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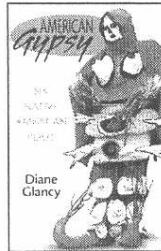
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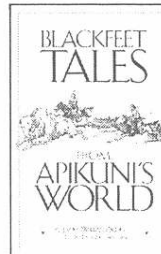
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The Rise of the White Shaman: Twenty-Five Years Later

Geary Hobson

It's been twenty-five years since I published the essay entitled *The Rise of the White Shaman as a New Version of Cultural Imperialism*. It appeared in Ishmael Reed's and Al Young's annual publication, *Y' Bird*, and it caused a considerable stir. Where it seemed to have drawn the most flak, I'm told, was in the Bay Area. I don't know this firsthand since I was living in Albuquerque at the time and rarely had occasion to visit San Francisco or Berkeley. Looking back now, I estimate that I must have received fifty letters and phone calls over the following two years—1978-1980—from people either taking me to task for my “reverse-racism,” or complimenting me on having said things in the essay that they felt needed to be said and that should have been said long before.¹

I wasn't alone on this particular dubious stage. My close friend and colleague, Leslie Marmon Silko—at the University of New Mexico at the time—was also on the receiving end of both praise and damnation for her essay *An Old-Time Indian Attack Conducted in Two Parts*, which had appeared in Reed's and Young's earlier incarnation of *Y' Bird*, called *Yardbird*, the year before mine was published.² In fact, it was Leslie's idea for us to write the essays: We wanted to do something that would address the proliferation of White poets who were suddenly calling themselves shamans, and by and large embarrassing/amusing/angering Indian people by their pretensions to Indian sacred knowledge and ceremonialism as they paraded such hucksterism in their various publications and public performances. Ishmael Reed had previously asked Leslie for a contribution to his journal, and our essays were the response he got. White Shamanism, for a short while, was a hot topic.

Leslie centered on two writers in particular—Oliver LaFarge and Gary Snyder—for what she felt was their cultural arrogance in presuming to write from a standpoint of superior knowledge concerning Indian worldviews and spirituality. While I didn't at the time, and still don't, agree totally with her harsh judgments of Snyder, I did, and still do, feel that she is correct in her assessment of LaFarge's stance of cultural superiority as he describes in his novels, in unabashed tourist-like ways, Navajo people around the turn of the

20th Century. I, on the other hand, chose to examine in my essay an array of rather second-rate (if even that) small-press poets who were capitalizing on Snyder's term, "Shaman Songs" (from the title of a section of his book, *Myths and Texts*), and writing, publishing and performing their "authentic Tonkawa Chants" (as one White poet claimed, despite, of course, not knowing a single word of the almost-defunct Tonkawa language), calling themselves "Apache Medicine Men," giving themselves on occasion colorful "Indian-sounding" names, often decking themselves out for public performances in more buckskin, beads, feathers, bone chokers, and body paint than Sitting Bull ever donned for any of the many ceremonials he conducted in the 1870s. My main concern, in the essay, was to lampoon such pretensions and to call attention to the enormous degree of cultural arrogance implicit in such instances of appropriation and capitalization of Indian cultural values. As well, and this is a point that I feel has been largely overlooked by most who have commented verbally and in print about my essay, I wanted to examine how a particular body of bad writing tended to come about. And bad writing these White Shaman poems and poemlets are, as most writing tends to be bad when the cultural matrix from which it professes to originate is, quite simply, false and cliché-ridden.

A year or so after *The Rise of the White Shaman* come out, Ishmael Reed told me that I had "killed off an industry" in the Bay Area. He said that in the aftermath of both my and Leslie's essays, the White Shamans began to fade away, so that by 1980 there were remarkably few of them left who were still attempting to extract mileage out of such quasi-literary posturings. I was glad to hear of it.

