

Studies in American Indian Literatures

**VOLUME TEN
1986**

**Center for American Culture Studies
Columbia University
603 Lewisohn Hall
New York, NY 10027**

Studies in American Indian Literatures

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Studies in American Indian Literatures, the Newsletter of the Association for Study of American Indian Literatures, is issued four times a year. Advisory Editorial Board: Paula Gunn Allen, Gretchen Bataille, Joseph Bruchac, Vine Deloria, Jr., Larry Evers, Dell Hymes, Maurice Kenny, and Robert Sayre.

Annual subscriptions are by the calendar year and are \$6.00, \$15.00 foreign. Back issues are available at \$12.00 per volume.

Inquiries, contributions, subscriptions, and requests for further information about back issues should be addressed to: the Editor, SAIL, 603 Lewisohn Hall, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027.

© *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 1986

ISSN: 0730-3238

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Volume 10, Number 1

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Coyote and the Five Sisters
told by Mrs. Lucinda Smith
Warm Springs, Oregon 25 August 1983
recorded, transcribed and translated by
Robert Moore

"Coyote and the Five Sisters" is the second episode of a Coyote Cycle told on 25 August 1983 by Mrs. Lucinda Smith, an elderly and fluent speaker of Wasco (-Wishram; Upper Chinookan) living at the Warm Springs Indian Reservation in central Oregon. Present on that afternoon were Mrs. Smith (LS in transcript) and Robert Moore (RM); we sat side by side a few feet apart on the couch in Mrs. Smith's living room while she narrated, with the tape recorder between us.

An exact transcription of Mrs. Smith's Wasco is given, with the English translation in brackets. All of Mrs. Smith's English utterances are underlined in the transcription; the Wasco passages are not underlined. Comments are in parentheses. The transcription format aims to represent as precisely as possible all the features of Mrs. Smith's oral delivery; separate lines represent stretches of speech bounded off by pauses of varying length. Punctuation is also designed primarily to reflect prosodic and junctural phenomena: lines ending with a period were delivered with "sentence-final" falling intonation; lines ending with a semicolon indicate phrase-final level or slightly rising intonation; lines ending without punctuation of any kind were delivered with phrase-final level tone, and frequently separated from the following line by a pause for breath. Rhetorical lengthening of vowels is marked with colons.

It must be emphasized that Mrs. Smith's pervasive use of English in narrating is not a reflection of limited Chinookan fluency--she is perhaps the most fluent Wasco speaker at Warm Springs--but is rather a reflection of her efforts to convey a traditional Chinookan myth to a novice ethnographer.

LS: À::nd tháy'd go on;
next whére they're--
Oh, they see--come to some uh
gírls!

RM: aN:::!¹

LS: It's a bíg ríver!
Déep!²

RM: aN:::

LS: m^h_m
'n they used to wear clóthes no clóthes
long ago they used to make tan búckskins

RM: aN

LS: they'd put ón, like
díaper.

RM: m^h!

LS: They'd put a string hére, then tíe it.³
Five gírls.

RM: a:

LS: Five sísters.
They'd swím, díve in, cóme out⁴
and jump úp on a,
a little
knóll;

RM: aN:

LS: The Coyóte séen that he said
he told Eh iq'álalas "Áh!

[He told uh Raccoon "Ah!]

"daxíáiC idElxàm -ktyen- uX^wàg^wátuL!"⁵

["People over there are bathing!"]

"They báthing them gírls over there, le--
"let's go tó them!"

RM: mm

LS: "íwatSk⁺atXúya!" he told the Raccoon.
["Let's go right over there!" he told
the Raccoon.]

So the Raccoon followed himd íwa and⁶
 [So the Raccoon followed him-d that
 way and]
 and them gírls lóok at them,
 Coyote 'n Raccoon,
 then they'd just díve in they'd láugh;
 they'd come úp on the
 on--up on the
 little
 dirt,
 dirt híll like that,
 jump úp on that.
 And the s--Coyóte thought bād!
 He said "I'm gonna cráwl únder the wáter,
 "wày únder then I'll just gráb 'em!"⁷
 [laughs]

RM: [laughs]

LS: yeah!

RM: he'd really crawl, er?

LS: aN:, an--an--¹
 [yes, I'll--I'll--]

"ank'ìLXiYá:: alma k^Waba anL-- -ktyena-
 λ'mànλmān anSL--anLúX^Wa;
 ["I'm gonna craaaw! over there then
 (hesit.) I'll feel them up;]
 "iLnÉmSkS Laxiàic"
 ["the girls over there."]

RM: m^hm m^hm

LS: He méan he'll
uh, féel them 'róund

RM: E^hE, E^hE

LS: And then-- [laughs]

RM: [laughs]

LS: Ye:ah he snuck úp there's fíve sísters;
~h~⁸
one ólder, next ólder, and, ánd
one yóungest,
fíve.
They'd' laugh.

RM: mm

LS: And there was their bóss was there I
don't know whó he was sítting
wáatching 'em.

iLa--

[Their--]

iLaStámX.

[Their boss.]

waCLSCSLStLtix -iktyeni--

(Sound of rushing water (?); hesit.)

iLnÉmSkS.

[The girls.]

Lx^hLx^ELx^hLx^hLx^hG^wátuL.

(Sound of splashing water)-bathing

They'd díve in they'd cóme up;

So Coyóte

crà::wls sló::w galik'íLXix under the

wáter

[craaawls slooow he crawled under the

water]

RM: aN::

LS: galik'íLXix.

[He crawled.]

RM: aN:

LS: So he just

láy there.

Òne cóme, jùmped ín, he was rìght thére;

he gráb her an' he

RM: m!

LS: y'know he r--ripped her uh

her búckskin

RM: aN

LS: pánts they máke.

RM: m^hm

LS: And he started doin that áe that girl

scréam

scréam scréam and she gótt out!

kíck at that s--?E^h--Coyóte.

gaCi--gagik'Íltqixi

[She kicked him.]

-ktyena- gaSiLLCíxit iLSq^wába isk'úlia.

[(hesit.) Coyote fell backwards in the
 water.]

RM: aN::!

LS: "æ:!" said and this
their bóss tol'm "Whát you folks dóin to
that óld mán?!"
"he's pítyful you folks húrtn' him!"

RM: [laughs]

LS: And they wóuldn't say nóthing!
a:: he kept doin' that to áll of 'em
kánawi qí dau gaC úX!
[Ahh he kept doin' that to all of 'em all
of them he did this way!]
He'd uh ríp their
--well, what they wéar

RM: mm

LS: like díaper.

RM: m

LS: a: the lást óne,
the yóungest;
gaksúbnaX
[She jumped.]

RM: m!

LS: aga gaCagígaX.⁹
[Now he grabbed her.]

RM: aN:!

LS: He dóne that to her dóne that;
she drág him úp that knóll.
gagíuk^WL wílXpa.

[She dragged him aground.]

"qíngi qí da⁺mSgíuXtix?!" he said he
didn't see

["What are you doing to him?!" he said he
didn't see]

"What you folks dóin' to that póor old
mán?!"

RM: aN

LS: "Well,
"CnSúStkt!

["He's copulating with us!]

"qí dau CnSùX;

["That's what he's doing to us;]

"CnSx^ENE mudXEmX!

["He's playing with us!]

"qingémax CNSúStkt!"

["What's all this, he's copulating
with us!"]

RM: aN:

LS: And they táke him away from there.

"aaaiyyaaaaa!!" he scréam he roll down
the¹⁰

sómeewhere.

"Hey you bíg, úgly Coyóte!" they said

in Wáscó "inSa--imig'ám!a!"

[. . . they said in Wasco "You're evil!"]

"mibàisxÉdag^waX!"

["You're dirty-minded!"]

RM: mm! [laughs]

LS: [laughs]

Ye::ah and he léft then.

And Raccóon says "What was you dóin' now?"

He didn't nótime him, what he--he was

únder the wáter.

RM: aN:

LS: [laughs]

"áwiya qìdau;

["Only thus;]

"qídáu iLnÉmSkS inLúX"

["Thus I did to those girls."]

RM: [laughs]

LS: Ē^hĒ

"λ'màn λ'mán inLúX"

["I felt them up."]

[silence: 2.70 sec.]

"Ó:::" he told him "imik'ám!a!

["O:::" he told him "you're bad!

"msk'úlia!"

["You-Coyote!"]

[laughs]

RM: [laughs]

[silence: 7.40 sec.]

LS: That's óne.

Notes

¹ nasalized vowel aN (length variable) is,
in certain contexts, the Wasco equivalent of

yes; more important, it was the response taught to children who were the addressees of myth-recitals in former times. In a fully traditional myth-performance setting, the audience would respond at certain junctures with a chorus of aN::.

² a broad, sweeping gesture accompanied these lines.

³ LS indicated by gesture a string tied around her waist.

⁴ gesture: with forearms extended, both hands move up and down, palms open.

