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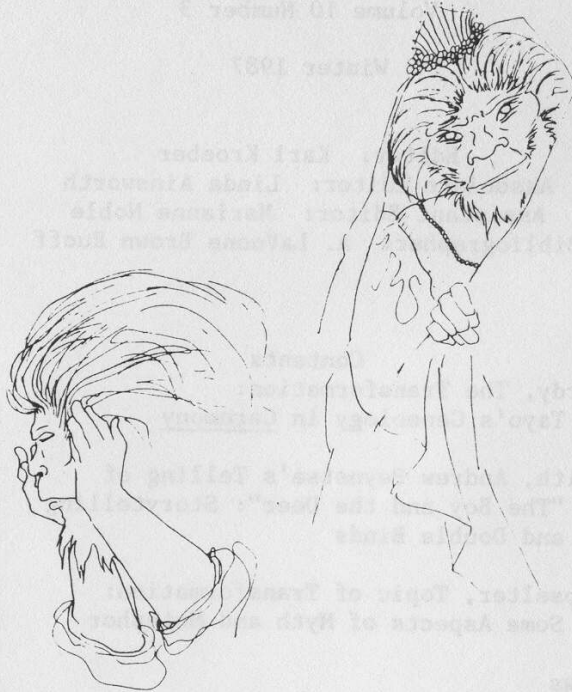
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The Transformation:
Tayo's Genealogy in Ceremony

Tayo is an intriguing and complex character, and thanks to Leslie Silko's abilities as a storyteller, his story is engaging. As we read of his search for a cure, we sympathize with his plight, and when Tayo confronts Emo and the evil forces he represents at book's end, we support him. Like Tayo, we come to recognize the responsibilities he has to his world, but also that meeting these responsibilities results in his gaining the power to survive the confrontation through his awareness of appropriate action, or inaction in this case. Like Laguna oral literature, Ceremony is concerned with entertainment and enduring cultural values, and when Silko writes of a man trying to come to grips with a chaotic world seemingly bent on self-destruction, she does what past Laguna storytellers have done: clarify the changes in their world and dramatize how old ways may be adapted to accommodate those changes. Tayo's story emerges from a long-standing literary tradition which continues to define and redefine the sources of power found in the Laguna landscape, and to provide knowledge of the ways that these sources may be utilized. As Tayo moves through his narrative, his awareness of the relationship between his experiences and those told of in the stories of his people grows, and he in turn moves from an isolated, ill individual to a powerful, competent representative of his people. In a word, he becomes a hero.

Silko's use of traditional stories as bases for her fiction is easily demonstrated. One need only look to her short works such as



Illustrations in this issue are by Kahionhes from Joseph Bruchac, The Wind Eagle and Other Abenaki Stories (Greenfield Center, NY: Bowman, 1985), pp. 162 and 171 and by Wendy Rose from The Halfbreed Chronicles and Other Poems (Los Angeles: West End Press, 1985), pp. iv, 147, and 173.

"Yellow Woman" to see how she acknowledges the relevance of the old stories to an understanding of the present. In it, a woman is carried away, quite literally, by a man she meets near the stream on the outskirts of Laguna, and throughout the story she continually asks herself if the man is actually a mountain Katsina and if she is a modern incarnation of Kochininako, or Yellow Woman. Silko never overtly answers the question, but the mere fact that another, updated version of the stories of Yellow Woman is being "told" is answer enough. Yellow Woman, the perennial heroine, lives through Silko's story. Tayo shares a similar life in that Silko conscientiously tells the stories that relate to Tayo's life and from which his story emerges. When she tells of Hummingbird's and Fly's endeavors to set the world right and bring the rains back, she establishes the ways that individuals may act for the people and work transformations through correctly ordered actions and perseverance. And when she tells of Sun Man's confrontation with the Evil Gambler, Kaup'a'ta, she provides both the genesis of the plot for Tayo's narrative, and his genealogy as a fictional character.

Sun Man climbs a mountain to rescue the rain clouds from Kaup'a'ta. He is successful because Spiderwoman tells him what the Gambler will do, so he can anticipate events and react accordingly, thus turning the Gambler's evil back on himself. Obviously, these characters have contemporary counterparts in Silko's tale; Ceremony has its own hero who climbs the mountain and who with the aid of mysterious beings--Ts'eh and the hunter--is able to bring the rains and turn evil into its own defeat. If there is doubt about Emo's nature, one need only

remember the scene in which Silko describes him playing with the teeth of a dead Japanese officer. He rolls them like dice; he is quite literally gambling for Tayo's life, and he nearly wins. If there is any doubt about Tayo's character, one need only re-examine the stages in his story that speak of his identity, but also the ways by which he comes to understand what is happening in his world and how to react to the changes he sees taking place. His strength comes from his awareness that his story is very similar to those he heard from Josiah as a child.

The earliest event in Tayo's life is quite revealing. As Silko carefully notes, Tayo was four when his mother, Laura, left him with her kin--Josiah, her grandmother, and Auntie. Four is a number often used in sacred contexts, and this is his age when his memory begins. He lives with the family from that point on, but Auntie (Laura's older sister) will not let Tayo forget his questionable parentage nor his mother's wild behavior. After Laura's death, Auntie periodically draws Tayo aside to tell him stories about Laura that, at first, seem to be delivered with the sole, malicious intent of tormenting and humbling the boy by emphasizing his isolation and his inferiority to her son, Rocky. On one such occasion, however, Silko provides an added dimension to Auntie's burden as the self-proclaimed mediator between her family's actions and its reputation in the community. The event takes an interesting turn from the Christian morality that would seem to be Auntie's prime concern:

"One morning," she [Auntie] said, "before you were born, I got up to go outside,

right before sunrise. I knew she [Laura] had been out all night because I never heard her come in. Anyway, I thought I would walk down toward the river. I just had a feeling, you know. I stood on that sandrock, above the big curve in the river, and there she was, coming down the trail on the other side. . . . I am only telling you this because she was your mother, and you have to understand. . . . Right as the sun came up, she walked under that big cottonwood tree, and I could see her clearly: she had no clothes on. Nothing. She was completely naked except for her high-heel shoes." (73)

Readers might interpret this passage as proof of Auntie's narrow nature, as well as Laura's wild abandon. The younger sister could be viewed as another lost soul, an Indian going "bad." However, there is another possibility; by fulfilling her role as an older sister and family matriarch, Auntie helps--in her own way--her adopted child understand his character by emphasizing certain qualities of the scene she witnessed long ago.

In the first place, she notes that the event took place before Tayo was born. Likewise, she is very specific about where it took place--"on that big sandrock, above the big curve in the river"--as well as when--at dawn. The earliest events in Tayo's life story are tied to water, and a specific place and time--all of which are associated with the Katsina. As Silko and Elsie Clews Parsons both note, the Katsina of Laguna are traditionally connected with water--either rainfall or the river (Parsons 176). Like Yellow Woman, Laura has

gone to the river where meetings between humans and Katsina have been known to take place. Moreover, Auntie tells Tayo the exact place on the river, the same place--Silko suggests later, where the Laguna people wait for the arrival of the Katsina during a ceremony. Also, she sees Laura at dawn, a time associated once again with Katsina (Parsons 179). In brief, Silko implies that her protagonist may in fact be directly related to, and therefore aided by, Katsina; his conception and birth may very well conform to those of other heroes in the Laguna tradition.

This connection becomes clearer after Tayo visits Betonie. Through Betonie's help, Tayo initiates a journey that begins with a search for the spotted cattle on Mount Taylor, a place once again bearing numerous sacred associations with the Katsina (Boas 38). This is where he meets Ts'eh; since their meeting follows immediately Silko's telling of the Gambler story, the reader begins to draw parallels between the actions presented in it and those of the main narrative. Given Tayo's obscure parentage, the similarities are cause for wonder. Before Tayo begins climbing the mountain, however, he spends the night with the mysterious Ts'eh, and this act has a profound effect on his ability to complete his quest. Like the meetings between the Mountain Katsina and Yellow Woman, their's happens near a river, and it provides him with a powerful accomplice; interestingly, their love-making is described in terms appropriate to Tayo's developing character: "it was the edge of a steep riverbank crumbling under the downpour until suddenly it all broke loose and collapsed into itself" (188). The drought is nearing an end, and this is a direct result of Tayo's dawning knowledge

of appropriate action, as his movements the next morning indicate.