Several other Indian writers followed up the issue of White Shamanism after Leslie and I had published our essays, and some have carried the arguments even further, particularly into other areas in which certain Whites have exploited, and continue to do so, in Indian cultural matters. Two excellent essays by the Hopi-Miwok poet Wendy Rose are *What's All This About Whiteshamanism Anyway?* and *The Great Pretenders: Further Reflections on Whiteshamanism*.³ The latter essay paraphrases, to some extent, my essay, but then moves on to examine the pretensions of the three most flagrant non-Indian writers who have shamelessly exploited Indian people in their extremely popular works—Carlos Castaneda, Jamake Highwater, and Lynn Andrews.⁴ Also, Ward Churchill [Creek-Cherokee], in *Spiritual Hucksterism: The Rise of the Plastic Medicine*, which came out in the early '90s, looks at the phenomenon of non-Indian marketeers re-making themselves into "Medicine

Men.” Other Indian writers that I know of who have addressed occasional aspects of White Shamanism include Ronald Rogers [Cherokee], Ray Young Bear [Mesquakie], Devon A. Mihesuah [Choctaw], Maurice Kenny [Mohawk], Sherman Alexie [Spokane-Coeur d’Alene], Peter Blue Cloud [Mohawk], Taitai Alfred [Mohawk], and Andy Smith [Cherokee]. If I’ve left out anyone here who ought to be included, I apologize.

I would advise anyone interested in how Indian people tend to feel concerning White Shamanism in many repugnant varieties to read the works of all these fine writers. Before I leave this particular portion of this essay, it bears mentioning that Canadian Native writers, too, have addressed the issue. Beginning in the mid-’80s, such writers as Lenore Keeshig-Tobias [OjibwayPotawatomi], Daniel David Moses [Delaware], Drew Hayden Taylor [Ojibway], Deborah Doxtater [Mohawk], Jeannette Armstrong [Okanagan], Marie Annharte Baker [Saulteaux], and Floyd Favel [Cree] took long looks at their own pushy White neighbors who were encroaching on Native spirituality and then fought back with highly literary responses. In Canada, the term Appropriation is more commonly used to describe the phenomenon known in the States as White Shamanism.

However, as the years have gone by, the White Shamans seem indeed to have abandoned the poetry scene to a remarkable degree. Unfortunately, their prose-writing counterparts have taken over. Since this is the subject matter of Ward Churchill’s *Spiritual Hucksterism*, I will refrain from repeating his thesis. But I will mention a few of these 1980s spiritual gurus who are not examined in his essay. Note the super-Indian names: John Redtail Freesoul, Brooke Medicine Shield, Mary Summer Rain, Wolf Moondance, Medicine Hawk, Howling Wolf, Red Hawk, Red Pine Antler.⁵ Wow! What beautiful sonorous names! Better even than Hollywood could have picked! But I suppose we should just be patient. Dances with Wolves and Stands-With-A-Fist will be along shortly to give us the whole real skinny of how White-thought “Indian medicine” is the hope of the world. This pathetic bunch of spiritual fakers, and there are still others out there, are, of course, following in the wake of Casteneda, Highwater, and Andrews.

I would like, though, to pursue an aspect of the idea of medicine teachers into another direction. At the conclusion of *The Rise of the White Shaman*, I mention that there is a general reluctance on the part of Native American people toward discussing publicly their roles and activities, if they have them, of being medicine-makers, i.e., shamans, in their communities. Much of this hesitation to share knowledge

with the outside world stems from five centuries of interfacing with the Western world. Despite what the New World Studies Boys (who appear these days to have abandoned somewhat trendy and esoteric lit crit theorizing, or at least to have transferred their attention and dominance to ethnic and aboriginal literatures), the pushers of that breezy lie-enfolded term, “Post-Colonialism,” would claim to the contrary, there is still an oppressor-oppressed, colonizer-colonized mentality existing between the two disparate world views of Native and non-Native, and Native Americans, as has always been the case, still have to contend with it in the ways they deem best for their survival. Another factor often precluding public discussions of medicine roles has to do with the native belief that unadvised or unsanctioned vocalization of such matters dissipates the efficacy of power, i.e., medicine, thereby rendering it ineffectual and powerless. Still, there is, I believe, yet another factor present. The outside world—and here let’s specifically call it the American public—has, despite remonstrances to the contrary, little understanding or awareness of what Indian medicine, or power, is all about. I will identify two culprits in this regard that have (and continue to do so) foisted Native American medicine people into stereotypes and invisibility: Hollywood movies and anthropologists.

