

PART TWO

**NATIVE AMERICAN
LITERATURE**

EPHANIE'S VISION QUEST: BLENDING NATIVE AMERICAN AND FEMINIST ELEMENTS

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"The key is in remembering, in what is chosen for the dream. In the silence of recovery we hold the rituals of the dawn, now as then."
---Paula Gunn Allen, "The Trick is Consciousness"

Paula Gunn Allen said that it took her thirteen years to write The Woman Who Owned the Shadows and that she considered it a kind of personal vision quest. Allen parallels her vision quest as a writer with those of Native American men--going out into the wilderness to find out who they are (Vision 99). The Woman Who Owned the Shadows was written in San Francisco, Albuquerque, Los Angeles, and El Cerrito. The process of its writing is reflected in the wanderings of the central character, Ephanie, who is pulled between various locations as she goes on her own vision quest. According to Allen, "wandering is an old custom among the tribes" (qtd. Norwood and Monk 193). Although Allen connects Ephanie's search for identity to a tribal tradition of wandering, it is of course also an established literary pattern evident in both Eurocentric and American novels.

Allen is one of the more prolific figures in American Indian literature. A poet, a novelist and a critic, she was born of mixed Laguna Pueblo, Sioux and Lebanese descent in Cubero, New Mexico in 1939. She holds B.A., M.F.A. and Ph.D. degrees and is currently a professor of Ethnic Studies and Native American Studies at the University of California at Berkeley. Definitely a feminist, she traces those roots back to the woman-centered pueblo society (Coltelli 11-12).

Allen calls the woman-centered society of the pueblos gynocentric rather than matriarchal. In her studies she has never found a patriarchal society in a Native American culture. The actual role of the woman varied from tribe

to tribe, but femininity was a central cultural value. According to Allen, you will find important female deities and female rituals necessary to the ongoing life of the tribes. Although many tribal ceremonies are gender specific, women are significantly present in one way or another in every ceremony (Allen, Vision 101).

Indian feminism is, however, different from the "mainstream theoretical feminism of the university" (Shanley 214). The key issues of the women's movement--equal pay for equal work, child health and welfare, and choice on contraceptive use, sterilization and abortion--affect Indian women also. However, equality for them begins with personal and tribal sovereignty. Indian women are struggling for the survival of a social structure different from the mainstream movement's notions of family, and they are also seeking sovereignty as a people "in order to maintain a vital legal and spiritual connection to the land, in order to survive as a people" (Shanley 214). Equality within tribal communities is more significant for them than equality in terms of America at large.

It is this complicated relationship with feminism that Allen incorporates into her novel. She explores the interrelationship between new lifestyles and traditional values in light of women's ritual and spirituality. Exploration of the displacement of the "breed" or mixed blood Indian is another central theme in Allen's work as well as in work by most contemporary Native American authors. This displacement arises from pressures of the dominant white society and results in a mixed blood man or woman who is not completely at ease in either the dominant culture or their own tribal culture. In recent writings, the breed is "reborn to dig out their roots--able to re-establish relationships with the lands" (Coltelli 4). Symbolically, Ephanie's name is a split name, "a name half of this and half of that: Epiphany...Effie" (Allen Woman 3). Much of Allen's work searches for natural harmony and meaning and attempts to place the individual in the web of "history, natural harmony and traditional understanding" (Ruppert 32). Healing comes from power within each person and in Woman Who Owned the Shadows, Ephanie combines a physical journey and a mythical journey to seek the ancient power inside herself.

Allen tells Ephanie's story in a circular manner moving back and forth between present, past and mythical time. It is a story of a woman in deep depression, unable to cope with life. Her world is vague and dreamlike as she leaves one unhappy marriage and moves into another after a brief passage through a controlling relationship with her cousin, Stephen. She leaves her children on the reservation with relatives as she attempts to put her life on more stable ground. She again drifts between relationships; this time with women. As Allen explores issues of tribal identity, feminism, and a half breed's ability

to function in the world away from the reservation, so does Ephanie's journey enable her to gradually remember her childhood. Ephanie's dreams bring insight and lead her to come to terms with the person she is.

