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Linda Hogan

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Editorial

I have been editor of SAIL for exactly five years, yet this is my first editorial, so please bear with me. It is precipitated by some recent experiences at a conference–"Native Literary Strategies for the New Millennium"–organized by the American Literature Association. It was a wonderful and revealing experience. There was a fine mix of scholars in American Indian literatures, most of whom were drawn to it through their love of the literature and the ways it engages issues of critical importance to us all.

During the planning of the conference, I agreed to set up two panels for A.S.A.I.L.: one on Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* and another that, at least originally, was to bring together some prominent A.S.A.I.L. members/ scholars to share their academic careers, and look ahead to the next century. In the intervening months, however, the panel metamorphosed. At one point James Welch was to be on it, but he had a scheduling conflict so he was unable to attend. At a later date, LaVonne Brown Ruoff had to withdraw, when she assumed the duties as director of the D'Arcy McNickle Center. That is the way conferences go, as we all know. As it worked out, the panel was comprised of Elaine Jahner, David Moore and Kathleen Sands, and I was the chair. Each of us planned a talk and/or wrote a paper.

Things evolved, however, as I surveyed the program in preparation for making the trip and, as we attended the wonderful panels over the course of the first two or three days, the panel metamorphosed yet again. As I sat looking around me at the sessions, and as I listened to the fine

papers read on a wide array of topics and texts, it suddenly struck me that we—A.S.A.I.L. and perhaps all scholars of Native literatures—are at yet another significant juncture. Around me there was a significant number of Native scholars; the presence of the "old" generation beside the "new" was pronounced; so, I felt that, at long last, A.S.A.I.L.'s goals and objectives, so often articulated at similar (most often smaller) meetings, had been realized, if not to the degree desired, at least in significant part.

On the spur of the moment, I asked my colleagues to throw away their papers and prepare a brief talk that would foreground the changes we have seen over the years, and challenge those present to take up the task of seeing to our communal future. They graciously agreed. Whether or not we were successful may be a point of contention (although my discussions with conferees after the session and since lead me to believe we were). Whether we dropped a gauntlet or grenade may be a matter of perception, interpretation.

Other motivating forces behind my decision to change the tone of the panel are myriad. First, I had noticed, as I read the program, that around one third of those present had been published in *SAIL*. (Some of us, myself included, published their first scholarly essays here.) Others had been panelists for A.S.A.I.L. sessions at the M.L.A. and its various regional gatherings or the American Literature Association conferences. In a word, the beneficial influences of our Association were immediately apparent, as was a very real desire to see the momentum continue. Second, accompanying these thoughts was an equally real fear that all this would pass and that the focus A.S.A.I.L./*SAIL* provides would diffuse. And it could, very easily; as Momaday says of the oral canon, we are but one generation removed from extinction. Let me give an example.

A year ago the Association was in negotiations with a few university presses, thinking that the journal could be affiliated with one of them and thereby much of the production could be passed to the press. However, negotiations were suspended. During the course of those discussions, one press proposed certain concessions (an apt term): copyright on the essays published in the journal and the approval to double the subscription list. These seem rational enough, at first glance, until one realizes that some presses are "cornering the market" on journals, including those who publish in Native literatures, and "collecting" this intellectual property.

Looking back to the history of scientific journals, my concern about this should be understandable. Many of the preeminent scientific journals were founded much as *SAIL* was founded: by a group of concerned academics who were attracted to an area of inquiry and wanted to share their

exuberance and wonder with others through the dialogue of publication. In the course of events, commercial interests took them over. Subscription prices skyrocketed (until libraries cut back on purchasing monographs just to pay for them), and the control of those who loved the texts and promoted their messages was lost to fiscal managers. This type of an arrangement is diametrically opposed to—at least in my understanding—A.S.A.I.L.'s ideal, mission, goals: the widespread dissemination of interest in Native literatures. Maybe I'm just paranoid, and maybe I'm wrong, but the questions remain: what is the next step in our evolution? What does the Association need to do, be?

It is not my place to answer these, of course, but I send this editorial to request that we (re)initiate the discussion. As I see it, and I admit I may be wrong, the Association is situated in an unique, focal position: as a group, we have access to an extensive network of colleagues around the globe, and our journal has the potential both to facilitate celebration of Native literatures, and to ensure that new scholars have a forum in which to share their ideas about it as they progress toward tenure (and the freedom to voice ideas for the education of the next generations without fear of losing their jobs). These are the concerns my fellow panelists articulated.

To spur the discussion on, I would like to rearticulate a few of the goals the Association has set in the past. It has always been a desire to extend, to bring "new voices" into the dialogue: writers and "new" scholars or groups. That is what originally precipitated our presence in the American Literature Association and the conferences of several other organizations. The Association has always been fairly autonomous. Some of our success, ironically enough, may be attributable to our marginalized status; there are people and institutions who probably wish we had gone away. Nonetheless, thanks to the long (thirteen years, if memory serves) and tireless work of several members, there is a division of American Indian Literatures in the M.L.A, and A.S.A.I.L. continues its "discussion group" status. The goal, here, is to continue to offer as many M.L.A. sessions on Native literatures as possible through the two entities.

To take the discussion further, I would also like to offer some other ideas. Some of these have been the subject of discussion before at business meetings or around dinner tables afterward. Others have not. First, we need to fulfill our intention to set up an editorial board for the journal. We need to determine in what way it would operate: the boards on some journals are simply dressing on the masthead. As it stands now, the Association's officers serve as the governing entity and thus a de facto

editorial board. Second, (and this comes from the after-the-panel discussion at the conference) maybe the journal could establish a number of "Associate Editor" positions, perhaps by genre or "area," to bring others into the editorial process. Theoretically, this might be a training ground for future editors, but it also might provide some of our members with substantial scholarly experience that might be considered for tenure and/or promotion. (To qualify this, though, I would have to admit that the logistics might be difficult, but this is still an interesting idea worthy of consideration.)

It is also desirable to establish an endowment. We have a tremendous resource to draw upon in the aging "baby boom" generation that, I believe, helped contribute to the popularity of Indian literatures. Moreover, in recent years a number of private foundations have devoted funds to "diversity" projects/programs. Bill Gates' one billion dollar donation to education is only one example of this social consciousness that might benefit the Association. The endowment could fund the journal and thus maintain its autonomous nature and provide for mutually beneficial connections with other groups with whom we share interests. For instance, we might develop conferences/gatherings that are co-sponsored with groups such as Word Craft Circle: scholars and writers in true dialogue. (In fact, we might coordinate with these to establish an endowment.) This collaboration could also result in a new press; this has been a longstanding discussion, I know, but at this juncture in time, as the megapublishing conglomerates continue to eat one another and university presses face more difficulties, maybe it is time to band together to ensure that Native texts have a self-determined future.

At one point during the ALA discussion after the panelists and I threw the floor open for all, a participant stood up and articulated a sentiment I have heard before, often. As members, I believe, we are always asking ourselves why we are doing what we do: why we are involved in the Association, the discussion of literary arts by Native American writ-ers, and the teaching of texts that, in some situations, administrators would prefer we avoid. As another participant responded, it's love: a true and profound admiration for the literary art of Native texts and a concern for the issues they reveal. This is one thing that has not diminished, nor been revised, although the critical debate around the texts has over the last thirty years or more.

I make one final appeal. Twenty-three years ago thirty people, Native writers and non-Native scholars, met in a conference in a small town (Flagstaff, Arizona) and made a commitment to change the way the academic

world worked. Paula Gunn Allen, Elaine Jahner, Kay Sands, and Leslie Silko (to name only a few) were there. They did not go for personal gain, glamour, glory, recognition, or tenure, at a time when this body of literature was called "shit lit" by some. (See Ken Roemer's essay in this journal, 9.3, celebrating the conference.) Today, the academy in this country is not what it was then. At a moment in time, a relatively small group of people—less that half the number who attended "Native Literary Strategies for the New Millennium"—provided a critical mass whose efforts rippled through the country and decades. True, the change came from many sources, but A.S.A.I.L./*SAIL* had a significant part in it, and it remains influential. So, the questions remain: who, in the current generation of scholars and writers, will step forward to take us into the year 2023? Who will dedicate to this, and to the time and energy it takes to move the world?

The Terrestrial and Aquatic Intelligence of Linda Hogan

Donelle N. Dreese

Linda Hogan, an American Indian author of Chickasaw descent, has published novels, poetry and prose that explore issues surrounding Native history and spirituality, cultural displacements, and environmental protection. Her work *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of The Living World* (1995) could be perhaps categorized as a work of creative nonfiction given that it interweaves history, philosophy, autobiography, and storytelling within the framework of the rubric we call "a sense of place." In the preface to *Dwellings*, Hogan reveals that the writings have grown out of her "wondering what makes us human, out of a lifelong love for the living world and all its inhabitants" (11). She also states that the work reflects "the different histories of ways of thinking and being in the world," and that she writes "out of respect for the natural world, recognizing that humankind is not separate from nature" (12). Her devotion to place reflects these inspirations and requests our acknowledgment of the planet we call home and its non-human communities. The writings of *Dwellings* have also grown out of Hogan's "native understanding that there is a terrestrial intelligence that lies beyond our human and knowing and grasping" (11). This "terrestrial intelligence," although acknowledged by Hogan as inaccessible to human comprehension, plays a significant role in inspiring *Dwellings* as a spiritual history where oral traditions and nature's mysteries are given prominence over Western ideological constructs of nature that have been confirmed detrimental in the midst of the contemporary environmental crisis. Informed by her Native heritage that encourages reverence for,

and reciprocity to, the natural world, Hogan's respect for the earth's terrestrial intelligence is clear in her insistence on a more balanced relationship between the spirit world and human world. This balance is essential in maintaining a sustainable planet, and the answer to much human suffering.

Hogan's terrestrial intelligence is not confined to territories of solid ground. In *The Book of Medicines* (1993), water becomes a recurring image for physical and psychological healing in a contemporary world of sexism, drought, violence, and hunger. In this poetic work, Hogan evokes terrains reminiscent of tribal origins, such as the Chickasaw emergence story of rising from an underground origin into the world through a lake. Additionally, Hogan attempts to integrate the past with the present in this work, and to reconcile her mythic/historical sense of place with her contemporary sense of place. These two conflicting territories give rise to an aquatic, poetic terrain, which is at once beautifully nostalgic, and at the same time sorrowful and brutal. Like *Dwellings*, *The Book of Medicines* challenges Western constructs, but with an ecofeminist activism that brings together women and water imagery to expose male exploitation of women and nature on an aquatic terrain. Hogan's belief in a terrestrial intelligence, or faith in the spirit and mystery of nature as a source of wisdom, is evoked in this work as an aquatic intelligence. In both works, social activism is drawn from sources of spirit and mystery where injustices committed against women and the non-human natural world are addressed. Hogan demonstrates that by studying this form of intelligence, we can learn how to take better care of our environment, and one another.

A Terrestrial Intelligence

When encountering Linda Hogan's works, we should note Hogan's different perspectives on being in the world and her philosophies in relation to nature. In *Dwellings*, her focus on the spiritual dimension or terrestrial intelligence of dwelling places and living creatures reinforces the notion of the earth as a vital, living organism upon which we live and also connects the earth to a larger cosmic realm. The small, seemingly trivial dwellings of creatures are as spiritually significant for their existence and function in the natural process as the whole of the earth itself. Her questioning of Western meanings imposed on aspects of the natural world forces us to recognize the anthropocentric constructions of nature as an ideology with many fixed meanings. But *Dwellings* is more than a quest challenging meanings and places, it is also a guidebook on how to nurture a more spiritual connection with the world and its inhabitants.

Linda Hogan's approach to nature is nothing less than mythical, mystical, and magical. Much of her philosophy and view of nature is founded in American Indian mythology. She claims that "in recent times, the term 'myth' has come to signify falsehood, but when we examine myths, we find that they are a high form of truth. They are the deepest, innermost cultural stories of our human journeys toward spiritual and psychological growth" (51). The symbolic meanings of animals and places within the natural world that she uses to dismantle existing Western notions come from these myths that shape her worldview.

In the chapter called "The Bats," Hogan describes these winged creatures, who are often associated with the blood-sucking terrors of Dracula, as sacred creatures that occupy two worlds, giving them great insight and wisdom. These bats for Hogan "live inside the passageways between earth and sunlight." They are "two animals merged into one, a milk-producing rodent that bear live young, and a flying bird. They are creatures of dusk which is the time between times, people of the threshold" (27). For Hogan, bats are given spiritual significance in that they exist in a liminal state between worlds and therefore act as guardians of the passage into a higher spiritual state. Hogan claims that in Native stories "the bat people are said to live in the first circle of holiness. Thus, they are intermediaries between our world and the next" (27). As intermediaries, bats transcend the Western and popular culture stigmas that have associated them with fear and evil. Also, Hogan's conception of the next world of spirits is not one of evil and death but a world populated by holy beings and ancestors. The bats, therefore, are guides to a more spiritual existence as opposed to being creatures from a horrifying darkness.

Hogan's chapter on snakes is similar. She deconstructs the association of snakes with Satan as the force that tempts Eve out of her virtue and redefines the serpent as a symbol of wholeness and regenerative life. Due to the snake's ability to coil itself in the form of spiraling circles, it echoes the circular life philosophy of continuity, reciprocation, and holistic living (nurturing spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional needs) rather than the Western linear construct, which leaves a loose end dangling into oblivion.

In the chapter entitled "Creations," Hogan writes, "unlike the cyclic nature of time for the Maya, the Western tradition of beliefs within a straight line of history leads to an apocalyptic end. And stories of the end, like those of the beginning, tell something about the people who created them" (85). Hogan is suggesting here that people of Western cultural backgrounds live in destructive ways that will ultimately lead to

their own doom. By living life in a linear fashion, one takes without giving back and progresses toward a goal without examining future consequences. Linearity suggests that there is a beginning, middle, and an end, and one lives in accordance with the line towards bringing about that end. A linear existence may refer to engaging in various forms of self-destructive behavior as well as behaviors that are destructive to others or the non-human world we inhabit. Hogan believes that if people take responsibility for one another as well as the earth, and perceive life as circular, with transformations instead of conclusions, their attitude toward life prioritizes preservation and sustaining what they may someday need.

Hogan contends that "Before SNAKE became the dark god of our underworld, burdened with human sin, it carried a different weight in our human bones; it was a being of holy inner earth" (140). As a being associated with the inner earth, the snake is at the core of life and creation for Hogan and many other Native cultures. In Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/ La Frontera*, the serpent's mouth is symbolic of womanhood where it is considered "the most sacred place on earth, a place of refuge, the creative womb from which all things were born and to which all things returned" (34). It is intriguing that the snake as a symbol of life and birth in some Native oral traditions finds its contrast in the Western tradition where it is the symbol of sin and death. Hogan maintains that "in more recent times, the snake has symbolized our wrongs, our eating from the tree of knowledge, our search and desire for the dangerous revelations of life's mystery" (141). The biblical story of Adam and Eve has indeed given snakes a bad reputation. The edenic snake is the ultimate symbol of temptation and represents the fall of humankind. Hogan's work provides a much-needed alternative signification for this creature.

In her attempt to reshape our notions of bats and snakes, Hogan strives to break down the human/nature dichotomy and heal the alienation between humans and the natural world that has led to environmental degradation. She maintains that at the core of this alienation are Western religion and philosophies. In "Creations," Hogan asserts that "the Western belief that God lives apart from earth has taken us toward collective destruction" (85). In many Native philosophies, gods and goddesses, who represent Hogan's idea of a terrestrial intelligence, walk amongst the people sometimes in spirit form, other times in the shapes of animals and other people. The fact that the Christian God is located in a separate "heavenly" realm and "above" the earth and its inhabitants suggests that the earth is a place of sin and physical matter that needs to be transcended. The body dies and remains on earth to disintegrate, while the

soul transcends to a spiritual, unearthly place. While followers of Emersonian thought and earth-based religions have worked to show the presence of spirituality in non-human living things, the separation of God from earth suggests that inhabitation on earth is ultimately undesirable.

In *Dwellings*, Hogan explores in detail the homes and dwelling places of animals, birds and Native peoples. By exploring the history of the natural world in regards to its Native American mythological and spiritual significance, she highlights how close the lives of animals are to human life, in order to combat the human/nature alienation created by Western thought. In one instance, she tells a story about how one day, hiking up a mountain side to hear the voices of great horned owls, she discovered a nest that had fallen from a tree along her path. Much to her delight, she found that the birds that built the nest used a thread from a skirt she owns to build their home. She states, "I liked it, that a thread of my life was in an abandoned nest, one that held eggs and new life" (124). On looking at it more closely, she discovered strands of her daughter's hair were also used to build the nest. In thinking about the nest, Hogan claims, "I didn't know what kind of nest it was, or who had lived there. It didn't matter. I thought of the remnants of our lives carried up the hill that way and turned into shelter" (124). What is most important for Hogan in this occurrence is the fact that the birds benefited from her existence in some way, and that she played a small role in the issuance of new life. In this case Hogan uses the example of the bird's nest to point out that many creatures make use of the materials they find in the wild to structure and build their dwellings, but profligate use of materials seems to be a characteristic more analogous to human consumption.

In addition to a bird's nest, Hogan depicts caves as important dwelling places for Native communities. Firstly, caves provided the entrance ways between worlds; these are the homes of bats, who act as intermediaries, as discussed earlier. Secondly, caves were refuges from dispute and strife that took place in the world outside the caves: "In earlier days, before the springs and caves were privately owned, they were places of healing for Indian people, places where conflict between tribes and people was left behind, neutral ground, a sanctuary outside the reign of human difference, law, and trouble" (29). The caves, therefore, provided a temporary retreat for the tribes: from war and conflict. They are places to go to think and regroup, to rest and plan the next course of action. In Hogan's novel *Mean Spirit* (1990), the character Michael Horse retreats to a cave to record the history of his Native people in a journal in an effort to supplement the Bible with Indian ways. The character Belle Graycloud

also believes that this "Sorrow Cave" is the home for bats that are bearers of powerful medicine accessible only to those who believe. For Hogan, caves are places of great spiritual significance: safety and sanctuary, not dark holes where fire-breathing dragons are waiting for curious travelers, as in the Western literary tradition.

She also assigns a distinctly female symbolic meaning to caves. Once, on a journey near the Continental Divide with her family as a young girl, she saw an African lion at the mouth of a cave. She told her father, but he did not believe her because he did not see the lion. He even went up into the cave but returned having seen nothing. Although Hogan knew with certainty that the lion was there, her father was unable to locate it even though he returned smelling of the lion. It became clear to Hogan at a young age that there are places on earth where men do not belong. These are places where they either do not have access, or they do not have knowledge of where they are and what surrounds them. While Hogan admits that a terrestrial intelligence lies beyond human comprehension, this story suggests that perhaps there are places where women may catch a glimpse of the intelligence while men remain unaware of its presence. Hogan states that "caves are not the places for men. They are a feminine world, a womb of earth, and a germinal place of brooding. In many creation stories, caves are the places that bring forth life" (31). Many creation and emergence stories tell of a tribe coming into being from the underworld through some passage such as a cave. The underground tunnels and caves, therefore, could be equated with the womb and birth canal, where the people emerge from the world of darkness into the world of light.

One of Hogan's fundamental calls in *Dwellings* is for readers to teach and demonstrate stewardship for the earth. It is a practice necessary for preserving the earth's creatures, and healing the gap between the human and non-human world. She writes that "caretaking is the utmost spiritual and physical responsibility of our time, and perhaps that stewardship is finally our place in the web of life, our work, the solution to the mystery of what we are" (115). Until we learn "our place at the bountiful table, how to be a guest here, this land will not support us, will not be hospitable, will turn on us" (46). This declaration debunks the anthropocentric notion that the earth is here to serve human needs, and places the human world on equal footing with the other "guests" at the table, the non-human guests. Also emphasized in this passage is the spiritual connection with the earth and its terrestrial intelligence. Hogan passionately and convincingly suggests an explanation for the mystery and meaning behind human

existence: recognition of one's place within the ecosystem and responsibility for its well being. She practices what she preaches. Near the end of *Dwellings*, we discover that she works in a rehabilitation facility for birds of prey. Clearly, she believes that stewardship is our responsibility as co-inhabitants of this place we call home.