In her seminal article "An Act of Attention: Event Structure in Ceremony," Elaine Jahner focuses on Tayo's greeting of the dawn to support her contention that the novel's structure is based upon events that mark a pattern of convergence and then emergence. Her insight is intriguing, for such a pattern exists in Laguna oral tradition and ceremonialism. Stories tell of the people converging in a previous world and then emerging into this one (which is only one event in a long history of transformations), and when a ceremony is to begin, the people converge by societies, then emerge into public celebration. As Jahner points out, the major events in Tayo's story are those points where "time, place and story" intersect (44). These are times when Tayo makes crucial associations between his own experiences and those of his predecessors, and Jahner's definition suggests that an event is significant when it marks the convergence of the story of an individual with the perceptions and life ways of his people as related in their oral literature. Such moments lead to insight and knowledge, and in turn to appropriate action.

On the morning Tayo begins his climb, he sings to the dawn. He also notes the "damp and cold" quality of the air. His actions and the conditions of his world mark a vast change from those described at the opening of the book when he was passive and inert in the hot, dry, drought air. Things are changing, and Tayo is at the cutting edge of a transition. Significantly, he breathes deeply; breathing in Laguna ritualism is an act of blessing (Parsons

421). The effects on Tayo are obvious: "Being alive was all right then; he had not breathed like that for a long time" (189). Since his visit to Betonie and his night with Ts'eh, his cure has taken the form of a journey--a series of instances in which he perceives his own experience through the knowledge gained from Laguna oral literature.

As he waters his horse in the dawn, Silko provides another important connection between Tayo's story and Sun Man's:

Before the dawn, southeast of the village, the bells would announce their approach, the sound shimmering across the sand hills, followed by the clacking of turtle-shell rattles--all these sounds gathering with the dawn. Coming closer to the river, faintly at first, faint as the pale yellow light emerging across the southeast horizon, the sounds gathering intensity from the swelling colors of the dawn. And at the moment the sun appeared over the edge of the horizon, they suddenly appeared on the riverbank, the Ka't'sina approaching the river crossing. (189)

Tayo rises to sing his song, and by this point in her narrative, Silko had given her readers enough evidence to make crucial associations that will allow them to share in the event by recognizing its significance to Tayo's development and character. Again, water and the dawn are connected with his actions, but the readers also relate Tayo's memory of a ceremonial place by the river where the Katsina appear at dawn with qualities of the earlier story Auntie tells about Laura. Strange forces

are at work in the narrative and the minds of Silko's readers, for whom Tayo's song becomes an appropriate observance of an ancient relationship between his people and forces in their world. As Tayo rides into mountains, he looks at his world differently; his story now has purpose and direction through his renewed knowledge of the powers that have aided, or challenged, past heroes in their quests.

Tayo's experiences on the mountain are confrontational, like those of Sun Man in the story Silko tells; however, rather than confront the Evil Gambler at this point, Tayo confronts himself. Although he recognizes the sacred associations between this place and his people, he is hampered by his fear of the white rancher, Floyd Lee. Lee "owns" the mountain now and has the forces of law and order on his side, but there is another, Laguna order that predates Lee's by generations and survives despite expensive fences and other physical boundaries. Tayo's fear is so great that it threatens to turn him from his journey, but as a hero in the ancient tradition, he finds the courage to continue through the aid of another character who, like Ts'eh, appears somewhat mysteriously to play a crucial role in Tayo's development.

As he lies on the earth under a pine tree, Tayo has a vision. First he goes through a transformation, becoming "insubstantial" and therefore free from the fear of the riders Lee employs to guard his property. Then he sees a mountain lion:

The mountain lion came out from a grove of oak trees in the middle of the clearing. He did not walk or leap or run; his

motions were like the shimmering of tall grass in the wind. . . . Relentless motion was the lion's greatest beauty, moving like mountain clouds with the wind, changing substance and color in rhythm with the contours of the mountain peaks: dark as lava rock, and suddenly as bright as a field of snow. When the mountain lion stopped in front of him, it was not hesitation, but a chance for the moonlight to catch up with him. (204)

The lion's actions speak of his fitness to his surroundings; there is no hesitation on his part as he moves freely and confidently in "rhythm" or harmony with his world. And Tayo recognizes the importance of the meeting. He, too, needs confidence in the old ways of moving with ancient powers to help him face the Floyd Lees of the modern world. He must fulfill his responsibilities, so he immediately rises to his knees to address the being before him: "mountain lion becoming what you are with each breath, your substance changing with the earth and the sky" (204). Tayo learns a valuable lesson about the nature of change, and when the lion leaves, he pours pollen into the tracks in devotion to "Mountain lion, the hunter. Mountain lion, the hunter's helper" (205). It is a curious act, but one which is obviously full of meaning, and as the readers attempt to fit it into the progression of Tayo's journey, Silko gives it significance by connecting it to subsequent events on the mountain.

First, Tayo finds his cattle. Has the hunter's helper responded to Tayo's actions? Then, Tayo is captured, but Lee's fence riders are drawn away from their prisoner by the lure

of the mountain lion. The mountain lion's presence quite literally saves Tayo. Next, as Tayo moves down the mountain, a storm approaches so he seeks shelter in a scrub-oak grove: "He lay in a shallow depression and heaped piles of dry leaves over himself until he felt warm again" (212). This event seems insignificant, compared to those preceding it, but it is the final step in a process--a sequence of events or actions--that transforms Tayo from a fearful, ineffectual individual into a traditional Laguna hero capable of confronting the evil forces at work in his world, and surviving.

There is another published version of the story of the Evil Gambler which provides further connections between past narratives and Tayo's. In John M. Gunn's Schat-chen: History, Traditions and Narratives of the Queres Indians of Laguna and Acoma, it is Pais-chun-ni-moot, or Sun Youth, who undertakes the journey to the Evil Gambler's mountain stronghold to end the drought that threatens the people, and he is the offspring of the Sun and Yellow Woman. Pais-chun-ni-moot first climbs a mountain to meet his father, who then takes him to the people who, in turn, ask the boy to perform four tasks to prove his birthright. For the last, they place him in a room full of lions, "and the lions fawned upon him" (163). Then the people perform the initial ceremony to celebrate Sun's child:

And when the sun saw that the people were convinced, he ordered them to go to the mountains and gather leaves. These they brought and made from them a bed for the youth; and they warmed him in the leaves until he was made in the image of his father.

Then the people cried, "Behold Pais-chun-ni-moot! He will go to the mountain where Kai-na-ni [Gambler] dwells and release our people." (163)

Silko constructs a similar process taking Tayo through a like transformation from a lost and wandering individual to a character who can perceive the significance of events and the forces that move people and who can respond accordingly. This knowledge provides him with the power to succeed in his final confrontation with Emo.

Subsequent events progressively enhance the mythical implications of Tayo's story. As he walks off the mountain through the storm the following morning, Tayo realizes that he and the mountain lion have been saved by the falling snow, which Silko immediately associates with the lion: "the snowflakes were swirling in tall chimneys of wind, filling his tracks like pollen sprinkled in the mountain lion's footprints" (215). Almost immediately, he is joined by a mysterious man carrying a deer; he is dressed in traditional clothing: rabbit fur and, for a cap, a fur that "looked like mountain lion skin" (216). As the two men continue down the mountain, the hunter sings. The first song Tayo hears is from Laguna, but the man sings songs from other pueblos where, interestingly enough, Mountain Lion is also a powerful figure in literature and ceremony. When the two arrive at the cabin, the accumulating snow threatens to break the branches of a tree near the house, and the hunter makes a simple statement connecting the storm to Ts'eh: "The tree . . . you [Ts'eh] better fold up the blanket before the snow storm breaks the branches" (218). She goes into the

bedroom where the "black storm-patterned blanket was spread open across the gray flagstone" (218). The storm ends when she folds it; she has brought her two men home safely after their successful trips onto the mountain.