⁵ ()-ktyen-() is the standard Chinookan "hesitation form"; roughly equivalent to English whatchamacallit, I have left it untranslated. Parentheses here indicate positions at which this form may be inflected for the supposed number-gender of the object whose name has escaped the user (e.g., in feminine, a-ktyen-a, in masculine i-ktyenE, neuter, (iL-)ktyen-(iL), etc.).

⁶ note false English clitic structure: follow-ed him-d.

⁷ gesture: arms outstretched and plunging downward (on "way under") as in diving; then moving upward with hands grabbing (on "I'll just grab 'em!").

⁸ note LS's hybrid of "Chinookan" aN: and English Eh hEh: E'E.

⁹ gesture: grabbing motion with hands.

¹⁰ "aaaiyyaaaaa!!" delivered very loudly in high falsetto; gesture: arms outstretched, flailing.

Symbols Used

aN = ǣ

C = č

E = ɛ

G = ɡ

L = ɫ

N = ŋ

S = ʃ

X = x

Other Versions of "Coyote and the Five Sisters"

1. Language: Wishram
Narrator: Louis Simpson
Date: 1905
Ethnographer: Edward Sapir
In: Sapir 1909: 7-9

2. Language: Wishram
Narrator: Tom Simpson
Date: 1905
Ethnographer: Edward Sapir
In: Sapir 1909: 9-11
3. Language: Clackamas
Narrator: Victoria Howard
Date: 1929
Ethnographer: Melville Jacobs
In: Jacobs 1958: 83-84
4. Language: Wishram
Narrator: Ida White
Date: 1967
Ethnographer: Michael Silverstein
In: Ms.
5. Language: Upper Cowlitz (Sahaptin)
Narrator: Lewy Costima
Date: 1928
Ethnographer: Melville Jacobs
In: Jacobs 1934: 243
6. Language: Wasco
Narrator: Lucinda Smith
Date: 7/84
Ethnographer: Robert Moore
In: Ms.
7. Language: Wasco
Narrator: Lucinda Smith
Date: 8/84
Ethnographer: Robert Moore
In: Ms.

8. Language: Wasco
Narrator: Lucinda Smith
Date: 1/72
Ethnographer: Michael Silverstein
In: Ms.
9. Language: Wasco
Narrator: Hiram Smith
Date: 1955
Ethnographer: Dell Hymes
In: Ms.

References

- Jacobs, Melville. Northwest Sahaptin Texts, I, II. Columbia University Contributions to Anthropology, Volume 19, Parts I & II. New York: Columbia University Press, 1934.
- _____. Clackamas Chinook Texts, I. Bloomington: Indiana University Research Center in Anthropology, Folklore, and Linguistics, Publication 8, 1958.
- Sapir, Edward. Wishram Texts. PAES 2. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1909.

Transformation:
Sweat Lodge Ritual Number 1
A Brief Exercise in Ethno-poetics
Fletcher/LaFlesche, 1903

I wish to acknowledge my gratitude to Danny Vollen for deepening my understanding of the sweat lodge.

. . . one of the members of the [Omaha Pebble] society . . . was one day bathing, when he caught sight of a hawk, and fearing it was an enemy he turned himself into a fish. The bird descended to get the fish, when the man eluded his fellow-magician by turning himself into a rock, and so escaped by his magic power, while his fellow magician, the bird, hurt his bill on the hard rock. There are many songs which refer to these magical transformations.

(Fletcher/LaFlesche 580)

One might question this account in the following way:

Why didn't the Pebble Society member turn himself into a rock straight off, instead of first becoming fish? Is it because he is bathing, is already part fish, when he first notices the hawk, immersed in that more ephemeral flow of air and sky? Or does the move first into fish trick the other magician into revealing himself--that wasn't just another hawk in the sky--and committing himself to dive? Is timing what is important, then, the Pebble Society member changing into rock at the last possible instant, after attracting the other to him as

fish? Is turning oneself into rock the special province of Pebble Society members (literally, those who have the translucent pebble), from which other magicians are excluded? What might a person turn themselves into in order to get at a rock? Fire? Larger rock to crush?

Without knowing if these are the right questions or whether questioning itself is the appropriate mode in which to approach this Omaha song, it does seem clear that what is called for is a suspension of the judgments emanating from our Occidental consciousness so that we may concentrate our attention, carefully, and peripherally, too, on this magical movement of life from one form to another, across what we consider to be firm boundaries, and back again. For this power of transformation, this ability to "turn onself into" some other form of life is central to the deepest experience of the Omaha, if we are to believe Fletcher/LaFlesche, and it informs in a significant way the work of the best Indian writers today. It also offers the promise of opening us up to the transforming powers of the natural world. What are the transformations we literally have traversed in our evolutionary journey from the so-called "lower" life-forms to ourselves? And what are the transformations we literally have traversed individually in our journey from egg and sperm into adult human being?

Not unexpectedly, this transformative power is essential to the Omaha creation story as told by Wakidezhiⁿga, the old leader of the Pebble Society, dead by the time Fletcher/LaFlesche published their work:

At the beginning all things were in the mind of Wako'da. All creatures, including man, were spirits. They moved about in the space between the earth and the stars (the heavens). They were seeking a place where they could come into a bodily existence. They ascended to the sun, but the sun was not fitted for their abode. They went on to the moon and found that it also was not good for their home. Then they descended to the earth. They saw it was covered with water. They floated through the air to the north, the east, the south, and the west, and found no dry land. They were sorely grieved. Suddenly from the midst of the water uprose a great rock. It burst into flames and the waters floated into the air in clouds. Dry land appeared; the grasses and the trees grew. The hosts of spirits descended and became flesh and blood. They fed on the seeds of the grasses and the fruits of the trees, and the land vibrated with their expressions of joy and gratitude to Wako'da, the maker of all things.

(Fletcher/LaFlesche 570-571)

What is most striking about this old story is the sudden transformations that are integral to this place, this earth: rock appearing suddenly out of water, flames bursting forth from rock, water floating into air as clouds, grasses and trees appearing from earth. We, ourselves, partake along with "all things" of these sudden and powerful transformations in our origin, coming as spirits from the mind of Wako'da to this place of water, rock, fire and smoke-like clouds of steam. Eating changes seeds and fruit into

flesh and blood, into bone. Grief calls forth primal rock from vast water. Joy makes the land vibrant, and goes back to Wako'da.

The sweat lodge of the Omaha Pebble Society is presented by Fletcher/LaFlesche as a formalized way to continue the expressions of joy and gratitude with which the land vibrated, and as the vehicle through which members of the society open channels of healing between these primal events which are timeless and those who are presently sick. Their account has attracted the attention of at least two Anglo poets, Jerome Rothenberg and William Brandon, who use it as the source for poems in English, Rothenberg giving us his "version" of the whole account while Brandon renders a poem about the "primal rock" of the first seventeen lines. The remainder of this paper will use the standard interpretive tools of the literary critic to examine the relative merits both of the original written account of this ancient ritual and the poems in English created from it.

Addressing ourselves initially to only the first part of the ritual (Appendix B, ll. 1-17), we find the earnest desire of the doctor, or shaman, expressed through two untranslated words, He! and ecka. He! is an exclamation involving the idea of supplication and distress. Ecka is a refrain meaning "I desire," "I crave" or "I implore." Neither are translatable, according to Fletcher/LaFlesche. Ecka ends all but four of the seventeen lines of this section (and all but 12 of the remaining 33 lines of the ritual). Of those lines not ending with ecka, only one of the first seventeen is without the reverential exclamation He!, though 11 of the remaining 12 lines without ecka are also with

He!. This repetition of He! and ecka, plus the repetition of the phrase "Aged One," gives a decided chant quality to this part of the ritual, which lessens only slightly throughout. In Fletcher/LaFlesche's recording of the ritual in the original Omaha, the chant quality appears even more pronounced (Appendix A), the whole sound matrix of the first seventeen lines made up, for the most part, of three repeated patterns and their variations. These chant qualities of the Omaha ritual express the intoning and imploring earnestness of the shaman. He uses them to re-enter the primal time of the ancient rock, of the sweat house, to open a healing channel of power to flow into these "little ones" (l. 4) who are sick. The most striking omission of Brandon's rendering is "these little ones" who have been "taught" (prepared) by the doctor, and who "obey." These are the sick people that the Omaha doctor prepares himself to heal as he enters the sweat lodge. The voice of the ritual is one of an intermediary: he addresses the primal rock of their creation story, of the sweat house, directly, speaking of the readiness of the sick to receive its healing power.

