Shawnee Ray, he thinks only of himself, causing her to cry out, "You got the medicine, Lipsha. But you don't got the love" (112). As Shawnee Ray knows intuitively, power (in Lipsha's case, the power to work magic) only succeeds if it is not used for selfish ends, while mere authority (as exemplified by Lyman) is contingent upon the vagaries of individual destinies and the twists and turns of history.

In the dramatic final scenes of the novel, both Lipsha and his aunt manage to overcome the cold they have felt all their lives. Zelda finally swallows her pride and summons up the courage to go to her old lover Xavier Toose. As she approaches, she literally thaws out: "Zelda's face bloomed toward his as though his features gave out warmth" (246). Paradoxically, her new-found vulnerability is not weakening but empowering: "Light dashed itself upon Zelda, but she wasn't shaken. Her hands floated off the steering wheel and gestured, but she wasn't helpless" (247).

Lipsha, in a parallel process, seems to experience the same discovery of the power of gentleness. At the end of the novel, as he lies trapped in a stolen car with a small baby during a blizzard, he recalls his parents:

> I think about my father and my mother, about how they have already taught me about the cold so I don't have to be afraid of it. And yet, this baby doesn't know. Cold sinks in, there to stay. And people, they'll leave you, sure. (258)

> My father taught me his last lesson in those hours, in that night. He and my mother, June, have always been inside of me, dark and shining, their absence about the size of a coin, something I have touched against and slipped. And when that happens, I call out in my bewilderment—*"What is this?"*—and the thing I never knew until now it was a piece of thin ice they had put there. (259)

But Lipsha, though he could attempt to escape on his own, refuses to abandon the baby to freeze to death. At the novel's end, it is unclear whether Lipsha has survived the blizzard or not. It is more than possible, however, that he and Zelda will surface once again in further novels by Erdrich, perhaps to exemplify the enormous force that is derived from the blurring of gender stereotypes and from the emergence of new concepts regarding the exercise of power and authority by men and women alike.[2]

NOTES

[1]In her introduction to *Woman, Culture and Society*, Rosaldo suggests that this may be due to a constellation of factors. Among these, she discusses the opposition between the domestic and public spheres and the association of the former with childbearing activities.

[2]A shorter version of this essay was presented at the annual conference of the American Indian Workshop at Fernando Pessoa University in Oporto, Portugal in April 1995 and will be published in the conference *Proceedings*.

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Leslie Marmon Silko's Sacred Water

Laura Coltelli

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In classical Western culture, sacred waters evoke visions of headwaters and lakes, rivers, and springs endowed with powers of purification or magic-casting spells, inhabited by nymphs and deities whose identities or destinies merge with the waters that embody them.

For Leslie Marmon Silko, a Laguna Pueblo Indian rooted in parched mesas who has lived her life in communion with nature, the water that forms the subject of her most recent and highly distinctive collection of short prose compositions, *Sacred Water*, is almost insubstantial as a physical element. *Sacred Water* deals with the presentiment or memory of water, water as a precious rarity, water as an integral part of the spiritual life of the Pueblos, above all those to the west of the Rio Grande. In this area of New Mexico they depend almost exclusively on rain for all forms of survival; for instance, in the old stories, a scarcity of water is often interpreted as a sign of disharmony or as a punishment by their creator, Spider Woman, for some act of disobedience. This lack of water may lead to an alienation from the land and from the benevolent spirits that inhabit and govern the precious flow of water.

Silko's *Sacred Water*, which can be likened to a small anthology, is composed of 41 brief tales accompanied by 39 black and white photographs which, at times, run parallel to the text and, at other times, extend the horizons of the stories. But the water stories are Silko's guiding thread in this celebration, weaving an almost ritualistic incantation into her stories. And as words in ritual derive part of their meaning from the accompanying gestures, so in this slender publication the significance of the written word is enhanced by the material aspects: the jacket, the paper, and the photos are all *handmade* and *homemade*.

The book thus becomes a complex representation of the author's thoughts and craft, entirely composed and produced by the author herself.

The very word that identifies water is sacred, and respect for the sacred word imposes restrictions on its use. However, all sacred, primeval concepts use the language of simplicity, and Silko has chosen not to exclude the seemingly trivial from these stories, or, as she herself puts it even more simply in the subtitle of *Sacred Water*, these *narrations*. Narrations and images. Even the latter are entirely unpretentious: simple polaroids suggesting, evoking the passage of water.

Affixed to *Sacred Water*'s jacket of soft ivory paper, flecked with tiny grains like speckled sand on a wall, are photocopies of a drawing by Silko (bearing the date and initialed by her own hand, showing the title and the name of the author). The same drawing, in an enlarged photocopy, appears on the inner face of the jacket and the following page. In the picture the prominent element is a parrot, which in Pueblo mythology represents a *rain bird*, an invocation to rain and to the spirits of rain. It is a "glyph," as Silko herself states, that "I invented to signify the phrase 'sacred water.' The glyph contains more information than the words 'sacred water.'"[1] The same arrangement is repeated at the collection's end; the only variation is that a photocopy of a drawing of a snake by Silko is glued to the back jacket (also authenticated by her initials and the date in her own pen). The water motif, so insistently repeated, thus provides a double visual frame for the central body of the narrations and the photographs.

The narrations are contained in this web of paper and string: every aspect of nature, every element that reveals itself to the eye and the ear is scanned in order to discover therein the forecast, certainty, or memory of rain. Sudden gusts of wind, heavy clouds, the pearl blue of the sky, and the smell of the land saturated with dampness, all these are carefully recorded. The sensory peceptions of the reader are engaged in this search, straining as with an almost genetic sensitivity to recognize the signs of the sacred water. Through this sacred aura the natural phenomenon opens into a universe of profound spirituality.

The rhythms of childhood, from learning to prohibitions, are molded by the ever-present availability/absence of water ("we were never permitted to frolic with or waste fresh water" [6]); these learning processes include, for instance, the protection of animals that in other cultures are not commonly associated with the affection children shower on pets, such as frogs and toads, described here as "the beloved children of the rain clouds" (6). And it is water that is the driving force of Silko's storytelling and imagery, from the story about toads with their rear ends pointing in the four cardinal directions (12) to the

big pitcher placed on family members' graves lest they be thirsty. Indeed it is here that water becomes life-bearing even in death for those who have not truly died but have simply departed ("the people used to say that a person had passed on; they seldom used the word 'died'" [16]) and who will return as rainclouds. Bodily existence is transformed into the most precious possession, water, and existence continues in this cyclical metamorphosis of the buried body that lived on water and itself then becomes a *shiwana*, dispenser of water.

In this cyclic interaction between water absorbed as a life-giving force and water that returns, even the desert landscape of the Southwest presents itself as a benevolent provider of water; water collects and is held in rock formations acting as natural cisterns so that, as the older generations of Pueblo Indians recall, even in periods of drought survival was assured.

> All around Laguna and Acoma,
> there are sandstone formations
> which make natural basins and pools
> which hold rainwater. These rainwater
> pools are cherished even
> now, because long ago, in times of
> drought, the survival of the people
> depended on the rainwater stored in
> the sandstone pools. (18)

In Pueblo cosmogony, life on this earth represents the final act of creation: the emergence from the four underground worlds where the makers of this creation have their abode, first and foremost among them the "Creation Mother" (Silko, "Landscape" 113-14). The way into these worlds, Silko tells us in *Sacred Water*, is through natural springs and lakes, which for this very reason are worshipped as natural phenomena believed to possess great power. The serpent Ma'sh'ra'-tru'ee, a messenger from the Gods, dwells in these waters, ensuring that there is sufficient water for the well-being of humankind, animals and plants. Significantly, the draining of a lake near Laguna, Silko's home village, and the resulting disappearance of the "Water Snake" closes what could be called the first part of the story, marked so far by careful observation of nature but also imbued with a profound religious and mythological aura. This context, which forms an intricate web of intercommunicating physical and cultural worlds, is responsible for sudden and unexpected misunderstanding when, in the second part, the rock drawings of a snake indicating the presence of water nearby are interpreted by the first Spanish *conquistadores* as coded signals pointing towards hidden treasure. This constitutes the first act of disharmony with the land, which has its sequel centuries later in vehicles swept

away by thunderstorms (34-35) and children drowning in swimming pools in Tucson ("designed to be attractive and inviting" [54]), deaths which, Silko points out, are far more numerous than those caused by traffic accidents.

The detailed descriptions of the metamorphosis of the desert landscape wrought by sudden summer rainstorms racing out of nowhere reveal close familiarity with these abrupt changes, and these passages have the passionate, descriptive force that is characteristic of Silko's prose. But as defiant resistance against the violence of the water and its legacy of death is charted, the rhythm of "storytelling" loses fluidity and evocative power to take on the impersonal, almost statistical, tone of journalistic reporting, of fatal cause/effect consequentiality.

As a wisely constructed foil to this sequence, the third or central part of *Sacred Water* focuses on Pueblo communities and the Native communities of Alaska threatened by stormy floods. The thoughtlessness of those who are unable to recognize the signs of light and wind is replaced by a climate of anxious awaiting, followed by conscientious and painstaking work to set up defences and small dams to save things and people. An elaborate network of ditches is set up to divert, and therefore preserve, such great abundance of rain. The violence of nature is transformed into fertility, the hostility of the desert into protection of the watchful *shiwanas*, the dispensers of water.

Just as there is interaction between the storyteller and the audience through voice and gestures, Silko's pages (narrations, photos, fonts and typesetting, paper, and binding) also "form part of the field of vision for the *reading* of the text,"[2] thereby inviting those who approach the book to read carefully and involving them in an intense dialogue with all these elements. The framing elements, for instance, have a specific material quality that is defined both visually and by touch. A dialogue is set up not only with the external world represented by the reader but also between photographs and the written word, between the page and the colors white and black, and between approximate alignments and jagged cut-offs. *Storytelling* is word *performance*, then, an evocation of images, but it is also the representation a book makes of itself, the perception of its physical substance, its shaping of a page simultaneously with the shaping of the story, of the writing, of the imagery. All of these elements culminate in a synthesis that does not exclude modern writing and photography but allows these features to be used in a process that will not freeze them. The words can change, and the images ultimately leave a sense of profound and constant inconstancy, dominated as they are by clouds or water, by animals and flowers that are subject to metamorphosis.

The very presence of such inherently fragile matter as glue, string, and thin, porous cardboard is far removed from the customary solidity

of a book as a finished commodity that is unmodifiable and has the nature of a thing that has completed its cycle. And, indeed, the author does not parade her work as concluded but rather intimately *in progress*; she also does not present herself as a writer in the Western tradition by codifying the story into a fixed written output. The numerous and quite substantial changes introduced into later versions of *Sacred Water*, as compared with earlier versions sent as complimentary copies to friends, are by no means mere revisions but genuine enrichments. Just like the *storyteller* in the oral tradition, Silko elaborates her narration with every version: "I like the idea that like the oral narrative which changes subtly with each telling, my book *Sacred Water* also changes as I tinker with the text and with the 'glyph' and other visual dimensions of the book. Because I am making my own books, I can amend the text and change the book's design to experiment with different visual effects freely."[3] Following the same principles as those that govern oral transmission, she thus produces her own *performance*, which materially gives rise to her *own* book: "I make the books for the sheer sensual pleasure of the paper, glue and the picture. Hand-set type and lovely bookbindings are wonderful, but they wouldn't be right for this book. I wanted a book which is unmistakably my book, a book which only I could or would dare make. *Sacred Water* is this book."[4]

The sense of performance is carried even further by the use of the term Flood Plain Press, which is actually the name of a stretch of land owned by Silko herself. The conventional layout of the frontispiece information is thereby maintained. Yet, in a subtle way, these apparently conventional indications come to denote a different relation between the work and its author: a new perspective unfolds, in which the author is involved in a global process encompassing the possibility of change, change flowing from the currents of creative power that is not attributable exclusively to the writer/storyteller, but is rather an intrinsic feature of the becoming of things.

A significant addition to *Sacred Water* is the dedication appearing beside the first photograph, which was absent in the earliest version: "In memory of the nine Thailand Buddhists assassinated in their temple near Phoenix, Arizona on August 10, 1991." This murder occurred only a few months before the publication of Silko's latest novel, *Almanac of the Dead*,[5] to which she had dedicated ten years of intense work:

> I was exhausted in every way, and I questioned the dark vision in *Almanac*. I decided I needed to re-read Zen Buddhist writings, and to focus myself on the calm and timelessness and oneness which surrounds us. I developed myself to this appreciation of Zen Buddhism for

> about three months, and just as I was beginning to feel as if the vicious world of *Almanac* was truly fictional, the nine Thailand Buddhists were killed in their temple near Phoenix, Arizona. It was as if vicious destructive forces which *Almanac* was about, sent me a message through those murders: 'This is what we do with Buddhists in southern Arizona.'"[6]

A further change, in addition to the tribute in memory of the murdered Buddhists and the coincidence between Silko's Zen readings and the murder, came in the form of sudden awareness that a story in *Sacred Water* concerning a multitude of toads torn and mangled by snarling dogs and perhaps also decimated by radioactive contamination (64) presented a startling parallel to the massacre of the Buddhists: "I realized there is a parallel image between the smashed dead toads in *Sacred Water*, and the nine dead Buddhists. The non-violent and the defenceless smashed apart by the aimless destroyers who themselves had been torn apart."[7] The interaction between stories of different kinds, true stories or prohetic stories of destructive terror similar to those told in *Almanac of the Dead*, is emphasized here once again in support of that intimate connection which in the Indian universe unites one event to another. And indeed a connection is once again felt, even if "*Sacred Water* was meant as a soothing, healing antidote to the relentless horror lose in this world. It was meant as a gift to the readers who wrestled with *Almanac of the Dead*. Some of the readers were wrenched by *Almanac* and I wanted to give them something generous, yet truthful."[8]

As she weaves her story of sacred water, Silko touches on every aspect of humanity's journey on earth, outlining its intense spiritual dimension and giving voice to mythological beings from a past vitally united with the present. She traces a historical itinerary of values belonging to profoundly different cultures, or rather the order of a long homogeneous story in opposition to the violent disharmony of oppression, conquest, and imposition of alien cultural models.

Water is the vehicle that penetrates into these worlds and channels them into the story of the rainwater pool in the Tucson Mountains where Silko now lives. Historical and mythic elements blend with the personal in an affirmation of other indivisible interrelations. The story of this water purified from the devastating invasion of red algae by means of water hyacinths indicates—as for Tayo in *Ceremony*, Silko's first novel—the route towards a genuinely regenerative ceremony. In the water that "began to clear and smell clean" (*Waters* 72) a design of harmonious growth begins to take shape, similar to the configuration of stars that guides Tayo to the completion of his ceremony. Only at the end, when the process of regeneration has run its full course and

the story has repelled the intervention of the destroyers, can Tayo go back and collect the seeds of the plant indicated by Ts'eh, his guiding spirit, and make them grow in many places, thereby imitating the way a story is spread by oral transmission. Thus Silko's water plants, spurred by vibrant, purifying growth, become stories that enrich the "storytelling" on Indian land. When, at some future date, other destroyers appear on the scene and have to be defeated, as in the apocalyptic *Almanac of the Dead*, Silko's latest novel, there will be other stories with which to fight them, such as that of the datura, the plant of powerful and awe-inspiring sacrality venerated by Pueblo Indians, which succeeds in metabolizing waters contaminated by radioactive wastes.