Movies continue to perpetuate the image of the medicine man. He is usually something like the Iron Eyes Cody character in *A Man Called Horse* or Chief Dan George in *Little Big Man* and *Spirit of the Hawk*. I hasten to add that I intend no disrespect toward either of these two late great actors. They were, of course, merely acting out the roles on screen written by White scriptwriters and devised by White directors. Yet the persona of each of these “medicine man” roles, as it is for every other medicine man on film, is always encapsulated in these particular stereotypes. In reality, even in many cases today just as it was in the past, there was no medicine man. Rather, there was—and is—an entire network of medicine people of various categories throughout any given community. Indeed, certain Indian communities still retain medicine societies, such as are found among several of the New Mexico pueblos, in which there are still yet elaborate brotherhoods and sisterhoods of people charged with carrying on the multiform aspects of community-healing, i.e., powers, i.e., medicine, harmony, health, stability.

Anthropologists, to a great extent, also often foster misconceptions regarding medicine people. Although many excellent and astute scholars have accurately described the networkings of medicine people and societies at work in particular tribal

communities—James Mooney’s and Frans M. Olbrechts’s *The Swimmer Manuscript*, which features numerous detailed character descriptions and accompanying photographs of most of the medicine makers, both men and women, in the Big Cove community of the Cherokee Reservation in North Carolina, in the 19teens and ’20s, and David McAllester’s and Charlotte Frisbie’s *Navajo Blessingway Singer*, which brings into acquaintance not only the late Navajo medicine man, Frank Mitchell, as he relates his life as a healer, but also the many colleagues of Mr. Mitchell as he conducted Blessingway ceremonies on the reservation in Arizona in the first half of the twentieth century—are two such that come immediately to mind. There are, to run the risk of belaboring the example, quite a number of other similar descriptive studies—Hallowell, on the Chippewas; Russell, on the Pimas; Erdoes, on the Lakotas; and so on. Yet, too few others go to any great extent in outlining similarly complex networks of medicine-making in the tribal communities examined.

The problem, however, is not with the lack of verisimilitude, or any manifestations of cultural blindness on the part of the scholars with any of these works, or with other such similar descriptive studies. The issue, rather, is with the often-presented format of describing such Indian communities and their medicine-making networkings and then on going on to state that if such-and-such traditional practices are not in place, nor are there manifested any of the visible (to the anthropologist) medicine-making trappings that cohere to earlier models, say, the 19-teens Cherokee community or the 1940s and ’50s Navajo milieu, along with such phrases as “so-and-so the *last* medicine man, died in 19--, and so passes forever the end of his tribe’s traditional medicine,” then it is automatically assumed by the reader that much more has been irrevocably lost than perhaps what actually has been lost. Too many anthropologists foster, still in the present day, such views of the “absent medicine man,” a persona which they had already largely succeeded in fossilizing. From such “absences” of the visible trappings, without a total regard for the cultural template, the idea is fostered that most modern Indian communities are no longer traditional, and are, therefore, “not all that Indian anymore.”

It is time to reject this particular type of scholarly colonization. It is my contention that medicine makers, of both sexes, are still functioning out of the old medicine society network templates in much the same pattern as they have always done. While it is true that perhaps many clearly traditional outer trappings of the medicine societies are

defunct in the same ways they were operational prior to, say, 1820, the time-tested templates necessary for community survival and continuance yet remain. The claim of White Shaman poets in the 1970s, or of the Instant Indian Spirituality gurus of the '80s and '90s, that they made their cultural leaps into Indian medicine teachings because "The Indians aren't doing it anymore," just simply won't wash. Despite such a claim, which sounds ominously like that of early Euro-Americans saying they "took the lands of American because it was bare of inhabitants," there is the fact that such Whites are leaping into what they perceive to be a void when indeed there is no void at all.

Let me develop another example. Although a teenage Cheyenne girl, living, say, in Hammond, Oklahoma, in the year 2000, perhaps a cheerleader while she attends high school, might not be learning the exact same things that her great-great-great-grandmother learned at the same age a century-and-a-half earlier—how to prepare and preserve buffalo meat; how to perfect such domestic skills as cooking, sewing, home construction, childcare, childbirthing; how to remember the wealth of oral tradition of history, legends, and gossip; even the Cheyenne language—yet the contemporary young girl very likely embodies most of the everyday values and worldview of her Cheyenne parents and relatives. She is still Cheyenne. Further, she is just as much Cheyenne in her time as her great-great-great-grandmother was in her time. Just because Al Gore probably doesn't walk around wearing a coonskin hat and carrying a flintlock rifle, does that make him any less a Tennessean than Davy Crockett?