In her most direct attempt to contest the manner in which human beings view nature, she writes:

> We are of the animal world. We are a part of the cycles of growth and decay. Even having tried so hard to see ourselves apart, and so often without a love for even our own biology, we are in relationship with the rest of the planet, and that connectedness tells us we must reconsider the way we see ourselves and the rest of nature. (114)

Reading Hogan's *Dwellings* can make one reconsider this relationship. Her book, with all its stories, recreates the life of the natural world that has been objectified, and it redefines non-human creatures that have been negatively stereotyped. She provides an older way to reconceive snakes, bats, birds, caves, nature, and the human world in relation to the non-human world.

The Aquatic Intelligence

In *The Book of Medicines*, Hogan evokes the oral tradition pervasively throughout her poetic terrain. It may be inappropriate to refer to Hogan's sense of place as a "terrain" because that term connotes land or physical ground, and Hogan's dominant sense of place in this work is aquatic—on the sea, by the sea. She's in the water or the water is in her. Her poems are filled with oceanic images; whales, fish, fisherman, sand, salt, dolphins, ships and shells are all images that populate Hogan's poetry. In one passage from the poem "Crossings," she links water to human origin and traces the terrestrial intelligence explored in *Dwellings* to an aquatic beginning:

> Sometimes the longing in me
> comes from when I remember
> the terrain of crossed beginnings
> when whales lived on land
> and we stepped out of water
> to enter our lives in air. (28)

Hogan's desire for water is primal, mythical, and echoed throughout many of the poems in *The Book of Medicines*. It is nostalgic of a time when humans had not assumed dominion over the earth, but were oceanic creatures crossing paths with whales in the course of evolution and emergence. According to Stacy Alaimo, "Crossings" expresses a "yearning to experience bodily ties with nature and to cross over to a time when those corporeal connections were most evident" (59). In addition to highlighting physical connections, the poem suggests an interchange of knowledge. Life that was once aquatic and is now terrestrial (and vice versa) maintains some sense or memory of its prior state of existence and evokes in Hogan the longing for the water that characterizes her sense of origin. Additionally, this "terrain of crossed beginnings" demonstrates the transformative quality of American Indian cultures, adapting to their surroundings in order to survive rather than forcing the environment to adjust to their requirements, a characteristic of Western cultural ideologies.

Informed by the aquatic intelligence that permeates the work, Hogan's poetry is directly activist. *The Book of Medicines* is not only a reclaiming of cultural identity and authority over her Chickasaw history, but also an ecofeminist endeavor: a voice speaking out against environmental injustice. In an interview with Laura Coltelli, Hogan states, "Spirituality necessitates certain kinds of political action. If you believe that the earth, and all living things, and all the stones are sacred, your responsibility really is to protect those things. I do believe that's our duty, to be custodians of the planet" (79). One of the ways in which Linda Hogan acts as custodian is by writing poetry that draws attention to injustices committed against her culture, her gender, and the environment. In the poem entitled "Hunger," Hogan personifies physical starvation as a being who "crosses oceans" and "sits on the ship and cries." The poem evokes the image of colonial settlers crossing the sea in search of that which will fulfill them. These travelers are clearly male:

> Hunger was the fisherman
> who said dolphins are like women,
> we took them from the sea
> and had our way
> with them.

Also:

> It is the old man

who comes in the night
to cast a line
and wait at the luminous shore.
He knows the sea is pregnant
with clear fish
and their shallow pools of eggs.

The language and imagery in these passages are highly sexual, equating an exploitation of natural resources with the exploitation of women. The first passage conjures up images of rape, with dolphins "like women," taken from their aquatic territories and objectified to serve the needs of the fishermen. The second passage introduces the sea itself as the figure of a bountiful, pregnant woman who is fertile and unaware as the men approach at night waiting to draw from her that which she nurtures.

Criticism of this nature/woman subordination is at the core of ecofeminist theory. Anne Booth and Harvey Jacobs explain that "ecofeminism equates the suppression and domination of nature with the domination of women, and for similar reasons. Each was, and is perceived as dangerous and in need of control" (29). If we understand the domination of nature as that which exploits, devalues, destroys and/or renders powerless natural resources, ecofeminism contends that the same kind of philosophy behind this domination is inherent in the attitudes which have attempted to justify the exploitation women. "The standard history of colonialism," according to Greta Gaard, is "one in which the oppressive structures of capitalism, Christianity, and patriarchy construct nature, and in which those associated with nature are considered resources for the colonizer, means to his ends, interesting only in terms of their subordination" (12). The alienating and destructive dichotomies nurtured by Western metaphysical ideologies are what ecofeminists are trying to dismantle. Culture/nature, mind/body, black/white, man/woman, intellect/emotion are all examples of structures which lie at the root of subordination and are perpetuated by those who benefit from them. Because the ecofeminist agenda involves healing these artificial separations and challenging existing power structures, writers and theorists such as Susan Griffin and Ynestra King, among many others, have made writing an activist endeavor to help us better understand ourselves, and make connections where there are gaps.

Early colonists, before arriving on the new continent, were expecting a Garden of Eden and land of plenty for their consumption. The journals of Columbus describe a lush land with cinnamon and spice, aromatic plants,

herbs, flowers, fertile soil and an abundance of gold. The Spaniards were looking for what they already knew as familiar and that would result in personal or capital gain. This is where the metaphor of nature as virgin woman has its roots. Annette Kolodny in *Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* examines the land/nature-as-woman symbolization in American literature. She refers to the metaphor as a male fantasy:

> a daily reality of harmony between man and nature based on an experience of the land as essentially feminine—that is, not simply the land as mother, but the land as woman, the total female principle of gratification—enclosing the individual in an environment of receptivity, repose, and painless integral satisfaction. (4)

While the poem "Hunger" takes place on or near the ocean, Kolodny's theories could still be applied here. The poem, situated in an historical context, enables the speaker to tell of the beginnings of the colonial settlements that ultimately brought about American Indian cultural genocide, and carried with it patriarchal practices enforced by a belief in a divinely ordained mission to dominate and subjugate the "new world." Given that the psychology behind dominating other life forms can also be traced back to fear, an aquatic or terrestrial intelligence emanating from the unknown or mystery in the non-human natural world would be deemed a threat and in need of controlling.

Another example of this patriarchal assault on women and the land is in the poem "Harvesters of Night and Water." It begins with the image of men out on a boat in the middle of the ocean fighting to capture a resistant octopus. The boat they are on is described as "white" and "small" and the nets they are using are described as "impotent" and "limp." Again, Hogan uses sexual imagery, while no doubt making simultaneous descriptive references to those who occupy the boat. The speaker is sorrowful for the violent and cruel manner in which the men attempt to catch the octopus:

> The tentacles fall down over themselves
> and inch down,
> with the men screaming,
> jabbing at it. I want to stop them.
> I want to tell them what I know,
> that this life collects coins
> like they do

and builds walls on the floor of the sea. (23)

This passage reveals the frustration Hogan experiences in wanting others to respect and value living creatures other than humans. She wants to heal the gap that dominant culture has placed between humans and nature by telling the men that the sea creature lives its life to survive as they do. The octopus saves valuables for future use and builds its home underwater in the same way that the men do on land. I don't argue that Hogan is trying to humanize the octopus in an anthropomorphic sense, but rather to foster respect: this creature is a living being and not simply an object for capture and consumption. Furthermore, the objectification of nature that allows these men to brutally attack the octopus is a result of the notion that human beings are not a part of nature. Otherwise, there would be an understanding that the men are brutalizing a part of themselves. Hogan ends the poem with this stanza:

I want the world to be kinder.
I am a woman.
I am afraid.
I saw a star once, falling toward me.
It was red
with brilliant arms
and then it was gone. (24)

Hogan's call for a kinder world is echoed by the vanishing falling red star, which may symbolize the strength and brilliance of Native cultures. As a woman, she is aware that there is much to be afraid of. The harvesters of the night can kill and exploit women in the same manner that they brutally attack the octopus. This disrespect for other forms of life has created a cruel and brutal world in Hogan's view. The men who are harvesting the night in the seas that she navigates in her poetry fail to acknowledge and respect the aquatic intelligence that surrounds them.

The themes explored in Hogan's writings directly link women and Native American cultures to the environment and landscape as members of a community that share a history of oppression. The identifiable history of exploitation and misuse experienced by women and Native Americans in relation to the land has allowed various environmental movements to complement one another for a common cause—to raise awareness and improve the way human beings behave towards the places they inhabit, and one another. Hogan's natural world in *The Book of Medi-*

cines is beautiful, wild, and also very dangerous. It is not nature that is depicted as dangerous, but rather the colonizers who attempt to abuse and destroy the land and her people. In the poem "Tear," for example, Hogan gives the title word double meaning in order to describe the dresses the women in her tribe wore and the historical removal that devastated her ancestors on the western pathway known as the Trail of Tears.

> Tear dresses they were called
> because settler cotton was torn
> in straight lines
> like the roads
> we had to follow
> to Oklahoma.
> But when the cloth was torn,
> it was like tears,
> impossible to hold back,
> and so they were called
> by this other name,
> for our weeping. (59)

The settler cotton torn in straight lines, like the straight roads to Oklahoma and the streaming tears running down the faces of the people forced to march this harrowing path, is the cloth of the colonizer. The term "tear" in one definition suggests a rupture or split and reminds Hogan's readers of the separations her ancestors underwent during the events surrounding the Trail of Tears. Separations from family members, homes, tribal regions, from their ways of life, their languages and identities are just a few of the various forms of human and cultural fractures that are a result of the colonial process. The specific landscape from which a tribe derives determines its means for survival, its cultural symbols, its sense of self and its spirituality; therefore, removal from these landscapes initiates a split from many other aspects of the tribe's way of life. In "Landscape, History, and the Pueblo Imagination," Leslie Marmon Silko describes this centrality of landscape and place within oral tradition:

> As offspring of the Mother Earth, the ancient Pueblo people could not conceive of themselves without a specific landscape. Location, or "place," nearly always plays a central role in the Pueblo oral narratives. Indeed, stories are most frequently recalled as people are passing by a specific geographical feature or the exact place where a story takes place. (269)

The diversity of the landscape of what we now call North America has contributed greatly in creating a diversity of Native American cultures, sharing some fundamental ideologies in their worldviews, but ultimately demonstrating a highly pluralistic existence in practice and worship.

In *The Book of Medicines*, the poems with water imagery are compelling in expressing Hogan's equation of the subjugation of women with the exploitation of the landscape and Native American cultures. While in "Tear" the water imagery navigates readers through the flood of sorrow caused by the history of cultural displacements, much of the time the water imagery signifies birth, hope, cleansing, unpolluted earth, and healing. This aquatic medicine in Hogan's work has many different healing purposes. The healing comes about through loving, in remembering the past, in telling the stories, in writing the words, and in respecting the earth and the wisdom that it provides. The final poem in *The Book of Medicines*, entitled "Flood: The Sheltering Tree," describes the image of Hogan standing beneath the only tree existing on a mound where water keeps slowly rising as "Land takes back the forgotten name of rain / and speaks it / like a roar, dark and running / away from breaking sky" (85). This rain is the tears of her people washing the wound and cleansing the land so that they can see again "the beautiful unwinding field / and remember [their] lives / from before the time of science, / before [they] fell from history" (85). There is a nostalgic mood evoked with a longing for a time when Chickasaw culture was alive and thriving. This was a time when the earth still had wide-open spaces and before European settlers brought their philosophies.

In *The Book of Medicines*, Hogan has created for herself a spiritual space with water as the primary ingredient needed to heal and reconnect her with her cultural heritage. Ironically, water is also the primary ingredient she uses to describe portrayals of environmental injustice, racism and sexism. The aquatic intelligence permeating her poems emphasizes the spiritual perspectives from which Hogan writes. In recognizing that intelligence, Hogan accepts the responsibility that accompanies it—that we all need to behave as custodians of the planet and work harder to protect the earth and its inhabitants, terrestrial or aquatic.

Conclusion

Part of the decolonization effort for many Native Americans involves a recovery of lost stories and cultural practices, but part of that effort involves imagination and invention also. Most of the landscapes that Hogan's ancestors inhabited are so severely altered by technology and

progress that a return to place can only be metaphorical or imaginative. There also have been so much assimilation and cultural exchange that a return to cultural "purity" would be impossible. Because of this profound assimilation, the decolonization process is often highly nostalgic and spiritual. This does not, however, make the process or outcome any less real. Being in the world is as much a psychological act as a physical one. And for many Native American cultures, time and space had been fluid multidimensional spheres rather than linear planes. Experiences gained through the power of the mind and the imagination rank equally with physical experience.

In *Grandmothers of the Light,* Paula Gunn Allen speaks of this phenomenon as "the plasticity of time in the universe of power." The universe of power is a place, she describes, where the sources of magic and transformation reside. In this passage she compares the ordinary world and the universe of power:

> In the ordinary world, we get from one place to another by walking, running, riding on animals, or riding or flying in machines . . . . But in the universe of power we, our signals, and our objects can traverse great or small distances with the speed at which a message can presently be sent over a fax machine. Objects and subjects alike can be transported through solid matter—windows, walls, stone buttresses, or mountains—and they are as independent of gravity as of other physical constraints. (17)

The universe of power is a place of much greater agency than the ordinary world. It is a place where painful memories of colonization and betrayal can be transcended. The spiritual and psychological power of this universe enables one to forego and transform the difficulties of the physical, ordinary world. Consequently, the universe of power is a great healer.

While viewing aspects of the environment with spiritual reverence as nothing less than kin and often as the embodiments of gods or figures of great wisdom, many Native American cultures have evolved from traditions that care for the landscape with respect and reciprocity. That which is taken is returned through prayer, ritual, and ceremony to maintain the delicate balance upon which all life rests. Abuse or poisoning of the land would inevitably lead to a disruption of that balance, which would in turn cause physical and spiritual pain and suffering for the life which inhabits it. As Paula Gunn Allen has observed, "it is the loss of harmony, an inner-world imbalance, that reveals itself in physical or psychological ailment. It

also plays itself out in social ailments, war, dictatorship, elitism, classism, sexism, and homophobia" (168). Realistically, it has been historically inconceivable to Western modes of thought to suggest such an all-encompassing connection between the environment and the state of human existence as viable. Ecocriticism, much like some American Indian philosophies, promotes and teaches the interdependence and connectedness of all living things, which means that any study of human existence would be insufficient without placing humans within an environmental context.

Hogan is aware of the individual's sense of the fluidity of place as an exterior force with profound effects on the interior sense of well being. We are our environments. We take in, physically and psychologically, our surroundings, and they become part of who we are. Place and the self are not separate entities, which is why Hogan's explorations of her culture, childhood, and gender pivot around an environmental center. As activist texts, *Dwellings* and *The Book of Medicines* demand the relationship between men and women, and that between humanity and non-human nature, be reconsidered and transformed. The subjugation of nature has resulted in the prevailing ecological crisis, and the subjugation of women has resulted in a continuing debasement of women. (Domestic violence, rape, anorexia nervosa, lower employment salaries, and unrealistic standards of beauty through media forms are serious symptoms.) One of the goals of ecofeminism as expressed by Ynestra King in "Healing the Wounds: Feminism, Ecology, and the Nature/Culture Dualism," is to genuinely and actively seek an antidualistic philosophy in Western culture as another stage of human evolution called "rational enchantment." This "rational enchantment" will involve "a new way of being human on this planet with a sense of the sacred, informed by all ways of knowing—intuitive and scientific, mystical and rational" (120). The terrestrial and aquatic intelligence in Linda Hogan's poetry demonstrates this way of being human that embraces the sacred and validates intangible forms of knowledge.

The project of Western patriarchy thus far has been to construct a civilization in which it has been understood that antithetical epistemologies cannot coexist. This paradigm is rationalized by those in power in order for them to maintain their position, and to sustain the subjugation and oppression of women, nature, and marginalized cultures. One cannot stifle, however, the human desire for connection—to oneself, to others, to a certain place. One also cannot stifle the human need and quest for safety—to live on a sustainable planet without worrying about what is in

the eight glasses of water we should be drinking every day. Ecocriticism and ecofeminist theories are valid approaches to literary studies because they attempt to diffuse assumptions and behaviors that have tenured the Western power paradigm in terms of gender, culture and capitalist progress. The world is clearly in a state of environmental crisis. The more problems escalate, the more there is a need for theories that address different ways of approaching how we live within the world and amongst one another. An appropriate quote comes from Wendell Berry's *The Unsettling of America*: "we can make ourselves whole only by accepting our partiality, by living within our limits, by being human—not by trying to be gods" (95). Our existing approaches to being in the world need to be modified, and our values need to be seriously reconsidered. Caring more for the other does not mean caring for the self less. It means recognizing one's position within the multitude of life forms in the universe and taking some responsibility for their well being. If one is not safe, none of us are.

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Linda Hogan's Tribal Imperative: Collapsing Space through "Living" Tribal Traditions and Nature

Melani Bleck

This land is the house
we have always lived in.
Linda Hogan, "calling myself home"

James Ruppert describes Native American writing as an act of "mediation" (8), and he argues that "it is more useful to see [Native American writers] not as between two cultures (a romantic and victimist perspective) but as participants in two rich cultural traditions" (3). This act of mediation allows Native American authors to expose their readers to values and beliefs that differ from dominant society's worldview. This article will examine the way in which Linda Hogan re-imag(in)es[1] and "[revises] contemporary reality" in her novels *Mean Spirit, Power*, and *Solar Storms* by collapsing spatial boundaries through tribal traditions and their links to nature. Gerald Vizenor claims that "narrow teleologies . . . have reduced tribal literatures to an 'objective' collection of consumable cultural artifacts" ("Postmodern" 5). To counteract this trend, he calls for "other"[2] types of criticism, and in response to this appeal I will attempt to illustrate that the perception of reality as "spatially and temporally extended" (Flew 332) remains a western concern. In this article, I will illustrate how Linda Hogan collapses society's spatially configured and abstract reality through tribal traditions and nature.

Paulo Freire, in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, explains the reasons behind, and the ramifications of, society's static perception of reality in his discussion of "cultural invasion" (159). Cultural invasion

involves the invaders "penetrat[ing] the cultural context of another group" and imposing "their own view of the world upon those they invade" (Freire 159). He qualifies the effects of the invasion on the invaded in terms of the damage done to the invaded peoples' cultural and creative expression, and he analyzes the underpinning attitudes that shape the invaders' worldview. He argues that cultural invasion "serves the end of the conquest and the preservation of oppression" (159). Societies that practice cultural invasion use it as a means to exert power[3] over the invaded people. He argues that cultural invasion "always involves a parochial view of reality, a static perception of the world, and the imposition of one world view on an 'other.' It implies the 'superiority' of the invader and the 'inferiority' of those who are invaded" (159). The invaders' rigid perspective of reality legitimates their domination over the invaded people due to the failure of the invader to acknowledge the validity of "other" perspectives.

Freire's model accurately describes the cultural invasion that Native Americans experience under the oppressive rule of the Western world and its narrow worldview, which leads to the subjugation of Native Americans through a rigid and hierarchical classification system that privileges one view over an "other" view. Native American authors use their works as a platform to express a worldview that differs from their invaders' worldview.[4] Linda Hogan's fictional works reconfigure and re-imag(in)e "spatially extended" reality (Flew 332). She challenges the underlying premise behind the dominant culture of oppression and domination by writing "other" stories.