In Brandon's version (Appendix C), the timeless sense is retained but not the chant, and "rest" is used in place of "sittest" in describing the rock, which, though less awkward in English is also less active, thus reducing the sense of the rock's life. In fact, in a ritual for the sweat lodge before the initiation of a member of the Pebble Society this act of sitting of the primal rock is made even more explicit:

6. Oh! Aged One, ecka
7. The great water that lies impossible to traverse, ecka.
8. Aged One, ecka
9. In the midst of the waters thou came and sat, ecka
10. Aged One, ecka
11. Thou of whom one may think, whence camest thou, ecka
12. Aged One, ecka
13. From midst the waters camest thou, and sat, ecka
14. It is said that thou sittest, crying:
Iⁿ! Iⁿ! ecka

and

35. Oh! Aged One, ecka
36. Thou sittest as though looking for something, ecka
37. Thou sittest like one with wrinkled loins, ecka
38. Thou sittest like one with furrowed brow, ecka
39. Thou sittest like one with flabby arms, ecka
40. The little ones shall be as I am, whoever shall pray to me properly, ecka

(Fletcher/LaFlesche 577)

The "winds" of the Omaha ritual lose both their "various"ness and their existence as "coming" winds in Brandon's working. "Coming" especially seems indispensable because of its way of centering the rock in the midst of winds coming to it along various paths. And Brandon's version reverses the order of the grass growing and the bird droppings and places the grasses at the "feet" (his addition) of the rock (perhaps the least satisfying touch of the whole Brandon rendering, for the Omaha ritual goes on to associate the "small grasses" with the hair of the head, thus extending a unified view of the rock). The Omaha ritual closes this opening section (ll. 13-17) by piling up the details of the phenomenal world--grasses, droppings, feather down--not moving away from them as Brandon does. Rothenberg (Appendix D), while keeping the chant repetitions of *He!* and *ecka* in his use of "lis-ten" 19 times in his 16 line rendering, loses some of the reverential tone of the original and moves too far towards a slangy, casual relationship to the rock in his use of "listen" for *He!* and *ecka*, of "old man" for Aged One, and of "birdshit" for "droppings of birds," but he's probably accurate in sensing that the Fletcher/LaFlesche rendering was overly formal.

The second section of the ritual (ll. 18-25) addresses the primal water out of which the rock rose as standing "next in power" to the rock, as "flowing from time unknown." The timeless "unmovedness" of the rock and the timeless "flowing" of the water are set down together, both elemental features of the world. Rothenberg renders "From time unknown" (l. 22) as "from time out of mind," and then the "craving" of the little ones to touch the rock (l. 25) as "the children go mad for your touch." This is a

modern skew towards madness and time being out of one's mind, for pain and suffering (though they can lead to madness) take many forms and usually are just that--pain and craving for healing, not madness.

And the shaman tells the water, too, that the "little ones" (associated in their "littleness" with the "small grasses" of section one?) have taken of it, though its mysteries "remain unrevealed," and they "crave thy touch" (ll. 23-25). This craving to touch and be near these elemental beings is central to the ritual. Also, the primordial rock and water "from time unknown" are literally present in the sweat lodge in the form of the heated rocks and the water that is to be splashed on them making steam (like the "waters that floated up into the air in clouds" when the primal rock burst into flames), and in the form of the water they have drunk.

In the third and shortest section of the ritual (ll. 26-30) the shaman directly addresses the sweat lodge and the "great animals" whose skins make the covering for it. It is addressed as "Thou that standest as one dwelling place, *ecka*," and this "as one dwelling place" is repeated, echoing the "dwelling place" of the rock amidst the small grasses of section one. "As one dwelling place," like the original land was one dwelling place for all the spirits of all living creatures seeking to become flesh and blood, just as the sweat lodge itself is a dwelling place where spirits make their presence known. Perhaps it is the shape of the sweat lodge, too, humping up like a large rock, that adds to its association with the rock. In this one "dwelling place" of the sweat lodge one

realizes the deep interconnections between all aspects of life, not just rock, water, fire and air, but the animals who've lent their skins, too, and it is not only the "covering" of the sweat lodge that is evoked here, but the covering of the bodies of the Omaha with the animal skins; in fact, an exchange of skins (and spirits) with animals is implied. The little ones are asked to think on this one dwelling place "reverently."

The fourth section of the ritual (ll. 31-46) opens by focusing on the willow frame of the lodge, explicitly including the plants in the "one dwelling place," though, to be sure, they have been present all along, as the "small grasses" of the primal rock, as the seeds of the grasses and fruits of the trees upon which the hosts of spirits fed when they first descended, and as the branches of trees and brush who gave themselves to be burnt to heat the rocks for the sweat lodge. The frame of the sweat lodge, standing with bent back and stooping shoulders over the shaman (and, presumably over the little ones waiting to be healed) is the most powerful figure of the whole ritual, for the "little ones" are likened to this lodge person stooped with old age, thus their healing is treated as something that will occur:

They shall escape. Their shoulders shall
be bent with age as they walk

As they walk on the well beaten path

Shading their brows now and again with
their hands

As they walk in their old age, ecka.

(ll. 43-46)

"In their old age" just like the old age of the stooped one bending over them, just like the rock as the "aged one" from first-time-ancient-beginning.

The frame of the sweat lodge seems endowed with the quality of care for them (ll. 32-33), "bending over us" like a grandparent bending over a child, or as sky, too, oldest of grandfathers, arches over all. The willow frame of the lodge itself says, "Thus my little ones shall speak of me as 'bending over them with stooped shoulders.'" And this speaking of the frame of the lodge is accompanied by an act of care for it, as one might care for an old person:

Brushing back the hair from thy forehead,
ecka

The hair of thy head

The grass that grows about thee

Thy hairs are whitened, ecka

The hairs that grow upon thy head, ecka.

(ll. 36-40)

The little ones are urged by the lodge frame, through the ritual, to see it as bending over them, enclosing them in a healing way, and to actively respond by caring for it, brushing back the grass that grows about it, the grass that is its white hair, and through this act themselves become stooped, white-haired, bending over others who will come to that aged care. It is the high point of the ritual, the "one dwelling" place where they may come to shelter in their sickness, and which echoes the dwelling place of the original rock among the "small grasses"

where the spirits of all things came to dwell, and take on their fleshy bodies, and express their joy and gratitude.

Rothenberg omits the trees the grass is growing about (l. 38), thus weakening the explicit reference to the sweat lodge frame made from tree branches, and he also interprets the ambiguous "Brushing the hair back from thy forehead" as a self-act by the rock rather than as an act of the patients through which they engage the life of the rock and lodge itself in an act of caring--"you brushing the hair back from your forehead." He also mutes the "desire" of the little ones, repeated twice in the last four lines, using the weaker word "want" only once, and misses the opportunity to connect the hands of the little ones "shading their brows" to "Brushing back the hair from thy forehead," but he ends well.

listen,

the children want to be close by your side
listen
walking listen
be very old and listen

His use of words like "while" and "because" in the lines immediately preceding these is, I believe, a mistake, making the internal connections of the ritual too grammatically rational, and his "children" for "little ones," though he explains in his "commentaries" that it is the patients that are being referred to, seems misleading. The slightly vaguer "little ones" allows us to experience our actual place in the world as frail and engaged with powers that dwarf us.

The ritual ends with a section of four lines of great dignity and quietness, expressing the desire of the "little ones" to have this healing happen for them, "That of thy strength they shall partake, ecka" and expressing their desire "to walk closely by thy side, ecka/Venerable One, ecka."

The ritual is a circle, just as the lodge is, as earth is, as sky, ending with the strength of the primal rock which rose out of the waters and the desire of the sick people to walk close by the side of it. While we cannot presume to know what an Omaha person might have experienced at this point, I imagine that if they did not receive the healing they longed for, the experience of walking closely by the side of the aged Rock of "time unknown" would be affirming and sustaining even in illness and death. And perhaps entering the sweat lodge is the act of entering (going inside) the primal rock and primal time itself.

This identity of the sweat lodge and the primal rock of the closing sections of the ritual is made by the small grasses that the rock has for its "dwelling place" and that the "little ones" are to brush back from the forehead of the "one dwelling place" which the lodge is. It is made even more explicit in another section of the initiation ritual for the Pebble Society previously quoted: here the primal rock and the willows that frame the lodge merge, for "Aged One" which has explicitly been the ancient rock for the first 40 lines, becomes the willows as aged one.

41. Oh! Aged One, ecka
42. Oh! Thou pole of the tent, ecka
43. Along the banks of the streams, ecka
44. With head drooping over, there thou
sittest, ecka
45. Thy topmost branches, ecka
46. Dipping again and again, verily into
the water, ecka
47. Thou pole of the tent, ecka

(Fletcher/LaFlesche 577-578)

The point to be made from all this is that the sweat lodge ritual from the Omaha Pebble Society is a clear expression of transformation as the primordial reality of the world (rock emerging from water, fire emerging from rock, water turned into clouds, etc.) and the shaman attempts to use this transforming power of the world to turn sick people into whole, healthy human beings, to use it to struggle against illness. The sweat lodge itself is a gathering place, not only of human beings, but also of their relations: gathering willow branches that make the skeleton of the lodge, the hides or blankets that provide the skin for it, the rocks that contain the heat of the sun stored inside the bodies of the trees that make the fire, gathering the water that changes into steam on the rocks, bathing the "little ones" in the dark heat, opening them to release the water that is deep inside, opening channels of life and pain and healing in the darkness, to be carried out of the belly of the lodge when the door is opened, gathering the darkness in which the sun's rock-water-heat may do its work, gathering

sage, cedar and sweet grass to purify the lodge and the dwellers in its belly, gathering songs and prayers, the joy and pain of the little ones of the lodge-belly, but gathering most of all the spirits of these, and of the old ones who come into the lodge to be happy, to heal. The lodge itself is a live thing, glowing, singing, gathering together the elemental universe with humans too, that they may acknowledge their true place in the world and ask for healing, for themselves and others--old people, rivers, the hunted. The sweat lodge, it gathers and vibrates with all that is gathered into it, much more than we know or know how to say. It is primal rock of creation arising out of the vast waters in fire, fusing together the world in its gathering.