By this point in the narrative, we can accept the possibility that Ts'eh's blanket may bring snow, and we can believe that Tayo walks with the same hunter we have already met on the mountain because we, too, have made the same associations that transform Tayo from a man lost in the fog into an effective hero. Like characters in other Laguna stories, Tayo has gained personal relationships with powerful beings in his world--beings similar to those Silko carefully describes in the traditional narratives she reproduces--and we know he will counter the influences of Emo and his cronies. Like his predecessors, the heroes of Laguna literature, Tayo is a responsive, and therefore powerful, human being who leads the way for his people as they try to react to vast changes in their land. A contemporary Laguna storyteller has written an imaginative narrative that has its bases in the narratives of her people--in the characters, landscape, motivations and, most of all, the desire to provide a continuity between the past and the present. However, her narrative goes beyond what has already been told to address an audience that her ancient, and contemporary, oral counterparts could never reach. When Tayo moves in the imagination of a nontribal person, he brings to life the traditional Laguna possibility that one person may work a massive transformation in the world and bring about sweeping, beneficial change through close attention to forces in the world that respond to considerate and responsive

actions. Silko brings the stories to life today, and demonstrates their global significance.

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Andrew Peynetsa's Telling of
 "The Boy and the Deer":
 Storytelling and Double Binds

Andrew Peynetsa's telling of "The Boy and the Deer," contained in Dennis Tedlock's collection of his translations of Zuni traditional narratives, Finding the Center, uses economical means to achieve a powerful emotional effect. The first and longest part of the story recounts the protagonist's miraculous conception, birth, and upbringing by a deer family, and his recognition by and return to his human family. The concluding part tells the tragic consequences for the boy-protagonist of this recognition and return. In both parts, storytelling is depicted as playing a decisive role in the unfolding of the story's action. One suppressed story at the start, the story of the boy-hero's conception by a priest's daughter by the Sun, his birth and abandonment by his mother, leads to the telling of a number of stories about the boy, told in order to reverse the effects of the original suppressed story and to return the boy to the human world. But these same stories in the end paradoxically undermine this process of reintegration. Stories act both to restore the hero to his cultural status and to prevent this from happening. The same stories carry opposite messages in different situations and thus act as double binds on the boy-hero. That his restoration to his society puts him in a psychologically impossible situation is the source of much of the story's poignancy.

To grasp the specific qualities of Peynetsa's rendition, we should first sketch out the course of its action. It begins with the

daughter of a Zuni priest finding herself pregnant by the Sun (who is regarded as the primal "Father" in Zuni cosmology). She goes into the wilderness (ostensibly to wash a bundle of clothes), bears a male child, and abandons him. The boy is found, nursed and reared by a family of deer. The deer-mother also obtains two sets of clothes for the boy from the kachina-priests of Kachina Village, the underwater home of the ancestral gods of the Zuni. The boy's uncle eventually spots him among the deer and organizes a hunt to retrieve the boy. The boy's deer-mother explains to him the facts of his parentage, predicts the coming hunt (which will result in the killing of the boy's deer-family and his return to his native village) and instructs him how to tell the story of his life and establish his relationship with his mother and family.

Things fall out as the deer-mother had predicted. The boy tells his tale and his human mother acknowledges him. The boy then fruitlessly goes through the motions of being a hunter. His human mother requests him to obtain some of the long sharp blades of the yucca plant for her to use in her basketweaving (the same activity she had been engaged in at the beginning of the story when the Sun made her pregnant). When the boy pulls out the center blades of a yucca plant, it pierces his heart and he dies.

The first part of this story (up to the boy's telling his story and his recognition and reception by his mother and family) bears a strong resemblance to the traditional narratives analyzed by the psychoanalyst Otto Rank in his The Myth of the Birth of the Hero. These

narratives, bearing a striking similarity among themselves on certain important points, are distributed over a wide range of cultures.

The hero is a child of most distinguished parents, usually the son of a king. His origin is preceded by difficulties, such as continence, or prolonged barrenness, or secret intercourse of the parents due to external prohibitions or obstacles. During or before the pregnancy, there is a prophesy, in the form of a dream or oracle, cautioning against his birth, and usually threatening danger to the father (or his representative). As a rule, he is surrendered to the water, in a box. He is then saved by animals, or by lowly people (shepherds), and is suckled by a female animal or by a humble woman. After he is grown up, he finds his distinguished parents in a highly versatile fashion. He takes his revenge on the father, on the one hand, and is acknowledged, on the other. Finally he achieves rank and honors. (Rank 64)

Rank not only shows the extraordinarily wide diffusion of this pattern (he cites, among other examples, the myths of the births of Moses, Sargon, Gilgamesh, Paris, Telephus, Cyrus, Oedipus, and Romulus), but he also provides an explanation of the myth's origins, form and appeal. It is, says Rank, a representation of the child's mixed feelings of love and hate for his parents. The child idealizes and admires his parents on the one hand; on the other, he resents them and wishes to downgrade them to his own level or below. In the myth these contradictory emotions find representation by

splitting the original pair of parents into two sets: the highborn parents of birth, whom the child admires and with whom he identifies his essence, and the lowborn adoptive parents of the child's actual experience, animals or humble humans, to whom he can inwardly feel superior, while still expressing gratitude for their nurturing function. The climax of the story corresponds to the child's fantasy that the highborn parents will reappear and recognize his exalted status. The drama of the career of the mythic hero is actually the dream, compounded of fantasy and reality, of the Everychild who (psychoanalysis assures us) still lives within all of us.

Rank notes other characteristic features of this group of myths, features which also apply to "The Boy and the Deer." For instance, the human mother in the Zuni story is depicted at the beginning and end as weaving baskets. She gives birth to the boy near a river, and places the baby in a hole lined with juniper leaves, a structure analogous both to a basket and a womb (Tedlock 4). Rank points out that these details can be considered a symbolic representation of the process of birth itself:

In fairy tales, the birth of a man is frequently represented as a lifting of the child from a well or a lake.

The utilization of the same material in the dreams of healthy people and neurotics signifies no more and no less than the symbolic experience of birth. The children come out of the water. The basket, box, or receptacle, simply means the container, the womb, so the exposure

directly signifies the process of birth, although it is represented by its opposite. (Rank 73-74)

In the same vein, Rank refers to Freud's comment on a dream "in which the dreamer hurls herself into the dark water of a lake": "Dreams of this sort are birth dreams, and their interpretation is accomplished by reversing the fact as communicated in the manifest dream; namely, instead of hurling oneself into the water, it means emerging from the water, i.e., to be born" (Rank 75). We can readily apply Freud's interpretation to the versions of the Zuni story told by Peynetsa in which the deer-mother visits Kachina Village to appeal for appropriate clothes for the boy; since the Kachina Village is at the bottom of a sacred lake, the deer-mother must descend to and ascend from the lake bottom to make her visit, the purpose of which is to obtain appropriate clothes for the boy. The obtaining of clothes is symbolically another birth.

This leads to a further insight into the Peynetsa retelling of "The Boy and the Deer." Each stage in the boy's development is accompanied by a change of clothes or the equivalent. When the boy is drawn out of the juniper leaf-lined hole by the deer (a symbolic birth), they draw around him and warm him with their fur (symbolic of clothes) (Tedlock 4-6). The deer-mother's two journeys to Kachina Village correspond to two further stages in the boy's career: his life with the deer herd and his re-entry into the world of men (Tedlock 9-17).

Further, the recognition scene in which the boy finds his human family includes a depiction of the bodies of the deer family laid out on cloth and decorated with turquoise (Tedlock 27). Their death, in turn, is actually a rebirth in the world of Kachina Village (Tedlock 32). Each instance of new clothes or ornament is a signal of a new stage of identity and cultural status. With this in mind it is easier to understand the seemingly casual reference to the priest's daughter going out to give birth to the boy carrying a bundle of clothes, which she washes after the birth and returns home with. In the context of the patterns of this story, the clothes are the social status and identity she has "laundered" by abandoning the child and avoiding the stigma of unwed motherhood (Tedlock 4-5).

So far I have examined how Rank's psychoanalytically oriented theory points up recurrent patterns in "The Boy and the Deer" and gives a deeper understanding of their significance. The story up to the recognition and return scene conforms fairly closely to Rank's summary of the myth of the birth of the hero. But after this scene to the end of the story, the Zuni tale diverges significantly from Rank's paradigm. In Peynetsa's retelling, the priest's daughter "embraces" the boy at the end of the climactic identification scene, but makes no other expression of emotion (Tedlock 27), just as she expressed no emotion in giving birth to and abandoning her son at the beginning of the tale (4-5). The emotional numbness of the human mother is contrasted by implication with the active concern of the deer-mother.

More pointedly, Peynetsa contrasts the human mother's callousness with the deer-mother's tenderness. The deer-mother is made to speak an embittered indictment of the human mother's behavior while telling the boy the story of his birth:

and when you were about to come out
she had pains, got out of the water
went to a TREE and there she just DROPPED
you.