The slender vein that forms streaks of yellow uranium, as bright and vivid as pollen, in stones gouged out of the bowels of the earth and arranged in a monstrous design of cosmic proportions by the destroyers (*Ceremony* 246), is the image of an impending devastation portrayed in the final pages of the novel, as well as near the end of *Sacred Water*. But the land is inviolable, Silko declares, and so are the stories that defend us and endow us with our identity as a people:

> the ancient people perceived the world and themselves within that world as part of an ancient continuous story composed of innumerable bundles of other stories. ("Landscape" 111)

Thus the story of this water becomes a collective story, forming a bond with the innumerable narrations that speak of Indian land, narrations that are always encompassed within a cyclical time deriving its continuity and cohesion from interpretation of the landscape. But in order to understand this Native interpretation, the very term "landscape," Silko argues, is found wanting:

> the term landscape, as it has entered the English language, is misleading. "A portion of territory the eye can comprehend in a single view" does not correctly describe the relationship between the human being and his or her surroundings. This assumes the viewer is somehow outside and separate from the territory he or she surveys. Viewers are as much a part of the landscape as the boulders they stand on. There is no high mesa edge or mountain peak where one can stand and not immediately be part of all that surrounds. ("Landscape" 108-09)

Equally distant from Indian sensibilities are the various descriptions that have been given of this desert, from scientific classification concerning climate and vegetation to the spatial dimension, from romantic celebration to an entity whose definition is achieved by

negation. But the only negations that interpret this Indian concept are those of *non*-desolation, of *non*-arid vastness, of *non*-metaphoric ambivalence of "Virgin Land." Nor is it a frontier landscape, where presence is more an apparition than a customary state of affairs, for such a landscape existed "primarily as a text written and read by Americans and would-be Americans. The West had to be not inhabited but invented" (Heyne 3).

As the poet of Acoma Pueblo, Simon Ortiz, puts it in his description of Canyon de Chelly, "Lie on your back on stone / the stone carved to fit / the shape of yourself" (67). There is truly a compenetration of shapes and forms, forms that construct narration midway between orality and writing, those that produce a book and those that generate life. This is where the Indian story of this land springs from, like the clouds swollen with rain repeatedly photographed by Silko as they come to rest on the horizon. Her desert gathers up and transmits a wealth of precious heritages: land of memory and water of memory, water that is not only life-giving but is also the defining element of life.

NOTES

[1]Letter from Silko, dated 30 July 1993, to Laura Coltelli.

[2]"Note from Author," typescript enclosed with *Sacred Water*, 2.

[3]Letter to Coltelli.

[4]"Note from Author" 2.

[5]Larry McMurtry presents the novel this way: "A brilliant, haunting and tragic novel of ruin and resistance in the Americas. In a long dialectic, tinged with genius and compelled by a just anger, Leslie Silko dramatizes the often desperate struggle of native peoples in the Americas to keep, at all costs, the core of their culture; their way of being. If Karl Marx had chosen to make *Das Kapital* a novel set in the Americas, he might have come out with a book something like this."

[6]Letter to Coltelli.

[7]Letter to Coltelli.

[8]Letter to Coltelli.

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"When the Stories Disappear, Our People Will Disappear": Notes on Language and Contemporary Literature of the Saskatchewan Plains Cree and Métis

Peter Bakker

With approximately 70,000 people, the Crees are the most numerous aboriginal nation of Canada. They live in small communities from the Atlantic Ocean to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Traditionally, the Crees are hunters-gatherers and trappers. Some western bands excelled in the buffalo hunt. (See Mandelbaum for a description of the Plains Cree buffalo culture.) There are still hunters on all the reservations, but most of the Crees do not have "regular" jobs.

The Crees played important roles in the fur trade on the prairies. They were so important that the other, neighboring tribes and white people also used Cree, an Algonkian language. The etymology of the name "Cree" is controversial, but in any case not of Cree origin. The Crees call themselves *nêhiyaw* and their language *nêhiyawêwin*. (The accent on the vowels means that the vowel is long.) Algonkian languages were traditionally spoken on almost the entire East Coast of North America and in Canada to the Rocky Mountains. Many of the East Coast languages are now extinct. Other important Algonkian languages are Ojibwe (also called Saulteaux or Chippewa), Montagnais or Innu, Blackfoot, Micmac, and Delaware. The Cree language has several dialects, whose mutual intelligibility is sometimes low. Plains Cree, spoken on the Alberta and Saskatchewan prairies and in Montana, is one of the main dialects. The stories given below are all in the Plains dialect of Cree and in Michif, which is a different language, a mixture of Plains Cree and French (with some Ojibwe).

Amerindian languages are notoriously complex. Among those, Plains Cree is one of the least complex ones, even in comparison with other Cree dialects. There are only two nominal endings, the sound

system does not yield problems, and word order is free. Only the verb structure is rather complex. There are two conjugations. There is agreement with subject, but also object and indirect object in the verb. Verbs have different forms for animate and inanimate subjects or objects. Animate beings include not only humans and animals but also stones, spoons, bread and fish, but not meat, forks, and some plants. For more information about Plains Cree see Ahenekew, *Cree Language Structures* and Wolfart and Carroll.

Relatively much has been published in Cree. A large part is (Christian) religious literature. Further, there are anthologies of traditional oral literature, often recorded by white people (e.g., Bloomfield's *Sacred Stories of the Sweet Grass Cree* and *Plains Cree Texts*, Ahenekew's *kiskinahamawâkan-âcimowinisa/Student Stories* and *wâskahikaniwiyiniw-âcimowina/Stories of the House People*, all in Plains Cree, and Wolfart's *pisiskewak kâ-pikiskwêcik: Talking Animals*, in Swampy Cree). Only a minority of the Crees can read or write the Cree language in either Roman alphabet or in the traditional syllabic writing system. The latter is gradually becoming obsolete among the Plains Crees. English is quickly replacing spoken Cree. On the plains, few young people under twenty still speak the language.

Because of the fur trade a new nation emerged, the Métis. Their ancestors are European (mostly French) fur traders and Amerindian women (mostly Cree and Ojibwe). Their culture is markedly different from both Cree and French culture. They also have a language of their own called Michif (from French Métif, meaning mixed-blood) which is still spoken in some communities on the northern prairies. The verbs and demonstratives are (Plains) Cree and the nouns are French (Rhodes). The Michif language will probably be extinct in one or two decades.

Telling stories has always been an important part of the Cree and Métis cultures. Stories are still exchanged on all kinds of occasions. Even some ceremonies and official conferences may start with funny stories. Good storytellers are highly valued in the communities. As stated above, virtually all young Plains Cree and Métis now grow up speaking English as their first language. It is not yet known what consequences this will have for the oral literature. The stories are said to be "not as funny" in English as they are in Cree or in Michif. This has to do, among many other things, with the fact that in Cree one can easily create new, funny sounding words for events. For instance, a man who lost his excrement while running was called *kâ-misi-pahtâ-t*, a hilarious word in Cree, roughly translatable as "shit-and-runner."

Storytelling is also important among the Métis. Michif stories are taken from French, Ojibwe, and Cree sources. For some people the stories are connected with the Michif language. One Métis elder I

asked about stories said she does not really remember them as she has no opportunity to tell them nowadays: "My grandchildren only understand English."

Probably some of the stories will continue to be told, but in English. There are also communities where Cree is learned by people when they are reaching adulthood. Nevertheless, disappearance of the language may be more than a symptom of the replacement of manifold aspects of Cree ways with a more Western lifestyle. Through the Cree oral literature, a world view and a value system are transmitted to younger generations. These stories are among the most important aspects of the Cree culture, an unauthorative regulatory social force in the communities. Some elders consider the traditional stories to be the backbone of their culture, so much so that one of them said: "If our stories disappear, our people also disappear."

Traditional stories that do not have a clear historical base and which are usually situated in a different world that preceded ours are called *âtayôhkêwin* in Cree. True stories are called *âcimowin*. These are orally transmitted histories, and anything else, jokes, and so forth. The Métis have the same distinction, *les contes* versus *les histoires*. I will give examples of both of these, including different types of *âcimowin*. All of these were recorded in 1988 in Saskatchewan. Some of the storytellers consider themselves Métis (and they may or may not be Indians according to Canadian law); others are legally Indians. Some of the stories are in Cree, others in Michif and one in English.

The *âtayôhkêwin* stories, roughly translatable as sacred stories, myths, legends, or fairy tales, often talk about Wîsahkêcâhk, the Plains Cree trickster, half-human half-god, always hungry and looking for food, but nearly always he experiences that the animals are his superiors. He can communicate with animals and plants. The telling of these stories is associated with different taboos. For instance, tobacco has to be offered before telling an *âtayôhkêwin*. In other communities these stories can only be narrated between sundown and sunrise, or else the storyteller will soon get lost in the woods. Often these stories give an explanation for certain natural phenomena. Nevertheless, when these stories are told, there is always a lot of laughter. Many of these stories are told by the Métis too, having Wîsahkêcâhk or Nenabush (from the Ojibwe) or Ti-Jean (from the French) as their hero. In the first story (in Cree) given here (story 1) one is warned against eating a species of moss growing on rocks that is lightly poisonous. Further, an explanation is given for a certain fungus growing exclusively on birches. The second story is a traditional Cree story which explains the fact that bears have no tail. It was recorded in the Michif language.

Native people often have good memories for events. Some people

tell about historical events of centuries before in great detail in these orally transmitted stories. An example of "oral history" in Cree is story 3, which deals with the protection of the dog's paws when used to pull sleds in winter about thirty years ago. A Métis example is story 4, in which the storyteller narrates how the Michif language, the mixture of French and Cree, came into being. The story is of course in the Michif language.

Jokes are also very important among the Crees. Telling jokes happens at all meetings. In contrast to, for instance, Europeans, Indians tell jokes about themselves but not about the neighboring people. Usually they are silly, but in their silliness they can be very clever. An example of a joke is story 5, which is in Cree. Often jokes start off as if they narrate real events, and only in the end appear to be an invented story, as in the story about the trapper and the wolf (story 6). This story is in the Michif language.

Further traditional stories are those that contain a lesson. In Cree culture it was (and still is in many areas) unusual to tell other persons how they have to behave. Advice (or criticism) can be given by telling a story in which a certain person makes a certain decision. The teller of the story then hopes that the hearer will do the same (or in some cases the opposite) as the person in the story does. The "moral" will not be explicitly formulated, unlike in many Western societies. An example of such a story is "God comes to visit" (story 7). The moral is not given but is still very clear. The source of this story may very well be European, though it is in the Cree language.

To give an example of the continuation of the storytelling tradition in English, I finally give a traditional Cree story (*âtayôhkêwin*) which I recorded in English (enriched with some Michif) as told by a Métis storyteller. It is a literal rendition and, therefore, it gives a good impression of modern storytelling.

The spelling system used here is the standard spelling for Cree as outlined in Wolfart and Ahenekew (1988). To give an impression of the intricacies of the language, the second story is also given in morpheme-by-morpheme glosses. In the Michif stories the non-Cree (French, English) elements are italicized. Some of these stories were published before in Cree and Dutch in the Dutch periodical *Wampum*. I am grateful to the storytellers for sharing their wisdom with me.

1. wîsahkêcâhk êkwa waskwayak (Wisahkechahk and the birches)
Victoria Daigneault, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Saskatchewan

wîsahkêcâhk wâsakâm sâkahikanihk ê-papâm-ohtêt. asinîhk waskic kikamôki êkwa ê-kakwêcimât: "tânisi ê-isiyîhkasiyêk?" ê-itât, "nisimim-itik?"

"'Kisiwâskatikakîsak' nitikawinân."

"êkwâspî matakwensamuyak!"

sôskwâc ê-mâci-mowât. tâpiskôc les crêpes mah-mîcisot êkonisa.

êkwâspi Wîsahkêcâhk ê-sipwêhtêt ê-mâcît. êkwa môswa ê-wâpamât. mwêhci wî-paskisiwât, ê-mâci-puikîtot ê-wusahuwât môswa. êkwa kisiwâsit.

asiniy ê-cipusiyît ê-mihkwa-kisâpiskisôwât êkwâspî ê-ôtinât iskotêhk ohci. êkwâspî êkota ê-apit. ekwa mikîhkasot wâskitwîy. êkwâspî papâmohtêt ekwa kâ-pahkihtatât omikî. Kîhtwâm êsa êkota ê-pimôhtêt. kâ-miskât êsa omikî. kâ-mîcit êsa. kâ-nakamohikot piyêsisa, wîsahkê-câhk omikî miciw. êkwa êsa piyêsisa namoc ê-kiskêyihtahk kâ-nakam-oyit. waskwaya kîtêyihtahk kâ-nakamoyit.

"namoya nimikî kâ-mîciyân; nikawiy okâhkêwak ômisi ana ê-kîpahkiht-atât." piyêsisak kêyâpic ê-nakamocik. êkwa wîsahkêcâhk ê-kisiwâsit. pitikonam omikî ê-pimosinatât waskwaya omikî ohci.

êkôni ê-itêyihktahk kâ-nakamoyit. êkwa kâ-kikamôk waskway wîsahkêcâhk omîki.

1. Wisahkecahk and the birches

Wisahkecahk was walking around the lake. He saw things sticking on the rocks and he asked them:

"What's your names, my little brothers?"

"Sickmakers, they call us."

"You can't make anybody ill!" and then he started eating them. He kept on eating them, as if they were pancakes.

After that he went on to hunt. Then he saw a moose. Just when he was to shoot, he started farting and so he chased the moose. He was angry. He took a pointed stone and made it red hot. Then he took it out of the fire and went to sit on it. His back-part was sore. There came a wound.

After that he walked on, but he lost the scab of his wound on his way. When he came back to that same spot, he found the scab and ate it. He made the birds sing, because he was eating his scab. And he didn't know that it was not singing birds; he thought it was the birches.

"It is not my scab I am eating, it is the dry meat my mother had lost here."

But the birds kept singing. Wisahkecahk was furious. He made the scab into a ball and threw this to the birches, because he thought they were singing.

That's why still you can see Wisahkecahk's scab sticking to the birches.