The concept of space emerges from a climate informed by a "static perception of the world" (Freire 159) that has continued to influence the colonizers of North America. As a product of the Western worldview, space, a category that simultaneously perpetuates and justifies a rigid worldview, has developed into a tool that dominant society uses to implement "cultural invasion" (159). It exists within the context of a specific theoretical debate; however, over time Western society has forgotten the limited applicability of the term, and it has become "lost in scientific abstractions and mired in a logic of identity . . . 'unaware of the real element from which forces, their qualities and their relations derive' and is blind to 'the far more subtle and subterranean differential mechanisms' that constitutes reality" (Best and Kellner 81). Space is an abstract concept constructed to explain the Western world's perception of reality; however, it has "spaced" itself outside its origins and severed itself from its context. Like science, it has divorced itself from the tradition that gave birth to it,

and now it creates the illusion that it occupies a position outside its roots in theory. In this manner, the notions of theory and space appear to remain free from any cultural bias. When theorists discuss space, it achieves the status of immortality. They theorize about its properties, what the term encompasses, how to claim it, how social relations are negotiated in space and as a function of time, but they never question its existence.

Theory,[5] and by extension space, has lost "sight of its own conditional nature, takes no risk in speculation, and circulates as a form of administrative inquisition," and in this way space, as a product of theory, "oppresses" because "it wills or perpetuates existing power relations" and "it presents itself as a means to exert authority" (Minh-ha 42). It acts as a divisive and exclusionary tool used to dominate and claim, and the danger rests in the concept's apparent immunity from analysis of its own conditional existence. Far from representing Native Americans' experiences, the concept of space owes its existence to the "shared . . . common experiences of their [European] peoples . . . [who] dwelt within the world view which had dominated western Europe for over a millenium" (Deloria, *Custer* 11). Space emerges out of, and serves to legitimate, a specific worldview. Society effectively uses the notion of space to perpetuate and condone the Euroamerican destructive inclination to divide and conquer. Indeed, I would argue that space has become synonymous with the unknown and the conquerable.

According to Vine Deloria Jr., "*White culture* destroys other culture because of its abstractness," and as products of "*White culture*" (Deloria, *Custer* 188) theory and space abstract Native American experiences from their tribal contexts. Spatial analysis adopts the characteristics with which Western theory has imbued space; by creating artificial barriers to delineate an area of study, spatial analysis *abstracts* and isolates the objects of study from their context. The Western construct space, because it abstracts and *is* an abstraction that has concealed its roots in theory, resists rigorous questioning. Space has concealed its own origin (Lefebvre 71). It has become an integral part of defining Ourselves, Our reality, and Our[6] position in society through "the illusion of transparency . . . a transcendental illusion . . . by . . . referring back immediately to other traps—traps which are its alibis, its masks" (Lefebvre 29). Space masks its origins in Western theory and presents itself as reality.

The suppositions behind space emerge from a tradition that relies on dualistic thinking, which sets up a dichotomy between empty and occupied space, and a desire for structure that manifests itself in the binary opposites through which western society defines itself: nature/culture,

female/male, good/evil. The postmodern project to "[denaturalize] constructs like 'object' or 'self' or 'history'" (Ermarth 163) succeeds in deconstructing the binaries that structuralists rely on; however, although postmodernism succeeds in a "collapse of the dualisms that have served modernist hegemony and its forms of transcendence" (7), and questions "Western discourse" and "its obsession with power and knowledge" (6) that has led to the invention of the "conventions of space and time" (22), postmodernism fails to reach the conclusion that space, as a concept and a term, itself remains a construct. Just as Jacques Derrida argues against a transcendental meaning and "erases the radical difference between signifier and signified" (85) but leaves the sign intact, postmodernism seeks to deconstruct the rigid and structural makeup of modernist space but leaves the concept of space intact. Although "it now appears that we have constructed society, The Market, and The System and are solely responsible for them" (Ermarth 164), postmodernism still views space (except for a modernist perspective of space) as a non-manmade invention: as reality.

The very premise of the term "space" relies on certain presuppositions that stem from dominant society's worldview, which privileges "scientific or abstract . . . knowledge" over the "simplicity and mystery" of "wisdom" (Deloria, *Custer* 11)[7] . Theory, as a discipline, has positioned itself as the science of Literature; therefore, one can apply Trinh T. Minh-ha's criticism of science and its anthropologists to the notion of theory, and by extension to the notion of space. The dangers of anthropology exist within the belief that the professional erases his biases and own cultural discourses to provide an unbiased view of an "other" culture predicated on scientific knowledge (48). The notions of theory and space rely on a similar methodology of abstraction that allows society to write over "other" experience. Just as Trinh T. Minh-ha's cultural "other" (52) represents lack and justifies cultural superiority, space too is used as a tool to assert domination over an apparent lack.

The exemption of space from analysis, whether space reflects a rigid modernist perspective or a fluid postmodernist perspective, allows dominant society to use space, which originates from a hegemonic power structure, as an oppressive tool. Both postmodern and modern definitions configure space as lack. Debates concerning the characteristics of space as rigid or fluid become inconsequential when one views it as synonymous with lack. Lack implies a void: emptiness. The belief that Woman symbolizes lack allows for "the repression" (Cixous 311) and the silencing of women; likewise, the view that space signifies lack allows for the op-

pression of Native America through a discourse of dominance and ownership. Daniel Cornell states that lack is "the negation of what is" (52). Lack, because it negates, leads to acquisition. Space has become something to occupy and acquire.

Society uses space to control and define "other" social relations through a rationalization of occupying lack. Henri Lefebvre[8] argues that "Any 'social existence' aspiring or claiming to be 'real', but failing to produce its own space . . . would fall to the level of folklore and sooner or later disappear altogether, thereby immediately losing its identity, its denomination and its feeble degree of reality" (53). His perspective, which stems from a Western worldview,[9] relegates Native Americans' experiences and social relations to folklore because Native Americans locate their social relations within tribal contexts that resist spatial definition. Stated in another way, Lefebvre's, and society's, belief that social relations occur in space and are defined spatially limits his perception of reality; therefore, Lefebvre's and the Western world's spatial boundaries restrict their ability to understand "other" realities. His bound and rigid view of social relations legitimizes the Western world's domination over, and appropriation of, Native American experiences through the rationalization that they fail to produce space. Space has become an abstract territory to own and to legitimate ownership, to dominate and to legitimate domination, and to occupy and to legitimate occupation.

Recently, a race for space has permeated academia. Departments and disciplines within academia vie for space to "measure off and stake out . . . territory" (Salvaggio 263). Theoretical divisions such as "bodyspace," masculine space, feminine space, and third space" have emerged out of a *belief* that "social relations . . . are constructed and negotiated spatially" (Duncan 4) and that ownership of these spaces results in knowledge and by extension power. Dominant theories of space argue about masculine and feminized space versus female space or ethnic space. The theorists try to posit, from the privileged position that theory holds within academia, ways of "knowing" the space(s) that we inhabit. Already these theories fail to recognize that they are constrained by a set of assumptions based on a scientific way of "knowing".[10] Academia itself consists of separate departments that attempt to cordon off a particular subject by studying it in exclusion from other disciplines, often without acknowledging its narrow approach and constraints. Society and its institutions are products of the same worldview responsible for constructing space and society; therefore, dominant "social relations" and institutions are spatially perceived and configured from their conception. Alterna-

tively, Hogan's written works illustrate Native American social relations, which, due to their tribal ties to nature, evade spatial configuration.

Lefebvre argues that "The more a space partakes of nature, the less it enters into the social relations of production" (83). The more American Indians' social relations participate with nature within a tribal context, the less spatial theory applies to their experiences. Because Native Americans' social relations occur within a tribal context, Western theories concerning space fail to explain their experiences. Henri Lefebvre, in his book *The Production of Space*, depicts a troubled relationship between space and nature. He claims that "It is becoming impossible to escape the notion that nature is being murdered . . . by abstraction, by signs and images, by discourse" (71). The very conventions that characterize dominant society and its construct space are rendering nature and its laws obsolete *to the Western world*. William Bevis postulates that "Native American nature is urban . . . meaning at the center of action and power, in complex and unpredictable and various relationships" (31). Their tribal customs and beliefs focus on nature. Conversely, "urban" to the Western world refers to spatially constructed cities, while nature refers to the opposite. The "parochial view of reality" (Freire 159) has influenced society's perception of its relationship to nature: "Europeans have long assumed a serious split between man and nature" (Bevis 31). This split informs the Western world's view of nature as wilderness. For Native American authors, "Nature is part of tribe" (31); therefore, their stories and their tribal relations preserve their links to nature and reject spatial analysis.

Mean Spirit focuses on a community of Indians living in an Oklahoma town called Watona, Talbert to the non-Native inhabitants and the official institutions, during the oil boom on Indian Territory. The novel, by following the Graycloud family's plight, deals with the inhabitants' struggle to survive social greed and values that clash with their own traditional values and beliefs. Likewise, *Solar Storms* tracks the events surrounding four generations of females in Angel Wing's family and their struggles against the attempts of social institutions, indicative of a larger social order, to create artificial boundaries—in this case, dams. Her newest novel, *Power*, follows a full-blood Taiga adolescent, named Omishto, as she experiences rebirth through storm, wind, story, and balance. Hogan uses these stories as a forum to re-imag(in)e Native American social relations.

In *Solar Storms*, set in a region known as the Triangle, Hogan portrays the Triangle's defiance of society's attempts to use maps to spatially chart and label the area in an attempt to understand and measure

space. She states that "Maps are only masks over the face of God" (138) and that "maps were not reliable" (122). Maps mimic the lens that shapes society's view of, and belief in, spatial relationships. Maps contain artificial boundaries, divisions, measurements, and labels that seek to bind the dynamic relationships found in nature. Similarly, social conventions, predicated on an understanding of spatially constructed barriers, seek to bind a dynamic and "living" Native American culture. Western society's worldview attempts to define social relations spatially and to impose a static and rigid worldview over dynamic human relationships that emerge out of a tribal, and therefore a natural, context. Likewise, "the cartographers thought if they mapped it, everything would remain the same" but "the land refused to be shaped by the makers of maps" (123) much as many Native Americans refuse to be shaped and defined by society's spatial boundaries. Nature's "wildness, its stubborn passion to remain outside their [society's] sense of order made them want it even more" (123). Society's desire to control nature is doomed to fail. Angel's Auntie comments on society's ignorance of nature: "Did you know that the men building these dams didn't even know that water ran north" (275). Society's ignorance of nature hinders its attempts to spatially control nature, while tribal knowledge of nature allows the Native Americans to see past society's physical and social barriers.

Peggy Ackerberg, in her article "Breaking Boundaries: Writing Past Gender, Genre, and Genocide in Linda Hogan," claims that "Hogan weaves her boundary-breaking imperative throughout her poetry, fiction, essays, and interviews." Hogan's "boundary-breaking imperative" (9) remains inseparable from her preoccupation with nature. She uses nature's disregard for society's artificial boundaries as a means of collapsing space. She sets *Solar Storms* in a region that "had long been in dispute between Canada, the United States, and tribal nations" (*Solar Storms* 66) and "where water was broken apart by land, land split open by water so that the maps showed places both bound and, if you knew the way in, boundless" (21). The Triangle and its waterways remain undefined, unclaimed, and unconfined by countries or maps. Omishto, in *Power*, also comments on nature's lack of boundaries: "There are no edges, no borders between the elements because everything is water, silver and glassy. The whole ground moves and shimmers as if it is alive" (46). Hogan illustrates nature's ability not only to deconstruct society's spatial boundaries through its fluidity, but also to completely erase the boundaries. Due to their links to nature, tribal relations mirror nature's disregard for boundaries and resist the boundaries that spatial analysis imposes on them. Angel Wing embarks on a

journey of discovery that causes her to state that her "vision shifted" (85) in this uncharted, at least inaccurately charted, and undefined territory. By accepting the tribal way of viewing nature and by extension Native American social relations, Angel finds previously impenetrable boundaries becoming "doorway[s] into the mythical world" (*Dwellings* 19).

Hogan's novels seek to demonstrate that, although Western society remains bound by its inability to look past the spatial barriers that it has erected, tribal relations remain free from containment and unbound because of tribal ties to nature. One character in *Solar Storms* declares "that earth has more than one dimension. The one we see is only the first layer" (123). By searching for "other" (natural) ways of knowing, not just relying on sight, and by rejecting her preconceived notions predicated on the Western way of knowing, Angel learns to see beneath the surface, and "one day my vision shifted and I could even see the fish on the bottom" (85). Angel's experiences, within the fold of her extended family and in the improperly charted waterways of the Triangle, cause her to reject society's worldview and to accept a worldview based on tribal wisdom and nature's laws. The author depicts the tension between society's propensity to abstract, a product of society's worldview, and her belief in experience through a realtor in *Power*: "He sees subdivisions. I see life" (198). These books remove the spatial boundaries that seek to subdivide "life" (198). Hogan argues that communication with nature leads to a more holistic understanding of Native American tribal relations.

Society informs and remains influenced by the dominant perspective of space, but tries to position itself outside any such influences. In other words, society tries to exist separately from the very attitudes and perspectives that have shaped and built it into what it is. A striking example of this attitude emerges through analyzing the notion of a house. In the United States, arguably as an extension of its links to Europe, a house becomes a haven and sterile oasis in many modern societies amid the dangerous and filthy wilderness: "houses 'ought to be' web-free" ("Heart" 113). Vine Deloria Jr. encapsulates a difference between Native American culture and dominant American culture in a few sentences. He believes that "[i]nherent in the very definition of 'wilderness' is contained the gulf between understandings of the two cultures. Indians do not see the natural world as a wilderness" ("Trouble" 281). Hogan uses these conflicting views to further her argument for a more empirical, rather than abstract, view of nature and tribal relations. An example of this tension exists in the idea that houses reflect the Euroamerican tradition of separating and dividing space. A house attempts to provide spatial boundaries

by creating walls that try to contain space and to keep the wilderness (nature) outside and separate from the inside. Houses attempt to separate people from nature and to confine life "within four sterile walls" ("Heart" 113). However, Hogan's characters' views concerning the notion of the house radically differ from this Euroamerican tradition. For them, the confines of the house do not exist as separate from the perceived "outside." In *Mean Spirit*, *Power*, and *Solar Storms*, the houses reflect very different values; instead of houses that remain sterile, she depicts nature's disregard for such artificial boundaries.

Repeatedly her characters describe houses as inseparable from nature rather than as artificially autonomous objects. Hogan introduces this theme in the first page of *Mean Spirit* when she writes that "[g]iven half a chance, the vines and leaves would have crept up the beds and overgrown the sleeping bodies of people" (3). She advocates the belief that nature resists spatial confinement. For Hogan, "Beyond walls are lakes and plains / canyons and the universe" ("Apartment" 264); however, in her fiction, she illustrates that "the walls [are] no longer there" ("Amanda" 173). Again and again she depicts nature's ability to push through and dismiss spatial barriers. Houses and walls, when perceived as rigid and fixed boundaries that separate civilization from wilderness, are Western constructs that exhibit the characteristics of dominant space. Hogan's collapse of space allows us to "[look] through the walls of houses / at people suspended in air" ("Apartment" 263). Her portrayal of people in a suspended state within spatial boundaries illustrates her view of society's space as a rigid and confining construct that suspends life within its artificial walls. Hogan's walls symbolically represents spatial barriers that contain people within rigid and fixed "spaces" and she uses nature to dissolve spatial barriers.

Hogan portrays nature's disregard for, and its ability to overgrow, man-made constructs in an effort to illustrate her conviction that any attempts, social or man-made, to bind nature or Native Americans are futile. Instead she believes that "the walls of houses / that hold you in / will . . . [fall] away to earth / once again" ("Cup" 173). Through her writing and her illustration of the links between tribal traditions and nature, Hogan metaphorically and literally collapses walls and spatial barriers. Grace Blanket places her piano outside where "a neighboring chicken built a nest on the keys" (*Mean Spirit* 9); Sara's and Benoit's mattress became a "nest" in a tree (119); Jim Josh's bathtubs had "corn . . . growing" in them, and his car contained "pots and wooden boxes full of tomato plants" (156); Bush's house on the island had vines that "crept inside and reached

across the inner walls" (*Solar Storms* 69); Ama's house has "wood . . . so rough that moss tries to grow on it and the blue flowers and vines of morning glories climb up it" (*Power* 7); and "the roots of trees are always trying to break" into Herm's cellar (90). Hogan uses this theme to further her argument that clearly demarcated boundaries between the man-made walls and the outside do not exist in nature, and therefore do not exist in Native American experience. By challenging this separatist view of space, she "re-visions" (Salvaggio 273) society's perceived reality.

Like the women's writing that dissolves hierarchical and masculine boundaries in Ruth Salvaggio's discussion,[11] Hogan's novels' characters, their perspectives, languages, writing, and their worldviews dissolve the spatial barriers and stereotypes that bind Native Americans. She too takes issue with the structuralist assertion that "language itself could be spatialized into a system" and that "Literature and language remained bounded entities" (266). Hogan's novels question the systemization and regulation of Literature and language and further demolish the "impenetrable" boundaries that surround the literary discipline and theories of space.[12]

Through the act of writing[13] and the power of language, Hogan illustrates dynamic relationships that challenge society's privileging of abstract theories of space. Speaking and writing stories remain crucial to Hogan's attempts to reconfigure social relations because "Story is a power that describes our world, our human being, sets out the rules and intricate laws of human beings in relationship with all the rest" ("First" 9). The words[14] and stories used in Hogan's writings reflect a tribal worldview and the tribal members' relationships to each other, to nature, and to the Western world. Throughout the novel *Mean Spirit*, Linda Hogan's character, Michael Horse, sits in his teepee and types what he later calls "the Gospel of Horse" (273). Father Dunne, the Catholic priest in *Mean Spirit*, vehemently protests Horse's addition to the Bible, and he continually tells Horse that he "can't do that" (273). According to Protestant and Catholic belief, the Bible became a bound book in the year 397 AD. The Council of Carthage, acting on behalf of its religious institution, decided that no further books could be added to the New Testament of the Bible (Ryrie 1440). Despite the priest's conviction that Horse cannot add a new chapter to the Bible, Horse continues to write. Horse ignores "canonical boundaries" and he "rewrites the Bible" (Ackerberg 13). Hogan uses this act of writing to illustrate that books do not exist as bound and impenetrable texts. Horse irreverently disregards, or remains unaware of, the previous decision. By failing to recognize the council's decision as a

social and religious barrier, he illustrates the fragility of the man-imposed boundary and makes a mockery of society's attempt to control and constrain a dynamic force.

Through this example, the author offers her readers a living and dynamic view of writing that differs from academia's attempt to canonize Literature in its "purest" form. Horse's decision to add a chapter to the Bible also illustrates his view of writing and storytelling as very different from a dominant view of books and Literature, because his decision links his writing to a "living" oral tradition. Horse informs the priest that "the Bible is full of mistakes" and that he "would correct them" (*Mean Spirit* 273). He again challenges the dominant and institutionalized belief that books remain static and rigid objects, and he argues that writing remains a dynamic and changeable process.

In *Power*, Omishto's story also reflects aspects of oral storytelling. Omishto relates a story to the reader, to the court, and to her community. The story focuses around an event, a storm, that Omishto experienced in the past, re-experiences as she relates the story in the present, and will experience in the future when she retells the story. The story cycles around itself, constantly shifts, and "is in continuous flux" (Allen 224) as she relates "the same story" (163) but focuses on different interpretations. The story also incorporates traditional tribal stories and songs. Hogan's written works offer her readers a tribal perspective of Native American social relations and writing that differs from the static and separatist view upheld by the "men who have" in "[t]heir attempt to chart the spatial dimensions of literature . . . sought to measure off and stake out the territory that literary discourse might legitimately be said to occupy" (Salvaggio 263).[15]

Rather than accepting the dominant view of writing and language as oppressive tools used to rigidly control and dominate space, which only occurs if one insists on accepting the view of writing as static, Hogan portrays writing as an act of liberation from spatial boundaries. Michael Horse describes his writing as necessary for the future of his people and as a healing process. He felt "as if he could write away the appearances of things and take them all the way back down to bare truth . . . . He was writing for those who would come later . . . as if the act of writing was itself part of divination and prophecy, an act of deliverance" (*Mean Spirit* 341). Horse's perspective of writing alludes to the function that the oral tradition holds within Native American culture, and his description indelibly links the past, the present, and the future to the act of writing, and links writing to a process of healing.