THAT is your MOTHER.

She's in a room on the fourth story down
making
basket-plaques, that's what you'll tell
them.

THAT'S WHAT SHE DID TO YOU, SHE JUST
DROPPED YOU. (16-17)

Following the prompting given in the deer-mother's narrative, the boy's recital of his story to his human mother and family is not only an identification but an accusation, contrasting the human mother's indifference with the deer-mother's fostering care, and concluding with the climatic, accusatory "THAT'S WHAT YOU DID AND YOU ARE MY REAL MOTHER" (27).

Because the Peynetsa rendition of the story is eloquent about this contrast, it confirms Rank's point about the split in the child's perception between mother who gives birth and the mother who nurtures. But in the Zuni story this split is not healed or glossed over; in fact it is aggravated. After the recognition and return scene, where the boy is acknowledged by his mother, the deer family is skinned and served as dinner. As Joseph Peynetsa commented, "I suppose the boy didn't

eat the deer meat, because he said, 'This is my mother, my sister, my brother'" (32). Because of his past, his story, the boy cannot be integrated into the culturally defined role of deer hunter, and by extension, he cannot be integrated into the family. His conduct expresses his ambivalence about his oral satisfactions: under one set of conditions he blissfully feeds from the breast of his deer mother, and under another set of conditions he seems to be cannibalistically feeding on the same mother.

The boy borrows his grandfather's quiver (the grandfather-priest here substitutes for the inaccessible Sun-father):

He went out, having been given the quiver,
and wandered around.

He wandered around, he wasn't thinking of
killing deer, he just wandered
around.

In the evening he came home empty-handed.
(28)

It is impossible for the boy to identify with the male role in this culture, the role of the uncles and the grandfather who kill the nurturing deer-mother and eat her. To act up to expectations in one's role is to destroy the nurturer who prepared him for the role: that is the double bind facing the boy.

Ruth Benedict, in her collection of anthropological studies, Patterns of Culture, writes that since Zuni society is arranged around matrilineal households,

every arrangement militates against the possibility of the child's suffering from an Oedipus complex. Malinowski has pointed out for the Trobriands that the structure of society gives to the uncle authority that is associated in our culture with the father. In Zuni, not even the uncles exercise authority. Occasions are not tolerated which would demand its exercise. The child grows up without either the resentments or the compensatory daydreams of ambition that have their roots in this familial situation. (Benedict 101-102)

My analysis of Peynetsa's story in the light of Rank does not permit me to accept Benedict's sunny analysis. Indeed, the Peynetsa story carries the Oedipal crisis to an extreme, because there is never any father to confront--or rather, because the Sun-father is omnipotent and omnipresent in the "daylight" (human) world. For the boy, to imitate the uncle and grandfather in order to win the favor (perhaps) of his human mother by deer hunting means he must kill his nurturing deer-family. To gain nurturance, he must destroy those who nurtured him. The boy retreats; he does not assume the role of the adult male, the deer hunter; instead he responds to his human mother's request to help her in the female role of basketweaving, to bring her the (phallic-shaped) yucca plant blades. The situation has returned to the one with which the story started. The priest's daughter is weaving baskets, but the boy cannot hope to wield the fertilizing power of his Sun-father; he must content himself with a symbolic substitution, the yucca plant blades.

Benedict informs us in Patterns of Culture that whippings with yucca blades are important in the initiations of boys into the ceremonial religious life of Zuni males (Benedict 69-70). The boy, in contrast, pulls out the long blades "from the center of the yucca plant" and dies as the blades enter his heart (Tedlock 28-29). The ending of Peynetsa's telling of "The Boy and the Deer" can be interpreted as the catastrophe following upon the unsuccessful resolution of the boy's Oedipal crisis. The boy, at the mother's request, symbolically castrates himself (pulling out the yucca blades) and the result is his death. The real father, the Sun, can never be rivaled or brought to account, and all hope of obtaining the mother's love is lost. The boy has no place in the world as a "daylight person"; his only option is a return to death to the "raw people," his deer-family and the beneficent Kachina-priests of the underwater (pre-birth) Kachina Village.

I can recall no other story that in so limited a space puts so intense an emphasis on the process of storytelling, and no other in which we are made to feel so much the inadequacy of storytelling for the humans most concerned. The deer-mother tells the story of her discovery of the boy to the Kachinas; the uncle tells his story of discovering the boy twice, once to his household and then to the priest, the boy's grandfather. The deer-mother tells the boy the story of his past, present, and immediate future, and explains how he is to tell his story to his new family and community; the boy does tell his story to the family and community. What is the effect? If we identify with the boy, it all seems of no avail. Certainly he hasn't changed the Sun, or his own human mother.

"Surely I could be anyone's mother, for we have many children" she responds to him (Tedlock 25), and at the end of the story she weaves baskets in the same unmoved impervious fashion that allowed the Sun to impregnate her at the story's beginning.

"The Boy and the Deer" thus ends as the story of the imposition upon the boy of a double bind. If the boy assumes the culturally determined role of deer-hunter which the whole narrative up to the point of the boy's recognition and reception by his family has brought him to (Tedlock 27), then he must destroy those who saved him, nurtured him and sacrificed their lives for him. This itself is a repetition and a reversal of the situation faced by the human mother at the start of the tale. If the story that she bore a son out of wedlock gets out, she will likely face drastic punishment, no matter what the real reasons for the pregnancy are. Her abandonment of the boy is her attempt to abandon, to erase, this story. At the end of "The Boy and the Deer," the boy is being invited to repeat his mother's choice. If he suppresses his past, forgets his debt to his nurturing deer-mother and kills other deer to live up to the demands of his social status and role, then he in a way is doing to the other deer what his mother did to him, attempting to destroy them in order to preserve a social role.

Each step of "The Boy and the Deer" is marked by a telling of the suppressed story: to the Kachinas, to the boy himself, and finally to his human mother and family. The last telling of the story of the boy's identity and up-bringing defeats the suppression by the mother of the story of his birth (Tedlock 27). But

more drastic punishment for her is averted, because the boy's story also explains his miraculous conception by the Sun, which means that his mother cannot really be held responsible for her pregnancy. Both the suppression and the telling of the boy's story have their root in a breach in the barriers between the human and divine orders, between "daylight" and "raw" worlds: the Sun has caused a woman to conceive; animals and Kachinas help the infant survive. The return of the boy to human society and his subsequent death put an end to this anomalous situation. But it is done at the expense of the boy's happiness and his life. Stories in "The Boy and the Deer" in the long run solve cultural paradoxes, not individual emotional and psychological dilemmas.

We can state the underlying double bind set up in this tale by noting that the tellings of the previously suppressed stories of the boy's birth and life first restore him to his cultural status and role as a Zuni male and then prevent him from acting appropriately in that role and status; to so act, to be a deer hunter, would be to destroy those who saved and raised him. The repetitions of the story have taken the boy from being a deer without letting him be fully a human, as it is understood in Zuni culture. Death is the only escape, in this instance, from simultaneous and mutually negating demands. From the point of view of the boy as an individual, storytelling both heals and kills.

But storytelling does have an ultimately consolatory nature for listeners to and readers of this story. It comes from placing the individual human's fate in the context of the

Zuni cosmos and culture. In this context, the boy successfully resolves his dilemmas by entering "the roads of his elders" (in order, presumably, to find his deer-family). The story affirms the necessary connections between the various elements in the Zuni worldview: deer, kachinas, the Sun; the family, the community, the individual. The first, silenced, catastrophic breach of boundaries in the Zuni world-order, the impregnation of the priest's daughter by the Sun, is eventually resolved by successive actions, especially by acts of narration. The world and its animal and human inhabitants face changes in the course of this process, but underlying and complicated connections are affirmed between the elements of the Zuni world, and this is something that the human mother's abandonment of the boy and suppression of his story would have denied, if it had prevailed.

Storytelling in "The Boy and the Deer," from the standpoint of the boy's individual earthly life, is the source of paradox, tragedy, and double binds. From the standpoint of the culture that acts as a context of a story, it is the source of paradox, transformation, making connections, healing of ruptures. Triumph becomes tragedy because narratives have the ability to convey opposed commands, not only when they are given but when they carry their imperatives into a new and changed context. If the audience feels ambiguous about the power of storytelling at the end of "The Boy and the

Deer," it is because the tale shows that even the best-intentioned narratives can have ambiguous and even self-negating effects.