Ruppert said in his article on Allen and mythical space that the world of imagination leads one internally into mythic space where the dreams are. When the dreams end, the person sees with new insight. The importance of "connectedness of all beings--and the fusion of personal and mythic space" to the Native American experience is invaluable in understanding Indian literature (Ruppert 27). To Allen, American writers focus on the ugly stuff that people do as the reality. To her, reality is the natural world, and that world includes the myths and the dreamtime.

Indian literature must also be understood in the context of the land and rituals which affirm the people's relationship to it. The land is Spider Woman's creation, and American Indians, even in urban areas, live in touch with it. At the center of many of these rituals are women and female sexuality. "The wilderness, American Indian women, ritual and American Indian women's writing are inextricably woven together" (Norwood and Monk 176).

Storytelling is a form of curing ceremony in Laguna Pueblo traditions. As Ephanie searches for healing, her story is interspersed with Laguna songs and tales. In Laguna tradition, everything that has happened will happen again. Indian time is a circle. In her Prologue to The Woman Who Owned the Shadows, Allen "feminizes and personalizes the myth of Spider Woman and her twin so that it becomes a means of viewing and revealing the events of the narrative to come" (Hanson 35).

In the beginning was the Spider. She divided the world.
She made it...Thus was woman...

Within the pouches, the sacred identical pouches she had
placed the seeds that would bear the woman who was her
own twin. Uretsete and Naotsete she would name them,
double woman she would name them, from whose baskets all
lives would come...

...thus they sit on the altar of power....(Woman 1)

Ephanie's story seemingly contradicts the power of the Spider Woman as she allows herself to become a victim. The resulting tension between the two stories serves to hold the novel together. Where the Spider Woman controls her world, Ephanie seemingly can control nothing. She feels that as a woman and a half-breed she is tossed about and must run without escape. Ephanie exists in a spiral of fear "made visible through the minutiae of her life; the details of her private rituals of daily experience" (Hanson 37).

Ephanie had a best friend as a young girl, a Chicana named Elena. This friendship is a reminder of the traditional story of the Creator sisters. "They were so close they were like twins... With each other they were each one doubled. They were thus complete" (Allen, Woman 22). When they were nine, Elena's mother put an end to the relationship because of a fear that they were becoming lovers. When they were separated, Ephanie felt that "she was falling. Had fallen. Would not recover from the fall, smashing the rocks. That they were in her, not on the ground" (Allen, Woman 30). Later Ephanie observes the joy of two nuns as they fall in love, but soon joyfulness leaves and somberness returns to her convent school when one of the nuns is sent away. Lamenting the loss of love and happiness, Ephanie gradually learns to distrust herself and her love for other women.

Allen says that lesbianism in traditional Indian cultures was probably common (Sacred 256). In the Lakota Sioux tradition, a woman who was Spirit directed toward other women would have "dreamed of Double Woman, and from then on, she would be a skilled craftsperson, doing both women's and men's work" (Van Dyke 347). This dream was accompanied by a special power and burden and was highly respected by the Lakota. A dreamer of this dream would be considered a sacred person or waeken. According to Allen she would be "a medicine woman in a special sense" (Sacred 257).

Ephanie's second fall is revealed near the end of the novel. At the age of twelve her cousin Stephen challenges her to jump from a rope and she slips. Suffering two broken ribs and a punctured lung, she feels betrayed by Stephen, and the result is both psychic and physical pain. The tree she fell from becomes the symbol of her "drought of the spirit" (Allen, Woman 132). Ephanie sees it "lying, against the ground, split in two---dying, all filthy and rotting and dying" (133).

At this point, she abandons herself--the very core of her being. Before this second fall, she had thought of herself as someone full of life and action, not afraid of the world. As she puts all of her energy into becoming the Catholic version of a "lady," she leaves her power and Indian traditions behind. She is not following her spiritual way, and she allows herself to be dominated by the men in her life. Her first husband, her cousin, Stephen and her Japanese-American husband all seem to just flow over her. She is overwhelmed, pushed this way and that, and seemingly rootless. This lack of roots results in lack of power and self-determination. Stephen is what she could not be, and she imagines her skin as his medicine bundle (8). She is dependent on him while Thomas, her second husband, is dependent on her. This interdependence weakens her even more. She eventually seeks the help of a woman therapist to "make her world safe" (67).