Nowadays, many of the formerly specialized practices and conveyances of traditional knowledge are carried on by virtually everyone in any given Indian community. Everyone is likely doing things essential to the community's maintenance. Particular modern-day ways of traditional medicine-making in modern dress might easily encompass outside-of-school teaching, as well as inside-of-school teaching; child care in pre-school classes; Indian languages and customs teaching in the home; the care of the elderly and the infirm; tribal courts officials; community health and housing personnel; tribal business enterprise developers; tribal council members; arrangers of public and social gatherings, such as stompdances, sundances, corn dances, purification rites, blessings of all sorts; conductors of and participants in wakes, funerals, births, sickbed attendances, marriages, and social events, such as powwows and rodeos. I believe these are all versions of our modern-day medicine people. Tribal historians, genealogists, family and marriage

counselors, psychotherapists, financial and investment consultants, and even recreation directors, are also all variations of medicine maker roles.

Contemporary Native American writers are more likely to be shamans, of whatever degree and specialty, than not. They are certainly more likely to be so than virtually any of the White writers who merely happened to have read a few books on Indians and to have written some poems or a few books on Indian themes. In my more than thirty years of academic life, particularly since being involved with university-based Native American studies programs, I have known countless medicine makers—and I deliberately employ the genderless term—within all aspects of the university structure. I have known college professors who are, quite often, not only active medicine people in both the old ways as well as the new configurations that I have described, but who are also tribal council members, tribal judges, and sometimes even chiefs. I have known physicists who are also Navajo Yeibechai singers, departmental secretaries who are also Cherokee and Creek stomp dance leaders and participants, undergraduate students who are also learning, when they go back home on weekends, to prepare the dance grounds, to help tend the Sacred Fire, to assist in erecting the arbors, to cleanse the hogans for the Yeibechai and Blessingway ceremonies.

Native American writers are deeply involved in such activities, and all along they continue doing so in a myriad of shamanistic endeavors: There is Simon J. Ortiz [Acoma Pueblo], serving a term as his pueblo's lieutenant-governor; Ofelia Zepeda [Tohono O'odham], establishing her tribe's bilingual education program and deeply involved in community health and education issues; Ted C. Williams [Tuscarora], serving as an herbalist, medicine maker, and tribal historian; a vast array of other tribal historians who perform such work for their tribes while they also write their poems and stories—Melissa Jayne Fawcett [Mohegan], Greg Sarris [Pomo-Coast Miwok], Karenne Wood [Monacan], Robert J. Perry [Chickasaw], D.L. Birchfield [Choctaw], Charles H. Red Corn [Osage], Lana Grant [Sac and Fox], Lincoln Tritt [Gwii'chin], the late Peter Kalifornsky [Dena'ina], Ted Jojola [Isleta Pueblo], Robert J. Conley [Cherokee], Rina Swentzell [Santa Clara Pueblo], and my mother, Edythe Simpson Hobson [Arkansas Quapaw]; leaders of and participants in ceremonial rites: the late Tom Heidlebaugh [Quileute], Philip Red Eagle [Lakota-Klallam], Ray Young Bear [Mesquakie], N. Scott Momaday [Kiowa-Cherokee], Beatrice Medicine [Lakota], Julie Moss [Cherokee], Edward Benton-Banai [Chippewa], Denise Sweet [Chippewa], Evelina Zuni Lucero

[Isleta Pueblo-San Juan Pueblo], and many others; herbalists of varying levels of learning in their communities: Ted C. Williams, Jesse Bruchac [Abenaki], Linda Noel [Maidu], my mother, and myself; those who work to heal families, as physical therapists, psychotherapists, nurses, counselors, etc.: the late Vickie Sears [Cherokee], Beth Brent [Mohawk], Barbara-Helen Hill [Cayuga], LeAnne Howe [Choctaw], Linda Hogan [Chickasaw], Joy Harjo [Creek], Barbara T. Hobson [Comanche], Annette Arkeketa [Otoe-Missouria-Creek], Helen Chalabee Burgess [Creek], Greg Sarris, Louise Erdrich [Chippewa]—indeed, any Native American writer who is a parent raising not only his or her own children, but those of others, and thereby fulfilling the classic Indian extended family model; and, finally, those who, in their writings, would seek to heal our hemisphere: Leslie Marmon Silko [Laguna Pueblo], Jack D. Forbes [Powhatan-Lenape], Ward Churchill, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn [Lakota], Winona Le Duke [Chippewa]—and, if I think about all this much further, I'll come up with additional examples.