2. maskwa (the bear)

May Desjarlais (+), Lebret, Saskatchewan

1 Kwêkwê ni-nohtê-âcimo-n
Something 1sg-want-tell-1sg

2 kuhkum ê-kî-âcimot, kayâs mâna ê-kî-âtayôhkê-t.
grandma COMP-PAST-tell-3 long ago usually COMP-PAST-narrate-1>3

3 *un ours* awa êsa ê-wî-nitawi-kwâskwêpicikê-t.
a bear this it-is-said COMP-VOL-go-fish-3

4 *dans le lac* kî-itoht-êw êkwa *la blanche* misiwê kî-api-w.
LOC the lake PAST-go-3 and the white all-over PAST-sit-3

5 *un trou* kî-mônahkipat-am.
a hole PAST-dig-3>0

6 mâka nama-kîkwê kî-ayâw *avec* kwâskwêpitsikê-t.
but nothing PAST-have-3>0 with fish-3

7 *so le trou* kî-mônah-am.
so the hole PAST-dig-3>0

8 êkuta *le l-ours* kî-pistat-êw *sa* swê
there the bear PAST-put in-3 his tail

9 kinwês êkota kî-api-w.
long time there PAST-sit-3

10 kî-âhkwaskaci-w
PAST-freeze-3

11 kî-wîhkîw, kî-wîhkîw, kî-wîhkîw
PAST-wait, PAST-wait, PAST-wait

12 êkwa *sa* swê ê-kî-pasikopitahk
then his tail COMP-PAST-pullout-3>0

13 kîsk-ipit-ahk.
broke-pull-3>0

14 tânsi mîna ê-pasiko-t, nama-kîkwê *une* swê kî-ayâ-w.
how again PAST-stand up-3 not-at-all a tail PAST-have-3>0

15 êkosi anohc nama-kîkwê ayâ-wak *les autres* o-sway-a.
so now not-at-all have-3PL the others tail-PL

2. Why bears have no tail

1. I want to tell something **(2)** that grandma told me **(3)** a long time ago when she used to tell myths. **4**. There was a bear who wanted to go fishing with a rod. **4**. He went on the lake and there was ice and snow all over. **5**. He dug a hole. **6**. He had nothing to fish with, **(7)** that's why he dug the hole. **8**. Then the bear put his tail in there. **9**. He was sitting there a long time. **10**. It was freezing. **11**. He waited, he waited, he waited. **12**. Then, when he pulled his tail out, **(13)** it broke. **14**. When he stood up again, he had no tail. **15**. That's why today they [bears] don't have tails.

3. Maskisina atimwa kici

Rose Laliberté, Sakitawak, Saskatchewan

kayâs ayîsiyiniwak atimwa êkwa mistatimwa poko ê-kî-pimohtêhocik. ê-kî-maskisin-ihkawâcik atimwa, maskwamiy kâ-mayâtisit êkâ ta-pîkosinisi-cik ositiwawa. le padla ohci êkî-osîhtâcik maskisina atimwa kici. ê-tahkopitahkwaw le padla atimwa ositihk êkwa la corde asici ê-sohkapitahkwaw.

4. Métif

Margaret Desjarlais, Lebret, Saskatchewan

"*Les Canadiens come across, les Sauvagesses* mâci-wîcamâwêyak *and then puis* êkwa *les enfants* ê-ayâwâ-cik. *La Sauvagesse* namôya kaskihtaw *en français* ta-kitotât *ses enfants*. *Le Français* namoya kaskihtâw *ses enfants* ta-kitotât *en cri*. *En français* êkwa kitotêw. êkwa *quelques les deux* kiskinohamahk. kîkwây ôhci pîkiskwêw *rien que en cri* ekwa *en français*.

5. wawiyatâcimowin

Henry Daniels, Sturgeon Lake, Saskatchewan

kayâs omâcîw ê-mâcît kâ-miskak wâpamonis. ê-itâpahtak kâ-wâpamât ostêsa. Mâka ostêsa ê-kî-nipayit pêyak askiy, êkoni ê-itêyihtâk kâ-miskak ôma masinipayiwin. ê-kîwêt wâpahtêhêw wîkimâkana. "ê-miskawak ê-sakihak awa. macokosan wâpahta." wîkimâkana wâpamisoyiwa. kisiwâsiw awa iskwêw ê-wâpamisot. ê-itêyihtâk onâpêma wâh-wâpamiyit ôhi iskwêwa kâ-minispayiyit. Awa iskwêw omamawa wâpahtêhêw ôma masinapayiwin. wâpamisot awa nôtok-wêw, kâ-itwêt: "tâpwê e-mâyâtisit!"

6. Le loup de bois (the timber wolf)

John Gosselin (+), Lebret, Saskatchewan

"*un vieux* ê-nôhcihcikêt, *you see*, êkwa *un matin* êwaniskât, ahkosiw, *but* kêyapit ana wî-nitawi-wâpahtam *ses pièges*. sipwêhtêw. mêkwat êkotê itâsihkêt *une tempête*. maci-kîsikâw. wanisin. pimôhtêw, pimôhtêw. êyâhkosit êkwa *le-vieux*-iw-it nohtêsin. *d'un gros arbre* picipat-apiw. "êkota ninipin," itêyihtam, "*une bonne place* si-nipiyân." ê-wâpamât ohi *le loup* de bois ê-pê-pahta-yi-t. ha, ha. hê hê! ka-kanawâpamêw *le loup* awa pê-isi-pahtâw êkota itê êapiyit. êkwa pâstinam *sa bouche* ôhi *le loup* ê-wî-otinât. pastinên *son bras* yahki-nam, *right through* awa *le loup*. *the wolf dans la queue* ohci-otinêw, *par la queue* âpoci-pitêw! kîhtwâm *le loup* asê-kiwê-pahtâw! ha ha ha!

3. Mocassins for the dogs

Long time ago people used to travel with dogs and horses only. They made mocassins for the dogs when the ice was bad, so that they would not hurt their paws. Out of canvas they made the shoes for the dogs. They tied the canvas to the dogs' paws and they would tie it with a rope.

4. The Michif (Métis) language

When the French Canadians came from across the ocean, they started to marry Indian women and then they had children. The Indian woman couldn't speak French to her children. The Frenchman couldn't speak Cree to his children, so he spoke to them in French. Therefore, some of them learned to speak French and Cree. Therefore, he speaks only French and Cree (mixed).

5. Joke

Long time ago there was a Cree hunter who found a mirror. He looked at it and he thought he saw his brother. But his brother had died a year before, so he thought he had found his portrait. When he came home, he showed his wife the mirror: "I found this, it is the one I love. Look at this portrait." His wife saw herself. She was angry when she saw a woman, because she thought her husband "had something" with the woman of the portrait. The woman showed the portrait of the lover to her mother. When the old woman saw herself, she yelled: "She is really ugly!"

6. The timber wolf

An old man was trapping, you see, and one morning when he woke up, he was sick, but still he went to see his traps. He left. In the meantime a storm broke out. It was bad weather. He got lost. He went back to find his place. He walked, he walked. But as he was sick, the man who was old, played out then. He sat down against a tree. "There I will die," he thought, "this is a good place to die." Then he saw that timberwolf running towards him. O, o. He kept looking at the wolf. He came running towards where he was sitting. And when the wolf opened its mouth to take him, the man pushed his arm forward in its mouth, right through the wolf. He took the wolf by its tail and pulled him inside out! The wolf ran back home again. Ha ha ha!

7. kisêmanitow ka-pê-kiyokawât

Florence Nayneecassum, Atâhkakohp, Saskatchewan

pêyakwâw pêyak iskwêw ayamihâw ekwa nêwâw ê-koci-kosit. ê-kî-kiyokawât.

êkwa ê-kî-pêhât kisêmanitowa ka-pê-kiyokawikot. êkwa ê-kikisêpayâk ê-piminawasot mistahi kahkiyaw kîkwê. ê-kîsisahk ayâkêseya ê-wî-pê-kiyokawikot kisêmanitowa.

êkwa awiyêk ê-pê-pâhpwêhikêt iskwâhtêmihk êkwa êsa ê-tâwapinikiyiw êkwa êsa yôhtênam iskwâhtêm. êkwa êkota awâsisa ê-tahkonamêt oyâkanis ê-nitâhtamikot sîwinikan apisîs. "namoya!" itwêw iskwêw. kâ-kapiyayiw ê-minihkwêcik kitêmak kahkitêmak kakî-atawêcik. kipowêpinam iskwâhtêm ana iskwêw.

êkwa kîhtwâm apihtâkîsisâk mistahi piminawasow. pêhow. mîna âsay pê-pâhpawêhikêyiw mîna awiyak êkwa nitaw-apinikiyiw êkwa iskwêw ê-nitâhtamawât anihi iskwêwa ê-nôhtêyâpâkwêt êkwa ê-kîskwêpêt. êkwa "namoya!" itikow, "namoya okîskwêpênasak nipamihâwak!" êkwa kîhtwâm kipowêpinam iskwâhtêm âsay mîna. ikwê êkwa iskwê-yânihk kâ-mîcisocik âsay mîna kahkiyaw kîkwê. kîsisam ê-pêhot kâ-pê-kiyokâwikot kisê-manitowa. êkwa iyisâskaci-pêhot êkwa âsay mîna awiyak ê-pê-pâhpawêhikoyiw êkwa nitaw-apênikoyiw êkwa êkota ê-nîpawit nâpêw ê-nôhtê-âpacihtaw sîwîkicikan, aya ê-wî-si-itamowât simâkanisa aya mêskanâhk nânitaw ê-wîsakisinicik. êkwa ana iskwêw "namoya!" itwêw êkwa âsay mîna kipaham iskwâhtêm.

êkwa mwêstas êkwa nitawikowisimiw ê-tipiskayinik ayakesk êsa ê-sâskaci-pêhot ka-pê-kiyokâkot kisêmanitowa. êkwa onipâwinihk pah-pimisin êkwa kâ-wâpamât awiyak êkwa ê-wâpiskisiwit êkwa kâ-pîkiskwatikot. itikot: "âsay ôma nistwâw ê-pê-kiyokahtân êkwa inihinstwâw kâ-pê-itohtêyân ê-kâtisahoyan. namoya êsa ôma tâh-tâpwê ê-kakwêcimoyan."

êkosi.

7. God comes to visit

Once upon a time a woman was praying. God tested her four times.

God was to come and visit her. She was full of expectations about his visits. In the morning already she prepared a big meal with lots of things. She was cooking, because God was coming to visit her. And somebody was knocking on the door. She went to look, opened the door. There was a little boy with a cup to borrow sugar. The woman refused. She slammed the door.

And again, when the afternoon came, the woman cooked a lot. After a while again someone knocked. She went to see who it was. There stood a drunk woman who wanted a drink because she was thirsty. "No!" she said. "I don't want to have anything to do with drunks!" and again she slammed the door.

When it was time for supper, again she prepared lots and she stayed waiting for God's visit. When she was almost fed up with waiting, again someone knocked. She answered the door, and there was a man who wanted to use the phone. He wanted to call the police, for there were some wounded people by the side of the road. But the woman refused and slammed the door again.

Much later she went to bed that night, after she had waited so long for God's visit. When she was laying in bed for a while, she saw a clear person in white and he talked to her. He said: "Three times already I came to visit you and all the times that I came you sent me away. You don't really pray."

That's it.

8. Wisahkecahk's adventures

John Gosselin, Lebret, Saskatchewan

Wîsahkêcâhk êsa kayâs dans d'un lac ê-apit les canards kî-wâpamêw [Wisakechak was sitting along a lake when he saw ducks] —ducks. And he invited dem over "*pê-pasakwâpisimowik*!" [Come do the shut-eye dance!] You see, dat mean dey dance wit deir eyes closed. *ê-nakamon* [there will be singing], he said. O.K. So dat ducks come out and he was sitting dere and singing and de ducks were goin around dancing. And he grab one now and again and break deir neck you know. One old duck I guess had one eye open, seen dat, and she hollered:

"*tapasîk! ati-micisohikonân!*" [Run away! He is starting to eat us!]

So he ran away.

Anyway, Wîsahkêcâhk he got dese ducks ready and he made a big fire and he stuck-em in dere to roast dem like an open fire and den he says:

"I wanna lay down, I wanna, *nit-ayêskosin* [I am tired]. I wanna sleep for a while. *ninipân aciyâw*."

So, he told his arse: "*awiyak pê-ituhtêt, kika-wihtamawin* [if someone is coming, tell me]. You see."

So. O.K., he went to sleep and all of a sudden: BANG! He jumped up, noting, noting around. He slapped himself on de arse:

"*kikiyâskiskin!*" he said, "you're a liar!"

So he lay down again, he went off, he jumped up and he looked around, noting, slapped himself again:

"*kikiyâskiskin!*"

So de tird time he jumped up, couldn't see noting around. "*kikiyâskiskin!*" he told his arse again. So he got up. De legs were sticking out of de fire, de coals, you know. De ducks, he start pullin dem out, dere was noting dere, just de legs stickin in, you know, so de coyotes or whoever stole dem he he put de legs . . . pushed de legs and ate de rest, you see. So he got mad at his arse, he says:

"*kikiyâskimin! kakipahênd.*"

So he heated up a stone and he sat on it. God's grace when he sat on dat hot stone, his skin you know, hiiiiit!

"*Aha*," he says: "*kikway itwê-yin?*" [what do you say?].

So he went and got a scab dere, you see.

So he was climbing up a hill. He was just like a little kid, climbing up a big hill. And when he got to de top he sat down and starts sliding down on his arse. Of course de scab come off, you see. So when he went back up de hill he found de scab wit a hole in it, you see. So he picked it up, put his finger in it, took a bite, he was whirling it in his finger. And de birds were singing.

"*Wîsahkêcâhk sa calle wîmîciw!*" Dat means: wisakechah you are eating your scab." *Wîsahkêcâhk sa calle wîmîciw.*"

And he says to de birds:

"*kiyâskinâwâw! musum ôhi kayâs mustuswa ê-kî-paskiswât*" [you are liars! Grandfather shot this buffalo long time ago] —like his grandfader shot a buffalo. "*ayi ayito nôhkom ê-kîpâsahk uma wiyâs ahiwê* [my grandmother dried the meat], meat-like, see dis hole, dere's *ayi itê musum ê-kî-pâskiswât* [that's where my grandfather shot it], dis hole."

And he put his finger in it.

"Well, it's O.K."

He walked. Anyway, he walked and den he met a woman. God, dey felled in love. He got married. And dey had two kids. While de kids . . . , in de story de kids grew up fast, a girl and a boy. Guy, she got to be a beautiful girl. De girl, when dey was laying in his tent he was well looking, jesus!, he liked her, you know, so he made a plan, dat he's gonna die, heh, heh. Anyway, he took sick. He was sick for two, tree days and he told his old lady: "If I die," he says, "you wrap me up in a blanket and you make a scaffold up on de trees and you put me up dere. And den you move, over here der is lake," he says. "You move dere and you camp dere. And while you're dere," he says, "a young fellow will come to de tent. And," he says, "you give him our daughter. *ka-mîyo-pamihikowâw*. He look after yous real good. *kamîyo-pamihikowâw*." O.K. Anyway, he died, and dey wrapped im up in a blanket, *natê kî-do-wêwêkêwak dans un échaffaud* [they wrapped him on a scaffold]. So den dey moved away. *kîpiciwak nêtê le long du lac. êkotê kî-kâpêsiwak* [They moved their camp farther near the lake. There they put up their camp] you see, *êkwa* [and then], oh, dey stays a while, all of a sudden dis young man come *dans la tente*, in front of de tent *êkwa le garçon awa têpwâtêw* [and the boy

shouts to him]: "*ahaw, ahaw, nîstaw, pihtikwê!*" [Hey, hey, brother-in-law, come on in!] He call him *nîstaw* [brother-in-law] right away, you see, "*ahaw, nîstaw, pihtikwê! pihtikwê!*" So de guy come in. He sat wit de girl right away, you see, beside de girl, and he talk and . . ., well, sure, he was married den. *miyâw ohi la fille!* [He gives him this girl!] So a few days him, old Wisakecak *awa*, he go over wit his son hunting den and de son didn't know it was his dad. He tought it was his broder in law. Anyway, dey go hunting you know, and all of a sudden de old lady kinda notice *nawac kostawêhimêw* [that he was scared of her]. *Mon dieu* [My God], so *kîtahtawê itêw êsa sa fille êkwa son garçon* [one moment she said to her daughter and son]:

"*pê-pîhtikwê êsâ tasê*" [come inside immediately].