Through her writing, like Horse, Hogan tries to strip away the stagnant and segmented space that society views as reality to reveal the dynamic and organic nature of tribal relations. Through Horse, Hogan deals with the controversial issue concerning writing and the oral tradition. Oral stories traditionally involve the act of speaking, not writing, but Horse answers the question "Why can't you just speak it?" by stating that "They [non-Native people] don't believe anything is true unless they see it in writing" (*Mean Spirit* 361). While the United States' very existence relies on the written word of the Constitution, the American Indian population has an understandable mistrust of written documents that led to the protest dubbed "The Trail of Broken Treaties" (Vander Wall 291). Native Americans have been forced into an abrupt understanding of dominant society's practices through the imposition of allotments, boarding schools, and relocation programs, to name a few. However, Hogan and her character Horse recognize the necessity of writing because, rather than living in-between two different worlds, their world has been surrounded, divided, over-shadowed, and infiltrated by the United States' dominant society. Hogan, through Horse, clearly illustrates the different use of language and writing that shapes her works, and this variation significantly alters the way Native American writings operate in comparison to the literary canon.

Society, because it perceives reality spatially, attempts to own and appropriate "other" experience: to "write" over what it perceives as lack. Hogan's books resist the "accepted" view of space that remains predicated on notions of ownership and superiority, and she offers a new perspective of social relations based on tribal traditions and experiences. Omishto's struggle to understand the two systems of law that affect her life after her Aunt Ama kills an endangered (society's *term*) and sacred (the Taiga *belief*) panther best illustrates the differences between the two worldviews. Society's law "divide[s] one part of life from another. It has separated by scars, legal theft, even the stone of earth split . . . and then it covers everything broken all back over in words" (*Power* 118). Omishto's description of society's law reflects its links to abstract ideas that create spatial barriers. Conversely, the tribal law relies on "the laws of this place, this world, laws stronger and older than America" (160). Through her exposure to the laws of nature, Omishto experiences a rebirth that results in her eventual understanding of the delicate balance between "right and wrong" (62) and her return to the Taiga community. By illustrating Native American tribal experiences and stories as inseparable from nature's laws, Hogan defies society's attempts to appropriate those experiences.

Linda Hogan also uses Hannah Wing to emphasize the dangers of subscribing to society's worldview, which advocates a belief in writing over "other" experience. Hannah's body exemplifies the dangers in believing that language and writing can dominate and own space, and she uses Hannah to protest against the dominant view that led to the "policy of involuntary surgical sterilization . . . imposed upon native women, usually without their knowledge . . . during the late 1960's and the first half of the '70's" (Jaimes and Halsey 326). Hannah's character depicts the destructive belief that American Indian women were somehow less than human and that their bodies represent an "other" lack to inscribe and an "other" territory to own. Hannah's body represents an empty space to the men who try to own her and to fill her with the language of violence. Hannah "was a skin that others wore" (*Solar Storms* 77) and "*her skin was a garment of scars. There were burns and incisions. Like someone had* written *on her. The signatures of torturers*" (emphasis added) (99). Hannah symbolizes a blank space for others, including Linda Hogan, to write over. The author deliberately juxtaposes the act of torture to the act of writing. Hannah's body becomes the vessel for all the violations that American Indians suffered at the hands of their colonizers. The rape of Hannah's soul by "*[t]he signatures of torturers*" (99) symbolically represents the theft of Native American land by signatures on treaties.

Hannah's dilemma provides a method of healing these violations and offers a refreshing way to view writing. Through her books, Hogan criticizes language and writing that seeks to dominate, bind, and torture by "successfully . . . draw[ing] her reader into the Native American value system she is inculcating" (Musher 26). The "value system" that Musher alludes to, or more precisely Hogan's rejection of abstract space, causes a questioning of the preconceived notions that inform current attitudes towards writing and the literary discipline. Language and words begin to take on a different significance as one reads Hogan's books. Through Hannah, the author emphasizes a theme that permeates her works: the power of song. The "Old Man" tells Bush that healing Hannah would require "a ceremony":

> The words of which were so beautiful that they called birds out of the sky, but the song itself would break the singer's life. No one still alive was strong enough to sing it. Not him, he said. Because things had so changed. Not any of the old men or women. And there was a word for what was wrong with her, he said, but no one would say it. They were afraid it would hear its name and come to them. (101)

The significance of this paragraph is manifold; it describes words, in the form of a song, as powerful enough to communicate with nature, to "*break life*" (101), and to bring harm to whoever dared to invoke the song's power. This excerpt also alludes to the impotence of the song, not because the song lacks strength, but because the passage of time has made the song ineffective. Again, Hogan links the need for flexible, rather than static, views of language and words as they emerge and shift within an oral and tribal framework.

I believe that Hogan offers her books as a new type of ceremony to heal the "lost or stolen souls" (101. Her works act as a continuation of the oral traditions and songs that remain a crucial part of many tribal societies, but with one notable exception, that they are written rather than spoken. Her characters often write their way around social and physical barriers, and their works become modern adaptations of the Native American oral "living" tradition and remain inseparable from the Native American worldview. In her novels, characters write to educate others in spite of perceived spatial barriers; Bush becomes "a truth teller" (308) by writing articles in protest of the dam that get "smuggled" past the road and water barriers in *Solar Storms*, Michael Horse writes an additional chapter to add to the Bible to cover the omissions that exist in it despite opposition from the church's representative, Moses Graycloud and Michael Horse write two letters to Washington about the deaths in Watona despite the risk to their lives, and Omishto writes "an autobiographical essay" (*Power* 109) that evolves into a story that explains the Taiga traditions and worldview.[16] Writing becomes an act of resistance against, liberation from, and a place to re-imag(in)e society's constricting spatial boundaries through her stories' connections to the oral tradition and nature. Socially the oral tradition remains a crucial component of Native American life, and it influences and is influenced by Native Americans' perspectives and experiences.

For society, language is inseparable from power, and society has sought to bind and constrict language. Ana Castillo argues that "language is the vehicle by which we perceive ourselves in relation to the world" (167). The English language's relationship to power, as it relates to the written word and to legal processes and documents, resides within the power structure behind its creation. Those who command and create language achieve a privileged position, while those who do not are silenced. Trinh T. Minh-ha warns her readers that "Power . . . has always inscribed itself in language" and that "language is one of the most com-

plex forms of subjugation" (52). The emphasis that society places on language, and the manner in which society attempts to own language, an attitude that reflects the socially accepted view that space can be controlled and owned, allows society to wield language as a tool for oppression.

Language, as well as writing, coexists as a part of Hogan's books rather than something that tries to dominate and control space. Instead, Hogan depicts language's and writing's fusion with Native American oral traditions. She emphasizes this crucial difference throughout her novels. Her character Belle Graycloud uses "words as a road out of pain and fear" (*Mean Spirit* 33) as she attempts to contextualize Grace Blanket's death for Horse. The author illustrates the healing power of words through Belle's oral rendition of the story, which firmly links the story to the tribe's oral tradition. In her book, *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World*, Hogan states that "It is the story, really, that finds its way into language, and story is at the very crux of healing" (37). Her character Angel, through "words [that] were creation itself" learns to express herself by "finding a language, a story to shape . . . [herself] by" (*Solar Storms* 94). By subsuming the words into a story within a tribal framework, Hogan illustrates the healing potential of words.

Hogan also depicts the problematic situation caused by privileging one language over others. The non-Indians of Talbert, or Watona, remain bound by a constricting view of language while the Hill Indians and various Indians of Watona benefit from their experience with languages: Father Dunne hears "the sound of earth speaking . . . It was the deep and dreaming voice of the land" (*Mean Spirit* 188) and Horse learned "the languages of owls and bats" (260). Michael Horse has already transgressed "the language boundary" when he translated "three languages during the Boxer Rebellion, facilitating communication between the colonizer and the colonized" (Ackerberg 13). His knowledge of languages adds authority to his supplementary book of the Bible. His book becomes a means to promote communication between the "colonizer and the colonized" (13).

Like the Indians in Watona, Angel, in *Solar Storms*, learns about the power of languages: the women in her family easily negotiate the complex and uncharted waterways because they "were articulate in the language of land, water, animal, even in the harder languages of one another" (193), Husk explains to Angel that "metal bridges were taken down . . . by the song of wind" (102), and she comes to believe that "there were times . . . when the [animals and humans] both spoke the same language" (82). In

Power, Omishto listens to the wind as it "blows their [the old people's] thoughts toward me as I float. As if a small voice is speaking at my ear, one that tells me what it is my people believe" (180). Again, Hogan questions the power structure behind a worldview that allows for the privileging of one language through the perceived inadequacies and lack of an "other." English becomes one way of communicating, but Hogan's characters benefit from their exposure to nature's languages. Her analysis of language, space, literature, the oral tradition, and houses triggers a questioning of society's "static perception of the world" (Freire 159).

Arguably, Hogan collapses current theories of space through her attempts to reconfigure and re-imag(in)e reality by placing her characters' social relations within tribal frameworks, which remain inseparable from nature and its laws. Her stories illustrate the resistance of both tribal experience and nature to spatially constructed boundaries such as maps and walls. Her reconfiguration of languages, writing, and nature functions as the foundation for her attempts to collapse space. Like Nietzsche, Hogan advocates a "dynamic view of a world in constant flux" and "transformation" (Best and Kellner 82). She offers her works as a site for re-imag(in)ing "the 'real'" (Rainwater 139) through her collapse of society's spatial boundaries, which do not exist in her experience but instead exist as illusions. Rather than viewing boundaries as barriers she sees "doorways into the mythical world" (*Dwellings* 19).

NOTES

[1] The term re-imag(in)es or re-imag(in)ing reflects the method implemented in Native American written narratives of imaging, using "means other than visible light" to produce a new "image" (Merriam-Webster's 578) of reality. The terms also reflect N. Scott Momaday's belief in the crucial link between Native American identity and the act of imagination: his mother "imagined who she was" (Momaday, *The Names* 25). Linda Hogan uses her books to *imagine* new perspectives of reality.

[2] When the word "other" appears in quotation marks, I am alluding to Edward Said's and Trinh T. Minh-ha's discussion of cultural otherness.

[3] Power, a crucial concept to any discussion concerning oppression or cultural invasion, "marks an exchange between social entities in an unequal relationship; the privileged participant either controls knowledge . . . or has superior knowledge or authority with respect to an audience

made up of various 'unequals'" (Rainwater *Dreams* 4). Barry Barnes, in his discussion of power, and especially in his arguments concerning "Divide and Rule" (98), discusses the link between knowledge and power:

> For effective domination of large numbers of subordinates in extreme conditions of divide and rule it is important that those subordinates should possess so much knowledge and no more . . . they should lack whatever knowledge might help them to establish co-operative interactions with others. (101)

By limiting the transmission of information, the "power-holders" (98) ensure their claim to power. This strategy "is a valuable resource in the continued enforcement of their subordination" (102). Arguably, the most effective way to control knowledge is to control education. The "power-holders" (98) of the United States use education to disseminate information and knowledge. Academia and education, as tools of cultural invasion, limit the knowledge to which the invaded peoples have access. Academia and the education system as a whole remain linked to the "parochial view of reality" (Freire 159) that demarcates cultural invasion. In this manner, the United States perpetuates its "master narrative" (Durham 427) and excludes "other" narratives.

[4] Arguably contemporary Native Americans have learned sophisticated methods of negotiating within their invaders' worldview while maintaining cultural ties to an "other" worldview, and they have managed to incorporate aspects of both cultures into their everyday negotiations and interactions, although the extent to which this phenomenon has occurred remains unique to each person. James Ruppert terms this particular form of social interaction mediation (Ruppert 3).

[5] My discussion concerning theoretical discourse in this article borrows from Trinh T. Minh-ha's debate about theory as "an occupied territory" that "presents itself as a means to exert authority—the Voice of knowledge" (Minh-ha 42). Society privileges theory due to its links to scientific knowledge, and this privilege serves to oppress and exclude those whom do not engage in theory.

[6] The capitalization of Our and Ourselves refers to the collective values that define the dominant worldview in the United States.

[7] Vine Deloria Jr. also goes on to redraw and redefine the geographical terminology that has led to the discrimination that American Indians have suffered at the hands of the "West." He astutely asserts that Native

Americans live in the "western hemisphere" (Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins* 11) and that what has been traditionally labeled as "The West" really only refers to "western Europe" (Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins* 11). By subtly shifting the geographical boundaries implemented by western European Eurocentric thinking, he throws "The West's" claims of authority and superiority into question. By extension, he undermines the credibility of the entire Western tradition and its practices, including its views on theory and space, its dualistic thinking, and the privileging of reason and abstraction over emotion and experience.

[8] This article must engage with the arguments concerning space and spatial theory delineated in Henri Lefebvre's book *The Production of Space* due to his impact on the way that the Western world currently perceives space. According to Erik Swyngedouw, "Lefebvre's work holds a unique position in the intellectual history of Marxism and in the way this history became appropriated by geographers from the late 1960s onwards" (317). His book changes the way Western societies perceive space and spatial theory.

[9] Although this article focuses mainly on Native American authors' departure from this Western worldview, it is important to note that contemporary Native Americans' daily subjection and exposure to this worldview influences their stories and their tribal contexts. Out of necessity, they have incorporated the Western worldview into their tribal contexts, but the Western worldview fails to adequately explain their experiences.

[10] Science seeks to separate and label specimens, or small segments, of an entity in an effort to control and obtain knowledge. Academia adopts this scientific methodology of separating and labeling different areas of study in the same quest for knowledge.

[11] She advocates a move away from the territory of theory. Speaking of women's experiences writing within a prevalently male-inhabited sphere she argues that "As they [women] . . . [space] themselves elsewhere, the contours of theory begin to dissolve" (Salvaggio 278) and this style of writing "account[s] for women's *experiences* as well as bring[s] into question both spatial boundaries and their inevitable exclusions" (emphasis added) (Salvaggio 272). In a similar manner, there is a need for ethnic works to move away from the western construct of theory and into writing based on experience.

[12] Ruth Salvaggio outlines the history of theory through her critique of previous spatial theories. She argues that "formalism, modernism, and

phenomenology . . . each of these literary theories shares . . . a type of spatial identity, a configuration of itself expressed in terms of some spatial form or concept that reflects certain values" (465). By briefly discussing the core thoughts behind each theoretical period, she criticizes the hierarchical and exclusive characteristics of modernist, or "masculine space" (262) and the postmodern feminization of space that occurred due to the development of theoretical approaches to literature.

[13] Linda Hogan seeks to alter the belief that language and writing are strictly adhered to systems that create elitist barriers. Writing acts as a fitting medium for Hogan's perspective because Literature has been "[d]isplaced from the center to the margins of culture–a move that may in fact be inevitable in the information society . . . " (Paulson viii), and because of this shift, non-canonized ethnic works have been able to penetrate a previously elitist field. According to William Paulson, the current obsession with scientific knowledge has moved Literature from its position within academia as a purveyor of Truth. This shift has enabled ethnic authors to enter the previously elitist field of study, and their new works offer innovative perspectives and new philosophies. In addition, books act as a good example of society's failed attempt to categorize and impose space's artificial boundaries on written works. According to Michel Foucault, a book "is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network" (423). Books fail to remain within their bounds and they bleed out onto the very covers that are meant to contain them: the title and the author are placed outside of the book to entice readers, the publisher places flattering synopses of the book on the back cover, other authors' comments are included on the covers, etc. From that point on a stream of criticism issues forth, and critics write about the books which leads other critics write about each others' criticisms of the book until you have an unbound and dynamic chain of signification (Derrida 85), or a micro-system that cannot remain autonomous or bound.

[14] Gerald Vizenor states that "The printed word has no evolution in tribal literatures; the word is there, in trees, water, air and printed on paper where it has been at all times" ("Preface" x). Like tradition, tribal knowledge, and oral storytelling, to American Indian authors, their words, language, and by extension their "tribal literatures" (Vizenor, "Preface" x) remain indelibly linked to nature.

[15] Ruth Salvaggio discusses the literary discipline in spatial terms as something that attempts to "occupy" a "territory" or space, and that is

"measure[d] off" and "stake[d] out" (263). She further argues that "[t]he space of the canon was mapped out . . . establishing the bounds for a systematic study of English and American literature" (263). Here again Salvaggio depicts Literature, a discipline within academia, as a rigid and bounded system that seeks to occupy space.

[16] She later tears up the story "into little pieces" (*Power* 112) because, although it describes her worldview, it does not fulfill the criteria for an inflexible school essay, and society could not imagine the story just as "Ama, too, is nothing they can imagine" (*Power* 130).

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The Politics of the Border in Linda Hogan's **Mean Spirit**

Yonka Kroumova Krasteva

A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants.

Gloria Anzaldua

The most recent developments in Western intellectual thought, multiculturalism and post-colonial theory have challenged the concept of margin and center, observer and observed, of totalizing and taxonomic accounts of history. Yet many voices now call into question the right of any local intellectual tradition to define alien identities, thus often assigning them to the museum of humankind. The center, though claiming to be in disintegration, still functions as a center, circulating systems of codes in its attempt to define non-Western identities associated with the periphery. And the obsession of drawing, redrawing and contesting boundaries and borders has never been so pronounced as in the 20th century. Suffice it to mention its most compelling symbol of rupture—the Berlin Wall, whose collapse multiplied new kinds of divisions instead of abolishing old ones.

In his 1995 essay, "From Limen to Border: a Meditation on the Legacy of Victor Turner for American Cultural Studies," Donald Weber convincingly demonstrates the outdatedness of the favorite American paradigm of the "rite of passage" on real and imaginary frontiers, as a code for

interpreting American history, character and culture, and recognizes "the explanatory power of what might be called a 'borderlands' position, a mode for discussing social and cultural processes and formations"(525). This vibrant new perspective in the conceptualization and interpretation of cultural history, which also reflects the postmodern incredulity toward metanarratives, has been enriched by the theoretical endeavors of such borderland intellectuals as Renato Rozaldo, Guillermo Gomez-Pena, Annette Kolodny, and Jose David Saldivar, who examine the inadequacies of the current modalities that postcolonial theory employs in its exploration of non-Western cultures.

"Yet the struggle for identities continues, the struggle for borders is our reality still," declares Gloria Anzaldua in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, her provocative study of what she calls "mestiza consciousness," which is the product of the blending of Mexican, Indian, Spanish and Anglo cultures on the Texas-Mexican border (63). This pronounced interest in the exploration of borderlands, physical, psychological, sexual and spiritual, as a powerful mode of cultural criticism, informs the literary ventures of writers such as Tony Morrison, Louise Erdrich, Linda Hogan, Gerald Vizenor, Sandra Cisneros, and Ami Tan, to mention just a few. Their probing into the past and present transcends resistance and subversion by bringing into life the carefully invented and fabricated presence of the racial Other in national literature, and by enlarging the space for the discourse of the border.

The ostensible aim of Linda Hogan's first novel, *Mean Spirit*, is to unveil the historical realities and ideologies beneath the stereotypical images and popular scripts, not so much by fragmentation of history and identity than by filling the active silences in the representations of what Raymond Williams calls "the effective dominant culture" (121). The focus is not so much on the victimization of the American Indians as on questions such as: How is any cultural group's story about itself and other groups affected when different societies confront one another on the border? Does the Other make its own mark on the pronouncements of the dominant culture? To what purpose is Indianness explored and exploited in the American imagination? In order to explore these issues, the author examines the construction of hybridized narratives at borderlands and frontier sites.

The recent works of American Indian writers Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris, Gerald Vizenor and James Welch stand as symbolic acts of recovery, remembrance and reinvention of a history of loss and grief, but they also actively search for new possibilities for the conceptualization of

self, place and narration. Illustrating the postmodernist concept of history as a struggle or negotiation between different modes of discourse, *Mean Spirit* projects the 1920s Oklahoma oil field fever as a plethora of texts on different levels, seemingly indeterminate versions of what happened in yet another story of dispossession. The novel employs a predominantly realistic mode, but it, too, strains the bounds of realism, by resorting to postmodern strategies such as the mixture of genres, and to a specific use of tribal lore in order to exploit a sense of history as a poetic and imaginative construct, and as an alternative account of past events.