As she begins a journey back to the female center of herself--moving from one world to another--she is out of place in both. The white women's group doesn't truly understand her. They only see the noble Indian (67). They are angry she isn't the brave Native American who fully practices and understands the traditions of her heritage. There is no room in their view of the world for an Indian woman who does not understand how she became the person she is nor what she will do with her life. When she tries to return to the reservation, she also feels dislocation. She begins to hear and remember the ancient traditions of her grandmothers. The spirits have not given up on Ephanie, and her friend Teresa tells her to listen because they are trying to tell her something important. "They want you to know someone is watching out for you" (62).

Leslie Marmon Silko beautifully expresses the necessity to understand the past:

You should understand
the way it was
back then
because it is the same
even now. (94)

Ephanie tries to avoid the messages from the spirits but finally understands that she has rejected the role the spirits have given her. As she begins to understand the two warring parts within her, she attempts to hang herself. But, Ephanie is able to cut herself down, and it is this third fall that brings her a realization and appreciation of life. The symbolism of this act could be viewed from two different traditions. Tribal history includes stories of suicide when one resists one's spiritual way (VanDyke 349). Also in tribal cultures, people don't become full adults until they go through their death trips. It is required of them (Coltelli 30). Allen sees this as a process that begins in adolescence (a kind of rebirthing) and usually takes at least fifteen years. She says "We don't get there until we are in our thirties" (Coltelli 31).

After the third fall, Ephanie begins to reclaim what is hers, searching for the answers in the old stories, and the healing process begins. She recovers her own vision of herself and accepts her connections "to the ancient tribal power of the sisterhood of the medicine women" (VanDyke 350). This tribal cultural view is also represented in a Seneca-origin myth about the fall of Sky Woman, "who with the help of some animals turned what should have been a fall to the death into life, populating a new world" (VanDyke 349).

The healing begins for Ephanie when she reconnects with the female principles exemplified in Thought Woman (Spider Woman) and her sisters. Acknowledging these Spider Thoughts, she knows everything is connected. She "recovers the ancient qualities of women who were seen as strong and powerful, balancing the ancient qualities of men, seen as transient or transitory" (VanDyke 351). This balancing of qualities allows both the individual and the tribe to continue and to prosper.

Allen is seeking to restore balance to the community of women by allowing the reader to participate in the curing ceremony of the novel and to follow the main character in the restoration of balance. Women-centered spiritual traditions offer a bridge between heterosexual and lesbian women. Traditionally, women have often used literature as sacred text when they are searching for new ways to understand spirituality. In fact, feminists have found that "non-European spiritual traditions offer more satisfying paths to global healing than Western patriarchal religions" (Curb 1).

For Allen, the act of remembering the past is a form of providing nourishment. Women need to "re-member" the past, put it back together, and recovering, know who they are and who they have been. She gives the example of the female Indian potters who take old pottery and grind it up and put it into the clay-mix for the new pot. This allows the clay to bond more securely, so it will not fall apart. The idea of gaining strength from a blending of the old and the new is an idea also expressed in Allen's poem, "Womanwork":

they use
old pots
broken
fragments
castaway
bits
to make new
mixed with clay
it makes strong
bowls, jars
new
she
brought
light
we remember this. . . (29)

Allen sees herself as "creating a fabric that will strengthen and nurture others and give them a sense of who they are and where they came from" (Vision 100).

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Allen's theme of drawing strength from bonding of the old and the new--an interconnectedness over time--is also expressed by Vickie Downey of the Tewa-Tesuque Pueblo. Downey told Steve Wall in his collection of conversations with Women Elders, that what are now called legends were originally given to the People as Instructions, a reality at some point in time, not just stories. These Instructions told that all peoples were related and interconnected. Downey said that the Pueblo people rely on the spiritual world for protection, and the spirits have said it is time to speak out.