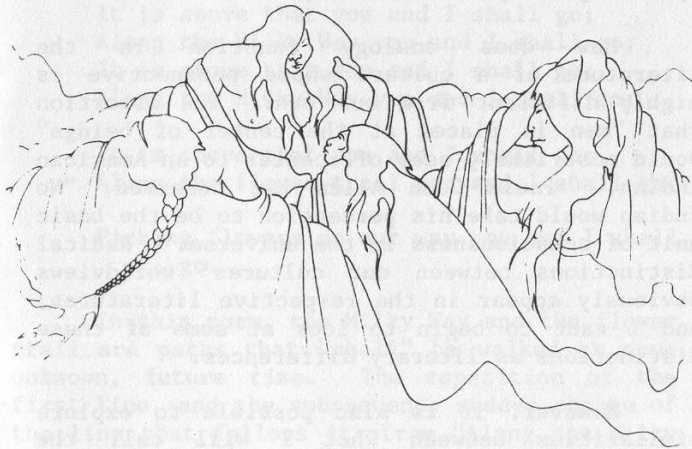
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Topic of Transformation:
Some Aspects of Myth and Metaphor

Emerson wrote, "Man is an analogist and studies the relations in all objects. He is placed at the center of beings, and a ray of relation passes from every other being to him." To some extent, our idea of the artist, and especially of the poet, is as a superior analogist who draws connections between nature and the psyche, and between discrete objects in nature. It does seem likely that art arises, in part, out of the desire to respond to what Wallace Stevens called "resemblances" in the world. Even the most basic form of authorship--dreaming--makes sense of experience by identifying seemingly random objects with one another. A world constructed of analogy is the opposite of chaotic, and the artistic process is an attempt to defeat chaos. We order the world by elaborating on the patterns we perceive, and by making new patterns in stylized works of art.

How does analogy function in the literature of a culture whose perspective is highly different from our own? The assertion that "man is placed at the center of beings" would most likely seem off-center to an American Indian. Paula Gunn Allen has observed, "No Indian would take his perception to be the basic unit of consciousness in the universe." Radical distinctions between our cultures' worldviews obviously appear in the respective literatures, and I want to begin to look at some of these distinctions as literary differences.

However, it is also possible to explore similarities between what I will call the "Western" and the Indian traditions. The

"mythical" and the "metaphoric" imaginations seem to share some essential features, and their common ground produces an interesting model for reading the literatures of both worlds. In the first part of this paper, I want to raise some general comparisons between myth and metaphor. In the second part, I will attempt a reading of the Zuni Emergence Myth, remaining aware of the foreignness of these comparisons but using my experience of the literature of my own tradition as a preliminary entryway to understanding.

Although it is often said that Indian texts do not use metaphor, I want to look at an Indian chant and at part of a narrative which betray a sophisticated mastery of metaphoric vision. Neither text uses metaphor directly, but each produces an effect which is related to it.

The Wintu chant below uses visual analogy to arrive at a cosmological vision:

It is above that you and I shall go;
Along the Milky Way you and I shall go;
It is above that you and I shall go;
Along the Milky Way you and I shall go;

It is above that you and I shall go;
Along the flower trail you and I shall go;

Picking flowers on our way you and I shall go.

In this poem, the Milky Way and the flower trail are paths that "shall" be walked at some unknown, future time. The repetition of the first line, and the subsequent, sudden change of the line that follows it--from "Along the Milky

Way you and I shall go" to "Along the flower trail you and I shall go"--identifies the flower trail with the Milky Way. Like the Milky Way, its location is "above." In other words, the poem calls the Milky Way a flower trail, and it is an easy image to envision, the path of stars strewn out like flowers.

This metaphor is highly suggestive, establishing a connection between the celestial and the earthly. While the first two lines are concerned with the heavens, the last line, "Picking flowers you and I shall go," is entirely earthly; indeed, it is the only line in the poem not preceded by "It is above." Nevertheless, this final line returns to the high register of the first, "celestial" stanza when it is sung--an effect which probably helps the listener to associate picking flowers on earth with walking the Milky Way. The beauty of the earthly activity is thus instilled with the significance of the cosmic one; there is no radical split between the pleasures. The rather abstract image of walking the Milky Way becomes concrete and familiar, embodied with the color and aroma implied in the final line. The chant, finally, links heaven and earth through the resemblance of the Milky Way to a trail of flowers.

The visual analogy and identity which are common to mythical narratives are similarly akin to metaphor. For example, the Blackfoot Genesis Myth tells us that

Old Man . . . lay on his back, stretched himself out on the ground, with his arms extended, he marked himself out with stones--the shape of his body, head, legs,

everything. You can see those rocks today. . . . He . . . stumbled over a knoll and fell on his knees . . . so he raised up two large buttes there, and called them the Knees, and they are called so to this day.

This mythical episode is clearly a response to the shape of a landscape. To the Blackfoot imagination, the land looks like a human form. A poet of the Western tradition, similarly struck, might write a line such as "the buttes are knees." Both devices--the metaphor and the myth-story--engage in transformation; in each case, a bare landscape changes into a human shape.

Like metaphor, mythical transformation evokes a variety of meanings, based on the specific images which are used. For example, the Sioux Genesis, like many genesis stories, conceives of the earth transformed into a human form as the origin of the species. A 1933 version of the myth contains a self-conscious awareness of the multiple levels of the tale. The last line of that version is "we are of the soil and the soil is of us." Identifying land with a human body is a comment on the relationship between human beings (in this case, specifically Sioux) and the earth.

In the Western tradition, the poem transforms the natural world into images, and the poet's imagination is the "center" through which the "rays of relation" pass. But the mythical imagination does not present the myth-teller as the center. Although the teller shapes the narrative, his individual influence

creates a relationship between him and a pre-existing--indeed, sacred and ancient--text.

Just as the current telling of the myth exists in relation to past tellings, the myth re-enacts transformations which happened "once" or "long ago." The mythical image, presented as having "happened," relies on temporal language to evoke the past. However, ritual tellings recreate the events and transformations of the myth, so that the past transcends itself and re-occurs in the present. Metaphor, as well, transcends time in making its transformations.

We do not repeat metaphor ritually; it remains atemporal within itself. We understand Toelken's confusion when he asks whether the jaguar really had amber eyes; however, no one would ask a poet, "Are your lover's lips really roses?" We accept the metaphorical statement as both figurative and true; we even acknowledge that some poetic truths are "deeper," somehow, than that which can be expressed unmetaphorically. However, we depend upon metaphor to express our conventional division between that which is "image" and that which is "occurrence." Perhaps the imagery of myth--imagery which occurs--is, in a sense, poetic language that fully believes its own transformations, its own power.

The treatment of time and transformation in the Zuni Emergence Myth is especially rich. I am familiar with three versions of the myth: translations by Ruth Benedict in her Zuni Myths and Ruth Bunzel in the 47th Annual Report of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and by Dennis Tedlock in Finding the Center. I will base my discussion largely on the translations by

Benedict and Tedlock. However, it is worth noting that while each of the three versions differ in detail and in tone, they all share a basic model: that the ancestors of present Zuni emerged, slimy and physically unfinished, from the fourth world, a region of chaos and utter darkness. As Tedlock notes, the tiered structure of the universe exists before the beginning of the tale. The people of the fourth world have apparently been living in chaos forever. However, the static frame of the myth is continually placed in relation to motion and process.

Birth imagery is strong in each of the versions. The people emerge from a place that is womblike, dark and without personal boundary, and once they arrive in the "daylight world," they are as helpless as infants, ignorant of all social custom. Significantly, in the Zuni language, according to Bunzel, the word for "daylight"--tekohanane--is the word for "life." And a Zuni commented to Tedlock that the emergence of the Moss People suggests the process of human evolution. Since this teller of the myth in 1965 was most certainly aware of evolution, the relevance of the concept is worth serious consideration. In both the Bunzel and the Tedlock versions, people change into water animals and then back into human beings; though the plasticity of species is common in myth, here the imagery seems to possess special importance. It adds to the image. An idea evolution can incorporate is the birth of the infant and its development into a nostalgic adult, the birth of the people Zuni, and a spiritual evolution from chaos to harmony. These themes are intertwined inextricably in the Zuni emergence myth. It would be artificial to

select one strand from this weaving, instead of allowing the idea of "birth" to retain the fullness of all its dimensions, as it does if we admit some kind of evolutionary theme as central to the myth.