I am fully aware of the debate started by Leslie Mormon Silko's review of Louise Erdrich's *Beet Queen*, in which Silko perceives the author's resort to postmodernist techniques as dangerous for tribal communities and destructive of their traditions. As I hope to show below, like Erdrich, Linda Hogan manages to reshape the Western postmodern narrative by masterfully weaving into its fabric traditions of communal storytelling and behavior, thus expanding the horizon of the reader's conceptual frame of reference. What Nancy J. Peterson says about *Tracks* holds true about *Mean Spirit* as well. Such works call "for 'both-and' vision encompassing native ways of storytelling and Euroamerican kinds of history writing" (412). This strategy effects nothing less than the breaking of epistemological boundaries, of pre-existing interpretative frameworks or systems of differentiation, and transforms the seemingly stable Euroamerican cultural terrain into a borderland of competing discourses and cultural exchange. The novel becomes a product of what Paul Gilroy has defined on another occasion as "untidy elements in a story of hybridization and intermixture that inevitably disappoint the desire for cultural and therefore racial purity, whatever its source" (199).

"Fiction is a vertical descent, a drop into an event to somehow decipher what history speaks, the story beneath the story" Linda Hogan believes, and her statement recalls Italo Calvino's main idea in his *Invisible Cities* about the China box principle on which stories exist (Interview 126). To violate history in postmodern texts, as in Linda Hogan's text, is to tell the story that has been repressed, to look for invisible texts. As the writer says, "In the case of *Mean Spirit*, a lot of the story will always be repressed because the FBI reports themselves are so thoroughly blacked out in order to protect national secrets. Some of it's just not there. But the content of the story is truth, fictionalized. Reimagined. I created many characters that do not in fact exist, but the events are real, and some of the characters are real. Some of the characters retain their real names in the book . . . the Nola in the novel has a real-life counterpart. But the Nola in

the novel lives in a different place" (123).

My purpose is to discuss Hogan's *Mean Spirit* as a postmodern text of replenishment, foregrounding the problematics of the border in its interrogation of different practices of Western colonialism. As well as a murder mystery, *Mean Sprit* is a tragic love story, a subversive historical account of the 1920s dispossession of the Osage Indians of their oil rights. Once rivers of oil were found under the barren soil of Oklahoma, which had been sold to the Indians because of its uselessness, years of intimidation, fraud and murder of oil-rich Indians began. Patricia Limerick has argued convincingly that "In the second half of the twentieth century, every major issue from 'frontier' history reappeared in the courts or in Congress, from struggles over Indian resources to relations with Mexico and conflicts between natives and newcomers" (98). In the same vein, Stace Red Hawk, the Lakota Sioux in *Mean Spirit* who believes that "he could do more about his people in Washington than at home," sees Watona as another new frontier: "He'd heard about what Indians still called Indian Territory. It was where every outlaw and crook used to hole up and be safe from the law. Now there were new thieves, those who bought and stole Indian lands" (52). And Oklahoma seemed a dark burial ground if there ever was one, outlaw country through and through (126).

As the novel opens we get a sense of the dramatic, scenic quality of the work. The year is 1922, and in half a year there have been seventeen murders. The sense of pervasive doom is established by Michael Horse's unexpectedly false prediction about a two-week dry spell, and by the murder of the richest person in Watona, Grace Blanket, witnessed by her daughter Nola and by Rena, Nola's cousin. This episode starts a chain of events, revelations and dramatic transformations that make up the world of the novel, the saga of exodus of the Graycloud family and most of the Hill Indians living in Watona.

At dawn, some of the characters are asleep in their gardens, which are threatened to be engulfed by the vegetation around: "Given half a chance, the vines and leaves would have crept up the beds and overgrown the sleeping bodies of people" (3). The world that the Indians living in Watona once belonged to seems to want to reclaim them and bring them back to their traditional environment, which they actually return to at the end of the novel. The habit of sleeping in the garden is usually associated with people who, like Belle Graycloud, hold on to their tribal traditions in spite of the fact that they live among white people. The rest of her family "believed in varying degrees, that they were modern, so they remained inside the oven-hot walls of the house" (4). Modernity

versus tradition has become a line of demarcation even within American Indian families, and the acute awareness of dividing lines, marking inclusions and exclusions, different kinds of outsiders and insiders, is established as a norm of existence on the first pages of the novel.

The politics of the border always revolves around the tensions between imposed identity and self-definition. In *Other Destinies,* Louis Owens deals with the "questions of authority and ethnicity," and identifies the question of "What is an Indian?" as the most difficult one that the American Indian novel has to confront. "Must one," asks Owens, "be one-sixteenth Osage, one-eight Cherokee, one quarter Blackfoot, or fullblood Sioux to be an Indian?" (3). As *Mean Spirit* clearly demonstrates, the issue of identity, which is most fragile on borderlands, does not refer only to personal identification and subjectivity, but is of utmost significance in determining the status of citizenship for Native Americans: their right to property or to receiving annuity in a white people's world.

Watona, that "limbo between the two worlds," the new American oil frontier, is dynamic, of a mixed, hybrid nature, with people, landscape, natural and civilized world locked in a deadly struggle. Grace, the daughter of the river prophet Lila Blanket, was sent by her mother to live in Watona, because she believed that "Some of our children have to learn about the white world if we are going to ward off our downfall . . . . We've got too far away from the Americans to know how their laws are cutting into our life"(6). Yet Grace Blanket pays little attention to the Indian ways and is not interested in white laws. Upon finishing school, she gets a job and starts to save her money. In total ignorance, she and her sister Sara select a dried up land, which Grace ironically names the "Barren Land" and, after striking oil, renames the "Baron Land." Grace's house, as well as the way she dresses, could easily be read as an epitome for the crisis of identity that she experiences, in a weird imitation of the world of white people: Grace's home is an "icy palace of crystal, and European to the ceiling, even though Grace herself had never cut her long braids, and had preferred moccasins to the spool-heeled shoes she wore that last Sunday on her way to church" (48).

Grace is a border woman. Having severed her ties with the Hill Indians, she lives in limbo, imitating white peoples' styles and practices, which still do not make her a member of the white community. Grace is a product of the assimilation policy of the Dawes Act, aimed to abolish the tribal system and to make the Native Americans accept the capitalist principle of private ownership and individualism. She also symbolizes the fate of those Indians who believe in the politics of assimilation, which in her case

proves to be another way of extermination.

Donald Weber perceives the discourse of the border as a "zone or sphere of positionality" (527), populated by what Victor Turner defines as marginals, which "would include migrant foreigners, second generation Americans, persons of mixed ethnic origin, parvenues (upwardly mobile marginals), migrants from country to city, and women in a changed nontraditional role" (232). For Turner the border is a transforming agent that secures the liminars their re-integration into society, their transition from innocence to maturity:

> Liminality is both more creative and more destructive than the structural norm . . . . But *where it is socially positive* it presents, directly or by implication, a model of human society as a homogeneous, unstructured communitas, whose boundaries are ideally coterminous with those of the human species (emphasis added). ("Liminal" 47)

The qualification, "where it is socially positive," clearly implies the relative character of this model, its inability to be universally applied. This positive aspect in the traditional definition of the frontier is valid for characters like Hale, Sheriff Jess Gold, and the Indian agents. They inhabit the in-between position of the border, with one notable difference. In the national script their experience is viewed as the liminal stage in the masculine rite of passage, equivalent to the mythological hero's "descent to hell" or encounter with a monster. Having successfully passed this test, the protagonist is reincorporated into society with a new enhanced status. The nature of this test, though, has radically changed. The basic qualities required now to perform this perverted rite of passage are fraudulence, blackmail, and the capacity to kill innocent people in cold blood. Having amassed their fortune by either marrying a rich Indian woman, and then shooting her, or by robbing the Indians of their land on the new frontier, they can be re-integrated into a society that values success/wealth above anything else. Hale, Sheriff Gold, and their mercenaries who perform all the murders are actually the contemporary descendants of the villain in the classical Western. Significantly, the lonesome savior of the Western is absent.

The positive interpretation of the border as a transforming agent has been attacked for what Renato Rosaldo in *Culture and Truth* terms as a "language of social control"; Rosaldo takes Turner to task for "reducing complex human dramas to mere illustrations of supposedly explanatory structural principles" (40). Turner, himself, in *Dramas, Fields, Metaphors*

observes the resistance of some "marginals" to join the ritual consensus. On this issue Donald Weber remarks that Turner "is privileging his sense of social leveling and attendant cultural bonding over what we now recognize as an encounter with identity politics and the border" (530). Linda Hogan's novel, in fact, dramatizes this encounter between two diametrically opposed groups of people that inhabit the border—the liminar, who ultimately joins "the affectionately warmer and more egalitarian bond of communitas" (233), and the "marginals" who resist incorporation and claim their difference.

The Hill Indians in Watona are typical marginal figures. They inhabit the borders that in Gloria Anzaldua's words "are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them" (3). "Hatred, anger and exploitation are the prominent features of this landscape" (Preface). Being Westernized places Native Americans in a double bind, foregrounding their alienness and ambiguity. Grace, for instance, is defined in negative terms both by the whites and by her own people. She is a transgressor, hoping to be able to live on the verge of both worlds. Her death is falsely attributed, even by the Indians, to a lovers' quarrel, because Grace was "famous in those parts both as a basket-maker and an oil-rich Indian, who was given to catting around. She had a sweet disposition, a mind of her own and a fondness for men and drink" (21).

There is no rite of passage for the marginals, since they are forever doomed to an in-between and betwixt existence, where they are invested with the ultimate ambiguity of being half-human and half-beast, and utterly irredeemable. Yet they are also figures who resist appropriation and possess the radical potential of deconstruction and subversion. Nola, Belle Graycloud, Michael Horse are such figures. Nola, who unlike her mother is ill-suited for town life, turns a rebel at school, defying all rules and codes. "From the first day onward, though no one would say it, Nola became something of a hero to most of the other children. Her anger and defiance spoke for all of them" (129). The cruel punishments imposed on her fail to quelch her indomitable spirit. Eventually Nola is assigned a legal guardian, Mr. Forrester, who is to take care of her and, of course, her money. For the sake of safety, at thirteen, Nola agrees to marry Mr. Forrester's son, Will, a weak, immature boy, a connoisseur of artifacts. Yet, as more of her own people are being killed—Ruth, Benoit, even Will's father—Nola becomes extremely restless and insecure, feeling completely out of place in a hostile world. Even Will, whom she loves, becomes "but part of the shadowy white world which was losing its focus. She was afraid of him . . . . Nola began to think that even their marriage was like

glass and it would take little to fracture it" (353). Will's interest in artifacts, especially his passion for collecting Indian artifacts, eventually makes her think "that she herself, as an Indian woman, represented something old and gone to him, something from another time" (195).

Like her mother before her, Nola has made an effort to belong to the white world, but her extreme isolation and the knowledge that "her husband could actually benefit from her death," that "He might have killed his own father," (321) motivate her to denounce her "whiteness." Nola feels a desperate need to flee from her house: "The glass figurines were of no use at all. It was another Nola, not this one, who had gone from store to store looking for a slender glass swan, another Nola who had turned pages in a catalogue searching for fragile items to place inside the walls of her life" (354). Undoubtedly, the seemingly mysterious deaths of all her rich relatives, leaving her the richest person in Watona, the pillage of her mother's grave and the disappearance of her body, feed Nola's fear to such an extent that when Will calls for a doctor, after she accuses him of being "one of them," she interprets his action as an attempt to get rid of her, by pronouncing her incapable of controlling herself. In order to protect herself and her unborn child, she shoots him to death. Ironically, Will is not "one of them" and his love for Nola is genuine, yet it seems there is no place for love in a "world that has gone out of kilter." Nola chooses to go back to the dwellings of the Hill Indians, who "had kept their distance from the world outside, the world that was going empty. The settlement was a far cry from the red and black automobiles, silk hats, the jazzmen and the guns" (359).

The "violence of representation" done to the Indians in the dominant discourse and the practices of intimidation are mechanisms for controlling them and for destroying their cultural identity by effecting an internalization of the degrading false standards according to which they are being judged. Fear and the sense of inferiority are exploited by people like Hale who "had hired Indian men to help him kill, burn and clear their land." Some Indians, like Grace Blanket, "were happy to learn business ways, but before long they had no choice themselves but to become meat-eaters with sharp teeth, devouring their own land and themselves in the process" (54). Such instances are stunning illustration of self-deprecation and internal colonization. By leasing their land to the oil company, the Indians in fact help the intruders destroy their community and ultimately their way of life. As Reverend Joe Billy, who had been a medicine man for twenty-two years before he'd converted to the Christian faith and married Martha against her father's will, puts it, "The Indian world is on a collision

course with the white world . . . . It is more than a race war. They are waging a war with earth. Our forests and cornfield are burned by them" (13).

On the other hand, there are those like Belle, Moses, Stace and Michael Horse who effectively resist such practices and find refuge in a new kind of knowledge of the nature of language, reality and identity. Michael Horse, the writer of sacred texts who is fluent in several languages and understands both tribal and white culture, uses code switching all the time in order to interpret on a deeper level of meaning what seems to be self-evident and self-explanatory. He perceives the true character of the "cultured, civilized ways of the Americans" and the kind of justice they dispense. The narrator reflects on the practices of marginalization and appropriation thus:

> Horse knew that they had ideas about Indians, that they were unschooled, ignorant people who knew nothing about life or money. But whenever an Indian didn't fit their vision, the clerks, the agents became afraid. That was why Michael Horse . . . always remained silent in the presence of the men from Washington. If they knew he kept a journal of all the events in Watona, and if they knew he had translated three languages back and forth during the Boxer Rebellion in China, they would have found a way to cut him down to the size they wanted him to be, and he knew it. Not that all of them were bad. Far from it. Nevertheless, Horse was afraid to even let them see that he had three gold teeth because he knew some of them were so greedy they'd find a reason to pull them out of his head, so he kept his mouth closed and his ears wide open. (60)

Gerald Vizenor defines such gestures as "the active silence" that represents "the shadows of tribal memories . . . in the literature of dominance" ("Ruins" 3). The official newspaper accounts and the photographs in newspapers of "real events" are pure fiction, fabrications that are substitutes for the real, yet are credited with authority. While Stace Red Hawk is reading a newspaper article about current events in Watona,

> A picture of the world was forming in his mind. One eye opened, one eye closed, that was the world, only half of a scale of justice. He opened the newspaper and the indelible image of Mr. Scelley, one of the oil barons, filled the front page. Scelley was shaking hands with a full blooded Indian outside the door of the courthouse. For the

> picture they each wore a feathered headdress. Stace closed the paper and pushed it away from himself. (189)

According to Vizenor such "Simulations are new burdens in the absence of the real and the imposture of presence" ("Ruins" 7). In this fictive Oklahoma, the Indians must play out their roles, act out the transformation of their "self" into that fictive vanishing Other, so that the white man may continue to be the hero in the national script of progress in the name of prosperity and equality. Such representations can be read as an allegory of the general epistemic violence of cultural imperialism, the fabrication of a self-immolating colonial subject for the justification of the mission of the colonizer.

John Tate, Ruth's husband, who at the end of the novel shoots her, constantly takes pictures of the Indians, as if they were archaeological finds. And this is the way he treats his Indian wife. Belle, through whose eyes most of the events are filtered, finds it difficult to place John Tate and Ruth together. "Tate was a weak man, held up in a way by the inner strength of Ruth. He loved to capture Ruth on film, through the camera, but he did not seem to love her living presence, in public, at least. They seldom went anywhere together, but when they did, he never walked at her side" (134). In such photographs the present is approached through what Frederic Jameson calls "the language of the pastiche of the stereotypical past" (76), eliminating thus our "lived possibility of experiencing history in some active way" (77).

The Indian as spectacle has become another cliché in the white men's world. When Lettie and Belle walk towards jail to pay a visit to Benoit,

> In the streets, everyone stopped to look at them. They were a spectacle. Belle carried a woman's drum. Lettie wore the ribbon skirt and blanket shawl of her father's people. They carried tomatoes to Benoit. The two women pleased the spectators no end. They liked to romanticize the earlier days when they believed the Indians lived in a simple way and wore more colourful clothing than the complicated Indians that lived alongside them in the modern world. They believed the Indians used to have power. In the other, better times, before the people had lost their land and their sacred places on earth to the very people who wished the Indians were as they had been in the past. (82)

This passage is a typical illustration of the racist attitude of considering

the Natives to be "the way we were once," in need of civilization, both cultural and rhetorical.

The courtroom where Nola, Will and Mr. Forrest enter when Nola has to sign the papers that give the latter the right to be her legal guardian is another postmodern text of simulacra. "Nola glanced up at the paintings on the high walls where naked Indian women offered grain and meat to the white men around them, and one of them rode on a black buffalo" (134). These paintings are materializations of white men's fantasies about Indian women offering themselves to white men, and since "woman as nation" has been the current paradigm for reading a culture, the paintings actually invite the viewer to think that Native Americans look up to white people and are willing to give up their cultural identity. Such misrepresentations of history are illustrations of what Umberto Eco has called "the real fake." The construction of "place" in Watona, once the Osage people's Gathering Place, has acquired the characteristics of "the real fake" while current representations of Indian identity are "copies without an original" that are being circulated and produced for mass consumption, accepted as more real than the living Indians themselves.

By defining the Indians as promiscuous, childlike, primitive or backward, the white man declares their unreadability in the discourse of reason, thus vindicating the ideology of exclusion, debasement and economic dispossession. The marginals are actually non-existent, since their assumed irrationality places them outside the realm of the logically defined real. The white profiteers see the Indians as instruments for their self-promotion and enrichment, a spectacle dramatizing the monstrosity of the primitive within men, a mere abstraction, a reminder of a past age. As Victor Turner points out, "Marginals and liminars are also betwixt and between, but unlike ritual liminars they have no cultural assurance of a final stable resolution of their ambiguity" ("Liminal" 233). That is exactly the position afforded to Native Americans in the imperialist discourse.

Native American people can be tolerated as long as they stay in the margins of society, as long as they remain poor, or invisible like the legendary Joe Stink, who is dead on paper and leads a ghostlike existence. They are treated as mere commodities, investment, objects for circulation, enrichment or entertainment. Marriage between a white man and an Indian woman has become just another vulgar, dangerous transaction. When asked what his occupation is, a white man simply answers, "I am married to an Indian woman." In *Mean Spirit* the cynical and degrading nature of such practices reaches its most absurd manifestation when a white man and a black woman "were married in the light of a lamp post with two dogs

for witnesses. The justice of the peace inked the dogs' paws and stamped their prints on the marriage license while the newly weds kissed" (90).

If at some point US policy aimed at assimilating the Indians by destroying their culture and making them adopt the American way of life, in the 1920s things definitely changed. As Linda Hogan clearly shows, there is no place for a rich Indian in a white man's world, no matter how much he or she has accepted the American way of life. The very concept of a wealthy Indian, let alone the existence of such, is offensive to white people:

> the oil company owners resented having to pay the Indians for the use of their land, in spite of the fact that the Indian people had purchased it themselves. The owners thought the Indians were a locked door to the house of progress. And even more than that, they disliked the way Indian people displayed their wealth, driving slowly red and cream-colored cars, wearing bright clothing, and joking back and forth about dollars and cents. And they did not know what to do with their money. (54)

Assimilation, then, is not an option; rather than acceptance, the Osage find violence. "The Osages are shot, blown up, and poisoned in the same manner, and for the same reasons, that the earth is drilled, dynamited, and despoiled for oil," observes Alex Casteel (50). At Hale's first murder trial, Mardy Green describes the complicated plot involving Hale and the sheriff to kill oil-rich Indians as nothing more than "clearing the land for your farm, or hunting the food you eat . . . . Well, maybe you would call that plot . . . or call it murder, but here it's just survival" (327). After Fraser, whose testimony is important for the case, is found dead in a car accident, and one of the disappeared witnesses confesses that the defense attorney, Springler, has paid him to leave, the trial is declared a mistrial and Hail is released. As rumors begin to spread that the army is coming to relocate the Indians, most of them sell their land in a hurry and start on a yet another tortuous journey, looking for a place that they can call home. Indian people have given up on American justice, although Hale is arrested again and re-tried in a federal court in Guthrie, Oklahoma, where most of the truth emerges. The belated justice, if it can be called justice, does not change anything for the Indians. The murders go on. The novel ends with Ruth's murder by her white husband Tate, who in the act of making an attempt at Belle's life is in his turn killed by Belle's husband, Moses. The Grayclouds, fearing Mose's arrest, flee "to places where no roads had been cut before them . . . . The night was on fire with their pasts

and they were alive" (375).