She said they have been told that it is time for the feminine to speak out and for their words to be recognized. "Most women can't comprehend what it is. They feel it. It's like a depression, so they go to psychiatrists, therapists, trying to figure it out. Or it turns into physical ailments. Feelings into physical ailments" (Wall 13). To her, Indians are the Elders of the non-Indian people and the message they bring is to remember that we are "spirit, we're body, and we are mind" (Wall 18).

Downey is saying that healing involves the physical body as well as the mind and spirit. In The Woman Who Owned the Shadows, Allen has blended feminist versions of traditional tales and a story of a contemporary mixed-blood woman to encourage women to heal themselves. According to Allen, the curing ritual of journeying within to connect with one's ancient feminine roots will bring women the power to fulfill their own individual potential. In this journey, Ephanie and Allen are participating in a vision quest. A vision quest representative of the search for identity inherent in most contemporary Native American literature.

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LIFE STORIES BY A CHEROKEE DREAMER: JOHN OSKISON'S HISTORICAL WRITINGS

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Taken together, the published, unpublished, and lost work that John Oskison wrote toward the end of his career reveals an inquiry into Cherokee culture made on the part of an acculturated adult in order to represent properly his mother's people and his often hidden self. The purpose of this study is to examine the code of John Oskison's tribal self as revealed in the historical imagination of a cosmopolitan professional and to investigate how his background as a journalist, novelist, and person of Cherokee heritage affects the style and structure of A Texas Titan (1929), a fictionalized biography of Sam Houston, and Tecumseh and His Times (1938). The term "historical writings" in the title refers to the aforementioned works of Oskison that deal with events before his own lifetime rather than his works that deal with turn-of-the-century life in Oklahoma. However, this study does not include his unpublished historical novel about the Trail of Tears, The Singing Bird, or his unpublished and apparently lost biography of John Ross (Parman).

In his autobiography, Oskison writes about being in social situations in which he believes it best not to disclose his Native heritage, but Oskison was always acquainted with and accepted by his mother's full blood relations. Notably, he claims, "I could not speak Cherokee, and they knew no English, yet we got on together perfectly" (Tales I 9). On the other hand, his ability to write eloquently in the language of his father granted him the qualifications to write about his nation as an outsider. On the whole, his historical writings reveal a strong respect for the Cherokee, whose point of view he felt compelled to relate to an ignorant and prejudiced world. His historical writings suggest that he continually expanded his own knowledge about and identification with his Cherokee heritage through research, memory, and imagination, and this self-knowledge moved him to write less about his individual childhood memories and more about the history of his people.

Oskison wrote A Texas Titan in 1929 after a shift in his career from short story writer, journalist, and financial editor of Collier's Magazine to novelist. He had recently published two novels about Oklahoma Territory, Wild Harvest (1925) and Black Jack Davy (1926). Even by the time of his second novel, there is a clearer focus on Cherokee characters. In Black Jack Davy, an

uplifting fictional account of the life of Ned Chisti, Cherokee legends and specific events from Oklahoma Territory history move from background to foreground although the events in the novel are seen from the perspective of a young white settler.

The legend and history of Sam Houston appear to have fascinated Oskison. In 1929, the time that Houston spent with the Cherokee was regarded by some historians, as by some of Houston's contemporaries, as a stain on the statesman's character (Gregory and Strickland 89-95). Houston's association with Native peoples and his adoption by Chief John Jolly was certainly used by his enemies in his lifetime to portray him as a violent, undignified person (Gregory and Strickland 92). However, during the Depression and after Oskison's publication of A Texas Titan, members of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) interviewed Oklahoma residents who remembered Houston and recorded their stories, all of which represented him as a beloved figure (Gregory and Strickland 30fn, 30). This is also the tone of Oskison's novel, which is clearly based on his embellished readings of Houston biographies.