Certainly, the theme of evolution is most apparent in the Tedlock version of the myth, which may, therefore, reflect the impact of Western ideas upon the native reading. In Tedlock, we learn that the first three "rooms" of people failed the Sun: they did not appreciate his divinity, neglected to offer him cornmeal, and were, therefore, not allowed to survive. It is as if only the children who work their way up from darkness are able to appreciate the Sun and their debt to him; in other words, the process of their emergence is essential to their final state. This process is long and deliberate. At each level of ascent, the people must pause for four days (years); they have to adjust to the light, to incorporate each stage of enlightenment, before they can continue to the next.

In the Tedlock version, the idea of process is repeated in the Ahayuuta's activity within the fourth world. The twins are markedly different here from those in the Benedict version, where they are more simply drawn hero figures. The Benedict Ahayuuta descend to the fourth world out of pity and heroic impulse, and though prayer is essential to their success in bringing the people up to daylight, their journey is not particularly arduous. Though Benedict's myth tells us that the twins "need" the priests, they themselves know how to ascend to the daylight world.

In the Tedlock version, however, the twins must engage in a formal and lengthy process of preparation for the ascent. After their descent--undertaken not of their own impulse, but because the Sun commanded it--they have no idea how to find the way back up. They are supposed to lead the people, but they cannot find the "road." They must go from priest to priest, repeating the same words; they seem to be rousing the priests from a long sleep. Each priest is approached in a pre-ordained, particular order: "You were the next to be spoken of," they say.

The repeated activity at the priests' houses has at least three effects. First, it establishes the power of the priests. Their knowledge is magical and indispensable to the emergence. According to Bunzel's ethnographic report, the priests are the most powerful figures in the Zuni social structure; they are "the real political authority of the tribe." The role they play in the Emergence, then, expresses and reinforces their political authority.

The second effect of the Ahayuuta's journey from priest to priest is to comment on the power of ritual chant itself. The Ahayuuta's words are a ritual chant within the chant of the Beginning, and it is the process of the Ahayuuta's ritual--"the WORD of some importance"--that, along with the prayer-sticks, will be crucial to bringing the people up out of chaos and darkness.

The third effect is clearly to align the twins with the Moss People. Blinded and confused, their quest and peril is as urgent as

that of the people they must guide. "Extraordinary persons we are not," they insist. Since their own birth was a "sprouting," they are like these people of the fourth world, these seeds pushing their way up through the earth--and also like chant itself, which "sprouts" in "strings of song" at the end of the chant. There is a moment in the myth when the twins have just entered the fourth world, and in the instant of light, before they are forced to extinguish their torch, they glimpse a stooped, slime-covered man. We can imagine the terror and confusion of the twins, who were born and bred in sunlight. It seems that they have descended in order to re-emerge themselves, as well as to guide the people. Their journey thereby acquires a resonance which a westerner must regard as a kind of inner redemption.

In the fourth world, the people urinate on each other, step on each other, and are blind; the priests live in isolated houses; the Moss People have no mouths or anuses, and their hands and feet are blocked with webbing. The impression is of people who are hermetically sealed, radically cut off from natural rhythms and social intercourse. Without the rising and setting of the sun, this fourth world is an embodiment of static time, nontime as well as hermetic space.

Time and reciprocity are introduced with the people's entrance into the daylight world. They are forced to look into the sun, and the tears that flow from their eyes become flowers, which emerge from the earth like the people themselves. The people's vision of the sun has the effect of including them in the natural processes of the earth. The flowers are the

products of their bodies; they have been engaged in the growth of plants, and have thereby entered into a "magical" relationship with nature. At this stage, they are still innocents, in a period of transition between the fourth world's darkness and a time when they will become "used to" the rising and setting of the sun.

The image of the people as sealed, without mouths or anuses, is destroyed when the twins cut them. The people are literally and figuratively opened up, given organs that allow them to ingest corn and to expel it. The cutting initiates them into the cycle of earthly production, and makes them dependent upon the earth. Eating and expelling, they become intensely corporeal figures; it is evident that mortality will soon be introduced.

Their fingers, newly freed to pound cornmeal, intensify the imagery of fluidity. The pounding of cornmeal, as opposed to the simple gathering of food, is a fundamental sign of Zuni ordered social life. Perhaps relatedly, cornmeal is also the food which is sacrificed to the Sun. Thus, stasis, isolation from nature, and social disorganization are parallel conditions, as are, conversely, fluidity, integration with nature, and social order. Life is expressed by boundaries; no one steps on their neighbor in the daylight world.

The present world, as a state of detail, immediacy, color and distinction, is presented as desirable, a condition which had been dreamed of and was attained with effort. The longing for the sun, for life, is deeply rooted, even fundamental--it is what makes the Moss People

seem human in the fourth world. The Zuni vision of the current world as the outcome of an ascent contrasts sharply with the Judeo-Christian idea, in which the static, atemporal realm is a pinnacle from which we fell into the present world. One is similarly struck by the contrast with Plato's allegory of the cave, which envisions the present world as dark and unreal, something like the fourth world, from which we must still strive to emerge. The Zuni idea, however, positions mortal life as the brightest and most desirable condition.

In fact, it is difficult to distinguish between the pre-birth world of the Moss People and the world of the dead. The people in the fourth world are below earth, covered with dirt and ashes, and slimy as if they were beginning to decompose. In addition, the twins' descent to the fourth world, and their mission of bringing the people up to daylight, suggests a relationship between the Emergence Myth and the Indian Orpheus myths. It seems most accurate, therefore, to place the fourth world not as strictly "before" (or "after") life, but rather as opposed to life. The darkness of the fourth world is the antithesis of tekohanane.

However, it is impossible to ignore the dark undercurrent within the myth, the intimation of the fourth world which slips into the daylight. The myth recognizes what might simultaneously be called thanatos, and the desire to return to the state before birth. One is reminded of the Nez Perce Orpheus myth, in which Coyote enjoys the death lodge and does not want to leave; in that story, Coyote's attempt to return suggests that he longs not only for his wife, but for the entire death-world he had

discovered. Analogously, in the Zuni Beginning, the child who dies must live at the place of emergence.

In the Zuni Emergence myth, birth leads to separation. Birth is not the estrangement of the fourth world, which is a sealed-off confusion, but is rather the pain that accompanies consciousness and distinction. The second part of the Emergence Myth presents an emotion which is very like the ambiguous and free-floating nostalgia of lyric poetry. Something is missing; the people are "lonely." The myth recognizes a desire for symbiosis, and also, I will suggest, offers a remedy for existential loneliness.

The separation anxiety that follows the emergence is experienced as abandonment by the Corn Mothers. This is expressed as the fault of the children, who were "irresponsible" and "lost sight of" the mothers, and it is the children who must restore the bond. There is an urgency to return, not to the fourth world, but to a perfect condition that in fact has never occurred in the myth. The feeling that human beings are insufficient without the Corn Mothers, and the desire to create a tie to divinity, appears in the chant as unmediated loss and nostalgia. These emotions are finally resolved through ritual itself. The people fast and pray, and they follow the directions for "the way you will live." They are thus able to find their mother. "Because this happened," the narrative tells us, "The Corn Mothers came back." The Zuni people maintain "the way" in the present to sustain a relationship with the Corn Mothers. The chant is thus both a chronicle of, and a vehicle for, the development from unconsciousness to a

painful consciousness, and finally to establish and sustain a mutually reciprocal relationship with nature and the divine.

The ritual thus itself offers reparation. Its words and gestures first allow the people to emerge into daylight, and afterwards it is ritual which makes daylight tolerable. The chant of the Beginning thus recharges itself with each telling: its words create a center which each of the Zuni need to find, again and again.

To suggest such a metaphorical reading of the Zuni Emergence Myth as this is not to suggest an allegorical one. Rather, such a reading assumes that the myth's details are many-leveled, expressive of various planes of emotion and experience. It considers the myth as an artistic, as well as religious, endeavor.

The anthropologist Malinowski wrote that myth is "not an . . . artistic imagery" but rather a charter of "a primeval reality, told in satisfaction of deep religious wants and moral questions." Certainly these myths address religious apprehensions. However, we must question Malinowski's automatically assumed distinction between "aesthetic" and "religious." Even in the poetry of secular cultures, such a distinction is often unclear, and many Indian myths are powerful because "aesthetic" and "religious" often appear as aspects of a common desire: the human urge for order and for connection, or what might be thought of, in fact, as cosmological analogy.