Yet, far from the nostalgia for a romantic past or a romantic fantasy about Indians ingratiating themselves to white oil barons, *Mean Spirit* depicts the Oklahoma oil frontier as a troubled place of fluid and changing identities, a place of active exchange between cultures. The narrator observes that:

> The year of 1922 was almost over by the time Nola and Will were united in marriage. In spite of the wedding it was a year of separations. . . . By the year's end the double lives of people grew more obvious on all counts. Martha was not the only one who changed. Her husband, the Reverend Billy, wore braids and moccasins to deliver his sermons and he finally wrote the main church offices that he was resigning from the ministry . . . . It seemed as though toward the end of the year, people became the opposite of what they had previously been, as if the earth's polar axis had shifted. At the Indian school, two Creek girls were so fascinated with white heaven that they dyed their hair yellow like angels in pictures, and they wore white gowns they stitched together out of bedsheets. One of the school matrons, by contrast, began dying her hair black, and asked if she could attend the peyote church. (170)

This is a clear case of the eruption of what Tony Morrison in *Playing in the Dark* calls "the disrupting darkness before our eye" (91). The complex life of border people in parallel worlds and their need to negotiate practices of exclusion on an everyday basis has become the norm of existence in Watona. Linda Hogan has defined characters such as Floyd, Letty's white husband, Martha, and China, Hale's former girlfriend, as "fringe dwellers"—people who want to exist in an older culture (Interview 120). "Why does anybody coming from a middle-class American background feel such an emptiness that they want to take up another culture?" (121) the writer asks. In spite of the concerted efforts of the dominant culture to write the story of the vanishing Indian, the Indians are far from vanished. Their values and way of life are being adopted by white people, who have seriously questioned the validity of the biased assumptions of their own culture and its divisive politics. Significantly, Indian communities are attractive to those who want to take up the Indian way of life, to experience the wholeness of an ecologically oriented existence with stable moral values.

As the novel clearly demonstrates, Linda Hogan's postmodern incre-

dulity towards metanarratives is firmly grounded in historical practice. It is a justified distrust towards the distorted dominant account about the Oklahoma tragedy of the 1920s that is being circulated as historical knowledge. The dramatized experience of the marginalized and the dispossessed in *Mean Spirit* does not only subvert and correct the official discourse of progress, equality and prosperity, but also illustrates, to quote Tony Morrison again, "how knowledge is transformed from invasion and conquest to revelation and choice" (8).

Mean Spirit foregrounds the postmodern premise that our knowledge of history and the past comes from previous representations, which are constructed of biased cultural assumptions and do not rely on evidence, that is they simulate and occlude the real. The novel brilliantly illustrates Linda Hutcheon's contention that in the postmodern condition, "The representation of history becomes the history of representation" (58). The memory of the real exists not in the written word of the dominant discourse but in nostalgia, in the stories that are passed from generation to generation, and in tribal knowledge. As Louis Owens points out, "Ultimately, whereas postmodernism celebrates the fragmentation and chaos of experience, literature by Native American authors tends to seek transcendence of such ephemeriality and the recovery of eternal and immutable elements represented by spiritual tradition that escapes historical fixation" (20). "It is a holistic, ecological perspective, one that places essential value upon the totality of existence, making humanity equal to all elements but superior to none and giving humankind crucial responsibility for the care of the world we inhabit" (29). Yet, as Gerald Vizenor has argued, it was this postmodern distrust of received knowledge that made possible "a liberation of tribal stories" (*Narrative* xii).

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Calls for Submissions

New Rivers Press

New Rivers Press seeks submissions for a collection of Native American women's writing to be published in 2001. Short stories, memoir, creative nonfiction prose, and poetry written by Native American women will be considered for publication. The editors are seeking work that celebrates, records, and explores Native American women's roles in community. Of particular interest is writing that mirrors the oral tradition or uses Native language in accessible ways. Voices of all age groups are welcome as is work that suggests the full range of Native women's experience—their lives in and on the reservation, as parents and professionals, in tradition and transformation, as keepers of culture and of community.

Submissions should be typed or word-processed on 8-1/2 by 11-inch paper. Send three copies of your submission, a short biography that describes your heritage, and a SASE to:

Editors Laura Tohe and Heidi Erdrich
New Rivers Press
420 North Fifth St., Suite 938
Minneapolis, MN 55401.

We will consider only work that is previously unpublished. No submissions will be returned. Multiple submissions okay.

Deadline: January 15, 2000.

Native American Literature: Boundaries/Sovereignties

Paradoxa invites submissions for a special issue on Native American literature. While much attention has been paid to the tropes of borders and boundaries, we are especially interested in how Native American literatures—poetry, fiction, film, orality, theater, song, non-fiction—envision empowerment, both actual and failed. Abstracted and real geographical and legal lines shape Native American tribal life, past and present, and are manifest in borders, forced migrations, removals, blood quantam, tribal enrollment, culturally oppressive educational policies, land theft, incarceration, social rending, religious oppression, internalized racism, homophobia, sexism, and familial dysfunction. This special issue will strive for an exchange of views, or a dialogue between contributors, that deals with the depiction of sovereignties more than identity crises. We shall consider how these sovereignties assert themselves in voice, in political action, in language, cultural solidarity and continuance, in kinship ties, environmental vision, humor, and in genre innovation. Topics or problems of special interest include, but are not limited to, Native American literature in relation to law, religion, intellectual history, belief systems, mythic vision, sexuality and gender, individual crises, love and lost love, intergenerational dynamics, and political struggles. But all submissions related to Native American life as depicted in literature will be considered.

Editors for this special issue are Kate Shanley, Professor of Native American Studies, University of Montana, Missoula (kshanley@selway.umt.edu), and Professor Lee Francis, Department of Native American Studies, University of New Mexico (wordcraft@sockets.net).

Deadline for submissions is February 1, 2000. Please consult submission guidelines on the inside back cover of Paradoxa, or follow MLA guidelines in terms of general format, etc. Send 3 copies, each with an abstract of not more than 300 words on a separate page, to:

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Reviews

Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940 ***by Brenda J. Child. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1995. ISBN: 0-8032-1480-4. 143 pages.***

In her epilogue to *American Indian Quarterly's* special issue (Winter 1996) on "Writing about (Writing About) American Indians," editor Devon A. Mihesuah critiques the absence of Indian voices—both academic and non-academic—from the so-called "new Indian History." With too few Indian historians, and too few Indian people even being consulted by scholars working in "Indian history," Mihesuah argues that Indians' accounts of the past remain marginalized and, more often, simply invisible. Brenda J. Child's *Boarding School Seasons*, winner of the 1995 North American Indian Prose Award, serves as welcome antidote to Mihesuah's concerns by both consulting Indian sources and by centering its attention on Indian perspectives on the federal boarding school experience. As its subtitle suggests, Child's book focuses not just on Indian youth, the most direct recipients of the boarding school agenda, but their families as well during the first decades of the twentieth century. Child, a Red Lake Ojibwe who is a professor of American Studies at the University of Minnesota, announces her study as part of the "new Indian history" in which she privileges "Indian opinions, emotions, and experiences before, during, and after government boarding schools. I was looking for what one critic conceives of as 'other destinies, other plots,' with American Indian

people at the core of the narrative" (xiii). To that end, Child grounds her study of two Midwest boarding schools, Flandreau and Haskell, in letters written by Indian students and their families that she found in government school archives. Although she initially envisioned her work as a contribution to the tribal history of the Red Lake Nation in northern Minnesota, Child extended her study to incorporate the experiences of other Ojibwe families, complemented by attention to Oneidas, Lakotas, and Poncas who also attended these schools. In doing this kind of "Indian history," Child "hoped to document and assemble a narrative that would be familiar to my family and friends" (xiv).

While the impetus for her research began with informal interviews with family members, Child does not use oral history as the basis for her study, as K. Tsianina Lomawaima does for her study of Chilocco Indian school in *They Called it Prairie Light*. Yet among the historical studies produced in recent years on boarding schools (Adams, Coleman, Miller), *Boarding School Seasons'* focus on a few selected schools and its privileging of unpublished source material is most akin to the format of *Prairie Light*. Given these works, which share Child's interest in complicating any monolithic reading of boarding schools and their students, *Boarding School Seasons'* major contribution to the field is precisely its recovery of countless letters between families and children, between parents and school officials, letters "seldom looked at by historians" (xiii). These letters, which Child claims are "at the heart of this story" (xii), comprise much of her study, structuring each chapter's focus and foregrounding the points of view of Indian families. With these letters, *Boarding School Seasons* moves the reader through the "seasons" of boarding school life, from the anguish of separation from families and the persistent problems of inadequate food, clothing, housing and sanitation, to the lack of privacy and high rates of death and disease. At the same time, the letters enable Child to complicate the metanarrative of boarding school victimization by showing, for example, that in the aftermath of devastating allotment-era policies, when traditional Ojibwe familial support systems were attenuated by disease and dispersal, the schools provided "a solution, however temporary, to some of their most crucial dilemmas" (24).

After carefully providing an Ojibwe context for identifying the paths by which students found themselves at Flandreau and other schools, Child is equally careful in delineating the pan-Indian dimensions of boarding school life. As her chapter "Star Quilts and Jim Thorpe" points out, boarding schools inadvertently fostered a new collective sense of identity for Indian students, as they learned "bits of each other's language"

(4), intermarried, learned English, and set the foundation for future political alliances. On a somber note, they also were buried next to one another, with thirty-seven tribes represented in Haskell's cemetery (67). However, the shared sense of Indian identity that was created on the multi-tribal meeting grounds of the schools suggests the unintended consequences of a system precisely designed to eradicate tribal identities.

Similarly, Child's analysis reveals that just as the enforced use of English fueled the formation of a pan-Indian community, this tool of assimilation also provided families with a strategy for resisting the school's very goal of eliminating "tribal" influences on their children. Like Gerald Vizenor, who reminds us in *Manifest Manners* that "English, that coercive language of federal boarding schools, has carried some of the best stories of endurance" (106), Child shows us the ways in which letters written in English by parents and students challenged school administrators and their adherence to institutional rules. Of course, the excerpted letters also underscore the loss of agency experienced by Indian families, as students' letters were routinely screened and withheld, particularly if they wrote of being ill. From the other direction, letters pleading for permission to send sick children home, or to send children home because of family emergencies, often were either ignored or denied. Still, in the face of such obstacles, families remained "uncompromising in their determination to be involved in many aspects of their children's lives" (27), a point Child argues has been "underestimated" and "not well understood by historians" (27). For example, families whose letters she studied were tenacious in their efforts to stay in communication with their children, often turning to the "moccasin telegraph" as a means of keeping informed about their children's well-being and conditions at school. As such, these recovered "letters between family members speak for the deepest of bonds" (100), even as they also provide a paper trail of decades of resistance and resilience, as families fought the script assigned to them by assimilation-era educational policies.

By way of conclusion, Child reminds us that the "legacy of government boarding schools is still being sorted out in American Indian communities" (100). However, as her book persuasively argues, the "boarding school agenda did not triumph over Indian families or permanently alienate young members of the tribe from their people" (100). Returning in her conclusion to the Red Lake reservation, Child notes that despite problems of language loss and unemployment, many graduates were able to reintegrate into that community. By framing her study from a tribally and geographically specific point of view, Child points us toward refreshingly

"new" directions for the "new Indian history." This excellent addition to studies of the Indian boarding school experience makes effective and compelling use of documents long absent from the official record of a deeply complicated era in Indian history. In doing so, *Boarding School Seasons* helps to "reveal the stories of people who have for too long been anonymous and relegated to the periphery of American history but whose lives remain important to their descendants and tribes" (8).

Susan Bernardin

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Visit Teepee Town edited by Diane Glancy and Mark Nowak. Minneapolis: *Coffee House Press, 1999. ISBN I-56889-084-5. 372 pages.*

Visit Teepee Town earns its place as a first-rate anthology of postmodern Native American poetics. The humor throughout the collection effectively accomplishes one of the book's foremost aims: to resist and redefine Western readings of Native American aesthetics. Catalogued and preserved, Native American oral and written stories have been "frozen" in books and museums of history, say editors Glancy and Nowak. They see *Visit Teepee Town* as an act of unfreezing the meanings of Native American stories, poetry and prose, by unfreezing the binary of oral/written language. The collected works in *Visit Teepee Town* offer multiple possibilities for what Native American oral and written poetics can do and mean. They emphasize, then capitalize on, the fluidity of sound and meaning. Glancy and Nowak invite us to "Read quickly, misread the possibilities of words and their happenings" (v).

In Barbara Tedlock's excerpt from *The Beautiful and the Dangerous,* she realizes she is guilty of trying to freeze meaning: "I suggested that we might take a picture of Sabin—for history and all . . . . He stood next to his favorite deer-head trophy for two full-length portraits." Both photos turned

out badly. "Pictures no one loved, liked, or even wanted. Technological failures revealing the insistent documentary urge to freeze, store, and retrieve the authenticity of an encounter with a returned pilgrim. Examples of ethnographic bad faith" (116). (Tedlock's interpretation is nicely complicated by Leslie Marmon Silko's strong attachment to photographs of the landscape and people she grew up with. In *Yellow Woman* and *A Beauty of the Spirit,* Silko constantly photographs her surroundings. Her family uses photos of relatives and neighbors to teach and remind children of who their people were and are.)

The pieces in this anthology share a postmodern approach to Native American poetics, yet they vary widely, from Carolyn Lei-lanilau's narrative monologue to Barbara Tedlock's creation story; from Tlingit stories written in Tlingit by Nora Marks Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer; to Diane Glancy, Larry Evers and Felipe Molina's language poetry that uses physical space, punctuation, and word play to destabilize meaning. Finally, theoretical essays by Greg Sarris and Gerald Vizenor discuss the meaning of Native American writing and speech in various communities today.

Using the concrete details of everyday life, Carolyn Lei-lanilau's "Hawaiians, No Kanaka, Nah Hahh-Y-In" allows readers to see another, abstract story that the reader creates from the cultural meanings of those everyday details:

> Question: just who is Hah-why-an?
> I saw a definition by Ronald (in his pitch letter for his calassy
> publication)
> make the distinction of "colored"/"ethnic"—as oh sohard. He
> referred to his
> holiday "giving" letter
> addressed to All Colored Authors whom he referred to as "diverse"—
> What??? You cannoT understand what I trying to say?
> —How you think I felt when I got the letta and my linguistic beagle
> mine was sniffing it out
> and it jess sounded so fucken politie. iT Tried to be PC but it was silly.
> (87)

Also relying on the reader's cultural knowledge of words and language patterns, Rosmarie Waldrop's "A Key into the Language of American" uses the rhetoric of a Western anthropologist to create an experience of fluid meaning:

I SALUTATIONS
Are of two sorts and come immediately before the body. The pronunciation varies according to the point where the tongue makes contact with pumice found in great quantity. This lends credence, but no hand. Not so entirely Narragansette, the roof of the mouth. Position of hand or weapon conventional or volcanic formation. (72)

Complete sentences and the rhetoric of an expert scientific observer lull the reader into believing this passage will have one clear meaning. But so many meanings are possible that none clearly dominates. Salutations do come before the body (in a traditional Western letter or essay). They may also come physically before the body of someone raising a hand in greeting. It's not clear who the observer is, or who is being observed. In the next sentence, the passage seems to refer to an oral greeting. It seems Waldrop is making fun of—or having fun with—the anthropologist's rhetoric and intentions. She uses a Western scientist's monolithic rhetoric, but keeps the meaning fluid. This allows Waldrop to question the assumptions behind scientific rhetoric, the position of the observer and the observed, and the conclusions Western culture has drawn about Native American cultures, based on this kind of "expert" scientific documentation.

Waldrup continues to open up the multiple meanings of words (by placing words in different contexts, the signifiers stand for very different signifieds) in section XXIX:

XXIX OF THEIR WARRE
Surplus valor comes as messenger and heaves ambush. **Shóttash. Shot. A word made from English though their guns come from the French**. A third arm. Liable to sudden deviation. Then he has against him copious and pathetic voiced explosives to **kindle the flame of wrath** which **no man knowes how farre** it will branch to the right. A wager on who drew the first bow, on how many slain, the barking of a dog.

predestination
desert
storm
disability
Npúmmuck. I am shot. (81)

All that we associate with war in our late 20th century minds is alluded to with this list of words. Predestination led to Europeans colonizing the American continent with self-righteousness. Desert and storm are natural elements that have existed in Native American aesthetics for tens of thousands of years. In the list, desert storm is added to predestination. Desert Storm: another military attack by a large foreign power on a small sovereign state, some say to protect the resource supply. The next phase: mass starvation. "Disability" moves us to the common experience all people have with armed conflict: I am shot. No matter what language, what pronunciation, what intent, this is the sound of mortality: *Npúmmuck. I am shot.* "Disability" may also suggest that the ability to shoot and kill is a *dis*-ability.

Where Waldrup leaves silences and space for the reader to fill with meaning, James Thomas Stevens' poem "Tokinish" fills the spaces with many voices that compete for and complicate meaning. Stevens plays with the sounds of words, establishing meaning only to destabilize it. The poem captures the changing nature of English language, drawing attention to the way sound gets represented on the page (cheare and generall). At the same time, the Western gaze on the Native American seems to be clearly rendered. Or is it reversed? Does the Native American think the white people are "exceedingly delighted"? The assumption that the gaze goes only one way explodes:

> The thrill of recognition
>
> *What cheare* Netop? *is the generall salutation of all English toward them.* Netop *is friend.*
>
> *Netompauo g.* Friends.
>
> *They are exceedingly delighted with Salutations in their own Language.*
>
> -R.W. (16)

Excerpts from Roger Williams' *A Key into the Language of America* (1643), and John Donne's *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* continually interrupt, clarify and confuse the meaning of "Tokinish."

This interaction of Native American cultures with European onlook-

ers, settlers and scribblers is the lens through which Lise McCloud views her heritage. Her work "Mixed American Pak: NATIONAL HOLIDAY THUNDER CHRYSANTHEMUM WITH PEARLS&REPORTS" examines the beauty of American Independence Day fireworks as she discuss her family heritage from the beginning of the 20th century through her own life. Full of irony, McCloud's piece conveys the progress of Native, American, cultures.

> There's a discount outlet where you can get ten loaves of not quite moldy bread for a dollar on Tuesdays and that's where I'm headed, because you can fuel, or fool, a family of boys *indefinitely* on grilled commodity cheese sandwiches and date-expired Ho-Hos. To my total shock, there is a check from the US Treasury in San Francisco, made out to me in the amount of $1,729.76. It is "La Pay" from the Ten-Cent Treaty that everyone was waiting for all this time and meanwhile died of old age and hardship. In a daze I call up different meat lockers and finally order half a beef to be delivered. Nobody had any bison. (34)

A clear message in *Visit Teepee Town* is that Native American cultures are actively, continually developing. The cultures of people who settled on the North American continent tens of thousands of years ago continue to expand and adapt in the late 20th century, as all living cultures do. Daily life goes on, despite, and because of, and alongside, the mass population of Euroamericans on this continent. As Sherman Alexie writes in "The Native American Broadcasting System,"

> Custer came back to life in Spokane managing the Copper Penny Grocery, stocked the rubbing alcohol next to the cheap wine:
>
> RUBBING ALCOHOL 99ó
> THUNDERBIRD WINE $1.24
>
> The urban Indians shuffle in with tattered coats and boots,
> counting quarters while Custer trades food stamps for cash,
> offering absolution. (298)

The artists represented in *Visit Teepee Town* use postmodern poetics as a way to celebrate and share their aesthetics. In his excerpt from *Manifest Manners*, Gerald Vizenor points out that Native American literatures "have

been overburdened with critical interpretations based on structuralism and other social science theories" that mis-represent the culture those literatures come from. Worse, "Native American Indian imagination and the pleasures of language games are disheartened in the manifest manners of documentation and the imposition of cultural representation" Vizenor says (51-53). After all the mis-readings of Native American aesthetics by uninformed onlookers, *Visit Teepee Town* creates the playful, rich literature that draws on word-play, irony, understatement, humor and the celebration of survival that readers are invited to enjoy.