All this, and much more is at issue in the sweat lodge, and the poets feel it, though their saying of it is only a ghost of the Omaha ritual. That ritual resides in an intimate, living community, where people are sick and dying, and where certain specified, highly trained members attempt to engage the creative powers of the world itself in order to heal. Our poetry, fine and powerful and necessary to healing our spirits as it may be, and I am deeply committed to it, is far removed from this. Unless we realize how much is lost in this movement from American Indian ritual into modern poetry, we will not recover the healing, transforming powers of the world of which we stand in so much need.

Appendix A

Ritual for Sweat Lodge No. 1

1. He! Iⁿshage' ecka
2. Iⁿ'e shniⁿ'ke she ecka
3. Iⁿshage' ecka
4. He! zhiⁿ'ga' wi ewe'poⁿ'ce thoⁿ'de
5. Egoⁿ bi ecka
6. Iⁿshage' ecka
7. He!
8. He! gthiⁿ a'bitoⁿ thethe xti
9. Thagthiⁿ' adoⁿ ecka
10. Tade' ui'the the'noⁿ ha te thoⁿ ecka
11. Tade' bacoⁿ egoⁿ thagthiⁿ' adoⁿ ecka
12. Iⁿshage' ecka
13. He! xa'de zhiⁿ'ga thoⁿ thoⁿ ecka
14. Uti' e'thathe egoⁿ thagthiⁿ' adoⁿ ecka
15. He! wazhiⁿ'ga a'zhazha xti thagthiⁿ' adoⁿ ecka
16. Hiⁿxpe' a'gthagtha xti thagthiⁿ' adoⁿ ecka
17. Iⁿshage' ecka
18. Edi uwa'toⁿ ecka
19. Edi uwa'toⁿ ecka
20. He! ni nike she ecka
21. Ni nike atoⁿ adi'toⁿ
22. Gacu'ce shniⁿ e iⁿ'te ecka
23. He! du'ba thi'thica i te

24. Utha thithiⁿ'ge te thoⁿ'zha ecka
25. Zhiⁿ'ga' i'thite goⁿ'tha i te thoⁿ'zha ecka
26. He! Ti thatoⁿ she ecka
27. Ti thatoⁿ she ecka
28. Waⁿ'i'ta toⁿ'ga ecka
29. He! itha'kigthaxade ecka
30. Zhiⁿ'ga' ui'the uⁿ'gi'kaxe ta i te eshe ama thoⁿ ecka
31. He! tishi thatoⁿ she ecka
32. Noⁿ'xahi thiba'gizhe xti
33. A' baku thiba'zhu thoⁿ
34. Noⁿ't'u'ca xti
35. Zhiⁿ'ga the uithe uⁿ'gikaxe ta i te thoⁿ'zha ecka
36. He! pehiⁿ' bixa'xadon ecka
37. Noⁿ'zhi'ha thoⁿ the'thoⁿ
38. Xa'de thoⁿ hiⁿ a'zhi adoⁿ ecka
39. Hiⁿ'thoⁿ cka doⁿ ecka
40. Hiⁿ a'zhi te thoⁿ e'waka i doⁿ ecka
41. He! moⁿ'thiⁿ ta i ke ecka
42. Wiⁿ'uⁿwata uki'mongthoⁿ i ke ecka
43. A' baku thoⁿ noⁿ't'u'ca xti
44. Uzhoⁿ'ge noⁿ'cta xti i ke
45. Pe a'con githe ihe'thatha xti
46. Monshniⁿ' adoⁿ Iⁿshage' ecka
47. He! zhiⁿ'ga' gikoⁿ'tha badon ecka
48. Ithigikoⁿ'tha tabadoⁿ ecka

49. Thie i'wigipathiⁿ ta mike thoⁿzha ecka

50. Iⁿsha'ge ecka

[Fletcher/LaFlesche, in their phonetic guide note, tell us (1) "Superior n ("n") gives a nasal modification to the vowel immediately preceding," and (2) "'c' has the sound of th in thin."]]

Appendix B

Free translation

1. He! Aged One, ecka
2. Thou Rock, ecka
3. Aged One, ecka
4. He! I have taught these little ones
5. They obey, ecka
6. Aged One, ecka
7. He!
8. He! Unmoved from time without end, verily
9. Thou sittest, ecka
10. In the midst of various paths of the coming winds
11. In the midst of the winds thou sittest, ecka
12. Aged One, ecka
13. He! The small grasses grow about thee, ecka
14. Thou sittest as though making of them thy dwelling place, ecka

15. He! Verily thou sittest covered with the droppings of birds, ecka
16. Thy head decked with the downy feathers of the birds, ecka
17. Aged One, ecka
18. Thou who standest next in power, ecka
19. Thou who standest next in power, ecka
20. He! Thou water, ecka
21. Water that hast been flowing
22. From time unknown, ecka
23. He! Of you the little ones have taken
24. Though thy mysteries remain unrevealed
25. These little ones crave thy touch, ecka
26. He! Thou that standest as one dwelling place, ecka
27. Even as one dwelling place, ecka
28. Ye great animals, ecka
29. He! Who make for us the covering, ecka
30. These little ones, thou hast said, let their thoughts reverently dwell on me, ecka
31. He! Thou tent frame, ecka
32. Thou standest with bent back o'er us
33. With stooping shoulders, bending over us
34. Verily, thou standest
35. Thus my little ones shall speak of me, thou hast said
36. Brushing back the hair from thy forehead, ecka

37. The hair of thy head
38. The grass that grows about thee
39. Thy hairs are whitened, ecka
40. The hairs that grow upon thy head, ecka
41. O, the paths that the little ones shall take, ecka
42. Whichever way they may flee from danger, ecka
43. They shall escape. Their shoulders shall be bent with age as they walk
44. As they walk on the well-beaten path
45. Shading their brows now and again with their hands
46. As they walk in their old age, ecka
47. He! This is the desire of thy little ones, ecka
48. That of thy strength they shall partake, ecka
49. Therefore thy little ones desire to walk closely by thy side, ecka
50. Venerable One, ecka.

Alice C. Fletcher and Francis LaFlesche,
The Omaha Tribe, Volume II, pp. 571-573.

Appendix C

The Rock

(Fragment of a Ritual, Omaha)

unmoved
 from time without
 end
 you rest
 there in the midst of the paths
 in the midst of the winds
 you rest
 covered with the droppings of birds
 grass growing from your feet
 your head decked with the down of
 birds
 you rest
 in the midst of the winds
 you wait
 Aged one

William Brandon, The Magic World, p. 85.

Appendix D

Sweat-House Ritual No. 1

Omaha

listen old man listen
 you rock listen
 old man listen
 listen didn't i teach all their children
 to follow me listen
 listen
 listen unmoving time-without-end listen
 you old man sitting there listen
 on the roads where all the winds come rushing
 at the heart of the winds where you're sitting
 listen
 old man listen
 listen there's short grasses growing all over
 you listen
 you're sitting there living inside them listen
 listen i mean you're sitting there covered with
 birdshit listen
 head's rimmed with soft feathers of birds
 listen
 old man listen
 you standing there next in command listen
 listen you water listen
 you water that keeps on flowing
 from time out of mind listen
 listen the children have fed off you
 no one's come on your secret
 the children go mad for your touch listen
 listen you standing like somebody's house
 listen
 just like somewhere to live listen
 you great animals listen
 listen you making a covering over us listen

saying let the thoughts of those children live
 with me & let them love me listen
 listen you tent-frame listen
 you standing with back bent you over us
 stooping your shoulders you bending over us
 you really standing
 you saying thus shall my little ones speak of
 me
 you brushing the hair back from your forehead
 listen
 the hair of your head
 the grass growing over you
 you with your hair turning white listen
 the hair growing over your head listen
 o you roads the children will be walking on
 listen
 all the ways they'll run to be safe listen
 they'll escape their shoulders bending with age
 where they walk
 walking where others have walked
 their hands shading their brows
 while they walk & are old listen
 because they're wanting to share in your
 strength listen
 the children want to be close by your side
 listen
 walking listen
 be very old & listen

English version by Jerome Rothenberg, from
 Alice Fletcher & Francis LaFlesch. Jerome
 Rothenberg, Shaking the Pumpkin, pp. 280-281.