"You wrestle wit im. *ê-wî-tôtamâhkik* [that's what you have to do]. You wrestle wit im."

"*eh, ma foi, tâpwê!*" [But certainly!]

ê-mêtâwêwak you know dey played wit him *ê-pîhtikwê-yi-t mêkwât ôki notinitocik ôhi la vieille awa yasi-pitam la brayet* [while she came inside while they were fighting that old lady she pulled down his breech-clout] she pulled down, *ma foi*, you could see de big scab on dere. And she said: "*macikôhkôs! awa dans li sakâhk isôniyâhât*," you know, he took off; he run, dat guy.

Den he was walking by a village and two little boys was playing.

"*tânsi kâ-otamihkâ*" [How are you doing].

ayito, one boy said:

"*kipêhtên ci wisahkêcâhk otânisa ê-wîkimât?*" [Did you hear that Wisakechak married his daughter?]

"*onec*," he said.

Den he took off and dat was de end of his story.

He married his own daughter for a while but his old lady got im!

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Reading with a Eurocentric Eye the 'Seeing with a Native Eye': Victor Masayesva's **Itam Hakim, Hopiit**

Sonja Bahn-Coblans

> We're talking about: what's the difference between a Native filmmaker and a non-Native filmmaker? A Native filmmaker has the censorship built into him, the accountability built into him. . . . Accountability as an individual, as a clan, as a tribal, as a family member. . . . I insist on stories about Native Americans, by Native Americans. . . . Right now, we need to start with stories from Native Americans. There is such a thing as a sacred hoop which includes all the different races. . . . But, we have a responsibility to ourselves first. So I just would say that we have a different perspective. . . . That's where we're at as Indian filmmakers. We want to start participating and developing an Indian aesthetic. And there is such a thing as an Indian aesthetic, and it begins in the sacred. (Masayesva, qtd. in Leuthold 48)

These sentences are taken from Victor Masayesva's statement at the Two Rivers Native Film and Video Festival held in Minneapolis in October 1991. They raise the problematic issue of a specifically Native American aesthetic in filmmaking, a claim that has also been made by such Native American filmmakers as George Burdeau and Phil Lucas.

It is not my intention, however, to determine this aesthetic (for a discussion of that see both Leuthold and Sands and Sekaquaptewa-Lewis). I would like to find out whether it is possible to see into the

Hopi world with a Eurocentric eye and yet to experience the "accountability" and the "different perspective" created by the Native eye of the filmmaker. This involves, of course, a search for the structure, an analysis of the thematic content, an interpretation of recurrent and striking images, a record of techniques, all in order to get an intellectual grasp of the artistry and to read its meaning.

In Europe Masayesva is only known to a relatively small circle of film experts and Native American scholars. Born in 1951 on the Hopi Reservation, he studied at Princeton University and the University of Arizona, received fellowships and grants, and was appointed artist or artist-in-residence at several institutions but chose then to return to the Hopi Reservation to set up his own production studio in Hotevilla, first as photographer and then as filmmaker, with the intention to promote Hopi awareness, culture, and thought. Masayesva's films, until the early '90s, were certainly "made to serve Hopi consciousness and to see with Hopi eyes" (Silko 73). Both *Hopiit* (1980) and the shorter videos on traditional Hopi arts were released in the Hopi language and intended for a Hopi audience. At least four longer "documentary" films, *Itam Hakim, Hopiit* (1984), *Ritual Clowns* (1988), *Siskyavi-The Place of Chasms* (1991), and *Imagining Indians* (1994), have been released for non-Natives as well, either with subtitles or in an English version. There is no doubt that one can sense the photographer in Masayesva's films, can feel the profound respect for age and youth, for storytelling and history; one can appreciate the aesthetic in the choice of images, which are not just symbols but also reality.

Itam Hakim, Hopiit (We, Someone, the Hopi) was made "in recognition of the Hopi Tricentennial 1680-1980" and distributed in Hopi as well as in Hopi with English subtitles, which indicates that in 1984 Masayesva wanted to widen his audience. Its narrative structure is such that the content of the storytelling is essential to the meaning of the film. As N. Scott Momaday (and almost every Native American writer who has commented on Native American literature) observes:

> I think the storyteller in Indian tradition understands that he is dealing in something that is timeless. He has a sense of its projection into the past. And it's an unlimited kind of projection. I am speaking, I am telling a story, I am doing something that my father's father's father's father's father's father's father did. That kind of understanding of the past and of the continuity in the human voice is a real element in the oral tradition. And it goes forward in the same way. I am here and what I am doing is back here and it will be here. (Momaday, qtd. in Lesley xxv-xxvi)

This is exactly what the film conveys in the almost 60 minutes that

it lasts. First, the storyteller, the Hopi elder Ross Macaya (1887-1984), recounts his childhood years and goes on to tell a group of children a brief prairie dog tale, followed by a complete version of the Hopi emergence myth. The story of the Bow Clan and a religious song of the Ál priests conclude the first 35 minutes of the film. The technique until then is relatively straightforward, the soundtrack telling the story and the visual track showing activities in the Hopi village, intercut with elements of nature. "History" is continued in a technically different tone with the arrival of the Spaniards on horseback and the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, a sequence of about 10 minutes, using the effect of "posterization" to create an uneasy atmosphere and give a sense of threat and dissonance. After the departure of the Spaniards and the rejection of Christianity, the last 15 minutes of the video portray a harvest festival, with another stylistic innovation and experimental contrast achieved by speeding up the dancers and slowing down those working in the fields, an end which is open to many interpretations.

Masayesva has made an artistically complex video which is technically different from the usual documentary and does not fit into the traditional concept of the documentary. With a film as unusual as this one, the non-Native is unavoidably driven to break down the film into components and make a film protocol in order to rationalize its content. The visual side lends itself to several very different interpretations through the complementary and contrastive pictures; the soundtrack is completely dominated by the voice of the storyteller speaking a language which is only understandable to a minority, thus giving a sense of the "unlimited" Momaday mentions and the sacredness of the word; the subtitles are a help, but one feels one is missing out on the nuances. The technical aspects are extremely diverse, with rapid changes in perspectives and a wide range of camera techniques. The Eurocentric perception of time and space has distinct difficulty in coping with the "spherical" and "cyclical" perceptions of the Native American.

In her essay "The Sacred Hoop" Paula Gunn Allen discusses these perceptions of time and space in Native American thought:

> Those reared in a Christian society are inclined to perceive social relationships—and literary works—in this context; they order events and phenomena in hierarchical and dualistic terms. Those reared in traditional American Indian societies are inclined to relate events and experiences to one another. They do not organize perceptions or external events in terms of dualities or priorities. This egalitarianism is reflected in the structure of American Indian literature, which does not rely on conflict, crisis,

> and resolution for organization nor does its merit depend on the parentage, education, or connections of the author. Rather, its significance is determined by its relation to creative empowerment, its reflection of tribal understandings, and its relation to the unitary nature of reality. . . . Another difference between these two ways of perceiving reality lies in the tendency of the American Indian to view space as spherical and time as cyclical, whereas the non-Indian tends to view space as linear and time as sequential. The circular concept requires all "points" that make up the sphere of being to have a significant identity and function, while the linear model assumes that some "points" are more significant than others. (58-59)

The fascinating thing for the non-Indian is the way Masayesva has combined so many of the elements of Indianness mentioned in Allen's "Sacred Hoop" essay: circularity, inter-relatedness, egalitarianism, dynamism. By putting together these elements the way he did, he has created a wholeness in the soundtrack, camerawork, editing, filmic techniques; in the autobiography-storytelling-myth-history-ceremony content; in the landscape-weather-plants-animals-humans visual elements; in the spanning of generations and the sharp contrasts of distance and closeness of detail, in the macro and micro effects.

The film opens with the title, "itam hakim, hopiit" and the occasion, the Hopi Tricentennial, superimposed on a frozen silhouette of figures working in a field, followed by the storyteller Ross Macaya, who died shortly after the film was released and whose voice is heard telling his personal biography while his feet are seen walking over the dry earth to fetch water. In the first few minutes there is already an alternation of nature and humanity: voice, earth, shoes, water, buckets, wind; an alternation of close-ups, medium shots, and extreme long shots; a mixture of the universal and the personal, of the basics of life. Throughout the film Macaya's voice on the soundtrack narrates in Hopi while the viewer is shown those elements of the Hopi world that relate to or are suggested by the narration, i.e., everyday life on the Hopi Reservation—weaving, cooking, chopping wood, telling stories to children, for instance the story of the antics of the young prairie dog and the complete emergence myth of the Hopi. During these stories the children sit around, sometimes listening attentively and sometimes playing and laughing, with dissolves into scenes from nature—full moon, lightning, rain, eagle chained to the rooftop, earthslide, sea, ruins, canyon—and scenes from Hopi communal life—working the arid soil, planting and looking after the corn.

The story of the Bow Clan, to which Macaya belonged, provides a broader access to the past, widens the horizon from the plains to the

ocean, mountains, snow, and woods, and increases the array of animals (deer, sheep, dogs) and plants (fir trees, birches), all suggesting the tribal migration, a past in colder regions. Simultaneously, we are drawn closer into the world of the mesas: snake, cliffs, ruins, maize, shrubs. The audience is no longer the children and the viewer but more generally viewers. The filmic techniques so far have been relatively straightforward, the camera showing the objects frontally or from a high or low angle, but using the lens for focusing in and out or closing in. About halfway through the film another dimension is added. Old brown-tinted photographs of religious ceremonies with priests, drummers, and dancers are inserted, later to be counterpointed by a present-day harvest festival in color. The flow is halted and the camera zooms in on details or moves outward to show the whole. The photographs not only remind one of Masayesva's other profession but also illustrate in a sense the "accountability" and the "sacred" that he discussed in the opening quotation of this essay. There are six or seven of them, and their content is in every case "sacred," i.e., it is made absolutely clear that the viewer can go only so far and no further. Since photography by Hopi only started on the reservation in the 1940s (see Lomosits 191), these photos probably date from then and show moments during traditional rituals: dancers in ceremonial dress with villagers watching, priests in two rows dancing to the sound of a large drum, priests carrying flat baskets with feathers, bells and other objects, a young dancer kneeling on the ground, a group of priests with a drum, another group chanting and dancing, their arms in the air.

Another break in the rhythm and visuality is created by the sudden cut to a grasshopper caught in a spider's web with the spider wrapping it up in threads of silk to the song of a bird. The Spaniards are coming! This striking image of imprisonment in nature has at least two "meanings": on the one hand the grasshopper is enclosed and thus protected but, on the other, it is the victim. Conquistadors on horseback ride through the landscape to Spanish military music—a clearly enacted sequence made even more unusual and threatening by the use of "posterization" with glaring purple, brown, and green colors. One of the horses is then frozen into a coyote caught in a hunter's trap, superimposed with the insert of the Pueblo Revolt. A short break in the "posterization" shows Macaya leaning on a stick looking over the rocky landscape and telling of the cruel deeds of the Spanish invaders and priests and their effect on the Hopi population. These cruel deeds are then enacted, with "posterization," in restless shots with close-ups of horses and riders in accelerated motion. The ensuing resistance to the oppression follows without "posterization," with young men and boys running great distances (high angle shots) and the earth becoming increasingly barren; finally, the Spaniards depart on horseback across

the ravaged landscape while the soundtrack plays a Vivaldi concerto.

The return to Hopi life and culture dissolves into the present with an extreme close-up of flames of fire and the sounds of preparations for a feast. A sheep is slaughtered by men; women prepare the food: cooking, separating the corn from the cob, grinding, mixing dough. Drumbeats and chanting can be heard in the background and dancers in traditional dress shuffle in a circle. A shift to nature in harmony with itself (rainbow, flowers, butterfly) turns to the work of harvesting, a truck transporting the maize to the village, cobs of blue and yellow corn laid out on the ground to dry. This is followed by the most charming scene in the whole film: a small group of children, in costume and paint, ceremoniously stomp to the drumbeat, holding rattles or sticks, taking their role very seriously. The youngest, about three years old, is lovingly included in the dance and helped up when he falls down. His intensely concentrated expression and the doggedness of his desire to be a part of it radiate from his small body. Adults in modern dress but with feathers in their hair and paint on their faces dance, and the camera pans their movements while the pace and the drumbeat are accelerated to tremendous speed and volume, to be suddenly broken into complete silence. On the screen, against a reddish sky, two figures in slow motion work with maize in a field, murmuring to each other; they are in silhouette—the same silhouette that opened the film. Macaya asks the listeners to reflect on what he has told them and insists that the stories must be told so that the children do not forget; that is how it is and it will never end.

The discussion so far may seem repetitive. However, in the Western tradition of methodical probing the analytical process continues with a film protocol, as the one in the appendix, which sets up five columns listing the elements according to the time, the textual inserts, the visual track, the soundtrack, and the film techniques. Arranged in this way the film takes on a shape that gives the non-Native a feeling of control over the material. In the second column, the inserts, the historical development, run from the origins to the present-day situation with a kind of prologue or introduction. The storyteller introduces himself and his background ("personal telling") and then whets the appetite of the children with an anecdote ("storytelling"). The emergence myth takes the listeners back to the source of the whole tribe ("myth telling"), followed by the story of one of the clans, the Bow Clan, which considers itself the bearer of Hopi culture, and a religious song of the Ál society ("tribal telling"). The Spanish invasion demonstrates the devastating effect of European ways on the Hopi and their rebellion against that influence ("history telling"). The final sequence, the festival, then brings the audience to the present, which, because it deals recognizably with everyday life, needs "no telling."

Such a time-oriented approach makes it logical to indicate the minutes that each important sequence lasts in the first column to make sure one knows just how much time each part and the whole film take.

The third column, the visual track, is the richest for an analysis, because the language remains a closed book to the majority of viewers. At first there is an abundance of different pictures, but on more precise examination one can find certain patterns in the sequences. Up to the emergence myth the setting is presented. Here the geography of the space which is not named, the environment of the storyteller, and the activities which fill the day are shown. The only human beings on screen are Macaya and children. A transition to the myth is made with the pouring of the corn. The location is the same, but pictures that are presented are closely connected with the myth that is being told, a contrasting of nature and human activities, above all Macaya speaking and the children listening, playing around, and later helping with the corn planting. The story of the Bow Clan takes the viewer on an almost archetypal journey through a completely different climate, demonstrating the wanderings of the Bow Clan through mountainous, snow-covered countrysides and their corresponding flora and fauna, past water, to the dry expanses of Arizona with the naming of geographical places like Alósaka and Oraibi. This is cut short by the spider and the grasshopper and what follows is a kind of horror fantasy in violent color contrasts, with Spaniards in armor and with halberds riding on horseback through the land and the Hopi attempting to resist their conquering oppression. Their departure leads to a three-hundred-year leap into the present and the preparations for a festivity where everyone works together in an atmosphere of harmony and then joins in the harvest celebrations.