Lisa Bernhagan

Dark River ***by Louis Owens. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1999. ISBN 0-8061-3115-2. 286 pages.***

In his appropriately mixed-genre *Mixedblood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place*, Louis Owens opens two large worm cans and lets the nematodes mingle. He takes on not only the complex and politically-charged issue of hybridity—what it means to be mixedblood and what "mixedblood" means for the culture(s) at large—but also the equally difficult question of the relationship between identity and place. Readers of *Mixedblood Messages* will recognize in Owens's newest novel, *Dark River*, his sense of irony (present in *Wolfsong* and refined in *The Sharpest Sight* and *Bone Game*) as well as his efforts, in whatever genre, to come to terms with a history of hybridization in the context of often violent conflict over the land.

First, the irony. This is by far Owens's funniest and most clever novel yet. If *Bone Game* sometimes swerves toward dark humor, *Dark River* takes the whole corner with a twelve-pack resting securely on the gas pedal. From characterizations like a Jewish anthropologist from New York who has become more "Apache" than his objects of study, to the anthro's friend, a fullblood Apache storyteller inordinately fond of speaking the Italian he learned in Hollywood (and of the cat given to him by Iron Eyes

Cody), to an educated young Apache selling fake vision quests to wealthy Europeans and using the proceeds to fund scholarships for reservation kids, Owens explores the vicissitudes of Indian identity without caving in to either essentialism or the "bankable simulation." What is a reader to make of this young Indian entrepreneur, this *Jessie*, who robs from the rich and who teaches the boys on the reservation about Russell Means . . . Means the movie actor, that is . . . so that "the kids know their roles, develop their sense of irony so they'll know how to function, how to adapt . . . "? Who promises what no one should or can promise and who then, very strangely, delivers on that promise? There is much critical work to be done here, perhaps in light of Philip Deloria's *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1998). Craftily, Owens weaves White Mountain Apache tales into his narrative. To take a less than central example, Vulva Woman appears in the character of a blonde filmmaker from *National Geographic* who is first introduced as the dupe of the tribal council's presentation of the anthropologist as traditional Indian ("Goldberg" becomes "Gold Bird") but who then erotically overwhelms the ethically compromised tribal chairman. *Vulva Woman's new husband begs Frog Old Woman to hide him in the squash patch*: Owens renders the chairman's fear of castration with deft and hilarious subtlety. But a deft writerly hand is one thing, and this is no mere comic set piece nor merely a clever layering of the literary and the traditional. It raises disturbing questions about the intersections of sexuality and colonialism. I imagine Owens at the oars of a driftboat, floating us through some dangerous waters, and I imagine him looking over our shoulders, wondering if we know how dangerous they are and, if so, how we'll respond.

Together, Owens's linking his characters to figures from the Apache oral tradition and his careful description of specific landscapes instantiate one of the most rewarding and important aspects of his fiction: his ongoing struggle with the connections between identity and place. *Dark River*'s protagonist is Jake, a reader of Hemingway and—I believe—an iteration of the Apache culture hero Monster Slayer. Like Owens's last protagonist, he is a mixedblood Choctaw, and like Cole McCurtain, Jake Nashoba suffers from a ghost sickness, but Jake's sickness results from his tours of combat duty in Vietnam. While Jake, as an unquiet Indian veteran, is not *sui generis* in Native fiction, what lends his story its particular power and complexity is Owens's thematic focus on the variables of place and story in the calculus of identity. That is, contrary to dominant-culture or essentialist notions of the doomed and/or pathological mixedblood—which Owens critiques in *Mixedblood Messages* and elsewhere—Jake's prob-

lem is not his mixedbloodedness. As for the fullblood protagonist of *Wolfsong*, the fundamental problem for Jake is his lack of the stories that would make him part of a community rooted in a place, that might, for instance, allow him to live with his Apache wife, who is deeply rooted in her place and people, who "had grown up knowing exactly who she was." Jake's compensation, his survival strategy, is his time spent exploring and flyfishing the Dark River valley, a place that calls to him in the voice of mountain spirits and that constitutes his demilitarized zone, his secure perimeter—until the arrival of "monsters" on their own simulated vision quests. And as the conflict heats up and the men in the story wage an insane battle that is no less deadly for its self-conscious gamesmanship and irony, the female characters are increasingly revealed to be at the core of a dynamic continuity of tribal lifeways in a matrilocal culture. In love or council or (literal) battle, Owens's female Apache characters make things happen, and their strength comes from knowing the stories, and sometimes creating new ones.

In *Dark River*, Owens constructs a hybrid *bricoleur*'s plot that is roughly equal parts mystery, action/adventure, domestic drama, experimental narrative, traditional story, and farce. But all of these generic elements are ultimately in the service of a contemporary Native American "homing" story—one with an ending that will give you either a fit of irritation or great intellectual and emotional satisfaction. For me it was very much the latter.

David Brande

Dark River: A Novel *by Louis Owens. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1999. ISBN 0-8061-3115-2. 286 pages.*

When one looks upon the web of a trap door spider, the contraption that is on the surface is deceptively simple but is only the tip of something far more sophisticated. This latest novel by Louis Owens might be viewed as a simple story on the surface, a Native American action-adventure set in the mountains of the desert southwest. My question, as a reviewer, is

where to begin an examination of this deceptively complex novel? As a scholar of Native American literature, and as an admirer of all the works of Louis Owens, I find this book cries out to be discussed from the back forward. But to give away the ending of this novel would be to cheat the reader of the most sublime ending to a story I've read in a long time. And what is more, for those who can't resist the temptation to peek, it won't work to go to the end to read it first; you have to have been there for the entire trip for it to make any sense. It is also a novel that must be read at least twice to glean the layers of meaning from the complex orb Owens has woven. But I mix my spider metaphors.

A synopsis and some background is in order. The story follows Jacob Nashoba, a troubled mixedblood Choctaw Vietnam vet, through a few days in his life as a ranger on the Black Mountain reservation. Upon returning from a trip into the Dark River canyon, he finds evidence of poachers and stumbles onto a local attempt to stem the corrupt practice of the tribal CEO selling permits to hunt prime elk and pocketing the money. Meanwhile, the CEO has directed him to discontinue his trips into the Dark River canyon, where no one but Jake ever goes anyway, and concentrate instead on stopping the poaching on the mesa above. But Jake must make one last trip into the canyon to find his granddaughter, Alison. She has talked a local young Apache entrepreneur named Jesse into taking her into the canyon for one of his designed-for-tourists "vision quests," never mind that vision quests aren't an Apache tradition. On reaching the location where Alison is supposed to be fasting, he finds instead a paramilitary group playing war games, the real reason the CEO ordered him away from his beloved river. A couple of the group leaders turn out to be former Vietnam buddies of Jake's, who are astonished to find that Jake didn't die in Vietnam as they originally thought. A classic predator/prey struggle ensues, when a particularly determined member of the group steps forward and takes over. And by about page 162, Owens has the reader set up for the action-adventure rescue mission drama (there are, it turns out, two women in the canyon on Jesse's vision quests) to unfold. And any reader gullible enough to think Owens is actually going to write the story that way is due for a surprise. But then, readers familiar with Owens' other work will also be surprised, because Owens manages to deconstruct every expectation, including those for his traditional lonely protagonist Jake, before the story is over.

The background to this story is complex, but the more the reader knows ahead of time, the more the strands of this story will be apparent. One must simply know where to focus one's vision. The two major compo-

nents of the novel are the Apache landscape (cultural and physical) and the belief system of the transplanted Choctaw warrior Jacob Nashoba. These intersect in the river canyon but remain nonetheless independent world views; blended cultures are something Owens does particularly well because he appreciates the pentimento that results when one set of stories is passed over another. The convergent images and colors glow through, resulting in rich images with unique aspects.

Before reading very far into this story I poked around in the University of Texas Libraries' Minority Cultures Collection and found Grenville Goodwin's *Myths and Tales of the White Mountain Apache*, first published in 1939. In stories such as "He Goes to His Father: Slaying of Monsters," are the fables of the son of the sun named Slayer of Monsters, his brother Big Owl ("it was he who had been killing all of the people on the earth" [10]), Black Spider Old Woman, and Vulva Woman, among others. The classic battle between Monster Slayer (or perhaps Born To Water—many versions of these stories exist and the culture heroes easily shift positions from one telling to the next) and his brother Big Owl are reenacted in Owens' novel, but with a classic Owens storytelling twist that allows cultures to mingle on the shores of this Dark River.

Readers of Owens' earlier novel *The Sharpest Sight* (1992) will know much of the Choctaw eschatology that appears in a more subtle form in *Dark River*. But its presence is crucial to understanding the outcome of the book. As noted in "The Syncretic Impulse: Louis Owens' Use of Autobiography, Ethnology, and Blended Mythologies in *The Sharpest Sight*," *SAIL* 10.2, the Choctaw afterworld is reached by crossing over a black river called the Oka lusa hacha:

> The Choctaw afterworld is reached by the spirit after traveling on a path eastward toward the good hunting grounds, according to Thomas Campbell in his excellent overview of Choctaw eschatology "The Choctaw Afterworld." The path crosses a "tremendous cataract" at which the shilup must cross a slippery log while being pelted with rocks by beings from the far end. Those individuals who have not committed any of the "great crimes that merit banishment" cross easily; those who have murdered another Choctaw, are guilty of gossip, or who have set aside a pregnant wife, are destined to fall off the log into the cataract. Says Campbell: "the Choctaw type of afterworld resembles the Greek Elysium and Hades more than it resembles the Christian heaven and hell" (153). (58-59)

Warriors gain automatic admittance to the good hunting grounds, but they have to have both of their ghosts in the proper places to do so, and they still must cross that log.

Why research images of death, of the afterlife, and of spirits? Be-cause people die in this book—in many ways. Those characters who believe there is more beyond the end of life than a simple shut down of the brain stem (and cessation of all things spiritual) continue on in the story. And how long some people have been dead is perhaps the biggest mys- tery of all in this novel. Spiritual figures portending death appear or are alluded to throughout. One of the most important characters is the beau-tiful Apache elder who once married a "white hell-fire-and-brimstone- preacher" who left after three weeks, but she kept his name: Mrs. John Edwards (the insider humor is as sharp as this reference). Is she also Black Spider Woman? She is the one, several people tell Jake, who should interpret his dream, shared with her, of four perfect feathered bears. Other characters bear dual roles: Tali, the almost ex-wife, who placed his posses-sions on their porch when she could no longer live with his violent dreams, but who still visits him in the night; he associates her with water. Readers will associate her with many things. The toothsome National Geographic representative Donna Green as Vulva Woman. Shorty Luke is one of the "surviving twins" and is a thief of stories, who tells and retells his experi-ences in Hollywood as an Indian actor and cleverly incorporates others' memories into his own narratives. Shorty's best friend is the Jewish an-thropologist Avrum Goldberg ("Gold Bird") who has become more than the Indians and steps in to play Indian to woo the National Geo-graphic Society when asked by the Harvard-educated CEO Two Bears.

Jesse, the basketball-loving entrepreneur who sells vision quests to rich tourists is a pivotal character, and gives, I think, the best early key to the story and character of Jake. Jesse offers to fix the broken beer sign Jake was given years earlier. This sign is one of Owens' most enduring metaphors, and has probably appeared in every one of his five novels, but in *Dark River* he deconstructs the sign and Jake simultaneously:

> "Hey," Jessie said, motioning toward the beer sign with his chin. "I always liked that sign. Bet I could fix it for you. Probably just a bad connection."
>
> Jake looked at the sign. "I don't know," he said. "Maybe I like it just the way it is."
>
> "No way. Imagine how it would be with all of that simulated motion. I saw one of those in a bar in Flagstaff, and it was great. It's

> got these ripples going all the time, with that guy lifting and dipping his paddle. Drives you nuts trying to figure out where one of those ripples starts and another one ends and how the guy looks like he's moving but he's not. Everything tells you this guy's going somewhere, real lifelike, but it's just illusion."
>
> Jesse walked over and lifted the bottom of the sign, peering underneath. "Hey man, there's one hell of a spider back there," he said. "Black widow, I think. It's shiny black with one of those sticky, thick webs with no pattern to it . . . ." (17-18)

Pages later, when the beer sign starts operating spontaneously, Owens ironically mixes metaphors (including the flowery language of treaties) to craft a somber view of this character's life (and perhaps Native American life in general?) when Jake observes the sign and thinks "Action without effect, motion removed from time, a man in unceasing movement going nowhere beautifully. Even alive, the grass didn't grow, the water didn't flow" (94).

Unlike the beer sign, this novel flows forward, drawing the reader in with many witty intertextual references to Native American and mainstream literature along with Owens' usual mix of humor and insight. It manages the deconstruction of many stereotypical images about American Indians, but also provides a thoughtful examination of Indian literature, including Owens' own earlier fiction. This novel is Owens' most sophisticated to date, and deserves more attention than it has received. If this one goes to paperback, the academic use alone will keep it in print for years. For scholars of American Indian literature, this book will serve as a vehicle for demonstrating storytelling and narrative styles that are (post)modern but by no means mainstream.

"That's what they say" (9).

Margaret Dwyer

Family Matters, Tribal Affairs ***by Carter Revard. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998. ISBN 0816518432. 203 pages.***

The title of Carter Revard's collection of new and previously published essays honors a connection self-evident to Native readers even as it makes the importance of that connection manifest to others. *Family Matters, Tribal Affairs,* by the distinguished Osage mixedblood scholar and poet recently retired from Washington University, is first and foremost a book about family. More than that, it is an eloquent vision of literature beyond the Culture Wars. Laced with humor and irony, Revard's essays are often as intimate and colloquial as if he were telling the stories in person. He brings to life a close-knit, rural Oklahoma community whose members are ultimately connected with a much greater world. Those who leave for California or Chicago seem not so far away when Revard places them in the much broader context of traditional tribal identity. The book's first essay, "Walking Among the Stars," establishes a notion of a family universe that is not only far-flung but almost infinitely expandable. The uncles, aunts, grandparents, great-grandparents, cousins, siblings, nieces, and nephews—inlaws and outlaws, Osage, Ponca, and Irish—Revard recalls with deep affection in these essays are almost as numerous as the stars. If he shares the story of Aunt Jewell and the courage song that inspired his own writing career, he also includes his memory of Uncle Frank Phillips, whose Bartlesville-based petroleum company profited so richly from Osage oil.

Remembering his early schoolmates with equal affection, Revard peoples an entire community, not an isolated, provincial community but a community with wide-ranging ties to the larger world. Paradoxically, Revard's off-reservation schooling deepened his own tribal ties even as it offered him a transnational perspective. A couple of years after winning the radio quiz scholarship that made his college education possible, Revard was awarded a Rhodes scholarship. Just before leaving for Oxford in preparation for a lifetime commitment to language and literature, he received his tribal name in a ceremony organized by his grandmother, Mrs. Josephine Jump. That name becomes a touchstone through these essays as Revard enriches our understanding of its meaning and simultaneously what it means to be part of a tribal community.

Ultimately, these are essays about education, that traditional focus for Euroamerican autobiographers, but by the conclusion of the book's

first half, Revard has been appropriately transformed from young student to elder teacher with niece and nephew in tow. "Family Reunion," the last essay in the section called "Family Matters," brings us up-to-date with a tour of Greater St. Louis, Revard's home for many years. He knows the region well—from the readily recognizable Arch to Cahokia Mounds across the Mississippi in Illinois, visible reminders of what was once the largest city on this continent, to cattle egrets, recent avian migrants to North America from Africa. The tour leads Revard to reflect that while St. Louis landmarks can be seen from Cahokia, these important tribal landmarks are not visible from St. Louis. The book's second half, "Tribal Affairs," is a conscious effort to change this perspective.

Revard's essays are generously laced with humor and irony. His very first home, he notes wryly, was located midway between the Osage County Courthouse and jail, and the mansion that belonged to the family of John Joseph Mathews, the first Osage Rhodes Scholar, who returned to Pawhuska to write such works as *Sundown*. Contrary to the expectation of most off-reservation readers, it was the "wild Irish" side of Revard's family and not the "wild Osage" side that connected the future Rhodes Scholar to the jail. There his grandfather served a term for letting his three sons run their bootlegging operation out of the house. The Osage family his mother married into soon moved the young Carter and his twin sister into the world of middle-class gentility with maid and telephone. Here, a boy could borrow *Swann's Way* from his aunt's bookshelf for outhouse reading. It is a book, Revard confesses, that he may yet finish.

Revard exploits the comic reversal to its fullest effect in one of the book's finest essays, a gentle but pointed satire called "Report to the Nation: Repossessing Europe." As he adventures with his family from the Thames across France, through the Roncevalles into Spain, and almost but not quite to the summit of Olympos, Revard claims all that previously "unclaimed" territory in the name of the Osage elders. At the heart of the essay, however, are the four poems carefully intercut into the text, a quiet reminder that the real issue is not land ownership but joyous and respectful relationship.

Relationship, indeed, is a theme that connects all the essays in this volume. In "Making a Name," the first essay in the book's second section, Revard moves his focus to language and literature, his life's vocation. Here, he considers the relationships hidden or revealed in names, teaching readers to follow the thread of connection for a broader sense of tradition, history, and community. Citing the method used to instruct the young Charles Alexander Eastman, Revard suggests that such teaching

was fundamental to traditional tribal education. As he begins to establish his identity as an Indian academic, he shares examples from his own life—Amherst, for example. It was in this community, named for the British lord who sent the first shipment of smallpox-infested blankets to the local tribes, that Revard began his teaching career and engaged, some forty years ago, in his first skirmish in the Culture Wars. Ironically, this skirmish involved not only his departmental colleagues but the canonical figure of Robert Frost, then revered as "the greatest living writer of poetry in English" (118). Revard notes that he well might have responded, "'Good night—Yankee!'" when a resounding, "'Good night—Indian!" accompanied Frost's farewell handshake. He didn't, and through the essays that follow, his restraint becomes emblematic of Revard's enormous respect for the canon.

Establishing this context for his own inclusive approach to canonical British and American literature, Revard focuses on traditional cultural expressions of connection in his next essay, "History, Myth, and Identity among Osages and Other Peoples." The web of connection may manifest itself even in such nontraditional forms as Indian autobiography, he notes. In his thinking on the Columbian encounter, "How Columbus Fell from the Sky and Lighted Up Two Worlds," Revard casts Columbus as a Native culture hero, the source of illumination through whom Revard sees—and helps us see—how the European desire to purge the world of evil has functioned to marginalize Native peoples. In contrast with the Euroamerican canon (and its finest exemplars Milton and Shakespeare), the Native canon has found a fitting relationship between the newer whites and traditional culture figures. If money-seeking and power-seeking are looked on askance, they remain central to the universe and cannot be purged from it.

In his final essay "Herbs of Healing," Revard makes his most traditional appeal to literary scholars, invoking the Culture Wars directly. Pairing poems by Wallace Stevens, Milton, and Robert Frost with poems by Simon Ortiz, Wendy Rose, and Louise Erdrich, he posits a community rather than a conflict of interest. Revard leaves us with a poetic offering of his own, poems that offer new insights into both modern American and Native culture in one of the most traditional of Old English forms, the Riddle. The very form with its alliteration bridging two half lines stands as the model of connection that Revard so reverently hopes can come through the process of intellectual discovery.