Roger Dunsmore
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Elderberry and Stone:
A Source for Tsimshian Literary Studies¹

The Columbia University Rare Books and Manuscript Library possesses several hundred pages of manuscript recording Tsimshian customs, legends, myths, proverbs (a reckless person is one who "wants to die with all his teeth"), stories, and linguistic practices by William Beynon. Beynon was fluent in both Tsimshian and English (his mother was Tsimshian, his father non-Indian), and he sent the papers to Franz Boas during the 1930s, and Boas later gave them to the library. Until the Metlakatla community began printing some of the stories in a campaign to sustain their native heritage, Beynon's papers seem to have been disregarded, though they constitute a remarkably wide-ranging record of Tsimshian culture, gathered and annotated by a man of intelligent curiosity, excellent judgment, and with fine literary sensitivities.

The qualities are of special interest because the Beynon collection includes several stories from other informants of Boas, including George Hunt. Such comparable versions are relatively rare and consequently valuable, and my quick comparisons suggest that Beynon's literary sensibility was more acute than that of Boas or his other informants. So far as I can judge, Tsimshian stories tend to be lengthy, because they favor slow development with careful detailing of settings and motivations. Typical is a tale of a family forced by hunger to go hunting in winter. After travelling far unsuccessfully, they happen upon a populous village where they are cordially entertained. In the tent of the village chief an old woman takes

from a young mother her crying child, rocking the infant in her arms and whispering in its ear. Gradually the child ceases crying. But when the mother looks to it later she discovers it to be dead, all the blood drained from its body. She tells other members of her family, and they slip away from the village, but are pursued by the villagers. By creating snow-slides the family destroys many of their numerous enemies, but finally all the members of the family have been killed except for the young mother, followed closely by the last survivor of the pursuers, the chief of the village. By good fortune he plunges into an icy lake and freezes. The young woman with a shell knife cuts out his heart and eyes, and with these she magically restores all members of her family to life. They then burn the body of the chief, and the ashes rising from the fire become the mosquitoes we know today.

The skill of the narrative development exhibited in this tale is extraordinary. There is no question of this being an "explanation of the origin of mosquitoes." It is a brilliant work of art that reminds me of William Blake's famous picture The Ghost (that is, spirit) of a Flea, which portrays a huge man-like creature stalking forward carrying a knife and bowl for blood, its head humanoid but unmistakably insect-like. Blake's picture and the Tsimshian story portray a tiny insect's monstrous desire for blood.

Beynon's gifts as a recorder and reteller of Tsimshian stories are perhaps best illustrated by contrasts with other versions. In the 27th Bulletin of the Bureau of American Ethnology (1902, p. 72) Tsimshian Texts, for

example, Boas records a few sentences as if they constituted a story told him by an informant named "Moses."

A little before the Stone gave birth to her child, the Elderberry Bush gave birth to her children. For that reason the Indians do not live many years. Because the Elderberry Bush gave birth to her children first, man dies quickly. If the Stone had first given birth to her children, this would not be so. Thus say the Indians. That is the story of the Elderberry Bush's children. The Indians are much troubled because the Stone did not give birth to her children first, for this is the reason that men die quickly.

This version of "The Stone and the Elderberry Bush" sounds like something arranged by an Indian with experience of anthropologists' expectations as well as of his own tribal lore. Moses has ordered his material so as to foreground and make comprehensible to a stranger the explanations ethnologists usually seek from informants. He has perceived the nature of Boas's "scientific" point of view and gives him an analysis of a story rather than a narrative. As Marius Barbeau was later to observe, such versions, however interesting as representing a native's view of ethnology, are dangerously misleading when put forward as if representative of traditional tellings.

Beynon's version, to the contrary, is a genuine story, told as a story not as information prepared for an anthropologist. Beynon is free from the self-consciousness revealed by phrases such as "the Indians are much troubled,"

and even in a few words achieves some striking narrative effects.

When the world began and there was no light nor any living people, the stone and the elderberry bush said, "We will see who will give birth to the first child." Every day the stone tried to bring out her child, but she could not, and the elderberry could not bring out her child, and they continually quarrelled. Finally the elderberry bush did give birth, while the stone's child, a little later, only emerged half-way and then hardened into stone again, while the elderberry's child was fully born and lived.

This was a great misfortune to the world, that the elderberry's child was born first and lived, because that is why people now are weak, for the elderberry is not everlasting, like a stone. People die like elderberry bushes. But if the stone child had been born first, people would never die, because stone is everlasting.

This is manifestly a tale dealing with the essential nature of life, its most dramatic detail the stone's unsuccessful effort to give birth climaxing the struggle of both stone and bush to bring forth offspring. This detail suggests that the stone can only abortively enter a mode of life we humans and the elderberry share, which is, however, an existence of transiency, change, and death. Such considerations pose the question folklorists never seem to ask, what does the literal story conceal, what self-reflective process is contained within the narrative? In this story, in other words, what

is presented as overt cause in Beynon's telling appears in a fashion that compels me to re-examine the preconceptions underlying my emotional preferences. I favor the elderberry because what for me is most "real" is weakness and death: This troubling awareness is aroused by Beynon's skill as a storyteller. Beynon's manuscript, then, is more than a repository for anthropological data and constitutes a major resource for understanding Tsimshian literature, in this respect of greater value, I would guess, than the Tsimshian texts published by Boas.

Karl Kroeber

Notes

¹ A longer version of this paper appeared in Library Columns, Columbia University, May 1985.

Arnold Krupat, For Those Who Come After: A Study of Native American Autobiography. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985. xv + 167. \$14.95.

After a Cayuse/Nez Perce storyteller named Gilbert Minthorne concluded his spirited performance of a hero-tale about his ancestor Fish-Hawk for the linguist Morris Swadesh in 1930, he reflected on what it meant to have the story transcribed and "textualized": "Thus they told the story, and now all the people know it. This is a true story, now there, we have made it, and it will always be the same story."

The title of Arnold Krupat's study of Native American autobiography, For Those Who Come After, seems to catch Gilbert Minthorne's sense of historiographical purpose exactly; and the kinds of irony that attend Minthorne's purpose (the text that he and Swadesh "made" together remained in manuscript for nearly fifty years, unknown to the Cayuse themselves) are likewise part of Krupat's agenda as he examines the complex interplay of native oral autobiographers and Anglo transcriber/editors. Had Minthorne "told" Swadesh his own life-story, the resulting text would have been, no doubt, another example of the process that Krupat defines as central to Indian autobiography: "original bicultural composite composition" (31). His study is not concerned with autobiographical writings by Indians, such as Charles Eastman's books or N. Scott Momaday's The Names; instead, he chooses to examine a set of "composite" texts that includes two of the best-known first-hand representations of Indian life that we have--Black Elk Speaks, and Crashing Thunder: The Autobiography of an American Indian. Studying

the Indian autobiography as an intersection of two cultures is, he argues, to "see it as the textual equivalent of the frontier" (32).

Krupat's preface and first chapter amount to a kind of manifesto for the value of post-structuralist theory and practice to Native American literary study--probably the first extended statement of its kind. On behalf of the "systematization" of "a new Indian Criticism," he attempts to reconceptualize four categories of literary understanding as they bear on native texts: (1) the mode of production of texts, (2) authorship, (3) "literature," and (4) canonicity. Perhaps needless to say, Krupat's critique reveals to him how "conventional" kinds of reading have got these texts all wrong. "The literary pragmatists," he says, "--to call them that--have permitted themselves to carry on at some virtually pretechnological level of critical naivete; the amount of unself-conscious twaddle about plots and character and the poetry of place that goes on at the literary end of Native American studies would never be tolerated in the study of, say, Faulkner or William Carlos Williams . . ." (xiii). So, in the cause of showing the literary pragmatists and others how to avoid twaddling with native materials, Krupat brings his "New Indian Criticism" to bear on five autobiographies: of Black Hawk (Sauk and Fox), Geronimo (Apache), Crashing Thunder (Winnebago), Yellow Wolf (Nez Perce), and Black Elk (Lakota). In engaging each work, Krupat is at pains to reveal how it relates to (1) its historical period, (2) the categories of history, science, and art, especially literature, (3) Northrop Frye's fourfold scheme of emplotment--romance, tragedy, comedy, irony.

If there is real value now in having someone (and why not Krupat) lay out for general inspection what a post-structuralist program for Native American literary study would be like, the fact is that Krupat fails to deliver on the second part of his book's bargain--to demonstrate, that is, the value of his program by applying it cogently to Indian autobiography. There is a regrettable gap here between theoretical and ideological posturing, on the one hand, and actual illumination of the texts, on the other. It is not so much a "slender" book (134 pages of text), as a book that is seriously incomplete on its own titular terms. The substance, the texture, the patterning of personal detail in Black Hawk's and Crashing Thunder's stories about themselves, their intentions for "those who came after"--one can read Krupat's chapters looking mostly in vain for attention to such matters. Are they "twaddle," along with plot and character in the post-structuralist view? I'd like to think not--whatever they represent in Krupat's own scheme.