I have only to take a look at the list of 530-plus Native American writers on the roster maintained by the Native Writers' Circle of the Americas and I would say that it is the exception rather than the rule for some particular author not to be involved in some modern-day aspect of the medicine-maker's world. When a close friend was found murdered in Oklahoma, LeAnne Howe, in temporary exile in Ohio for a teaching job, rushed home to assist the victim's family. When the much-publicized May 3, 1999 tornado devastated many homes in Moore and Oklahoma City, Janet McAdams [Alabama Creek], college professor and poet, dropped everything in her busy schedule and worked several days as a Red Cross volunteer, assisting the homeless in finding shelter and sorting out donated clothing and food. Craig Womack [Creek-Cherokee] and Joy Harjo, presently living in Alberta and Hawaii, respectively, hurry back to Oklahoma at needed times just prior to the annual Green Corn ceremonies. I could go on with one example after another, but I expect all of the foregoing will suffice. Despite the persistent image in most non-Indian scholars' minds that modern-day Indians are so assimilated and acculturated as to be virtually no longer Indians, contemporary Native American writers continue to belie this in their writings, their daily works, and virtually all aspects of their lives. Specially, at the University of Oklahoma, my own "academic reservation," there is yet an overall non-Indian view that Indians are either rather fossilized in time or non-existent as cultural Indians. There are, at present, three times the number of White professors teaching Indian-related courses

as of Native American professors. This chasm, clearly evident when the Native American Studies program came into being a few years ago, has, sad to say, only widened with time.

I will provide an example to illustrate some aspects of this chasm existing between Indian perceptions and those of non-Indian professors. A particular White literary critic has for the past thirty years, off and on, presented the opinion that the Reverend John Big Bluff Tosamah in N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* is a laughable, and therefore dismissable, character. The critic claims that because Tosamah is at once a modern-day Kiowa knowledgeable about the Sun Dance ceremonies, an official and participant in peyote ceremonialism in the Native-American Church, a Baptist minister, and residing in downtown Los Angeles rather than in Oklahoma, he is thus "wishy-washy," "spread-out-too-thin," i.e., ineffectual. Indian people, on the other hand, who discover Tosamah in their reading of the novel, generally find him entirely believable, and especially so because of his successful syncretization of several religious outlooks and especially because of Tosamah's utter acceptance of everyone around him. The fact that this scholar so easily dismisses Tosamah speaks volumes about the abyss existing between Indians in universities and White academics.

This is not even to mention the horde of deans and provosts who not only never read anything on Indian cultures and literature, they hardly ever look at anything outside the hard sciences, let alone the vast realm of the humanities. Yet they make their stupid decisions and judgments almost daily on matters which constantly infringe on Indian people and their worldviews. Very few of our White colleagues at OU have a clue as to what most of us Indian people do outside the university as tribal officials, tribal judges, education program directors, stompdance participants, Sacred Fire attendants, herbalists, counselors, and family therapists. I expect it will continue this way for quite some time. In the final analysis, I don't think it matters a high-octane owl fart just what the White Shamans (of whatever variety) do—either as would-be poets, or truth-dispensing spiritual seers, or know-it-all-experts-only-through-books professors and administrators. Indian people will continue along as we always have, as the good, true Chippewa poet Denise Sweet refrains in one of her good, strong poems: "We are here. We are still here. We are here where we belong."

NOTES

¹ I still feel it's significant that most of the readers/writers—all White—who assailed Leslie and me for our "reverse-racism" were either the very writers we had written about or others who were hopeful of joining the ranks of Instant Shamanism. Significantly, every Indian writer who contacted us during that time was praising and highly supportive of our efforts.

² Reed and Young began their journal in the early 1970s under the name of *Yardbird*. I believe they published five annual issues, each one called *Yardbird 1*, *Yardbird 5*, etc., before changing the name to *Y'bird* which, in turn, became *Quilt* around 1980.