Part of Oskison's interest in Houston may have been that certain details of Houston's story could have reminded Oskison of his own past about which he writes in his next novel, Brothers Three (1935) and in his unpublished and unfinished autobiography. Although there is no direct evidence, it is also possible that Oskison may have heard the living legends of Sam Houston when he was growing up in Oklahoma. Certainly Oskison's character development of Talahina, Houston's Cherokee wife, is based more on folklore and imagination than on verifiable evidence. Although historians agree that Houston lived with a Cherokee woman, and evidence suggests that she may have been a distant relative of Will Rogers, Oskison's high school friend, very little is known about her (Gregory and Strickland 38fn, 37). Oskison's version of her name, however, is the one on her tombstone in Fort Gibson, Oklahoma (Gregory and Strickland 35).

Undoubtedly, Oskison, whose father was born in England and whose mother was an educated, mixed-blood Cherokee, took an interest in portraying Talahina with dignity. He described her as:

the mission-educated daughter of an Indian mother and an English Born American. . . Tall, handsome, . . . she . . . was patient with him. . . Skilled in cooking, spinning, gardening, [and] all of the Indian domestic arts [,] . . . she kept the cabin . . . in immaculate order. (130)

Her character also exhibited Cherokee magnanimity and wisdom. Although Houston's character worried that "If [Talahina] followed him to Texas, where

there would be only white women, she would suffer as an alien" (153), Talahina herself "wanted to help [him], for while theirs had been the usual practical, arranged Indian marriage, she loved him" (152). Thus Oskison depicts her as an accomplished woman of feeling, who could live in either the Cherokee or white world, but who sensibly chooses her own people and quietly walks out of Houston's life (154). This culturally sensitive and somewhat romanticized portrait defends Talahina and Houston, a couple closely resembling his own mixed family, from racist epithets--such as "Squaw Man"--that ridicule both (Gregory and Strickland 32).

Like Oskison, the Houston of A Texas Titan "couldn't endure the farm life. What did he want? . . . Not storekeeping" (7). Oskison's description of his own life on the family farm is marked by constant distractions, such as "a meadow lark rising from the grass or a half grown rabbit hopping into view" that "took my mind completely off my mission" (Tales I 7). In contrast to his portrayal of Houston as a man of action, Oskison represents himself as a dreamer, but he clearly indicates that both are unsuited for farm or trade.

In the novel, Houston was the youngest boy, who felt misunderstood by his brothers and his family. Although Oskison had half brothers and was not the youngest child, he was the youngest of the part Cherokee brothers; the youngest son in Brothers Three, who leaves home to attend college and become a writer, is therefore distinctly autobiographical. When the young Houston of Oskison's narrative returned home after running away to live with the Cherokee, he had to admit that in addition to deserting his family, he hadn't promoted trade with the Indians either. His older brother's reaction was hostile: "'You're no good anywhere, s'far's I can see!' Bob had stormed, and set him to work again in the fields" (8). Later Houston, who was dissatisfied with the local school master's ignorance, went back to the Cherokee for his education where he read "the books that Chief Jolly and the others brought home from college" (24).

Oskison's own autobiographical character in Brothers Three and his childhood stories of doing grueling hard work when he preferred to go to school suggest some parallels with his portrayal of Houston. For instance, after the death of his mother, his father's remarriage to a woman who opposed education created "[d]iscord in the home" (Tales I 11). When Oskison did go to school, he went "to become absorbed in books" (Tales I 14), but the work on the farm was unrelenting. When the grain had to be harvested, he frequently missed his noon meal, and at one point he recalls with frustration, "For three years there was no schooling" (Tales I 19-20). The Houston of Oskison's novel eventually left his family to become a lawyer and a statesman just as Oskison left Oklahoma to attend Stanford and then went on to New York to become a writer.

Oskison, like Houston, went through a divorce from a woman born to the lifestyle to which he aspired and of which he became a part. Oskison's marriage to Hildegard Hawthorne, writer and descendent of Nathaniel Hawthorne, must have seemed a clear sign of his acceptance into the New York literary world, much the same as Houston's marriage to the patrician Eliza Allen was the perfect match for a governor of Tennessee with political ambitions. The breakup of these marriages brought both of these men back, at least temporarily, to the Cherokee families that were theirs by blood or adoption. These journeys to Oklahoma apparently awakened them to the true callings of their careers: Oskison to the writing of novels about Oklahoma, and Houston to the founding of Texas. Houston went on to Texas and remained an advocate for Native rights, and Oskison became a novelist, returning to his Oklahoma days through his imagination and with an increasing desire to tell stories of the Cherokee people.