Perhaps the peculiarly contorted theoretical stance that disfigures this book is best revealed in another of Krupat's early polemical assertions. "Unfortunately, it must be said that those who do study Native American literatures have thus far tended to avoid critical theory as if it were indeed the French disease, a foreign corruption hostile or irrelevant to their local efforts" (xii-xiii). Now undeniably, a lot of writing on Indian literary subjects has been critically unbuttoned, given to unexamined "valorizings" of Indian texts--but it is hardly the case that our field has avoided and is avoiding "critical theory": unless Krupat really means to restrict the honorific category

"theory" to post-structuralist/deconstructionist theory only. I'm afraid that that is exactly what he means--here is valorizing with a vengeance!

Similarly, Krupat has simply nothing to say, even in denunciation, about the lively field of Western autobiographical theory and criticism, as represented by the work of Ray Pascal, Karl Weintraub, Elizabeth Bruss, and others. One might think that, in trying to sort out the preconceptions and biases of the Anglo recorders of native autobiography, Krupat would find it worthwhile to engage what such scholars have made of the Western tradition of Augustine, Bunyan, Goethe, and so on--but not so, an instance of a theoretical rigor whose profit is all too often mortis. (Readers who are curious about native autobiography in relation to Western autobiographical theory should read the preface and annotations in H. David Brumble's excellent An Annotated Bibliography of American Indian and Eskimo Autobiographies.)

Krupat is very hard, on theoretical grounds, on efforts to mediate between Indian traditional literature, and "our own," by comparing elements in the one--characters, narrative formulae, and the like--to elements familiar to us in the other: evidently this represents invalid intertextualizing. In his examination of Paul Radin's editorial changes in his purportedly "scientific" Winnebago autobiographies, Krupat criticizes Radin for comparing his subjects to figures in works by Balzac, Voltaire, Hogarth, and so on. Now it is undeniable that the greatest danger in doing anything with native traditional literature is the danger of co-opting it to our own literary

system--comparing in such a way that the whatness of the native material is obscured, or denied. But are inter-cultural literary comparisons by definition pernicious, distortive, co-optive, no matter how carefully set up? One might think so, reading Krupat, at least if the comparisons involve the artists already mentioned, or Shakespeare, Hemingway, or Yeats--but evidently there are exceptions: "Some Native American narratives would be interesting to study in relation to the texts of Kafka, Borges, and Barthelme, and, theoretically, as possible types of essentially nonrepresentative, non-mimetic fictions" (25-26). I would agree enthusiastically--but evidently the range of allowable comparisons, to Krupat, is as restricted as this metafictional triad suggests.

Krupat's range of intra-cultural comparisons is similarly restricted. He is right in saying that "autobiography" per se was an idea foreign to Native American cultures--foreign in terms of the licensed egotism inherent in the form, so contrary to native values, and therefore lacking any exact native literary equivalent. But I do not see how he can afford to ignore, as he does, native literary forms that do bear on the formation of Indian autobiography. What about the well-documented native genre of the hero-story--as illustrated, say, in George Bird Grinnell's Pawnee Hero Stories and Folk Tales, or Gilbert Minthorne's tale of Fish-Hawk, or a wonderful parody of the genre in Black Elk Speaks, the tale of High Horse's courtship? Further, if Krupat's autobiographies represent one kind of literary "frontier" between natives and Anglos, what about their relation to another definitive contact-era form,

the Indianized Bible-story, French folktale, and the like?

And--assuming that an Indian's self-conception and self-presentation, even in the artificial form of "autobiography," would owe much to the central narrative conventions in his culture--what about myth-narrative? It is typical of the shortcomings of Krupat's book, of his inability to get theory and practice aligned, that in his treatment of Black Hawk's autobiography he fails to notice that the defeated chief and his white transcriber, J. B. Patterson, begin their narrative with a mythic account of the prophetic dreams of Black Hawk's great-grandfather wherein he meets his "white father"--"the son of the King of France"--as he later does in actuality, with enormous historical consequences for his posterity.

Because he is convinced that the structures of his autobiographies are attributable to their Anglo editors, Krupat attempts, per his preface, to align each work with its historical era in Anglo terms, and with one or another of the forms of Western narrative emplotment. Thus The Life of Geronimo, written out by Stephen Barrett, is found to be "ironic," reflecting the scientific attitudes of the Boas era of ethnological work--which in turn is congruent with the 1887 passage of the Dawes Severalty Act. Typically, a hurried little summary of the implications of the Dawes Act is provided, and then comes the pay-off, in which the personal narrative of an imprisoned Apache war-leader is located for us on the big historical-literary-intellectual-theoretical map. "For Barret, Geronimo is certainly no hero . . . What we have, then, is Indian autobiography in the age

not of Carlyle, but of Hardy; there are no more heroes, and personal agency counts for little" (63-64).

Properly done, such attempts at contextualizing these composite works could be worthwhile--but all Krupat can make of the endeavor, given the scope of his book, is a set of rather simplistic outlines, connecting the abstractions of economic, political, and intellectual history with the general features of his texts in ways that are at best sketchy, and at worst simply factitious, as in his remark that Lucullus McWhorter's tragic-form "life" of Yellow Wolf conveys a "viewpoint on the events of 1877 [that] is not that of a substantial number of his contemporaries resident in Oregon and Washington" (126).

But what is most objectionable about Krupat's attempt to engage history is that it tends to lead him further and further from the substance of his texts. His summary of the end of Black Hawk's narrative ("comic") runs: "Native American decline is the necessary condition for the comic ascent of Euramerican civilization, and it is by means of this particular structure--the apparent tragedy as actual comedy--that the silent, absent editor speaks his acceptance of progressivist ideology, confirming the inevitability of Indian defeat . . ." (49). Maybe so, on some stratospheric level of historical abstraction, but such a formulation leaves me keenly dissatisfied in the presence (however shaped and filtered by "the silent, absent editor") of Black Hawk's eloquent, un-self-pitying bitterness, as in his "Dedication" to his captor, General Atkinson. "The path to glory is rough, and many gloomy

hours obscure it. May the Great Spirit shed light on you--and that you may never experience the humility that the power of the American government has reduced me to, is the wish of him, who, in his native forests, was once as proud and bold as yourself."

In his final chapter, Krupat returns to one of his central ideas--"Certainly it is of considerable interest how the Native American subject understood and presented his or her life; but whether we can infer this from the produced text is very much open to question" (111). Of course it is, owing to the composite nature of these texts--but Krupat's problematizing here and elsewhere seems downright evasive, given his persistent suppression of passages like the one just quoted--passages which, one might have thought would be test-cases in any serious effort to identify what is authentically the self-conscious, self-presenting voice of an Indian subject.

Finally, I doubt that this book is going to have much utility in a new field of teaching and scholarship which needs practical guidance and patient exemplification of method at least as much as it needs high-powered theory. That Krupat's study might have provided both is suggested by the fact that his discussion of the most widely read of his texts, Black Elk Speaks, is fittingly the most open, least tendentious section in the book. But where we might fairly expect him to offer guidance, through mention or at least bibliographic reference, to the reading of other native works in the light of Black Elk Speaks, or any of the others, he offers little or nothing.

It is especially disappointing that he has nothing at all to say about an authentic "composite" Indian autobiography that has begun to rival Black Elk in popularity, Ruth Underhill's Papago Woman. It is not unfair, in the face of Krupat's silence, to test his comic/tragic/ironic/romantic scheme against Underhill's narrative structuring of Maria Chona's astonishing life. Which "mode of emplotment" fits Maria's case? By my cogitations, at least, none seems to fit it. In the late Boas/John Collier/BIA epoch, as Krupat would have it, its emplotment ought to be either "ironic" or "comic," but it is really neither; even less is it tragic or romantic. Is this why Krupat chooses to ignore Papago Woman, a test-case for his method as valid as any of the five he chooses? Perhaps. In any event, his prefatory expression of regret over "the absence . . . of detailed analysis of the autobiographies of Native American women" (xii) sounds, by the end of the book, rather hollow, a pious apology for the subjugation of Text to Scheme.

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Matthias Schubnell. N. Scott Momaday: The Cultural and Literary Background. Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1985. viii + 336. \$19.95.