³ Since Wendy Rose credits me with coining the term "White Shamanism," let me take note of her more recent reworking of the term as "Whiteshamanism," mark her "appropriation" of it type-wise, and hereby restore the original term as "White Shamanism." No doubt such one-word coinages are indicative of the Bay Area Beats and Hippies of earlier times, of the eras and place where Professor Rose was raised, and so perhaps this has influenced her. Nevertheless, we should strive to avoid the proliferation of such adjectivewords, or soon we will have such monstrosities as sweetandsourpork and honeydewmelon. GreatSpiritforbid! Professor Rose is to consider herself chastised.

⁴ A fellow Native American, who asked that he remain anonymous, once referred to these three writers who have become very wealthy on Indian spirituality as Carlos Cacanada, I'm-a-fake Highwater, and Lyin'Andrews. One doesn't have to try very hard to perceive the anger and scorn in such renamings. My friend is clearly in the tradition of Fus Fixico and Sidemeat Cholly. If the just-named Big Three feel they still aren't wealthy enough, they are welcome to try to sue me for my reportage of someone else's work.

⁵Some authentic Indian names, when translated into English, of some of the Native American writers referred to in the second part of this essay, can be rendered as Sandstone, Smoke, Dreadfulwater, Cornsilk, Sifter, Takes and Kills. Most Native American people feel when interfacing with the non-Indian world, that such traditional

names, with which they have been blessed by family and community and not just by personal choice alone, should generally remain private. It is for this reason that I do not identify these names with their public English-language counterparts. Of course, it's too bad these names are not as lofty-sounding as Freesoul, Summer Rain, Wolf Moondance.

Dr. Geary Hobson holds a Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of New Mexico, where he served as coordinator of the Native American Studies Program. He currently serves as Project Historian of the University of Oklahoma's Native Writers Circle of the Americas. Specializing in Native American literature and American Studies, Hobson has published both poetry and academic writings on Native Americans. His latest book is *The Last of the Ofos*. He is Cherokee, Quapaw and Chickasaw.

An Interview with Joseph Bruchac

Kari J. Winter

Joseph Bruchac (Abenaki) is well known for the dozens of interviews he has conducted with American Indian writers, but he has less often been the subject of an interview himself. A prolific writer of fiction, poetry, traditional Indian stories, children's stories, essays, and autobiography, Bruchac is also the editor of path-breaking anthologies and the director of the Greenfield Review Press, which has published the work of many new Native writers from around the United States. In this conversation, which took place at the University of Vermont on October 13, 1999, Bruchac illuminates how Abenaki traditions shape his writing techniques, especially in relation to his *Dawn Land* trilogy, which includes *Dawn Land* (1993), *Long River* (1995), and *The Waters Between* (1998).

Kari Winter (KW): Literary critics sometimes say that all writing is autobiographical. This may seem far-fetched when talking about novels set 10,000 years ago. Yet Momaday and Silko, to mention just two notable examples, have shown that the self can be written in many different forms. Is there any sense in which your trilogy of novels is autobiographical?

Joseph Bruchac (JB): Standard autobiography charts the progress of an individual pushing forward against all odds through the world. Autobiography written from a Native point of view takes quite a different turn. In such autobiographies as Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain*—and, in fact, in much Native American writing—there is a different perspective on the part of the Native writer. It comes partially from a worldview in which we as human beings are much smaller than the larger circle of life around us. Therefore we're not elevated in our autobiographies. When people tell their own stories in Indian country, they usually begin by talking about their families rather than themselves.

There's that famous instance in Richard Coles's *Children of Crisis* about Native children drawing pictures of themselves. A healthy child supposedly draws a very large smiling stick figure in the middle with a little sun and a little house and a little mommy and daddy holding hands in the background. Native children who are perfectly well

adjusted, however, will draw a very small figure representing themselves with a very big canvas of mountains and trees and sun and other people and animals dwarfing them. That doesn't show maladjustment but a different view of our place in the universe.

Tom Belt, a Cherokee language instructor, explained it in these terms. In English when you see a bear you would say, "I see a bear," putting yourself first. In the Cherokee language the proper word order is quite different: "The bear makes itself visible to me." So it is the bear that is central, rather than the person seeing it.