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Reviews

Mary V. Dearborn. Pocahontas's Daughters: Gender and Ethnicity in American Culture. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

This is an important, path-breaking book, the first truly intelligent survey of ethnic female literature in this country. Dearborn uses Pocahontas as a representative symbol for the situation of the ethnic woman in full recognition that Pocahontas achieved her position indirectly--not through anything she wrote but only through representations of her. Native American women, properly, occupy relatively few pages in Dearborn's text, which ranges very widely but without ever losing critical incisiveness. Dearborn is interesting on Co-ge-we-a (though one ought to contrast with her comments the discussion by Dexter Fisher in her introduction to the recent Nebraska republication of this first novel by a Native American woman) and impressive on Leslie Silko as representative of "the complexity of the act of writing for the ethnic woman writer" (15). Dearborn's book is full of acute observations on a breadth of materials, ranging from Tales of the Okanogans to Janeway's Powers of the Weak and Abrahams' analysis of Philadelphia street culture, for instance: "few ethnic women present trickster heroines or tell trickster tales, but many use the authorial strategy of the trickster, purporting to tell one story . . . and actually implying another message" (29). Blessedly free of sociological, feminist, and psychological jargon, Dearborn's work exemplifies the new intellectual frontiers being opened now to those intelligent enough and

imaginative enough to pursue cultural studies in a genuinely humanistic fashion.

Karl Kroeber
Editor



Nature's Wisdom of the Wanderer

Maurice Kenny, Is Summer This Bear, Saranac Lake, NY: The Chauncy Press. \$6.95 ppr.; Rain and Other Fictions, Blue Cloud Quarterly Press, Vol. 31, No. 4. \$3.00 ppr.

Maurice Kenny, accomplished poet, winner of the 1984 American Book Award of The Before Columbus Foundation for his Mama Poems, in his new collection, Is Summer This Bear, continues in the fine nature tradition of Native-American poetry which he has helped to foster as one of its four or five most mature and significant voices. Joseph Bruchac has written that Mr. Kenny is "achieving recognition as a major figure among American writers . . . a distinctive voice, one shaped by the rhythms of Mohawk life and speech, yet one which defines and moves beyond cultural boundaries." Kenny, whose Blackrobe; Isaac Joques was nominated for The Pulitzer Prize in 1982, is the author of several books of poetry and has now just published his first collection of stories, Rain and Other Fictions, as an issue of The Blue Cloud Quarterly.

Though Kenny's Mama Poems--because of their deep digging into the poet's family roots and his emotional connection to the upstate lands of his forefathers--still contain his most emotionally powerful works, there are many good pieces in this current collection of poems from the Chauncy Press. Is Summer This Bear begins with a sensitive, poetically written preface which states: "I have never recognized humankind's supremacy. I have never granted humankind that boastful ego. Humans forget there was a time before them." Mr. Kenny goes

on to talk about the fear of nuclear end which threatens all life and then he warns us to listen to the elders.

Should they listen to the elders, humankind will be guided to the right path: should humankind respect hornet or fisher or willow, they will come to understand the nature of things and the design the Creator wove into the tapestry of life, all life.

Is Summer This Bear is a collection of poems to remind us of the beauty of the natural world around us and to suggest our obligation to it. The poem "Listening to the Elders" is, therefore, central to his new collection, and it carries the title, "Is Summer This Bear?" as its first line. The rhetorical question is Kenny's way of saying, "a rose is a rose," and that all of nature is what she is in each and every marvelous creation and creature which blooms or stalks or walks the earth--each respective of its place in the primordial universal scheme of natural balances--each with its own story and wisdom to offer--each as a symbol of natural aspect--each a Native American myth, legend, personification of nature and her diversified powers. Wolf, eagle, red tail, raccoon, bear, coyote, bobcat or turtle, anemone, loose-strife or wild strawberry exemplify her beauty and wisdom with their special gift or vital role in Kenny's lyrical chant, offering their indomitable wisdom of the earthly ages to the less wise, now often effete humankind who have stolen the American lands and who ignore the intelligence of earth and her native peoples. Nature's pristine powers and beauty are juxtaposed with the decadence of a materialistic

civilization, as in "Amtrak to the Adirondacks" where all sorts of wanderers, engrossed in or deluded by their separate civilizations or mysticisms or religions, board the bus.

Kenny's Native-American voice carries the spirit of his symbolic folklore:

Coyote

Over the rain I hear your howl toothed
into night . . .

Scrawny you run with hounds and poodles
distract the gun's sight

wearing grape leaves like a fox

When that fails you whine into legend

creep into the house to place

your docile paw in the lap

your joke, story on the table . . .

You are taken very seriously . . . for all
the ridicule . . .

The wolf or eagle give their own contemplations in poems titled with their English names, as Kenny begins Part I of his collection with a quote from Tehanetorens, in Indian Studies:

I love these woods . . . They're
alive to me. The woods have a life of
their own. From the smallest insect to
the largest moose, everything has a
function. It is all here for a purpose.
All of them are necessary.

Born and raised in northern New York near the St. Lawrence River and the foothills of the Adirondacks, Kenny lives in Brooklyn, often traveling back to his native land to teach or

around the country to give readings. This living between two worlds, the culture of his Mohawk country realm and the urban blight of Brooklyn, has given rise to a central theme in Kenny's work--the theme of the wanderer between two worlds, who knows the value of one and doubts the real civilization of the other, yet must go back and forth to write and to read the meaning of his vision. "Amtraking" or "Greyhounding" appear in both his new verse and prose collections, in which the poet often appears as the wanderer or the visitor between worlds. Is Summer This Bear ends with a poem about a runner titled, "Handing the Baton," which perpetuates the image of someone always headed home, searching between two worlds, in a rhythmic chant, powerful in its use of parallelisms, achieving its crescendo through the use of short line repetitions, a device Kenny use with mastery:

running
 two miles
 three
 running
 five miles
 ten
 hawkweed leaves between the
 teeth
 thirst nags at both
 throat and feet
 running into sweat
 five miles
 ten
 runners on the path
 between

 looking for a brook to wash
 feet

looking for a lake to ease
 pain
 looking for the end to
 breathe
 looking to sky for an
 eagle's wing
 looking north for wind

An earlier book, Only as Far as Brooklyn, augments this theme and contains what this reviewer feels are some of Mr. Kenny's most skillful poems, such as "Voyeur," "Dead Morning in Brooklyn Heights," or "Flash Finish." His first collections of short stories, Rain and Other Fictions, carries the theme further. Issued as a volume in the Blue Cloud Quarterly Press series, with a charming drawing by a Native-American poet/artist, Wendy Rose, on its pale blue cover, the book begins and ends with stories of traveling--the homebound wanderer in search of solace.

"Rain" begins with a small group of Native-Americans riding in a beat-up Pontiac to a rain dance festival which has become a tourist attraction. The fact that the car taking the American Indians to their festival is named for a great Indian chief offers an added irony. In this story, American-Indian mysticism is given the power of nature to which it is attuned when a rain dance, despite the Coca-cola and carnival tourista atmosphere in which it occurs, brings its longed-for results from the skies. As the refraining drums drum and rattles rattle, the dry hot dusty traveler's thirst is quenched by the power of his Native-American people to dance down the rain--to respect nature and her sensual offerings better than the over-civilized white man can. "Rain," becomes the true power of this

watery, blue clouded planet, marbled with nearly all swirling ocean.

Kenny is good as a visual imagist evoking scenes with short descriptive lines and sensual similes, as he creates the carnival atmosphere of the Pueblo rain dance festival in New Mexico. For example:

At the pueblo edge a Ferris wheel whirled. Music of a merry-go-round tinkled the afternoon. Sonny's face brightened with surprise, but his grandmother grasped his hand tightly. A smell of burning charcoal seamed the air. Young boys weaved in and out of the strolling crowd selling containers of Coca-cola from large wooden crates. Children, including Sonny, stared hungrily at the various booths selling cotton candy on plastic sticks. A tongue slid along the rim of a lip. Hundreds of people milled between craft stands and beverage counters, charcoal pits where great cauldrons of bubbling grease singed brown tortilla-like bread. Flies swarmed about the honey pots. A leathery-skinned man wavered through the crowds hawking balloons: purple, the color of his lips; yellow as the sun; blue as the clear sky; red as the heat of the afternoon.