Linda Lizut Helstern

Some Things Are Not Forgotten: A Pawnee Family Remembers *by Martha Royce Blaine. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997. ISBN 0-8032-1275-5. 274 pages.*

Reading Royce Blaine's book is a bit like looking through an old chest in the attic. The excitement and anticipation are certainly present as you enter a box like many boxes in the attic. However, upon opening, the contents begin to distinguish it from any other like repository.

The first thing you notice is the snapshots. Chapter 3 begins with a quote by Voltaire, "History supplies little beyond a list of those who have accommodated themselves with the property of others." The first half of the book is devoted to a meticulous detailing of that attempted and successful usurpation of the Pawnee people from their traditional territories by the United States and state governments. There is richness in this discussion; there is pain in the detail. If you are able to more than glance at this snapshot of the Pawnee experience of colonization, you will wince when you recognize the picture within the picture: this is about the universality of all indigenous peoples' experience in response to the colonization attempts of the settlers. As Royce Blaine details the legislative and illegal schemes which were perpetrated to deprive the Pawnee of their land, you glance and think, "Now, isn't this familiar?"

In fact, her eye is steady and her aim is true. Royce Blaine describes removal, starvation and negotiation for the necessities of life with a verisimilitude that is rare and compelling. Stark and convincing, her lyrical tone belies her harsh understanding: coercion, duplicity, and legislative manipulation were used in the attempt to remove the "Pawnee problem." In remarkable historical detail, Royce Blaine is able to describe this shameful American governmental legacy in a manner that describes the legislative and political coercion in a historical and a holistic manner. You understand not only when the events occurred but what the long-lasting impact has been on the Nation. This understanding results partly from the authenticity provided in Royce Blaine's narrative (attributable to the strength and veracity of the oral tradition) and partly from the historical written sources.

This is no victim's tale, however. In no snapshots are the eyes of the survivors averted. The Pawnee are described, discussed and regarded at all times with a respectful eye. The intellect, oratorical style, and talents of individuals and communities are alluded to and described. Some of the

historical truths are painful; they splatter the pages like tears on a letter. Even when describing these things, Royce Blaine is able to convey the strength and resilience of the people in a gentle and respectful manner. You are tempted to overlook the author's skill at times. However, when you come upon the descriptions of certain events by outsiders, you are consistently made aware that Royce Blaine knows her subject.

We are gifted by Royce Blaine's use of traditional translations and description of traditional lifestyles, medicines, dances and spirituality. However, as with personal diaries you might find in a trunk, it is somewhat perplexing to find yourself so absorbed in the reading but aware that it might not be appropriate that such information is in the hands of an outsider to the experience. In this work, as in life, you cannot separate laws from spirituality or government from laws, and the discussions of spirituality are certainly relevant. Royce Blaine adeptly manages the difficult task of treading between respect and responsibility to share information. This is especially true in Part II, comprised of three chapters largely devoted to weaving the oral traditions of Garland Blaine in an intricate pattern with the written text of Martha Royce Blaine. In a very true sense, reading this portion of the book seemed, at times, to verge on intrusion. Remembering the words of so many of our Elders, I recalled while reading this that to record some words was perceived as detracting from their strength and power. Partially, this understanding exists precisely because of the history and experience of indigenous peoples and our response to the colonial presence in our nations. On quite another level, I responded as one might respond to a private discussion with an oddly familiar stranger—not feeling quite deserving of the gift but honored all the same to receive it.

The book itself is a valuable gift to the children of the Pawnee and to those of us who have the shared experience of attempted colonization and its devastating impact. It certainly is an important resource for all individuals who work in the areas of Native American literature, law, or oral traditions. This book is most important for the wordgift it gives to the Pawnee people: it tells the people how they are and how they should be, where they have been and how they got where they are. It tells of the sacrifice, pain and the blood that paved the road that they traverse. It tells of the joy, spirit and celebration of the memories in their blood. The story is one which is old and true. In that sense, Royce Blaine provides us with two books. The first is a telling and skilled piecing together of a story which has its basis in the meeting of two very different cultures. As it is a joining, Royce Blaine uses the oral traditions of the Pawnee and the writ-

ten sources of the settlers to effectively tell that story. The second book is a lovelier and more private book, which with gentle terminology and a loving hand recounts and celebrates via oral tradition the very essence of Pawnee personhood: becoming Pawnee, Pawnee childhood, the Old and the new, and the Pawnee truths. The difference between the two parts of the book is much like the difference between the letter you write to a stranger and the letter you write to family. How lucky we are to be able to read both.

Tracey Lindberg (Cree)

Indian Cartography ***by Deborah A. Miranda. New York: Greenfield Review Press, 1999. ISBN 0-912678-99-2. 100 pages.***

A friend of mine carpets her walls with epic-sized maps. A map of the island within the San Juans where she owns a cabin home, and a map of Ireland, where she has staked her identity and origins. During my first visit to her rented apartment in the University District of Seattle, she immediately led me to her maps, displayed as one would display a shrine, with dignity and importance, emblazoned with heart-felt significance. We stood before them for thirty minutes or so, while she pointed out key locations, explained the perimeters, spaces and boundaries, the territories that define and comprise of her life. When I pick up Deborah Miranda's debut collection *Indian Cartography*, 1997 winner of the Diane Decorah Memorial Poetry Prize, I am vividly reminded of the afternoon I spent at my friend's house viewing her maps, her history, listening while she unfolded her life before me. Like my friend, Miranda is also a cherisher of maps—her stories unfold, her words draw boundaries and seek internal and historical terrain. Miranda's poetry examines and searches for lost and discovered identities. She leads me along her particular trails and paths—some gentle as mist, others wrought with the violence of hailstorms—and when I reach the clearings I am quietly amazed, stunned at times, by the

landscapes she calls home.

The first thing I am called to ask of Miranda's work is, what is home? Miranda informs her audience in the forward that her origins, her tribal background, is Esselen, a Californian tribe that because of missionization was nearly lost and forgotten, and was in fact declared extinct. (Currently, about 300 Esselen tribal members are petitioning for Federal Recognition.) Miranda writes: "The worst legacy of all for Californian Indians whose ancestors emerged from the Missions was the basic loss of familial connections through a diasporic, desperate scattering of tribes without a landbase." Miranda addresses this theme of homelessness in the poem "Looking for a Cure," which opens the collection.

> There is a medicine
> for this anger if only she could
> remember it
> or chant it
> or locate the shady grove
> where the plant still grows.

The persona of this poem is searching for something lost, a state of being perhaps imperative for survival, essential towards well-being. The persona alludes to the land as the cure, the homeland, the object of search, but she's not able to grasp it, not able to own it. "In this country that is and is not / hers . . . ." There once existed a psychic map offering directions to terrains rich in medicine, but as if emerging from a terrible nightmare the persona is lost.

> There are no longer directions
> to this place of resolution
> The woman dreams in daytime now
> of a cave of sacred bones, walls
> resonant with voices singing in a cliff.

This poem resounds with a grief specifically bred out of dispossession.

Miranda takes the theme of dispossession to another, more personal, level. Unflinchingly, she records in poem after poem a rape that occurred when she was only seven years old.

> After he leaves or I escape
> I hold myself together

with metal staples
or stitches of sinew,
or my own bloody fingers
because I know
I am not strong enough
to let go . . .
I am splayed open
like a starfish, a dead crab
an ancient turtle whose shell
has finally been broached.

In my mind, these poems immediately stand apart from other rape-experience poems because Miranda's poetry contains much broader implications; the speaker is an Esselen Indian woman. The poems succeed in delivering an indictment on a figure guilty of unconscionable violations. Peel back the layers of this portrait and there exists a larger frame: our country's heinous sins—the dirty deeds that aren't polite to talk about. Miranda's poems could be addressing the government, the missionization process, the colonizers. She juxtaposes imagery of land with imagery describing the territory of her body.

You cut me up,
left me alive
but scarred, black holes
scattered
throughout the universe
of my body . . . .

Miranda looks to her father for further investigation into her heritage, her home. In the title poem, "Indian Cartography," (also the third chapter title) Miranda aptly demonstrates the legacy of dispossession. She creates an homage to her father, a poem infused with remembrance and poignancy.

My father opens a map of California—
traces mountain ranges, rivers, county borders
like family bloodlines. Tuolomne,
Salinas, Los Angeles, Paso Robles,
Ventura, Santa Barbara, Saticoy,
Tehachapi. Places he was happy,
or where tragedy greeted him
like an old unpleasant relative.

By listing the geographical settings of her father's boyhood, Miranda immediately draws the reader into setting, a sense of place. This poem defines her Esselen Nation's homeland and at the same time mourns the loss of those homelands.

> In my father's dreams
> after the solace of a six-pack,
> he follows a longing, a deepness . . .
> he swims out, floats on his face
> with eyes open, looks down into lands not drawn
> on any map.

The final poem in the collection appears to come from a place of acceptance and reconciliation. Not giving in exactly, but discovering a home among the ruins.

> It is good
> to know my place
> and trace all the paths
> over and over
> to find my way
> by echo, taste of riverscent
> and breeze,
> not relying on light
> to find the bones of my ancestors . . .
> Here in the dark
> nation of my body
> I am never homeless.

Tiffany Midge

A Reader's Guide to the Novels of Louise Erdrich by *Peter G. Beidler and Gay Barton. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1999. ISBN 0-8262-1212-3. 265 pages.*

This a valuable tool for undergraduate students and advanced scholars alike. First-time readers of Erdrich's novels, for whom the book is primarily intended, will appreciate how Beidler and Barton facilitate memory of story lines and character interrelationships; I would even advise my own students to read relevant portions of this handbook prior to reading a novel. Those who teach Erdrich's novels or write about them will likewise enjoy double-checking textual details without the added labor of paging through the volumes themselves. However, Beidler and Barton's work offers us more than a handy guide to first-time reading and review: their book aids readers' discovery of the profound meanings implied through Erdrich's management of spatial and temporal elements of narrative. As the authors declare: "This book grows out of our own conviction that beneath the seeming chaos of story and character in Erdrich's novels lies a series of interlocking patterns, a carefully crafted web of more-than-Faulknerian complexity, as mazelike as life itself, yet ordered by Erdrich's genius."

Beidler and Barton's volume consists of an introduction, three main sections, and a detailed index. The first section contains a genealogical chart (accompanied by explanatory text) for each family appearing in Erdrich's novels. Furthermore, for each (non-linearly narrated) novel, the chronological order of events is listed. Such lists are excellent aids for readers, who must otherwise do much of this work for themselves. Though one might argue that chronological guides interfere with an important part of the projected reader's experience of dealing with textual information that is deliberately presented in "disorderly" fashion, we might also observe that facilitated reading leads more quickly to deep and insightful reading—the ultimate reward of our efforts. Finally, the first section contains maps of the real North Dakota, as well as of Erdrich's slightly redrawn and re-imagined territory. For readers intrigued by sleuthing out prototypes of the actual places behind Erdrich's fictional towns and reservations, these maps provide a fascinating diversion.

Section two, the bulk of the handbook, is a dictionary of characters. Major events involving specific characters are noted, as are the chapters in the novels where each character appears. Listings of characters by first names make this dictionary easy to use, and the commentaries on the

characters are enlightening and thorough. Erdrich's Animal People, such as canines Almost Soup and Windigo Dog, are referenced among the two-leggeds and the spirit denizens of her fictive world. In this second section of the handbook, as well as in the first, Beidler and Barton are careful to point out any inconsistencies in Erdrich's presentation of family ties, geographical locations, and character traits—another useful tool for a reader who suspects a discrepancy but distrusts her memory.

The last section of the handbook is an admirably complete, up-to-date bibliography of primary and secondary texts, an indispensable tool for students and scholars alike. A conscientious reader who uses this handbook as it is intended—to facilitate the considerable intellectual work that Erdrich's texts demand—will find that it enhances the pleasure of traveling the road to full appreciation of Erdrich's achievement. Including this text with Erdrich's novels as required reading in literature classes will, without a doubt, lead students quickly to higher, more insightful levels of discussion and writing than they might otherwise have reached within the span of a single course.

Catherine Rainwater

Feeding the Ancient Fires: A Collection of Writings by North Carolina American Indians *edited by MariJo Moore. Greensboro, NC: Crossroads, 1999. ISBN 0-9672180-0-4. 78 pages.*

As James Welch says on the dust-jacket of Joy Harjo's and Gloria Bird's *Reinventing the Enemy's Language*, "Don't look for 'pretty' stories and poems here. You won't find them. What you will find are individual voices . . . ." Harjo and Bird's innovative, wonderful, and woman-centered collection seems to have given birth to a new genre, a genre not so much literary as it is authentic, a genre made up of the words through which "real people" survive and heal. But *Feeding the Ancient Fires* is not an imitation of Harjo's and Bird's volume, of Barbara Duncan's *Living Stories of the Cherokee*, or of any other book of this kind. In fact, *Feeding the Ancient Fires* is even truer to the idea of community, passing the healing

power of words in a circle that includes not only the storyteller, but also elders, everyday men and women, and, perhaps most importantly, our children.

Feeding the Ancient Fires is the product of an invitation issued by the North Carolina Humanities Council to Cherokee poet and playwright MariJo Moore—the state's Distinguished Woman of the Year in the Arts in 1998—to hold a series of writing workshops for North Carolina Indians from various tribes and walks of life. The selections chosen by Moore for the volume are representative of the writing produced in this venture, and, as Moore says, "representative of the full range of life for American Indians living in North Carolina." The writings are, as one might expect, predominantly by Cherokees and Lumbees; however, Native Americans from other tribes, some unexpected, find a voice here as well.

This is also true of the extraordinary artwork included in the volume. Cherokee artist Lynn King Lossiah provides the cover art (also reprinted in the text), a depiction I would be tempted to call an indigenous "Holy Family." Darrin Bark, also Cherokee, shares an image of an elderly Native woman, so well drawn she almost seems to escape the confines of the page. Lumbee artist Karl Anthony Hunt offers a syncretic, postmodern crucifixion, with Christ sacrificed by clouds of urban pollution, an eagle gliding just beyond his grasp. But Navajo artist Roger Willie's pen and ink sketch of tree spirits is so incredible that if this were the only page in the text, the book would still be worth the purchase.

The writings, like the artwork, depict a syncretic, contemporary Native existence, the very liminality of which produces a host of identity issues and cultural crises. But, on the whole, the writings are positive, the workshop having offered writing as a healing experience. Contributor Barbara Braveboy Locklear (Lumbee) suggests that the healing extends even outside the Native American community: "the woven words of this anthology help others to understand these Native people in ways they had not . . . and enable us to see ourselves more clearly than we have done before." Another contributor, Kathryn Cooper (Cherokee), says of her experience,

> It is so hard for many of us to live in the right way and raise our children in the ways of our grandmothers when all of society and Hollywood has defined who we are and how we must behave and think. MariJo allowed us to have our voices back. She gave us the power to define ourselves . . . . But for me the most important gift was that our children now have a way to go and see what others just like

themselves have thought or felt, not just on the subjects that are politically popular, but on the everyday things.

And the children's voices in this book definitely stand out, carrying the ancient rhythms more gracefully and speaking more openly, without the constraint colonized life has taught the adults. Ten-year-old Sunale Crowe (Cherokee) writes,

To walk the sky path
You must have a clear mind.

To walk the sky path
You must have a clean heart.

To walk the sky path
You must follow the bright moonlight. (45)

Annette Bird Saunooke (Cherokee) relates her experiences as a young, mixedblood woman, the shocked reaction when she confronts the racism of her peers, her feelings about the new stereotype embodied in "a little Indian doll with a Hollywood history . . . But how do you sell a little Indian girl? Easy . . . She wears her 'Native' dress of polyester fringe and lacy bows and her eyes are naturally pink and purple-rimmed. Her lips are genetically stained pink" (63). Stan Watty (Cherokee) offers an equally moving account from a young man's perspective:

Straight as an arrow
Young Native watching his brother
choke on the smoke and drink,
seeing his people dying,
he stops to think:

What does it mean to be a Full Blood?
Lying? Dying in the mud?—with only a bottle at your funeral? (68)

The selections by adult contributors show that they realize the struggle their children face all too well. Karenne Wood (Monacan) writes:

then lost
that grief

the dispossessed fact
our faces etched in the
frozen-mouth horror of Bigfoot at Wounded Knee,
photographed
in death

so that some of us fall forward out of bars onto the
nearest black earth, as though we need to get back
to our beginnings, and other, younger ones
look at endless land and
put guns to their lives . . . (30)

Though at times for those more used to polished, literary writing—and accustomed to teaching the writing of academic discourse—some of the reading can be frustrating, giving rise to a desire to free these new authors from the traps of self-consciousness and insecurity, it is well worth the time for the soaring honesty that bursts through in pieces like these. MariJo Moore has done an excellent job with the volume and the project. She should be applauded for her selfless offering of her time and talent for the benefit of the Aniyunwiya and their neighbors. She walks in the footsteps of the Grandmothers.

Kimberly Musia Roppolo

Contributors

Susan Bernardin is assistant professor at University of Minnesota, Morris (founded as a Catholic boarding school), where she teaches Native American, African American, and American literatures. She has pub - lished articles on Mourning Dove, Zitkala-Sa, and Louis Owens.

Lisa Bernhagen is currently assistant to the Director of Composition at Western Washington University, where she teaches composition courses and is actively involved in training and supporting freshman composition instructors. She received her Masters in International Politics from Vaxjo University, Sweden in 1995, and her Masters in English Literature from Western Washington University in 1998. Bernhagen will be teaching Writing about Native American Literatures this spring, combining her composition and literature backgrounds.

Melani Bleck is of mixed Korean and Euroamerican descent. She received her undergraduate degree in English literature with an emphasis in Ethnic American Literature from the University of Colorado, Boulder. She received her MSc from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, where she is currently a Teaching Assistant and a PhD candidate. Her thesis is entitled "The Collapse of Space: Reconfiguring and Re-Imag(in)ing Social Relations in Native American Written Narratives."

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Margaret Dwyer is currently employed by the Libraries of the University of Texas at Arlington, where she finished a master's degree in English in 1999. She is nearing completion of a master's in Philosophy in Environmental Ethics at the University of North Texas. Both degrees have allowed her to focus on the environmental messages and ethics contained in mainstream and American Indian literature.

Linda Lizut Helstern is an engineering administrator and adjunct lecturer in English at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. Several of her critical essays have previously appeared in *SAIL*, and her reviews have been published in such journals as *Western American Literature* and *The Great Plains Review*.

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Tracey Lindberg is a Cree woman from Northern Alberta. A lawyer and scholar, she is an assistant professor of Aboriginal Studies and Criminal Justice at Athabasca University in Northern Alberta. Ms. Lindberg has taught Aboriginal literature and history and currently teaches Aboriginal law and justice and is constructing a course on Aboriginal women.

Tiffany Midge is the 1994 recipient of the Diane Decorah Memorial Poetry Prize for her collection *Outlaws, Renegades and Saints*. An enrolled member of the Standing Rock Sioux, she has authored a children's book, *Animal Legend and Lore: Buffalo,* and has published work in *Blue Dawn, Red Earth* (Doubleday, 1996), *Reinventing the Enemy's Language* (Norton, 1997) and *Growing Up Ethnic in America* (Penguin, 1999).

Catherine Rainwater is Associate Professor of English at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas, where she teaches a variety of literature courses, including one in Native American literature. Her publications on Native American writers appear in such journals as *American Literature* and *American Journal of Semiotics*. Her most recent book is *Dreams of Fiery Stars: The Transformations of Native American Fiction* (U of Penn Press, 1999).

Kimberly Roppolo (Cherokee/Choctaw/Creek descent) is a doctoral student at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, where she resides with her husband Randall and three children, Cody, Rachel, and Marley. She expects to take her PhD in August 2000. Her area of specialty is Native American Literature, with secondary areas in Chicana/o literature, African- American literature, and women's writing. She writes creatively as well and has several upcoming publications including "Selections from *Breeds and Outlaws*," which will appear in Robert Benson's anthology, *Children of the Dragonfly*, expected from the University of Arizona Press in August 2000.