Insofar as a book such as *Dawn Land* is concerned, it's autobiographical in the sense that I identify with the main character Young Hunter. True, there are many things in that story I felt I was experiencing as he went through them, but it's very different than my own life. Actually, I identify with every character in the novel, whether positive or seemingly negative—Weasel Tail, the grandparents, the women in the novel. My favorite authors seem to do that. There's not a three-dimensional hero with a one-dimensional cast of characters. Each has their own due place in the sun.

The last thing I'd say about this is that very often when I'm writing, in fact in most cases when I really get into the process of writing, it is as if I am taking dictation and a story is being told to me. I lose myself at that point, and I am not conscious of being involved in telling the story. Instead of telling the story, I am the vehicle, the voice, through which the story is heard.

KW: Do you think that has any relation to Roland Barthes's idea that in order for the writing to begin the author has to die? He was talking about the death of the author and trying to make space for the writing and for the reader who he sees as "the destination" of the text.

JB: I think within his worldview that can work. In Native tradition, however, the idea of death and dying doesn't work quite the same. Death in Indian tradition is a further inclusion into the whole that continues rather than a termination and an extinction of an individual. So in that sense I can't accept the metaphor; however, I do understand what Barthes is saying. I agree that the writer as an individual can get in the way of the narrative. A self-conscious autobiography can be really boring.

KW: Yes. I take his meaning to be that Western culture has valorized authors so much that there's been undue attention to that presence, that

idea of presence. Interestingly, in his own autobiography he speaks of himself in the third person.

JB: I prefer the idea of the absence of the author, rather than the death of the author, because the author does come back in. The author comes back in the process of revision, in the process of reconsideration, even in the process of reading her or his own work after it has been written. There is not that finality. But I do agree that the valorization which represents the author as a heroine or hero to be held up, even ahead of the work—like Hemingway, for instance, who is larger than life and larger than his own creation—is a distraction.

To get back to Native tradition, the story is always more important than the storyteller, because there is a whole intangible internal quality to it. The story goes on beyond us. It existed before us.

KW: That's really interesting. Autobiography is one of my main areas of research, yet I dislike most mainstream autobiographies that I read. My interest in autobiography came via the slave narrative tradition in which the point was not solipsism but the abolition of slavery. Escaped slaves told the stories of their lives because they were representative of other lives. The object was to end slavery.

JB: Right, it's not the autobiography of where you triumph against all odds and become a millionaire. It's like a traditional tale, in that it has the purpose of both entertainment and teaching a useful lesson or producing a desired end.

KW: In a similar vein, Louise Erdrich, in her essay "Where I Ought to Be: A Writer's Sense of Place," describes the traditional connection of storytelling, place, and identity in American Indian cultures. She says:

In a tribal view of the world, where one place has been inhabited for generations, the landscape becomes enlivened by a sense of group and family history. Unlike most contemporary writers, a traditional storyteller fixes listeners in an unchanging landscape combined of myth and reality. People and place are inseparable. (1)

That's connected to many things Momaday has said about American Indian writing. Erdrich wonders how non-Indian contemporary writers define identity if they or their characters have no

sense of place. I've been wondering what you see as distinctive in American Indian approaches in general or in your particular case in terms of attentiveness to place.

JB: Well, as you probably know, one of the first traditional stories in the Abenaki culture is that of Odzihozo, the one who is shaped from the dust that falls from the hands of Ktsi Nwaskw onto the earth. Odzihozo then shapes himself from that dust and that earth. In shaping himself from the land and moving around, Odzihozo shapes the land in turn. We human beings are shaped from the land, and we shape the land. There's that reciprocal relationship implicit from the very first story we find in Abenaki tradition. It could also be read as a metaphor for the glaciation of New England and the long habitation by Native people on this land. Through this oral tradition we remember even the time when our land was being changed by the great force of the glaciers.

I think that I would not exist without my connection with place. It is what makes me who I am. I would defend that place with my life. I actually have defended, with great energy, certain places in the lower Adirondacks which we know to be traditional burial areas. I've stood up in front of town boards and committees and spoken for the land. The little bit of land my family owns, about 120 acres, we've put into conservation easements so that it can never be developed and will remain in perpetuity as it is.

I spent three years teaching in West Africa in the late 1960s. Early on in my stay, one of the African teachers of the school where I was in Ghana was talking about how Europeans could never understand Africa. He said, trying to give me an example, "Joe, you know, we're here at this dance. Over there an old woman is dancing. You see how when she dances she points at a certain tree? You don't know what she's doing, do you?"