The story of A Texas Titan also provides Oskison with a platform for representing Cherokee accomplishments, values, and history. For instance, Oskison recreates the colorful speech of Houston in a moment of reminiscence about the Cherokee: "They tell me the whole tribe learned to read. They have a newspaper. . . . And there's many a white man that can't tell B from a bull's foot who still calls these people savages" (295). Although Houston was adopted by the Cherokee and fought alongside them in the battle of Horseshoe Bend in the War of 1812, he did not have to suffer removal; later he could not prevent the destructive Indian policies of President Jackson or of Lamar in Texas. Similarly Oskison, who apparently did not suffer from discrimination as a Cherokee and who benefitted from being a tribal member, could only watch helplessly as policies of land acquisition continued into his lifetime. For example, the government acquired the Cherokee Outlet for a fraction of its worth. In his novel Black Jack Davy, Oskison describes the day of Indian Payment for the Outlet as "the final scene of an epic drama that had begun two-thirds of a century before with the wholesale removal of the tribe from lands in Georgia and Tennessee coveted by the whites" (170). Perhaps by tapping his own attitudes to imagine Houston's character, Oskison is able to express through Houston's words his own pride in the Cherokee, his outrage at the continued instances of dispossession, and his anger at damaging stereotypes. Thus in A Texas Titan, Oskison adapts his own experience to imagine the passion, spirit, and intimate life of Houston and, as a result, he relies more on his abilities as a novelist than as a journalist.

Tecumseh and His Times, written almost a decade later in 1938, reveals an even stronger position of advocacy for Native rights. Here Oskison shifts to his journalistic style to report rather than to imagine the life of the famous Shawnee leader and warrior. A great deal of romanticizing about Tecumseh

had, in fact, already been done since his death in 1813. Indeed, Tecumseh, the enemy of the United States government and the nemesis of the future President William Henry Harrison, had ironically and almost immediately upon his death been transformed from "savage to Tecumseh the ideal man" (LeBeau 1). Subsequently Tecumseh has become the subject of countless works of popular culture ranging from the literature of the forerunner of the Boy Scouts to an emblem of American patriotism, an ironic position for someone who died fighting the U.S. government (LeBeau 5-7). However, once an Indian hero died fighting for his land and his people, by some curious, paradoxical analogy, he could be appropriated by American popular culture as a Patriot (LeBeau 8).

Demystification of Tecumseh as a Euro-American icon and the insistence on his greatness as a pan-Indian hero, who died trying to unite tribes to resist the United States government, emerges as a clear subtext of Oskison's work, which has nothing but high praise for Tecumseh. Oskison imagines a Tecumseh who would have been amused by some of the translations of over-blown verses written in his honor, and in the following passage Oskison ridicules writers of such verse or prose:

After Tecumseh's death, writers seized upon his career as the subject for much high-flown prose, poetry, and drama. . . . They created a strange, legendary figure--especially the English, who were possessed by a florid, pre-Victorian demon of expression. (231)

However, Oskison praises some American writers, who, like himself, "saw Tecumseh as a real man" (232).

In contrast to his fiction, Oskison's point of view in Tecumseh is submerged in his ironic, journalist's voice, and the focus of his subject is Shawnee, rather than Cherokee. Although in A Texas Titan Oskison refers offhandedly to Tecumseh as a "fanatic" and spells his name phonetically as "Tecumtha" (41)--Tecumseh's name in his own language (Sugden 2)--by the time he writes Tecumseh and His Times, he has adopted a standard, Anglicized spelling and done a great deal more research on his subject. There is also a less ambivalent attitude here on the part of the writer toward Andrew Jackson, seen earlier as the benefactor of Houston. He is now portrayed as the betrayer of his former allies, the Cherokee, something only suggested in A Texas Titan by an ironic remark by Chief John Jolly, "[W]e help him fight them Creeks, but he kicks us out jus' the same!" (57). In Tecumseh, Oskison depicts Jackson, as well as other U.S. political figures, as an active participant in the violent and criminal history of Euro-American appropriation of Indian lands.