Structurally and thematically the film thus falls into five parts, indicated in the protocol by spaces at 7, 21, 35, and 46 minutes. The images used are particularly striking; it would take too long to go through them all, but I would like to take a look at those that were most striking to me.

An image which takes on its full force only at the end of the film is the silhouette in the first seconds of the film, which serves as the background for the title and subtitle. The frozen frame of figures gathering maize against a reddish sky is hardly noticeable but gains enormous significance in retrospect when it is repeated as the final shot of the film where the figures move in slow motion, a tremendous contrast to the increasingly accelerated motion of the dance and the drumbeat preceding it. The two silhouetted shots encircle the film, creating a kind of framework.

One of the recurring close-ups, one that no viewer would fail to see, is the variations of feet on the ground. The first are those of

Macaya's sneakers before one even sees him as they, or rather he, shuffles over reddish, dry sand carrying two buckets to fetch water. The next feet come twenty minutes later. At the end of the emergence myth some of the children, who helped Macaya with the wood during the "personal telling" section, help with the planting of the corn. Again the sneakers are large on the screen, pushing the hoe into the dry soil and standing at the edge of the hole into which the corn kernels are dropped. Half a minute later, at the beginning of the story of the Bow Clan, one sees bare feet of male adults running over wet earth, suggesting the wanderings of the clan through different climates and regions that follow. Bare feet appear again in several of the photographs that show the religious ceremonies just before the conquistadors invade the land. In the last section of the film (harvest festival) the camera again closes in on feet, this time moccasined. The ceremonial dancers in traditional dress walk in a circle stomping their feet on the dry earth, two feathered sticks held in their hands; just before the final sequence, the villagers' feet are presented enlarged in the most varied pairs of shoes: sneakers, boots, sandals, high heels, and others. What is so interesting about this image of feet is that in the historical past the feet are bare and in the present they are covered in some way or other, an indication that the civilization of the white man has made its mark. At the same time, however, it is also made very clear that the feet in whatever garb are close to the earth in whatever state.

A second impressive, recurrent image is corn, the staple food of the Hopi. In the introductory section it is scarcely noticeable, but in the first few minutes of the emergence myth there is a short sequence that is repeated at the end of the myth: corn shaken in a flat basket to get rid of the dirt, then tipped over to ripple down into a bucket. The focus is shifted so that the pouring becomes blurred into what could be water or sand but lands in the bucket as corn. This rack focus is extremely effective because it intimates most of the basic needs of the Hopi: corn, water, soil. Before the repetition there is a shot of a woman (Masayesva's mother) separating the corn from the cob, which is repeated during the preparations for the harvest festival. The essential role of corn is illustrated by its frequent appearance at every stage of its growth, as seeds, as young plants, as full-grown maize, which is also cut, and as cobs laid out to dry and then separated for grinding. If one follows it through, the film shows first the separating phase, then the seeds, then the young plants, and continues through the whole cycle to the grinding.

There are a number of other images which could be discussed but it may suffice to deal with just one more. Masayesva makes impressive use of the moon at several points in his film. Above all, he chooses, at one point, to leave the screen in total darkness except for

the full moon. The moment that makes a lasting impression is the one during the emergence myth where the corn is being poured into the bucket. The camera zooms in on one of the kernels and dissolves into a small silvery disk, which is enlarged into the full moon in the midst of a black night sky. This moon seems to turn on its axis and wanders from the middle of the screen to the bottom and back up in such a way and for such a long time that the viewer begins to think it is a hole, especially since the emergence is being described. The viewer's eye flips from the moon with hazy clouds floating across it to a hole through which s/he is looking, with clouds floating past the entrance. Could this be an image of the "sípapu" (for those who do not know, the hole in the Hopi kiva symbolizing the emergence hole)?

So much for the first three columns. The fourth, the soundtrack, remains somewhat problematical, for those who do not understand the Hopi language, and is quickly dealt with. The striking element is the almost monotonous voice of Macaya, reminding the viewer of Momaday's "continuity in the human voice" (Lesley xxvi). It certainly creates a sense of the dominance of the storyteller in situations where the "sacred" elements in the culture are being handed down from generation to generation and respected by everyone of that culture. From time to time there are sounds from nature that are heard in the background and, occasionally, Macaya does not say anything so that they can come to the fore or the music, whether European or Hopi, can be heard. There is one distinct handicap. The non-Native cannot help feeling that the subtitles do not even offer half of what is actually told. If the pictures were not there it would be difficult to hold her/his attention.

The fifth column with the film's technical data was, in a sense, the most complicated of the five to put together and is certainly not complete, primarily owing to space. Only the most important techniques and those that indicate significant changes in perspective have been recorded. Immediately striking are the extreme close-ups which Masayesva uses often, but he places the most important ones at crucial points in the film in order to emphasize things of symbolic meaning, e.g., feet, hands, facial traits, water, corn, fire. The technique most discussed in connection with Masayesva's video, however, is his use of "posterization" (similar to polarization in photography), which Masayesva introduces most effectively in the part dealing with the Spanish conquest. The technique involves restricting the vibrations of light waves on the filmstrip so that they have different amplitudes on different planes and, therefore, show distorted outlines and distorted colors. The atmosphere becomes threatening and unpleasant, a nightmarish feeling enhanced by the music and the increased speed of motion. Another technique, which is also rare in

documentaries, is rack focusing (shifting of the focus plane to force the viewer to see a specific object or movement). Masayesva uses it frequently to suggest the merging of worlds or spheres and an associative process of thinking. Unexpected camera angles and the use of the stroboscope for special light effects help to rouse the curiosity and involvement of the viewer, especially the non-Native viewer who cannot understand the storytelling in Hopi. Slow and fast motion are also to be found in the video. Their interpretation is, in a sense, more difficult because there is not always an explanation for them. Both appear in the second half of the film, slow motion more frequently but, in every case, at a point when the movement that is slowed down is particularly important for the content of the telling: the antlered deer, the horses with the conquistadors, the ceremonial dancers at the festival, and the figures in silhouette working with maize at the end. Fast motion is used twice: once during the Spanish invasion when Macaya tells of the cruelties and demands of the Spaniards. Posterization, acceleration, and unusual low angle perspectives come together here to give the viewer an emotional sense of oppression. The second sequence with fast motion has created much discussion because no one seems to be sure what it intended to express. During the harvest celebrations, when all the villagers are dancing in a circle, Masayesva increasingly speeds up their movements, shifting and reshifting the camera perspective from the lower halves to the painted or decorated heads of the dancers. The rhythm becomes incredibly jerky, and the sound of the drums and rattles becomes unbelievably loud and shrill so that some people are tempted to laugh, while others try to find a rational reasoning behind it. Is it a kind of grim or grotesque humor here? Is it a warning that modern life will spoil tradition or a statement on the antagonism between traditionalism and modernism?

Having gone through the material in this way, one feels somewhat dissatisfied in the end. The analysis has given an insight into the structure, content, themes, and techniques; it has interpreted the parallelisms, repetitions, contrasts, and images. In the manner of New Criticism the attempt has been made to grasp the film as a text. However, if one glances at the film protocol, one soon realizes that only two columns are of any interest to the Native American: the visual track and the soundtrack. The others are purely Eurocentric in their orientation. Even worse, the whole protocol is full-fledged proof of Paula Gunn Allen's argument: "they order events and phenomena in hierarchical and dualistic terms." Space is "linear" and time is "sequential" (Allen 59).

Nevertheless, as a starting point it has its merits. It shows just how much richer the film itself is than the analysis. This could probably be said of every analysis in relation to the work of art but, if

one asks for the Indianness, "the different perspective" of the quotation preceding this essay, one needs to bury, but perhaps not forget, the analysis and look at the film emotionally, i.e., with gut reaction. What here is called parallelism, repetition, contrast, image becomes an interweaving of various equal realities, simply belonging to a whole, associatively connected, without evaluation, "spherical" and "cyclical" (Allen 59). For the Eurocentric non-Native, this is different, unusual, strange; for the Hopi, Masayesva's is a film about the Hopi by a Hopi filmmaker in which they can recognize their life on the reservation and probably re-experience communal awareness and their traditional culture.

NOTE

This essay is a reworked version of a 20-minute film presentation made at the AGM of the AAAS in Innsbruck in November 1994. I have based my analysis on the version of the film that was shown on 3sat on German television. I title this essay with apologies to Sands and Sekaquaptewa-Lewis.

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APPENDIX

Film protocol

Time/ inserts in min (ca.)	visual track	soundtrack	technical elements
0-6	silhouette		freeze
(title &	earth, Macaya's (=M)	"personal telling"	close-ups
subtitle)	shoes, buckets, water	breathing, cough	extreme close-up
child-	reflection, landscape,	water, laughter	medium shots
hood	pools of water, rocks	wind	extreme long shots
years	room, M, weaving		medium shots
	hands at loom, cooking		extreme close-up
	M's face		
	children playing	children's voices	medium shots
	M chopping, axe	chopping	extreme/close-up
	children helping		medium shots
6-7	M's home		cut
prairie	children sitting	"storytelling"	close-ups
dog	hands	chanting	
tale	children listening	laughter, cough	
7-21	M, children listening	"myth telling"	medium shots
emer-	room	laughter	pan, close-ups
gence	corn in flat basket	swishing	rack focus
myth	corn poured into bucket		dissolve/strobe
	moon/hole (sípapu?)	whistle, wind	fade into black
	lightning, rain, clouds	thunder, rain	pan, high angle
	eagle, roofs, eagle	squawking, barking	low angle
	earthslide, water	drumbeat, chanting	medium shots
	sea, waves	swish	
	children listening, playing	laughter	close-ups
	with gum, with fire (lamp)	crash (glass)	extreme close-up
	M's eyebrows, light, M		strobe/dissolve
	landscape, water, light		medium shots
	reflections, ruins, canyon		tracking shot
	separating corn/cob	knocking (cobs)	close-up
	corn in flat basket		
	woman working, baskets		medium shot
	corn poured into bucket	swishing	rack focus
	farming with hoe	whistle	long shots, dissolve

Time/inserts	visual track	soundtrack	tech. elements
	children helping		medium shots
	children's shoes, dry earth	wind	close-ups
	planting seeds		dissolve
21-34	landscape, adult feet on		
story of	earth	"tribal telling"	track shot
Bow	firs, mountains, birches	chanting, beat	soft/rack focus
Clan	young deer, dogs & sheep in		cuts
	snow, deer in woods		soft dissolve
	clouds, fields, trees, mountains		pan
	land, birds over water		track shot
	land, mountain (Alósaka)		
	mesa (Oraibi), landscape		long shots
	M's face		medium shot
	rising moon, mountain (Alósaka)		track shots
	snake, cliff dwellings, cliffs	swish, wind	cuts
	maize field, children playing	bird song, voices	dissolve
	deer in wood, shrubs, landscape		cuts
	mesas (Oraibi)		dissolve
	old photos/religious dancers		cuts, close-ups
34-35	photo (feet, drum, dancers)	singing	blend-in
religious	M's face		
song	deer, buffalo, photo		slow motion
35-38	spider & grasshopper	silence, bird song	rack focus
	conquistadors/horses	Spanish military	posterization
	on horizon, through land	music	low angle shots
38-46	trapped wolf	"history telling"	close-ups
Pueblo	Spaniards on horseback		long shots
Revolt	dark clouds, lightning flash		no posterization
1680	silhouettes of riders, M standing		medium shots
	clouds, expanse of land		zoom out
	hands, M standing		close-ups
	horses, with riders/landscape	galloping	slow motion
	birds flying, silhouettes of		posterization
	riders (distorted)		fast motion
	dark clouds, lake, men running	voices	no posterization
	boy running, snake, maize		medium shots
	men running, maize in wind	wind	long, medium shots
	drought, barren land		long shots
	departure of Spaniards	classical music	extreme long shots
	(2 horses & riders)	(Vivaldi)	
	M's profile, village (Oraibi)		close-ups
	clouds, flying bird, moon, sky	drums/stomping	long shots
46-59	fire, preparations for	"no telling"	close-ups
[harvest	festival, sheep slaughtered	chanting	
festival]	women cooking, corn separated	voices	medium shots
	ground, mixed, steamed		extreme/close-ups

Time/inserts	visual track	soundtrack	tech. elements
	heads of dancers, traditional dress		
	shoes & earth, dancing, drums		
	clouds, maize in wind		cut
	dark clouds, lightning		
	rainbow, flowers, butterfly	rattles	close-ups
	maize, trucks/tractor (harvest)		
	dancers, water, girl, tassles		slow motion
	blue & yellow corn laid out	shouts/drums	pan
	children dancing	rattles	medium shots
	adults dancing, shoes & earth	chanting	
	adults dancing	dissonant sounds	fast motion
	silhouette	silence, low voices	slow motion
		"telling": lesson	
59-60	(credits)		

The American Indian Writer as a Cultural Broker: An Interview with N. Scott Momaday

Daniele Fiorentino

Interview edited by Annamaria Musolino, Loredana Nucci, Giuliano Pascucci, Roberta Ragazzoni, and Paola Ruffini

This interview originated in a series of fortunate coincidences taking place in Rome, Italy, in the 1990-91 academic year. That year Professor Alessandro Portelli, who teaches Anglo-American Literature at the University of Rome, taught a seminar on contemporary American Indian literature. Toward the end of that course I was invited to speak about American Indians and I was confronted, not to say challenged, with a class that showed great interest in the subject and an uncommon inclination toward studies in writing and oral tradition, a favorite topic of Professor Portelli's lectures. At the very end of the same academic year, exactly at the time when the Department of American Studies of the University of Rome was organizing the American Indian Workshop annual conference, Professor Gaetano Prampolini of the University of Florence invited Dr. N. Scott Momaday on a lecturing tour in our country. Needless to say, we managed to put all these pebbles together, with the help of Sarah Morrison from U.S.I.S., and had him as a special lecturer at the Conference. Some of Portelli's students were present and asked to meet the Indian writer they had studied so extensively during their course work. Momaday kindly accepted and the interview took place and was taped on 1 June 1991.

It is probably my training as an ethnohistorian that makes me insist on the relevance of events to the structure of the text, but I am telling this story for many other reasons: first of all, to let the readers know what kind of work they are dealing with; second, because in its procedure this interview was a true exercise in combining oral communication and the written text; and last, but not least, because I mean to thank all the people here mentioned, and especially Dr. N.

Scott Momaday, for their help and availability in making this essay and interview possible. Dr. Momaday also gave his kind permission to publish this interview in SAIL.