N. Scott Momaday deserves better than this.

So far as Schubnell's dissertation-like book has a thesis, it is the reasonable if not novel one that Momaday's work is best assessed not as purely "Indian" but as showing influences of mainstream, non-Indian writing. A biographical chapter is followed by one discussing Momaday's "Theory of Language and Imagination," another on how Momaday's "depiction of nature . . . blends American Indian perceptions of the universe with the tradition of nature writing in America" (p. 39--fortunately no such heroic enterprise is in fact attempted). The fourth chapter treats of House Made of Dawn, the fifth of Way to Rainy Mountain, the next comments briefly on The Names, and the last is devoted to Momaday's poetry. Probably the most useful feature in this volume is its comprehensive bibliography. Schubnell's "criticism" is largely plot summary; representative of more daring flights is the following on "Green," the fifth of the eight "prose poems" of "The Colors of Night":

Momaday's intention is obvious; he is trying to eliminate the distinction between appearance and reality. Human reality goes beyond what is verifiable by reason; it is constituted as well by dreams, visions, and illusions. Momaday had noted that "there are modes and modes of existence."¹³² The reality of a tree, he

seems to say, is valid, whether it is a product of sense perception or of the imagination.¹³³ (235)

The first of Schubnell's notes in this quotation refers to one of Momaday's newspaper pieces in Viva some years before, and the second is perhaps even less illuminating and more troubling, though not uncharacteristic of Schubnell's scholarship, so I quote it:

H. Frankfort noted that for primitive man the distinction between subjective and objective knowledge was meaningless. He added: "Meaningless, also, is our contrast between reality and appearance. Whatever is capable of affecting mind, feeling, or will has thereby established its undoubted reality." In The Intellectual Adventures of Ancient Man: An Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East, ed. H. Frankfort et al., p. 11.

Schubnell seems to believe that Momaday, whose "Colors of the Night" he describes as "an attempt to give some clues to the way in which American Indians view the world" (236), regards Indians as "primitive" in Frankfort's sense. For me, this is a crude reduction of Momaday's view.

Schubnell's intellectual fuzziness prevents him from perceiving a fundamental problem of the possible discrimination between "Indian" and "Indians." "Indian" is an abstraction from the variety of "Indians," Kiowa, Sioux, Papago, etc. Whether there is a significant meaning to "Indian" and hence "Indianness" is a subject of

intense debate amongst those most concerned--including Momaday, whose Kiowa family had objections to his Cherokee mother. But of this tension, as to much else of deep concern to Native Americans, Schubnell is ignorant or indifferent.

He is interested in having lots of footnotes. But when one turns from the numbers to the notes they turn out to be substitutes for, rather than manifestations of, scholarly work. Schubnell almost never evaluates his sources--he merely cites, seemingly without discrimination. For him citation equals fact. His approach is almost a parody of the White historian of Africa Naipul parodies in A Bend in the River, whose scholarship consists in quoting every newspaper article he can find without concern for what truth, if any, lies beyond the printed word. And much in Schubnell's manner of presentation raises doubts about the depth of his research. I will cite a single example.

After graduation [from high school] in August 1952, Momaday began his studies as an undergraduate at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. Although he lacked a sense of direction in his academic work, he won several awards in rhetoric and declamation.³³ He majored in political science and minored in English and speech. Between 1956 and 1957 he went to the University of Virginia, where he enrolled in the law program. (20-21)

Note 33 referred me to an interview in 1973, rather surprisingly, since which awards in rhetoric and declamation (this last rather surprising in the 1950s) could presumably easily

be learned from the University of New Mexico. I expected a note for the last puzzling sentence. When is "between" 1956 and 1957? And what does enrolling in "the law program" at Virginia mean? Normally one goes to law school after earning a B.A., and Momaday didn't earn his first degree until 1958. Since Schubnell is obscure, I turned to Martha Scott Trimble's sketchy little pamphlet book of 1973, which Schubnell cites elsewhere, though not here. What she says is:

That fall he entered the University of New Mexico. He studied law during the academic years of 1956-1957 at the University of Virginia, but returned to New Mexico where he received his B.A. in Political Science in 1958. (11)

Twelve years later Schubnell ought to be able to add more than he does to previous sketchwork. Collecting and quoting is only rudimentary scholarship.

Nor is Schubnell's criticism sophisticated enough for Momaday's art. There can be little critical illumination of Momaday's debt to modernist literary movements in summaries of some of D. H. Lawrence's stories leading to this sort of generalizing:

All these stories have in common female protagonists whose sexual lives have been deadened in one way or another. The underlying cause is, in Lawrence's terms, a decadent and sterile modern civilization. None of the three characters achieves a satisfactory revitalization, but Lawrence had no doubt that the potential for rejuvenation lies in the

spirit of aboriginal America. While these summaries are overly simplified and reductive, they disclose the central patterns of the stories: civilization versus wild nature; self-conscious, willful female versus dark, aboriginal, dominating males; deadness versus vitality; the foreign versus the indigenous.

Momaday's treatment of Angela in House Made of Dawn can be seen as part of a similar pattern, especially when one compares it with Lawrence's short story "Sun."

So on we go to still another "overly simplified and reductive" summary.

Despite his many footnotes, Schubnell's interests and knowledge are so narrow as to be hermetic. He can do nothing with Momaday's dissertation on Tuckerman because he seems to know little about nineteenth-century American literature and less about Tuckerman. He is entirely unaffected by any of the recent work on ethnicity and exhibits no awareness of historical contexts. Momaday was pushed into early celebrity, not least by Winters and Stegner at Stanford, but about either of these two interesting figures, or the Palo Alto environment in the sixties, Schubnell seems not seriously to have enquired. There is irony in this book's claim to describe Momaday's "cultural background" as a more than Indian writer, since it scarcely distinguishes between the cultural situations of the sixties and the seventies.

My irritation with Schubnell's unreadiness to press beyond the most superficial levels of

investigation and evaluation is exacerbated by the feeling that Momaday's career is significant because a peculiarly complex, even tortured, one. I'm sure that especially painful and intricate for him, to whom fame came at a very early age (what Mailer says was his worst disaster), was that in some measure he attracted attention because he was a Kiowa, though to a degree deracinated. Momaday was quickly cast into the role of "leader" of an "American Indian Renaissance," a role which he both willingly undertook, yet instinctively resisted. His anguish has made life easier for all subsequent Indian writers, and his work, therefore, demands study that is simultaneously probing and sensitive, sympathetic yet unsparing. This Schubnell doesn't offer.

I don't doubt his intentions are fine. But we all know where the road so paved leads. And a non-Indian dealing with any part of the recent and still maturing "Native American Renaissance" undertakes special obligations. Schubnell is constantly adulatory of his subject, but as every sage since Herodotus has observed, adulation is usually exploitive. Non-Indians like me or Schubnell who deal with Indian literatures bear the responsibility of assuring that we treat our subjects with genuine, rather than superficial, respect. A pretentiously scholarly book on Milton or Keats today hardly matters, but on a contemporary Indian writer such a work implicitly gives aid and comfort to snobs and racists who think that such material is not worth serious attention. SAIL has always been committed to the opposite position: we claim that Indian literatures reward and deserve the attention of the most

penetrating scholarship and the most sophisticated criticism. So all academic students of Native American literatures, and, let me add, all academic presses, have a duty of trying to assure that publications in this field do not, even inadvertently, demean their subjects. Indians have suffered plenty from Whites: they should be spared the indignity of poor scholarship.

Karl Kroeber

Ray A. Williamson, Living the Sky: The Cosmos of the American Indian. Boston: Houghton and Mifflin, 1984. xv + 366.

Those who have studied Native American poetry thoroughly know that it has cosmic dimensions either overtly expressed or implicitly present. And while that may sound like a grandiose assertion to readers of conventional literature, it is nonetheless valid--all the more so in what I consider to be classical Amerindian poetry, by which I mean pre-Columbian and preliterate, no matter how it may ultimately have found its way into print. Yet the cosmic element is not always readily seen, nor is it always readily fathomed by critics who have been schooled according to conventional literary standards and techniques. The relationship between the earth's cosmic environment and the things that poets recite either narratively, lyrically or dramatically is so prevalent in American Indian poetry as to be taken utterly for granted in its tribal setting, yet so easily underappreciated by Western readers, that we need to be reminded how much it matters. Indeed, it can be said that there is celestial influence in virtually everything that a Native American poet recites in any sort of traditional setting.

In reviewing what archaeoastronomers have discovered in the United States about Native American naked eye astronomy during the last few decades, Roy Williamson deals head-on with that issue. In tribe after tribe and region after region, he demonstrates, Native Americans were perceptive sky-watchers. Using edifices that they erected themselves, local landforms by which they could chart the movement of celestial

bodies, or a precise system of monitoring constellations, they could be as adept at noting comets, novae, and other events in the heavens as they were at anticipating a solstice, an equinox or an eclipse. Thus they established precise dates for planting, harvesting, hunting, holding ceremonies, and conducting their daily affairs. Observing the movement of the sun, the moon, the stars and certain constellations with remarkable precision, they made the sky their calendar and, it might almost be said, their scriptures. The astronomy they practiced placed their architecture, their agriculture, their religion, their mythology, and their social organization in a remarkably unified system for which their poetry served as a focal point. In scrutinizing the cosmos they recognized its rhythms, and they explained its workings "metaphorically in story form and ritual practices," as Williamson asserts. Thus their poetry and their sky-watching conjoined to direct their lives.