Oskison's outrage at the history of the United States government's treatment of Native peoples explodes and the condescending attitude of whites

toward Indians explodes in bracketed exclamation points to indicate irony, sarcastic parenthetical remarks, and editorial comments. He is particularly fond of quoting from primary documents and indicating by punctuation, comments, or context the self-revealing irony of the writer's remarks. For instance, from a letter by William Henry Harrison, Tecumseh's main antagonist in the narrative, he quotes:

Although our title to the land is thus clearly [!] ascertained, I think it would be extremely impolitic to insist on taking the whole of it. . . . the remainder of this claim may be relinquished, and this liberality [!] will authorize us to ask for an extension of our territory into Illinois. (100)

Elsewhere Oskison refers to treaties made in good faith by the tribes as mere "gestures" on the part of the U.S. government (43) and to stipends for land as "sops" thrown to the tribes (46).

On the creation of the Northwest Territory, Oskison notes that the ordinance "echoed the words of the Declaration of Independence, but said nothing about the rights of Indians to undisturbed possession of their own lands and the pursuit of happiness according to their own conception" (53).

Needing no comment is a letter from Thomas Jefferson to Harrison, which Oskison quotes at length:

[W]e shall push our trading houses, and be glad to see the good and influential individuals among them [the Indians] in debt, because we observe that when these debts get beyond what the individual can pay, they become willing to lop them off by a cession of land. (96)

Anticipating resistance to his approach to gaining cheap lands, Jefferson warns that if any tribes complain, they will be driven West of the Mississippi and all their land taken (97). Thus Oskison makes the case that Tecumseh is a Native American hero, distinct from an "American patriot." One obvious distinction is Tecumseh's integrity of purpose to preserve Indian lands versus the hypocrisy and avarice exhibited by colonial patriarchs.

Oskison himself, however, in trying to represent an intellectual Tecumseh to a Euro-American audience also reveals his own biases. Growing up in Oklahoma, the author developed a disdain for charismatic religion, illustrated by his tone in recreating scenes of fundamentalist revivals in Brothers Three and The Singing Bird. According to his autobiography, he acquired the detached attitude of a comparatist toward religion, influenced by Unitarians and Swendenborgians (Tales IV 14). Therefore, as many historians have done, Oskison separates the warrior Tecumseh intellectually from his brother Laulewasikau, "The Prophet," to whom Oskison refers as a "one eyed fanatic" (162). Elsewhere in Tecumseh Oskison muses:

It is difficult today . . . to comprehend the sincerity of the Prophet or the credulity of those who believed in him. Yet it is equally hard to picture whole communities of whites in the grip of some religious frenzy, as happened . . . in the early settlements of Kentucky. (117)

At best, according to Oskison, Native peoples were no more susceptible to charismatic spiritual leaders than were their enemies, and such fervor aided Tecumseh's diplomatic plans.

In Oskison's description of Tecumseh's early life, he defends Tecumseh by his own intellectual standards, suggesting that he may only have "half believed" in Shawnee origin stories and other tribal beliefs (5). However, as historian Gregory Dowd suggests in his study of Tecumseh and the Prophet,

"[I]f we take Indian religion seriously, . . . the distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the believer and the thinker, a distinction that goes far beyond that between the priest and the soldier, cannot be maintained" (309).

Thus in Oskison's account, the actions of the Prophet, such as his recommendation to execute witches, are viewed somewhat cynically as indicated in the following passage:

In his effort to bring into his confederation all the tribes of the West and North, Tecumseh used, through his fanatic brother, the Prophet, this store of legend [about witches] and this fear to destroy weak and venal civil chiefs (21).

Oskison portrays Tecumseh's use of his brother's spiritual teachings as shrewd, political tactics for the purpose of eliminating his enemies and persuading other tribes to join in an alliance. However, it is more likely that neither brother made a distinction between the metaphysical and the political. Furthermore, historical evidence indicates that the Prophet began the unification movement and "remained important" in it after Tecumseh "became its driving force" (Sugden 6).