American Indian traditions have survived for ages through oral transmission. The written text was something unknown to Native Americans until their forced acculturation into the Euroamerican world. How thorough was this acculturation, though? From the following interview we can say that there was acculturation, but that this did not mean doing away with tradition altogether. As some passages of this text suggest, American Indian writers, for example, managed to mediate between tradition and the introduction of Euroamerican media into their cultures. The American Indian writer, then, can be viewed as cultural broker, someone able to compromise between two distinct ways of communicating, using the symbolic language of his/her own culture and transferring it on the written page. Moreover, as Momaday himself states in this interview, writing and storytelling can be similar in some ways, but they present profound differences that cannot be disregarded. In oral tradition the space and time factors play a role they do not play in writing. In the former, the teller and the listener interact and the first has to adjust his story, or does so unconsciously, to the situation and the reason he is telling it. In the oral tradition "every time a story is told," says Momaday, "each time it is told it is a unique performance; it can happen only one time. It's like a piece of music with a great many variations." The same does not go for writing. In this case it is the reader who interacts with the text. The writer, even when "translating" an oral performance into a written text, gives his/her own imprint at the time and of the place in which he puts down those lines on the page. Yet, I would add, the writer knows or believes to know the reader, and the story is told also according to that knowledge.

Some of the issues arising from this interview have to do with the problem of conveying major aspects of American Indian cultures to the outside. For over a century, anthropologists and historians have been dealing with this delicate point in their research: to what extent can an outsider penetrate the culture under analysis? Anthropologist Clifford Geertz has tried to give an answer to this touchy question by stating that the scholar studying a culture other than his own could accomplish his objective of approaching the "other," " . . . by a standing back, by the development of a general, closed, abstract, formalistic science of thought, a universal grammar of the intellect" (Geertz 351). Geertz's statement starts from the assumption of the basic similarity of the foundations of human existence in all cultures. In Momaday's words, this assumption is present all the time and his ability to communicate cross-culturally helps us understand better the reality of American Indian traditions, especially when it is mediated by a novel such as

House Made of Dawn, *or even more so by* The Way to Rainy Mountain.

American Indian writers, then, provide one of the best answers to the scholars' concern about the understanding of other cultures. They have managed to possess both instruments of communication, and they know both worlds and have lived in them. This is increasingly true for many American Indians who, although remaining faithful to their traditions, are all the more aware of the Euroamerican world and often an integral part of it.

Yet, the central character of House Made of Dawn, *Abel, makes an incredible effort in his attempt at crossing that cultural boundary that separates his Pueblo world from the outside world, and Momaday leaves us doubting whether he ever succeeded. It was still a problem in post-World War Two years for Indian people to make that kind of leap, and Momaday seems to say that it is not the same for today's American Indians. Nevertheless, we should not forget that living with a double cultural standard does not necessarily imply that one set of values must be abandoned for another. They can be matched and mediated, as shown by many American Indian populations nowadays. This requires, however, an effort of incredible magnitude, especially when we consider that many of these people do so while trying to preserve a whole Indian identity.*

In this respect language could be one means to the end of making the transition without necessarily renouncing one's own past. Oral tradition is portable and survives also in a world in which writing pervades all human activities. As a matter of fact, Momaday calls for a closer connection between written and spoken languages, which he says "are not as divided as we assume." In the following pages he gives a fascinating description of the uses of the spoken word and its connections with writing, something that has been central to his work.

Q: In *House Made of Dawn* and other writings, there is always the opposition oral tradition/written tradition, Indian culture/White culture. I wonder how important this opposition has been in your own experience, especially when we consider that you are a member of the Gourd Dance Society while teaching at the same time at an American state university.

NSM: For me personally, there was no great conflict and I think this is because, although I was born into a traditional world, I didn't stay there very long. I moved to another Indian world early,[1] so I had a

different kind of experience than most Native American children and, consequently, I didn't have to make the same kind of adaptation my father had to make. He was, for example, much more deeply entrenched in the traditional world. It was harder for him to get out of that context and to enter into another world than it was for me. So, for me personally, it's not as great a problem, but I'm interested in it and, as you know, in *House Made of Dawn* that was one of my central concerns: Abel's difficulty in crossing the barrier from the Pueblo world into the other world. It is a great problem and it was for his generation especially.

Q: How do you think Abel could solve this problem?

NSM: I don't know that he did. He was terribly damaged, because he was uprooted, and I'm sure that he was psychically disoriented and that was a terrible problem for people of his generation as they grew up. He was a Pueblo. He had lived all his life at the pueblo and suddenly he was taken, drafted, conscripted, put down in a chaotic situation, a war situation, and then allowed to turn loose and allowed to return. But what a tremendous severance that was! That whole generation in particular, those young men who came of age about the time of the Second World War, they were terribly . . . they were jolted by that experience and a lot of them didn't come out of it at all. The novel is open-ended and two days ago somebody asked me: "Well, what happened? Did he die?" And I said: "I don't know!" I didn't write the next page and so I leave it to you to decide.[2] He was showing signs, though, wasn't he, of making his way back into the traditional world at the end of the novel. So it could be that he did. But not without tremendous cost.

Q: Do you think that Abel's problem is one of giving the right answer to the situation? He went to war and he did the wrong thing when he counted coup on the tank and later when, once back on the reservation, he killed the albino. So, does Abel have the same kind of problem of adaptation when he finds himself in a war situation and when he goes back to the pueblo?

NSM: It's not quite the same problem. You mentioned him losing control when the tank comes at him; this is one kind of panic, and I think when he returns to the reservation, it is another kind of panic, and maybe panic is not the right word for it. He understands, you know; everything is familiar to him in a way. It's just that it is unavailable to him. He has lost the ability to exist in the dimension of his previous life and the great problem for Abel is how to get back into it. The question is, can he? Is it possible or isn't it? And as I say, that question really isn't answered in the novel. I didn't want to. I

didn't want to say flat out that: "Hey, he made it! It's great! He's back in the traditional world!" And I didn't want to say, on the other hand, that it is hopeless, that he's been forever separated from that world and can't do anything about it. I wanted both possibilities to be there at the end.

Q: Regarding the albino, when I read that part, I thought perhaps he was trying to free him because certainly he was a mystical kind of creature to the society and the point fit in. Could it be that there was a pact between them?

NSM: I like that idea and, of course, I allow for that interpretation, but I didn't consciously mean that, as I didn't consciously mean to construct the symbol there. Let me tell you a little bit about the albino. . . . There is a strong strain of albinism at Jemez Pueblo and this is the pueblo that I used as the model for the book. These people who are visibly different from other people of the community are regarded with a certain kind of wariness. They are thought to be witches, or they are thought to be more easily witches than other people. They are thought to have powers that most people do not have. So the people are suspicious in that sense. When I was living at Jemez (this would have been about the late '40s or early '50s), a man killed another at Jemez, shot him with a pistol at close range, point blank. The FBI, who have jurisdiction on the reservations, came in and they took the man into custody. It seemed to be a clear-cut case of homicide of the first degree and the man offered no resistance whatsoever. So he was tried and convicted. But in the course of the trial he pleaded self-defense on the basis of witchcraft. Somebody finally got around to asking him, "Why did you do it? What was your motive? Why did you shoot this man?" And he said, "I shot this man because he threatened to turn himself into a snake[3] and bite me, and so I shot him. You know, anybody would have done the same thing." That was his attitude. Well, the courts have no machinery to deal with that sort of defense and it made all the newspapers in Albuquerque.[4] That trial must have set the American system of jurisprudence sort of on its ear. And witchcraft! Witchcraft in the twentieth century as a legal defense! What do you do with that? Well, what happened was that this man was convicted of murder, but no one in the whole pueblo considered him guilty. And so the way the court dealt with it finally was to give him a minimal sentence, and he served something like two years in prison and then he got out, returned to Jemez and resumed his life. Nobody thought anything about it. Nobody thought that he had acted in any way other than he should have acted. He was temporarily inconvenienced and that was it. Well, that interested me greatly and that case really lies behind the murder of the albino. Abel is afraid of the

albino. He's s afraid of him because . . . well, there is bad blood between them; there is this thing of the chicken pull, but beyond that, the albino is a witch; at least Abel is convinced that he is, and Francisco, too. And so the murder is ritualistic.

Q: In oral cultures the creative power of language lies in sound. Does language lose this power in writing?

NSM: I think it can and I think it does. But, on the other hand, I also think that writing can be almost as powerful as the spoken word. We who grew up in a written tradition have lost a certain sensitivity where language is concerned because writing, as important as it is, tends to give us a false security. We know that we can write something down and we can put it away and it will be there when we come back for it. We don't commit it to memory, for example. But in the oral tradition you cannot afford to take language for granted. You have to hear what is said; you have to say what you say with great responsibility. And you have to remember what you hear. So, in a way, the oral tradition is a more responsible area of language.[5] But writing can be as forceful and powerful as the oral tradition or nearly so. You take an American writer like Melville. The things that distinguish *Moby Dick* are the very things that distinguish oral tradition: this responsible use of language, the very careful hearing of language. Melville had a wonderful ear, like the ear of a storyteller. He was listening to himself when he wrote, and he was taking great delight in language. When he wrote the chapter called "The Spirit Spout," for example, where you have those long passages that are full of alliteration, he was just drunk with the sound of the language and it turns out to be one of the most wonderful writings in literature. So that's the exception, but it should be the rule. People who write ought to take language as seriously as people who speak, and I have an idea that the two traditions, the written tradition and the oral tradition, are not as divided as we assume, that somewhere down the line they come very close together and perhaps converge. They don't, obviously, at a practical level in our time, but there was a time when we had a much greater sensitivity to language than we have now. We ought to be trying to recover that sensitivity.

Q: But, when you say that you learned much from Emily Dickinson, especially about the language, what do you mean by that?

NSM: Emily Dickinson is like Melville in that she has a tremendous respect for language and she experiments with it; she tries to see how far she can go in it, in the element of language, and she does what other people do not do. So you can learn a lot by reading Emily Dickinson. Not that you should emulate her because that's dangerous,

but she's a very . . . she inspires me as does Melville, for example, and other writers of very distinguished character. You can read Emily Dickinson and find out a lot about language: how it used to be used, how it ought to be used, what risks are involved in the use and so on. She's a good teacher.[6]

Q: So far you've mentioned Melville and Dickinson as inspiring examples to look up to because of the respect they have for language and the ways they work with it. But what are your ideas on words? What is your personal relationship with them? Also, I'm curious about the way you go about writing. For example, was *House Made of Dawn* a sudden inspiration or did you conceive it during a long period of time?

NSM: I had the idea for a long time. As for my personal relationship with words, I guess the answer to that is that I have a great respect for language. I believe that it is a very, very powerful instrument. I believe that language is limited, that there are things which cannot be expressed in language. But I also believe that we don't know what those limits are, that we have not begun to reach the limits. We don't know what is possible in language and that, to me, is exciting. I think words are instruments of infinite possibility, and I know that I can do certain things in writing, but I don't know what I can do, you know, how much. I don't know how well I can write. I hope that I can write something better than I've written and I believe that I can. I believe that someone, somewhere, sometime can write better than Shakespeare or Chaucer or any great world writer that you can mention. Language has that kind of possibility in it. I believe that language is miraculous. I believe that one can work miracles in language. Words. It is a magical kind of dimension we are talking about.

Q: The dual cultural background is not a problem that all American Indians share. How can you transfer oral tradition into writing or vice versa? Does it mean that you refer to two cultural patterns that grow together and you act as a cultural broker?

NSM: I like that idea, the cultural broker, that's true. And there are obviously many common denominators between writing and storytelling, writing and oral tradition. We can spot many of those common denominators. What is less easy to spot are the differences, because there are also intrinsic differences. For example, when you write a poem or a short story or a novel, you are taking language and you are freezing it. You are making it permanent on the page and it does not change. You have frozen it in time and space. With the oral tradition you do something else. You make it, you create it in some way. You can make a song or a story, but it retains a vitality that writing does not

retain. In the oral tradition every time a story is told, each time it is told it is a unique performance, it can happen only one time. It's like a piece of music with a great many variations. I can come and tell you a story and I tell you the same story twenty minutes later using exactly the same words, but it won't be the same. The situation will be changed somehow. You will hear it differently. I will put different intonation on the language. It'll be twenty minutes later. That makes a difference of some kind. What we're really talking about, I suppose, in a situation of that kind, is that oral tradition is much closer to theater than is writing. The storyteller performs in the way that an actor performs on the stage.[7] Just now I've used hands as I speak to you; that's part of the performance. When I look at you, shifting the visual contact from one to the other, that is part of the performance. When I emphasize with my voice a certain syllable, that is part of the performance. Now all of these things distinguish one tradition from the other. These things do not play a part in writing. I can write something and I can perform it to myself. I can read a passage that I have written and I can give it a different intonation and I can use gestures and so on. But if, you know, if . . . what I have written is read by someone out of my presence, I have no control over it. The control is intrinsic in the writing itself. The control can be very great, but it's of a different kind. It is less performance in the sense of artistical, theatrical performance. That makes a difference. How to measure the difference is critical and I don't know the answer to that and how you measure it. I think that, in the storytelling situation, in the oral tradition, when you have a speaker and a group of listeners, the control exercised by the storyteller is greater or more immediately perceptible than is the control of the writer over his reader. In oral tradition, the storyteller creates his listener. When I tell you a story, I determine you. I determine how you hear the story. I can do that by emphasizing certain things, controlling the rate, gesture, expression, eye contact, all those things. I can control, I can create you my listener, I can imagine you into being, and I can determine you as the listener. The writer has less control over the situation. There is a little song from Lakota. It's very short. This is the way it goes:

> soldiers
> you fled
> even the eagle dies

It's beautiful; it's wonderful. But what does it mean? How are we to take it? We know that it's powerful; it's a power song. And we know it has to do with courage and warfare and, somehow, with noble capacities in man. But I've seen it in one anthology entitled "Song of Encouragement" and in another anthology "Song of Rebuke." What a

difference! But you can read it either way. Here is someone who is chastising his soldiers because they fled, or here is someone who is saying, "You have acted admirably and nobly. Even the eagle dies." If you hear the song, if you hear someone utter it, you perhaps know better how to interpret it, how to take it. But just to have those few words on the page . . . that's difficult. There are at least two possibilities, and the two possibilities are very far apart. One has to interpret and one is morally obliged to interpret to the best of his ability. I feel that interpretation is inevitable, unavoidable. Misunderstanding is also inevitable, but sometimes it can be very creative and sometimes it can be even intrinsically more valuable than what is meant. Sometimes.

Q: In reading criticism of your work did you come across something you never thought of, a word that was there and of which you were unconscious?

NSM: This happens all the time. And it is always interesting and sometimes a humbling kind of experience. I've had people come up to me after a reading, and I've had the very disturbing experience of finding that someone knows my work better than I do at a given point of time. Someone can come up to me now, for example, and quote a passage from *House Made of Dawn* that I have already forgotten. And I hear it and I recognize it, but I don't have it in mind in the same way that the questioner has it in mind. "Doctor Momaday, when you wrote this, did you mean this, this, and this?" Yes, I did, I did mean that. But you're not always aware that you meant it. You know, a lot of creativity in writing consists of writing out of the subconscious. So you can do things of which you're not aware and you can do them well and people can read them and give you great credit and you deserve it; but, you know, sometimes you lag, you don't come to the full understanding of what you've done necessarily as soon as others might. And that's a humbling experience when that happens. But it is a real part of writing, I think. Whoever it is that's using language as a creative instrument deals in the subconscious as well as the conscious.