Despite all this, the rain does pour down, and the weary traveler, who has witnessed the miracle, then quenches his thirst on slices of juicy melon from the lap of mother nature as he feels the power of his people to be in tune with her still. This is the very power of Native-American poetry--on a symbolic level, perhaps.

Native-American poetry and writing is often better attuned to the actualities of our perilous time than is more academic prosody, or the dead metrics of English verse, in that it is vitally aware of the need to listen to the lessons that nature offers--exactly because it is alienated from the workings of corporate U.S.A. As Union Carbide, G.E., The United Fruit Company, or the uranium miners, or whatever profit-hungry pillagers destroy the indigenous populations of the world with their deadly ideas of progress, this theme certainly has its vitality above many others. Indeed, the entire "New Age" movement, as it is sometimes called, is akin to the spirit of Native-American poetry and writing. Its essence becomes universal as we realize our predicament with the balances of nature and the poisoning of our lands, once stolen from the red man, who now teaches us her wisdom and her balances, naming her nature for us. Maurice Kenny's work is full of the glories of the natural world with which he has a learned intimacy, the names of tree, bush, bird, flower or beast.

Recently, at the PEN International Congress which met here in New York City, this reviewer attended a panel or discussion on censorship, and was gratified to hear one member of the audience rise during the symposium to point out that Native-American history is censored from our public school texts in great degree. Often portrayed as a blood-thirsty, scalping, arrow-shooting, wild savage, instead of a people trying to protect their respected homelands from the destruction of the white man and his pillaging, rarely does the American-Indian receive the dignity due a people who inhabited the land we call America before the

rest of us did. Even today in the public school history textbooks of the land--in 1986--this injustice is just beginning to meet with proper attention.

In the second story of his collection, Kenny portrays three generations of Native-American women picking wild strawberries--central to the folklore and survival of their once Mohawk tribe amidst the foothills of the Adirondacks. The middle-aged woman--weighed down by the responsibility of her aging mother and her child--finds solace and comfort, or the ability to go on, in the wild strawberry juice brought to her by an aging medicine man of the religion. The old medicine man's elliptical message is inherent in the cycle of the seasons. The grandmother, Lena, longs for winter--having barely survived her life away in the city--as she rebels against the heat of summer, symbolic of lost youth. Summer and its ripe fruit drives her momentarily mad in its heat and bloody juices as a lady-bug reminds her that she deserted her children and did not, herself, fly home to rescue them. "Lady-bug, lady-bug, fly away home, your house is on fire, your children will burn," she chants as the bug lands in her berry bucket, causing her to go berserk in the heat of summer. The medicine man reminds her that winter will come soon enough in his few American-Indian words, and then he leaves a jar of wild strawberry juice with Lena's daughter to give her the strength to go on past forgiving her mother for her desertion. Kenny tells this story in a mystical and elliptical fashion, with plenty of sensual imagery of the meadow and the wild strawberry patch, making the reader long to join his characters among the bright berries for a first-hand taste of their magical juice.

In his final story of the collection, he returns again to the theme of the wander as he recreates with the images and rhythms of his language the feeling of a long bus trip across country to San Jose, California, by Greyhound bus. We watch the scenic route through the bus windows with him, as a sixteen year old American-Indian youth travels in search of the father he's never seen, and a car salesman feels empathy with the Indian youth--longing for some kind of family connection of his own.

The book ends with a cowboy song about a wanderer, just as Is Summer This Bear ends with a poem about a runner. The wandering cowboy or salesman is always looking for a woman who won't say "no" in this last story, and maybe she was once an Indian woman long ago who mothered the boy who is in search of his roots or his father. Again, Kenny is skilled at creating the scene:

The Greyhound growled up street and down, at last pulling into the station dock . . . Passengers trekked off. Some, naturally disgruntled about the long stop; others took an opportunist outlook. The boy disappeared immediately into the crowded terminal; the man headed for the plastic cafeteria . . . Time waddled like an old duck with chicks. Despite its surroundings, cool mountain tops checkered with snow, Salt Lake City was blistering hot. The sun's glare caught unpolarized eyes casting a blinding, sickening dizziness to the pit of the stomach. The polished sidewalks were poker hot. Few travelers ventured from the air-conditioned depot.

Michael Castro, author of Interpreting the Indian, has written of Kenny:

His work is American Indian, personal and universal all at once. His work is characterized by both historical and spiritual depth.

Patricia Wilcox, in The Small Press Review, wrote:

Kenny begins his Native American experiences and continues with elegant formal control: encircling, the poems frequently give off universal sparks. Kenny has shaped hymn-like poems of compassion and stern anger, of initiation and historical correction.

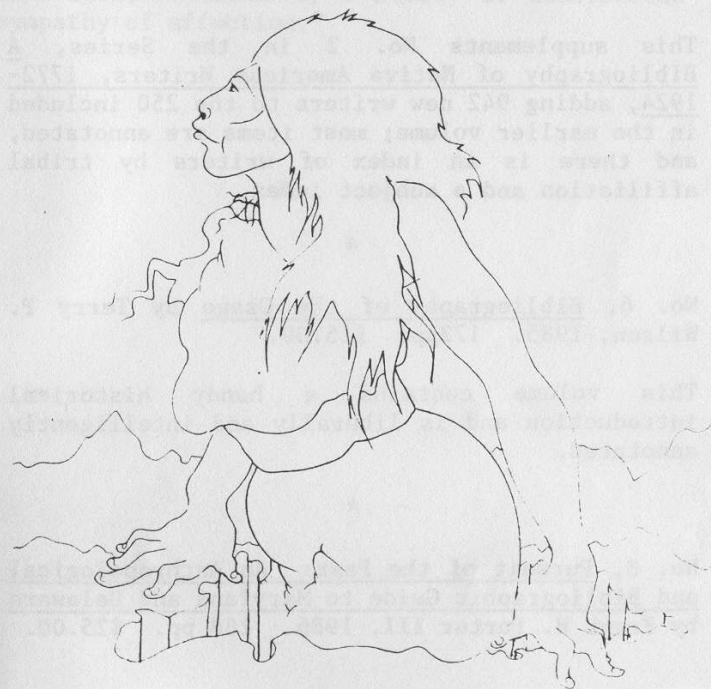
These two new collections, Is Summer This Bear, and Rain and Other Fictions, continue to support the essence of these commentaries on his work as one of the most important voices of Native-American literature--one achieving a full-bodied maturity in the wisdom of the wanderer, between the nature of his homeland amidst the foothills of the Adirondacks and the urban blight and ironic civilization of Brooklyn's teeming cityscape.

It is easy to see where the poet's soul really lives in the short lyric titled "Brooklyn Pigeon," from Is Summer This Bear.

Wings flash black on the sun,
trick my thinking for a quick
second:
home, winter, snow
crow on white fields

sun thaws iced elms
near blue waters
trout snagged in ice
may sun and pigeon fool my eyes
again tomorrow . . .
and sight the mountains.

Daniela Gioseffi
St. Francis College



Short Reviews

Under the general editorship of Jack Marken the Native American Bibliography Series is rapidly becoming one of the major research sources for anyone interested in any aspect of Indian literatures and their contexts. Three new titles have entered the series, all continuing the high standard for which it is noted.

No. 5, A Bibliography of Native American Writers, 1772-1924 by Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr. and James W. Parins, 1985. 360 pp. \$27.50.

This supplements No. 2 in the Series, A Bibliography of Native American Writers, 1772-1924, adding 942 new writers to the 250 included in the earlier volume; most items are annotated, and there is an index of writers by tribal affiliation and a subject index.

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No. 6, Bibliography of the Osage by Terry P. Wilson, 1985. 172pp. \$15.00.

This volume contains a handy historical introduction and is liberally and intelligently annotated.

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No. 8, Pursuit of the Past: An Anthropological and Bibliographic Guide to Maryland and Delaware by Frank W. Porter III, 1986. 268 pp. \$25.00.

The extensive introductory material is a special feature of this volume, which includes careful and substantial annotations.

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Mari Sandoz, These Were the Sioux. \$4.95.

A Bison Book reissue of a classic memoir-ethnographic account. The limpid simplicity of Sandoz's style conceals the concise cogency of her insights, for example, "to the Plains Sioux nothing that was made less by division could be inherited, enriched by a steady if understated sympathy of affection."