Although Oskison's work does not portray the figure of Tecumseh as anything but Shawnee, historically non-Native writers have appropriated Tecumseh by trying to demonstrate that he was highly influenced by Anglo culture. In order to account for his greatness by Anglo standards, Tecumseh has been portrayed as an avid reader of Shakespeare and as a man whose only love was the daughter of a white settler, even though there is no concrete evidence for these legends (LeBeau 4). Oskison gives no credence to such stories; however, he does use the extraordinary events of Tecumseh's life as points of digression to expand on his own agenda, which is Cherokee history. Although there is a historical connection between the tribes, the Cherokee for the most

part turned down Tecumseh's call for unification and joined with Jackson to fight the Creeks, Tecumseh's allies.

Other historical connections between the Shawnee and the Cherokee are fully, perhaps disproportionately, represented so that Cherokee history be included. Oskison also expands on any casual reference in which he might bring in something about his own tribe. For instance, he notes an early Cherokee and Shawnee alliance in the history of Shawnee migration, which "has continued to this day" with "the larger number of surviving Shawnees . . . living on land in Oklahoma allotted to them out of Cherokee holdings" (7). Even the Prophet wears a turban, "such as were worn by the Cherokees" (110).

Other passages provide openings for longer digressions. For example, when Oskison discusses Harrison's response to public sympathy for the settlers against the tribes, he uses the issue of public opinion to digress on the Cherokee removal. Indeed, years later the same hegemonic attitude against the Native peoples of Georgia would be used to justify removal of the Cherokee "at a time when that tribe had attained under progressive leadership a state of civilization even more advanced than that of their white neighbors" (56). On Tecumseh's statesmanship, Oskison finds that it

was solidly founded on one issue: the saving of his race from contamination and eventual destruction. . . . [I]t was the same issue which motivated the long fight of a contemporary but very different chief, John Ross of the Cherokees. (231)

An extended comparison between the two leaders and their respective enemies, Harrison and Jackson, follows. One finds Oskison using the removal of the Cherokees as a kind of anachronistic analogy for the loss of all Indian lands, which indeed the symbol of the Trail of Tears commonly represents. Such editorializing allows Oskison to bring in even more Cherokee history and to make connections to modern events concerning the on-going history of dispossession, such as government opposition to Native peyote lodges (236).

Under Oskison's more novelistic impulses, the story of Tecumseh becomes a great drama between Harrison and the Shawnee warrior. On the one hand, Oskison, the journalist, endeavors to give Harrison credit for competent, if not brilliant, military organization. On the other hand, he constantly disparages the ambitious territorial governor through the use of self-revealing irony and by exposing his actions in the context of the duplicitous maneuvers of the government to break treaties, ignore legal precedents, and take over the territory reserved for Indians. Oskison exposes Harrison's hypocrisy when he "assured them that if the Indians could prove that they had been cheated of their lands, the Great Father would restore them" (130). In addition, he ridicules "Harrison's farcical councils [that] were certainly conducted with all the grave

solemnity of a solicitous little father and an anointed regent of God" (108). Oskison continually cites instances in which all Indian complaints were suspected by Harrison to be British plots since "Harrison evidently could not comprehend the possibility that the Indians were capable of deciding for themselves what they wanted" (88). The history of unjust land cessions, pushed by Harrison and resisted by Tecumseh, corresponds to the duplicity, condescension, and insensitivity of the U.S. government during the later Cherokee removal. For good reason, the parallels between this story that of the Cherokee are irresistible to Oskison.

In his memories that shape his three published Oklahoma novels, Oskison writes more as an outsider sympathetic to the Cherokee than in his historical writings in which he sees himself as he reimagines the past. Oskison's historical writings, such as A Texas Titan and Tecumseh and His Times, allow him an entrance into a past beyond memory as a descendent of his tribe as evidenced by the dedication of Tecumseh, which reads:

to all Dreamers and Strivers for the integrity of the
Indian race, some of whose blood flows in my veins.

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