Q: I read James Welch, Leslie M. Silko and your *House Made of Dawn*. All the characters seem to find their identity in recovering their past or in a kind of traditional ceremony. I wonder whether this searching for oneself in the past or on the reservation brings with it a kind of immobility, a refusal to confront the Other. Does that involve a risk?

NSM: Yes, yes. I think that both things are a risk. To confront your heritage on your own terms, within the traditional world, that is one kind of risk. Yet, it is not as dangerous as confronting the outside

world. Abel grew up in a pueblo, which is, after all, a very isolated kind of place. At the time of Abel's generation the pueblo probably had a population of one thousand or twelve hundred or fifteen hundred people at the most. So it is a small community as compared to other communities. It is very much self-contained; the whole world of the pueblo somewhat resides within a very tight geographical area, and it is very different from the world just beyond. One who is born into that world has a certain kind of security, and he lives his whole life functioning in that small space. Once he ventures outside that space, he risks a great deal. You know, he forfeits his security: he forfeits his tribal identity. He has to live in the world on other terms, and they are terms with which he is not familiar. I'm talking about Abel's generation especially. So that is a great risk. There are risks in both categories but the safest situation is to remain in the traditional world. [. . .] As time goes on, the land base, the security of the reservation means less because more people are having experience of the larger world; they know better how to exist beyond the reservation than they did a generation or two ago. So the risk is diminishing but it is still there. . . . I don't know. You're raising an important question in the idea of losing one's identity. The Indian. Oh, it's too big, too big a question to deal with.

Q: Do you think it's possible to retain an Indian identity outside the reservation?

NSM: I think it is, beyond any question. The community can help you retain the identity. To use again Abel as an example: once he left the reservation, in a real sense, he left his identity behind, and this happened to a great many people of his generation. Now, it is not the same you know, because "it's twenty minutes later." The situation has changed and, if Abel were to live in the 1990s, he would not have relied so much upon his land base as he did in the 1950s, and so it would mean less of a risk for him to step off the reservation. He would not be as insecure: he would not be as vulnerable. To get back to your point, absolutely it is possible for an Indian to remain an Indian, whether he's on the reservation or off, because finally what is inside the individual is more important than what is outside. One can learn to carry his heritage with him into any situation, and that is what happened to the Indian. At one time a Navajo, when he left the reservation, would cease to be a Navajo. Now no. He can take his "Navajoness" anywhere he wants and that is a good thing.

NOTES

[1]Born in Anadarko, Oklahoma he moved early to New Mexico and grew up on Navajo and Pueblo reservations, mainly Jemez, which "was my home from the time I was twelve until I ventured out to seek my fortune in the world" (*The Names* 117).

[2]Authors coming from oral cultures tend to be more exacting towards their readers, calling for a more active participation. This could be ascribed to the different role of the listener in the storyteller-audience relationship. Gaetano Prampolini writes that "Momaday's method postulates a reader 'willing to cooperate' with the text, willing to participate actively in a progressive recognition of meaning" (67). Toni Morrison seems to have the same attitude towards her own novels. In an interview with Claudia Tate she declares that "my writing expects, demands participatory reading, and that I think is what literature is supposed to do" (125).

[3]It is a common belief in many different Indian cultures that certain individuals have the power to turn themselves into animals. The basic concept shared among all these different cultures is that man has an animal counterpart; the Tonal in Central America and the Powaqa among the Hopi culture are well known examples. Born in the Kiowa culture, Momaday seems to share this belief: "It is so real to me that understanding is almost beside the point. I am a bear. I do have this capacity to become a bear. The bear sometimes takes me over and I am transformed" (Woodard 15).

[4]See Evers.

[5]On this subject see Momaday, "The Native Voice."

[6]Emily Dickinson has a very strong relationship with the forms of orality. She derives a sharp, sonorous awareness from the daily reading of the Bible and the metrical style of the hymn, the ballad, and the nursery rhyme. She expresses it by means of alliteration, parallelism, and rhyme destined to "give voice" to poetry through the multiple phonetical actualizatian. For a more thorough analysis of Emily Dickinson's poetry, see Portelli 118-19 as well as Momaday, "Love Affair."

[7]On the same subject see also Goffman.

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FORUM

From the President

Dear ASAIL Member,

With this letter I am welcoming you to our organization, if you are a new member, and saying the very best of hellos to our continuing members. ASAIL is an active thriving organization devoted to the study of diverse American Indian Literatures. Our membership is growing steadily and the attendance at our organization-sponsored sessions at the Modern Language Association convention and the American Literature Association convention has increased to the extent that we have seen standing room only readings and meetings.

At this year's 1996 MLA Convention to be held December 27-30 in Washington, D.C., ASAIL is sponsoring a performance of a one-act play by William S. Yellow Robe, Jr., *The Star Quilter*. Gloria Bird, the organizer of this performance, says that it promises to be splendid. Also, Janice Gould has organized another strong ASAIL session "Convergencies/Divergencies: The Making of Worlds in American Indian Poetry."

ASAIL members can look forward to participating in our joint business meeting with the MLA Division of American Indian Literatures. This year's meeting will be an opportunity to discuss the future editorship of our newsletter *ASAIL Notes* and the scope of the American Indian Literature sessions at ALA in Baltimore, 1997. We expect to have a dynamic meeting where writers, teachers, and critics can gather to meet one another informally and discuss new directions in the field.

Meanwhile anticipation mounts for the long-awaited *SAIL* retrospective issue of the journal honoring the twentieth anniversary of the highly acclaimed, legendary Flagstaff conference that laid the groundwork for the American Indian literary studies that we recognize today.

Thank you again for participating in ASAIL, and a special hea rt-felt thank you to John Purdy and Robert Nelson, our general editors at *SAIL*, for doing a fine job. We look forward to seeing you in Washington, D.C. during the holidays.

Susan Scarberry-García
ASAIL President

From the Editor

It seems odd to be writing the first editor note, after two years as editor. Then again, I suppose it is. However, the time has come to share some of the news that has come our way over the last few weeks and to apprise our subscribers of the status of the journal, as well as its future issues. I will try to be brief.

First, I would like to welcome Don Birchfield Jr. to our staff. As you no doubt well know, the boom in publication in our area of study continues. The sheer number of books released each year continues to increase, thus making the job of book review editor an even more perplexing and demanding task. Don has graciously agreed to share that burden with current book review editor Julie LaMay Abner. We hope that this will result in our enhanced ability to cover the publication of relevant books in a timely manner.

Several special *SAIL* issues are forthcoming. The current issue, on European scholarship in Native American literatures, was guest-edited by Birgit Hans and anticipates a special panel on the subject that the association discussed providing for the 1997 MLA. Arnold Krupat, I believe, will coordinate that panel. The first issue of volume nine will be a special issue on the work of Gerald Vizenor guest-edited by Louis Owens. It has some fine essays in it, and we hope to have another interview with Professor Vizenor as well. After a general issue in the Spring, we will have one very special issue to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Flagstaff conference of 1977, out of which our association (and thus the Association) grew. This issue will include essays by participants of that conference and will be guest-edited by two of them: A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff and Kathleen Mullen Sands.

It promises to be an issue that will allow us all a moment of retrospection.

Over the last two years, we have been fortunate enough to remove our backlog of submissions—hopefully with a minimal amount of turmoil—and provide a sense of stability that has resulted in an increase in submissions. The number has increased sharply over last year, in fact. This marks, I believe, the awareness that the journal is here to stay, and that it continues to publish a wide variety of strong critical studies of American Indian literatures. Unfortunately, along with the increased number of submissions comes the concomitant increase in the number of rejections. This number is primarily due to a sad fact that a sizable portion of submissions today reflect scholars' first interaction with the Native American canon. The association has worked to foster this type of expansion over the years, and this is therefore encouraging; however, many of the essays sent us reflect an inadequate understanding of what has been published previously. They also reflect, I think, the increased use of Native texts in academic institutions, primarily the texts of writers so often the focal point of critical study: Louise Erdrich, N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, James Welch, to name the few. This makes publication even more difficult, while—as we discussed at our last business meeting in Chicago—leaving many other wonderful writers largely ignored.

At the same business meeting, we discussed having a panel on those largely ignored writers, primarily ones who have worked and published over a long period of time. I would like to extend that to the American Literature Association's conference in Baltimore, 22-25 May. We have been promised at least three panels, so I have issued a call for panel suggestions and possible paper topics (see "Calls for Submissions," below). However, to focus at least one panel upon writers whose books are rarely used in academic courses seems perfectly suited to the needs of the ALA membership. This is where we can introduce such writers and works to educators from around the country. Moreover, this opportunity follows a conference at the University of Oregon the week before, a conference organized by Sidner Larson entitled "Ethnicity and the Problem of Multicultural Identity" (15-17 May). Since the ALA is on the East Coast, it would seem plausible to continue this theme there, so a panel on identity could be useful if anyone is interested in chairing it. In any event, if anyone has an idea for the conference please contact me as soon as possible.

I have received several queries over the last year about the status of *ASAIL Notes*, the association's newsletter. Formerly published three times a year, it is now largely dormant. This is the result of a trend we can all recognize. Its editor, Mike Wilson, has not received the support from his institution for his efforts in behalf of the association.

Therefore, he has requested that we find another editor, one whose institution values such types of efforts. *Notes* is an immensely valuable publication for our field of study and we would hope to see it continue. This item will be placed on the agenda for our annual business meeting.

John Purdy

Calls for Submissions

ALA CONFERENCE, BALTIMORE, 22-25 MAY 1997

The Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures will provide at least three panels for the American Literature Association's annual gathering of scholars from around the country. One panel will be devoted to writers and texts seldom found in university/college courses, so I am seeking papers that focus critical attention in this area. I am also seeking subjects, topics, papers, and chairs for the other two panels. For information about the conference or suggestions for papers or panels, please contact me at:

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Deadline for abstracts, suggestions, paper titles: **10 January**.

ASLE CONFERENCE, MISSOULA MT, 17-19 JULY 1997

On 17-19 July 1997, the second biennial conference of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) will take place at the University of Montana in Missoula. Gary Snyder,

Rick Bass, Pattiann Rogers, and David Abram are among the prominent writers and scholars participating in the conference. ASLE invites program proposals for panels and papers on any aspect of literature and environment, roundtable topics of general interest, poster sessions to showcase teaching, curriculum, cooperative ventures, or research innovations, and readings of original nature writing. For more information concerning submissions contact:

John Tallmadge, President-Elect, ASLE
6538 Teakwood Court
Cincinnati OH 45224-2112
(513) 681-0944 JTALL@INTERRAMP.COM

Sessions at MLA, Washington DC, 27-30 December 1996

The following are MLA sessions that have been scheduled by both the MLA Division on American Indian Literatures and ASAIL. All of the sessions listed below will be at the Sheraton Washington.

284. Speaking to Be Heard: American Indian Oratory. Saturday 7:15-8:30 p.m., Lanai 152.
Presiding: Malea Powell, Miami U

1. "Narrative Authority and the Conversion of Patience Boston," Tamara Harvey, U of California, Irvine
2. "Blood as Narrative, Narrative as Blood: Declaring a Fourth World," Chadwick Allen, U of Arizona
3. "The Antiremoval Oratory of Nineteenth-Century Cherokees: A Legacy for Survival," Ginny Carney, U of Kentucky

508. Performance of *The Star Quilter*, a One-Act Play by William S. Yellow Robe, Jr. Sunday 3:30-4:45 p.m., Delaware B.
Presiding: Gloria Bird, Institute of American Indian Arts

581C. Business Meeting of ASAIL and the Division of American Indian Literatures. Sunday 9:00-10:15 p.m., Delaware A.

Presiding: Kenneth Roemer, Chair, Division of American Indian Literatures, and Susan Scarberry-García, President, ASAIL.

657. Teaching Native American Literature to Various Audiences. Monday 10:15-11:30 a.m., Atrium 2.
Presiding: Susan Scarberry-García, Navajo Preparatory

1. "Teaching *Home Places*: Verbal Art and Contemporary Expression in Native American Literature," Bette S. Weidman, Queens College, CUNY
2. "Mitakuye Oyasin: Making Connections in the Indian Literature Classroom," Debra K. S. Barker, U of Wisconsin, Eau Claire
3. "Corners, Walls, and Doors: The Methodology of Exams in a Course in American Indian Literatures," Sandra L. Sprayberry, Birmingham Southern College
4. "Instructions from the Backbone of the World: Teaching *Fools Crow* across Regions, Cultures, and Other Boundaries," Eric Gary Anderson, Oklahoma State U

719. Convergencies/Divergencies: The Making of Worlds in American Indian Poetry. Monday 1:45-3:00 p.m., Idaho.
Presiding: Janice Gould, U of New Mexico

1. "Convergent Worlds: Carter Revard's *Unzipping Angels*," Janet McAdams, Emory U
2. "Wendy Rose for the Year 2000: Preparing the Way to Our New World," Maureen Salzer, U of Arizona
3. "Mary Tall Mountain: Bringing Worlds Together," Gabrielle Welford, U of Hawaii, Manoa

REVIEWS

Philadelphia Flowers. ***Roberta Hill Whiteman. Duluth, MN: Holy Cow! Press, 1996. $10.95 paper, ISBN 0-930100-64-6. 122 pages.***

The 47 poems that comprise what may aptly be described as Roberta Hill Whiteman's "long awaited" second book are divided into two sections of similar length along with a couple pages of useful notes. Whiteman received her MFA from the University of Montana in 1973, where she studied with Richard Hugo, and has done doctoral work at the University of Minnesota. She presently lives with her husband, the Arapaho artist Ernest Whiteman, in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, the state in which she grew up. The Whitemans have two daughters and a son. Whiteman's first book of poems, *Star Quilt*, appeared in 1984 and was well received. In an interview with Joseph Bruchac in *Survival This Way* (1987), she speaks of her sense of transience and of the "dispossession" of the Oneida peoples. (She is an enrolled member of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin.)

Probably only an English prof or a botanist would be bothered by the misspelled title of the first poem of the book, "Kolanchoe," which shows Whiteman's considerable lyric prowess—*not* the incorrect spelling (it should be "kalanchoe," pronounced ka-lan-ko-ee, a succulent of which there are more than 200 species, mostly African or south Asian), but her control of rhythm and her keen ear. She employs

a 3-stress line haunted by the ghost of iambic trimeter:

> Your stems rise quietly,
> not quivering from touch,
> but from memory forced
> to send beyond its pain
> a brighter thing. Alive
> with light, your leaves contain
> the waves of an early world,
> a shoal lapping up the shadow
> of itself. . . . (11)

The fourth through sixth lines of this opening passage scan perfectly, but the metrical environment is such that the reader feels no jog-trot regularity. Whiteman is by no means a strict formalist, however, as can be seen in "Fogbound" (43-45), where the line length varies from a single, monosyllabic word to ten syllables, stanza length ranges from a single line to a dozen, and no puntuation appears at all.