What makes Living the Sky unique among the writings of New World archaeoastronomers is that Williamson stresses that relationship. He relies heavily on transcriptions of narratives and rituals which he gathers from every region of North America--from the Southwest to the most remote reaches of New England and from the northern mountains, plains and woodlands to the southern tip of California and the lowest reaches of the Gulf Coast. In reconstructing and interpreting the techniques and findings of archaeoastronomical researchers who have been working to uncover the sky-watching practices of tribes throughout the United States, he has carefully consulted ethnographical fieldnotes and written transcriptions of Native American

storytelling and ritual practice compiled by ethnologists and folklorists over the past century. And he collates those two kinds of data with a sensitivity for verbal artistry not ordinarily associated with scientists. Thus he demonstrates that sky-watching and verbal creativity serve each other, and shows that what is spoken or sung ultimately speaks for the movement of celestial objects and gives it an applied meaning. And in doing so he reminds us that verbal artifacts like the Navajo creation story or the chanted portions of the Pawnee Hako ceremony define relationships with the cosmos that might not otherwise seem apparent even to scholars of Native American literatures.

I would recommend this book highly to anyone already familiar with Native American poetry. It provides invaluable background to any text which attempts to reconstruct preliterate storytelling and singing; likewise, it can provide added dimensions of understanding to the growing body of works by contemporary Native American authors like Momaday, Silko, Ortiz or Vizenor, who absorb oral traditions in what they write. I would also recommend it as a valuable introduction to Native American literatures for uninitiated readers, since it identifies the major culture areas, specifies which tribes have left an important poetic legacy upon each, and shows how the poetry articulates principles of order seen in the heavens. And while this volume may seem like a cursory survey to well-versed students of archaeology and astronomy, I would urge even them to read it with special care since Williamson is uniquely adept at aligning those sciences with the way language was put to use among the tribes.

Williamson writes lucidly and enthusiastically, although that enthusiasm never seems to rob this text of its precision. He explains archaeological and astronomical procedures so that non-scientists can easily understand how calculations are made, and he is ever mindful of the broad cultural context within which calculations were originally made and then reconstructed by modern researchers. Granted, there may be some inaccuracies in the way he treats some of the poetic material. Going through his section on Navajo sky-watching and storytelling traditions, which I myself know best, I find a few flaws. He relies more heavily on some sources which I do not take as seriously as I take certain others. And I question a few small points of interpretation that he makes in discussing Navajo legends. But his generalizations about how the narratives interface with celestial activity still add insights into the stories that I would not otherwise have, and his training as a scientist gives him access to data that we in literary study would be likely to overlook altogether. To anyone who has read printed versions of preliterate Native American stories and songs, his discussions have the same effectiveness as a specialized guide to Greek archaeology might offer the reader of Homeric literature. Thus, I do not hesitate to call Living the Sky a major reference guide for the student of Native American literatures.

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Paula Gunn Allen's New Poems

Paula Gunn Allen: Shadow Country. Native American Indian Studies Center, Los Angeles: Univ. of California, 1981. 150 pp.

A Cannon Between My Knees. New York: Strawberry Press, 1981. 18 pp. \$2.50.

Star Child. Marvin, S.D.: Blue Cloud Quarterly, 1981. 24 pp.

Two chapbooks and a big, beautifully produced collection of poems (with illustrations by James Trujillo) within a year indicate the intense, productive energy of Paula Gunn Allen as her art comes to maturity. In his helpful, detailed foreword to Shadow Country, Kenneth Lincoln points out how Allen's mixed family background ("Laguna mother, Lakota grandfather, Lebanese father, life on the margins of mainstream and Indian") helps to account for the themes and preoccupations of her poetry, a poetry which develops, one might say, simplifying for the purposes of our review, in the space between two worlds, a place of overlappings, of opposing forces as much internal as external.

The first of these worlds belongs to the West and Southwest, is a tribal, myth-and-legend-haunted landscape (a part of the poet's consciousness as well) with its ancient, inescapable ways of seeing and interpreting, of ritual and ceremony, its fundamental involvement with nature, weather and season, bird and beast in their literal and their symbolic or prophetic aspects. Sometimes, as in "The Legend," where Allen addresses a friend or lover, landscape

stands forth in simple, idyllic features that almost anyone might find congenial in an earthly paradise: "a careful space of perfect springs/ and all we'd ever need/and swift winds on the peaks/where the light is clear." But awareness of and longing for this inheritance is usually more complex, more painful or frustrating in the poetic rendering. So in "Another Long Walk" Allen reflects on the horrors of Indian history, the nightmare of facts made plain in racial destruction. Neither the "symbolic" nor the factual, she says, "allows me to understand/ten or sixty million dead (records fail us)/purple blood in rivers/burned villages" Yet the past persists in "tribal dreams" and in the overtly alien present, observable, for instance, in the poem "Powwow 79, Durango," where old dances performed in a gymnasium before an Indian audience incongruously dressed in "jackets, jeans, down-filled vests" suddenly at the close acquire part of a lost power: "quiet like shadows/the people sit watching the floor below/where dancers circle the beating drums/exploding color in the light."

The second world, which as I've said, overlays the first both within the individual being of the poet herself and in the outward actuality of places, objects, and patterns of behavior, forms a partial context for "Powwow 79, Durango" but receives more pointed treatment elsewhere. This world is the "death culture," the contemporary urban and technological structure of life, explored exclusively in such poems as "Los Angeles, 1980," "American Apocalypse," "Relations" from Shadow Country and "Star Children," "Lu," and the excerpts from "Christmas at Votek High, Santa Fe" from Star

Child. But the industrialized, electronic society, drenched in petrochemicals, out of touch with nature, and leaning toward its own annihilation (yet with a strange "organic/craving" that demands "honeysuckle eucalyptus palm/ivy brick and unfinished wood/torn from forests" in "Los Angeles, 1980") stands as a formidable fact in Paula Allen's poetry; its reality is the circumstance within which most of the effort to live is expended and the personal bonds of friendship and love have to be discovered or maintained. This artificial, man-made, reason-dominated atmosphere threatens to obliterate the Indian memory entirely (as it threatens other intuitions of the sacred), to destroy or absorb surviving native Americans, to erase former means of knowing and understanding. Allen feels these eroding forces doubly because she is a Breed, without the grip or attachment of single tribal roots. The concluding stanza of "Meditation" provides a moving enactment (there are many in her poems) of this private dilemma, which is universal too since it embodies the modern day conflict between a wavering grasp of the transcendent or holy and the overwhelming immediacies of the surrounding mechanized environment:

I will try again to deny
the pulling reflections of the dancing
dresses of the god
of covered faces and massive strings of
flashing beads
and amulets, I will try
to pretend that the world
sane...oh
somewhere
the young forest
is green.

The nightmare of life-in-death, of contemporary culture which is memoryless and cut off from the elemental ties with nature, is confronted in "Star Children." In this poem, the touchstones of the ideal, "the young forest" and "the gods," Allen perceived in "Meditation" cannot be turned to since they have apparently never been known at all. Or perhaps these children are so at one with an ideal reality that they are almost totally vulnerable to the hostile world into which they come. In any event, while these "star children" are able to "leave legacies sprinkled here and there," what they bring into modern urban reality--"seeds" of new life, the potentialities of innocence, freshness, another beginning or chance for renewal (these seem among the possible implications)--is lost for the most part in desperate, suicidal gestures, in murders.

In some poems, "Donna," "Rose," "Womans-place," "Robin," "Fall Return," and "Womanwork" to mention titles from Shadow Country, Allen elaborates objectively or impersonally on various qualities of woman, including practical and mythic/visionary identities. These counter-balance pieces in which women are viewed as despairing, alienated, or brought to destruction.

I hope these all too brief remarks on some aspects of Paula Allen's recent poetry will serve to interest more readers, for her work, sophisticated, intelligent, profound in feeling and skilled in its artistry, deserves a wide audience. Allen is in a line of poetic descent and derivation from Whitman through Pound, Williams, Olson, Creeley and Snyder: she seeks

out her own forms rather than adhering to conventional rhyme and meter. She shows a good ear for diction and rhythm: her lines move with a sure sense, and their cumulative effect is usually considerable.

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Notes

Trickster Scores Again!

Gerald Vizenor's novel, Griever, An American Monkey King in China, is the 1986 winner of the Fiction Collective National Fiction Competition, and will be published by Illinois State University Press and Fiction Collective in 1987.

Congratulations Gerry.

In some poems, "Roses," "Rose," "Woman's place," "Robin," "Fall Return," and "Womanwork" to mention titles from Shadow Country, Allen elaborates objectively or impersonally on various qualities of women, including practical and mythic/visionary identities. These counter-balance places in which women are viewed as despairing, alienated, or brought to destruction.

I hope these all too brief remarks on some aspects of Paula Allen's recent poetry will serve to interest more readers. For her work, sophisticated, intelligent, profound in feeling and skilled in its artistry, deserves a wide audience. Allen is in a line of poetic descent and derivation from Whitman through Pound, Williams, Olson, Creeley and Snyder: she looks