In "Kolanchoe" the long i sounds (rise, quietly, brighter, alive, light) promote the music, and occasionally, as in alive/ light/leaves or shoal/shadow, the alliteration also contributes. The poem celebrates the healing power of the plant, which sends its tropical greenness like a lifeline to her, "Like a woman rescued / from a glacier," who can still hear the "white wind" of winter.

If the healing power of nature suggested in this poem sounds reminiscent of Wordsworth, the origins may lie in the heavy, old-fashioned tomes of poetry which her grandmother passed on to her, as Whiteman indicates in her interview with Bruchac (327). Surely Wordsworth would have applauded "Waterfall at Como Park," in which the personified cataract (she) "teaches me to believe / in this—it's best we're blind / to that which moving, moves us" (21). Of course Whiteman's embrace of nature has at least equal origins in Native American traditions, as we see in such poems as "This Gift," for her husband, in which she writes,

> Within me
> the hummingbird's blessing
> and the grizzly's wisdom
> take root and intertwine
> in the cliffs of your spirit. (27)

"Heritage: something that comes or belongs to one by reason of birth." Many of the poems in this book, like "In the Summer after 'Issue Year' Winter (1873)" and "Home Before Dark," celebrate and sustain Whiteman's Native heritage.

The force of nature is persistent throughout *Philadelphia Flowers*, but so, too, is the power of human relationships, particularly in tributes

to members of her family. In "From the Sun Itself" we encounter the poet sitting "on a wooded hill in Spring / playing my flute to fluttering green" (39), and "Breaking Trail" begins, "Here basswood leaves soak up / evening sun, their phosphorescent leaves" (41), but "Against Annihilation" opens on a much different note:

> When I found eraser dust
> from "you must do your math"
> left on my desk this morning, I thought of how
> I love to see your face,
> at once so familiar, so foreign. (46)

This poem, for her son Jacob Hill at age twelve, at least initially departs from the nature theme. But the images of "antelope twins / who bounded before you on the day / of your birth" and of Jacob "tramping through jack pines / setting up camp" set up a sort of tension with the math homework and the image of her son building robots in his room. At such moments, she wonders, "do you ponder / just what phenolophthlein means?" Like many of her poems, this one concerns healing and caretaking: "This poem asks the earth / to offer you her care" even as the speaker worries about a world that "prizes / annihilation."

The second section begins with the title poem, her longest and most ambitious effort, 147 lines set up in four parts. Here she encounters a nameless, homeless woman sleeping in "the cubbyhole entrance to Cornell and Son." The allusions to the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Independence Square, William Penn, and abolitionist and women's rights proponent Lucretia Mott create an odd context, a "city built of brotherly love" from which "plans were laid to push all Indians / west." Not all readers are likely to admire the rhetoric of commitment encountered in this poem: "Our leaders left this woman in the lurch. / How can there be democracy / without the means to live?" So ends the first section of the poem. The question might be whether the readers who admire the nature poems or those involving the speaker as caretaker will be equally comfortable with the poems in which Whiteman's political views are foregrounded.

One answer to that question, of course, is that the readersare not *supposed* to feel at ease in such a world. In the second section Whiteman finds herself jolted awake at four in the morning by "sirens screeching" and "choppers lugging to the hospital heliport." In the sultry heat she wonders, "What matters?" The skyscrapers tell their stories "under dwindling stars," and she recounts an episode of urban violence involving Mohawk ironworkers. For the reader who has moved placidly, even pleasantly through most of the poems up to this point, "Philadelphia Flowers" constitutes a rude awakening. (It's not

that dissonant tones have not been sounded throughout—they certainly have—but the tenor of the book has been serene, for the most part, what I would call healing and hopeful, though not necessarily optimistic.)

In the third section she encounters the "tall, dark, intense" woman who proudly sells flowers rather than beg for money in her desperation. She buys the flowers "because in desperation / you thought of beauty" and because she recognizes her own despair in that of the woman selling "those Philadelphia flowers." She sees herself maintaining her pride as the woman has done, "selling these bouquets of poems / to anyone who'll take them."

In the final section of the poem, which is set up as four tercets, Whiteman turns her carefully controlled anger against the anonymous "they," who have already taken "the timber, the good soil," and who plan to "demolish mountains." Next, she says, they will want "the water and the air." In the last lines she confronts the reader: "What of you, learning how this continent's / getting angry? Do you consider what's in store for you?"

Poems that implicate the reader, as this one does, always run a certain risk. While the poet doubtless draws a "right on" from the reader who is politically aligned, she risks preaching to the choir. Meanwhile, the unaligned reader may very well be offended. But perhaps the apposite question here is whether the "uncommitted" or middle-of-the-road reader will be won over or persuaded by such rhetorical tactics.

The next poem, "Being Indian" (65-67), is also highly rhetorical, but in a different way. "Philadelphia Flowers" involves the reader in three narrative scenarios that have considerable dramatic impact, so Whiteman lays a solid foundation for her rhetorical appeal in the closing dozen lines. "Being Indian," however, leads with pathos: "Being Indian / she felt sand bags weigh her heart." The next two stanzas introduce "Her daughter," who was tyrannized by television and who "was so willful / as she destroyed each brain cell," and "Her son" who "stuck to the shadows." The fourth stanza is a laconic tercet that brings son and daughter together: "His rage her rage, / healthy in this time and place / where Indians live." The final three stanzas begin with the opening line, which has the impact of a preliminary refrain: "Being Indian / she felt it good to dream"; "Being Indian / she had faith enough to let her burdens / fall"; "Being Indian / she lit a smudge and waited / for the dawn."

The range of subjects and voices in these poems is implicit in some of the titles: "Waiting for Robinson" (in memory of Malcolm Lowry), "Van Gogh in the Olive Grove," "Empress Hsaio-Ju Speaks Her Mind." But Whiteman's focuses mostly on her own journey through

life, her intimate feelings for nature and for her family and people. Hers is preeminently the voice of the concerned and loving mother: "I had to let him go, / my gangly eagle child, struggling / to ride currents of life's uplifting wind" ("Letting Go" 76); "Wherever in winter you go, child, / I hope our prayers flutter behind you in the wind" ("Wherever in Winter" 109). Confronting a world that seems increasingly inhospitable, Roberta Hill Whiteman consistently offers in her poems a nurturing, a healing, a refuge.

Ron McFarland

Life Amongst the Modocs: Unwritten History.
Joaquin Miller. 1873. San Jose CA: Urion Press 1987. $8.95 paper, ISBN 0-013522-12-0. 407 pages.

By the time Joaquin Miller wrote his book, in 1872 or '73, California had been a hotbed of racism and anti-Indian activities for over thirty years. Since the book says virtually nothing about the Modocs, one surmises that the timing and titling of the book was set to capitalize on the nationwide press coverage of the recently fought and highly publicized Modoc war. I do not have the actual date of publication, but the "war" dragged on from November 1872 to April, 1873, and culminated with the hanging of four Modoc men in October 1873.

I am gladdened, however, that Miller dedicates his book to "The Red men of America."

The author was quite a character in his time and well known in northern California and southern Oregon. Being a westerner and an Oregonian, his pro-Indian feelings made him both unique and impressively courageous. No doubt such biases sent him skedaddling out of many a California mining town. In fact, he spent several years "laying low" just prior to writing this book. All this is explained nicely in William Everson's fascinating introduction.

As a writer, Miller reflects his time. The prose is verbose, florid, and grandly sentimental. However, Miller knows how to tell a good tale and his poet's grasp of imagery is often nicely displayed: "As the

sun went down, broad, blood-red banners ran up to the top of (Mount) Shasta, and streamed away to the south in hues of gold" (190). Or: "Scintillations from the flashing snows of Mount Shasta shimmered through the trees, and a breath of air came across from the Klamat lakes and the Modoc land beyond, as if to welcome us from the dark, deep canyon with its leaden fringe, and lining of dark and eternal green" (182).

For those interested in setting, *Life Amongst the Modocs* is replete with rich descriptions of the flora and fauna of central and northern California. For example: "The manzanita berries were yellow as gold, the rich anther was here, the maple and dogwood that fringed the edge of the plain were red as scarlet against the wall of firs" (225).

A major frustration for the historian is Miller's apparent antipathy for time and place. He almost never advises the reader of the date or the exact location of his movements, hence many of his encounters with Native people leave us scratching our heads as to which tribe he is talking about. Based on the map of his travels on page vi, we must surmise he spent most of his time with the Shastas (he married a Shasta woman) and, to some degree, the Pit Rivers and McClouds. Based on the map mentioned above coupled with his text, we see that he spent little if any time with the Modocs. In fact, one wonders if he ever met a Modoc. Nevertheless, his sensitive depiction of, and respect for, Native life is evident. He seems more comfortable with Indians than with the whites in the mining camps, whom he paints accurately as a motley and often vicious crew, "the rank and file [being] made up of thieves, bar-room loafers, gutter snipes and men of of desperate character and fortunes" (283).

But Joaquin Miller is, after all, a white man, and he vacillates between the two worlds, as seen for example in his strange joining with a large militia that scoured the countryside and murdered five hundred Native people. On the other hand, he shows real sensitivity when he mentions traveling to Squaw Valley—"that place of such unfortunate name" (382). Yet, every time he refers to a Native woman, he calls her a squaw. Though he knows it is a derogatory term, it's the term of the day.

One particularly horrifying scene is his description of the massacre of a small, starving village. The miners are shown as cold, calculating, and heartless individuals. Later in the book he reflects with deep emotion: "About midnight the women began to wail for the dead from the hills. There is no sound so sad, so heartbroken and pitiful as this long and sorrowful lamentation. Sometimes it is almost savage, it is loud and fierce and vehement, and your heart sinks, and you sympathize, and you think of your own dead, and you lament with them the common lot of man . . . to feel how much we are all alike, and how

little difference there is in the destinies, the sorrows, and the sympathies of the children of men" (299).

In Chapter 22, Miller tells us of a remarkable plan. Setting himself up as a white Tecumseh, he wants to unite the Shasta, Pit River, and Modoc tribes into a confederacy under the name of The United Tribes, then treat with the government to secure "all the lands near the mountain (Shasta), even if we had to surrender all the other lands in doing so." He sent letters outlining this scheme to the military and civil powers-that-be in California. He never received a response. And he never refers to the idea again.

To repeat, Miller was a courageous man, unafraid to speak his mind. For example, referring to his father's experience of traveling Indian lands for twenty years without a scratch, he defends: "I am free to say that grandmothers never hold up before naughty children a bigger or more delusive bug-a-boo than his universal fear of Indians" (107). Still another example: "Of course we may deplore the death of the white man on the border. But for every white man that falls the ghosts of a hundred Indians follow. A white man is killed (half the time by a brother white man) and the account of it fills the land . . . and a general cry goes up against the Indians, no matter where" (106). As he poignantly states on page 160, "we hear but one side of the story. The Indian daily papers are not read." With the freshness of today's activism, Miller touts blowing the Indian Bureau to the moon (159).

In the end, Joaquin Miller captures the essence of his feelings in the middle of the book: "The white man and the red man are much alike with one great difference. . . . The Indian has no desire for fortune. . . . If an Indian loves you, trusts you, or believes in you at all, he will serve you, guide you through the country, follow you to battle, fight for you; he and all his sons and kindred, and never think of the pay or profit" (104).

Despite its shortcomings, *Life Amongst the Modocs* is a worthwhile read. Miller's positive portrayal of Native people from a white man's perspective helps to validate the Indian point of view concerning this dark period of California history.

One's mouth forms a wry smile thinking some of today's academics would call Miller's book "revisionist" should it appear in the bookstores today.

Pax Riddle

CONTRIBUTORS

Sonja Bahn-Coblans is an Assistant Professor in the Department of American Studies at the University of Innsbruck. Her main areas of research and teaching are ethnic and minority literature, new literatures in English, and film studies.

Peter Bakker is a linguist from the University of Amsterdam who specializes in language contact. He has an interest in Roman, Basque, and Amerindian languages, in particular Algonkian languages. His work focuses on the Basque pidgins spoken by Micmac and Montagnais Indians around 1600 and French-Cree contact, a study which made extensive fieldwork in Canada and North Dakota necessary. His thesis on Michif, called "A Language of Our Own," will be published by Oxford University Press in 1997. He has also written on interethnic communication in pre-contact North America.

Susan Castillo is a lecturer in the Department of English literature at the University of Glasgow. She is the author of two books, *Notes from the Periphery: Marginality in North American Literature* and *Culture and Engendering Identities*. She has published articles and reviews in Britain, the United States, Japan, Italy, Austria, Brazil, and Portugal. In 1993, 1994, 1995 and 1996 she was chosen for inclusion in *Who's Who in the World*. Castillo is a member of the New York Academy of Sciences, and has been active in human rights issues related to East Timor.

Laura Coltelli teaches American literature at the University of Pisa. She is the author of *Winged Words: American Indian Writers Speak* (University of Nebraska Press, 1990) and of numerous articles and essays on American poetry and Native American literatures. She has recently edited a book by Joy Harjo, *The Spiral of Memory: Interviews* (University of Michigan Press, 1996) and translated into Italian works by Leslie Marmon Silko, N. Scott Momaday, and Joy Harjo.

Daniele Fiorentino teaches American history at the University of Macerata, Italy, and is Cultural Advisor at the American Embassy in Rome. The author of *Gli Indiani Sioux da Wounded Knee al New Deal* (*The Sioux from Wounded Knee to the New Deal*, Rome 1991), he worked until 1992 as a research associate in the Department of American Studies at the University of Rome.

Birgit Hans is an Associate Professor of Indian Studies at hte University of North Dakota. She has published D'Arcy McNickle's short stories, *The Hawk is Hungry*, as well as a number of articles on him; she also writes on images of Native Americans in popular literature.

Ron McFarland teaches seventeenth-century and modern poetry, contemporary Northwest writers, and creative writing at the University of Idaho. His publications in the field of Native American literatures include a critical anthology on James Welch (Confluence Press) and several essays on Sherman Alexie's poetry. His study of the poetry and fiction of David Wagoner, *The World of David Wagoner*, is forthcoming from University of Idaho Press.

Pax Riddle is currently Vice President of The Butler County Council for Native Americans in Middletown, Ohio and a member of the Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers. He has just completed an historical novel about Toby Winema-Riddle, a courageous Modoc woman who attempted to negotiate a favorable peace for her people during the Modoc War of 1873, and has had a short story and poetry published in *The Beaver Tail Journal* and *News From Indian Country*.

Annette Veerman-Leichsenring is an academic lecturer in Popoloc and Nahuatl at Leiden University in Holland. She started her academic research as a Hispanist, but was always interested in Meso-American languages and cultures. She began to study the Popoloc language during a prolonged stay in Mexico during the '70s. Since 1992 she has been working on the morpho-syntactic reconstruction of Proto-Popoloc-an; at present she is coordinating fieldwork in Mixteca Alta (Mexico) in order to collect linguistic data of the severely endangered languages Chocho and Ixcatec.