I said, "Yes, I think I do."

"You do?"

"Yes," I said, "she's pointing at that tree because something happened there."

"AH! How did you know that?"

I said, "Because I'm not a European."

It's not just Native Americans who have that sense of place; it's tribal people. It's people who have lived long on the land and have never left the land. We've never given that up. And there are people in Europe who've remained on the land and have kept that same connection. Particularly, I think, some of the people of Northern Europe. Such Native folks as the Sami of Lapland and the indigenous

peoples of northern Siberia have that connection to their powerful, sometimes dangerous land. And it's not a romantic connection to the land because you know the land can kill you.

When I was in Alaska a few years ago talking with Inuit friends, they were talking about how dangerous it is to be out on the land, and yet how beautiful it is. A friend of theirs had recently died out on the land when his snowmobile broke down. By the time the search parties found him, he'd frozen to death. Yet even as they talked about his death there was a feeling that it was a good way to go because he was one with the land.

KW: In our ever more alienated consumer culture many people consume food without any sense or recognition of where it came from, the plants and animals. How do you think this alienation affects human identity? Do you see any path back from that form of alienation?

JB: I see people becoming lost. One of the reasons I write what I write is because part of what I write might be a little bit of a map, a little bit of a way post, pointing to something that's important. I think that people all over this continent and all over the world have a great emptiness in their hearts and a great feeling of loss in their spirits without even consciously knowing they feel loss. I think that some of the anger and frustration and the violence that we saw at the Woodstock III music festival was a result of young people lacking connection, feeling disenfranchised, feeling lost. In the midst of all that music and sound they were not coming in touch with the land but were feeling out of touch with the land and with each other, feeling alienation. That can, by the way, be changed. I've worked again and again with groups of young people who initially know nothing about the land. But when you take them out into the woods in a small group, after a day or two their minds begin to change and their spirits begin to heal.

My son Jim teaches traditional wilderness awareness skills. About ten years ago, he arranged with the New York City YMCA to bring two buses of junior high school and high school age kids to spend three days with us up in northern New York. When those buses pulled in full of those kids with their boom boxes and their attitudes, I looked at my wife and said, "You know, Carol, we're all going to die." But after a day and a half the attitudes had changed. They changed as we sat in a circle on the ground, as we walked through the woods, as we showed them how to make a fire with a bow drill. They began to learn, perhaps for the very first time, to listen to each other, to hear the sound of the

birds. They were not on the pavement surrounded by the sounds of sirens and people speaking in angry tones, but were immersed in the calming presence of the natural world. We need that calm presence, we need those natural places. To protect and preserve these places and maintain those people who protect and preserve them as well is, to me, one of the most important things we can do as a species for the continuance of humanity. We need to exist not just as organisms walking around on the planet using each other and hating ourselves but as parts of a community, aware human beings who recognize a past, see a future, and live within the present.

KW: One of my colleagues recently wrote an article about the healing power of gardening after her baby died. Do you see something as simple as gardening offering a path toward healing?

JB: Absolutely. You grow when you are growing things. When you see the seed go into the earth, that is a ritual act, the ritual of nurturing growth. When you bring forth a plant, you have reconnected yourself, absolutely reconnected yourself to the ancient cycles. We were meant to work with the earth. We were meant to touch the land. Even if it's in a small garden in a vacant lot in the center of a big city, you can make a seed grow. Gardening is a very important thing to me. It always is teaching me things. In fact, one of my little chapbooks of poetry, *This Earth is a Drum*, is almost all entirely about that experience of working a garden.

KW: I was surprised when I started gardening a few years ago at what an unromantic experience it was, though it moved me deeply. The garden was overrun by slugs, and so gardening felt like a violent experience. I had dreams about killing slugs. At the same time I remember the almost ecstatic experience of growing eggplants and how passionately I have loved eggplants ever since I grew them myself.

JB: A garden is a reality check, in the truest sense of the word. Everything happens in the garden. Birth. Death. Survival. Loss. Triumph. Depression. You learn things in a somatic way; you learn by doing as opposed to an intellectualized learning. That's why all those old poems about the garden, from the seventeenth century on, where the garden is the epitome of the ordered universe, are very amusing to me. Gardens really aren't that. There *is* an order in gardens but there is also a natural disorder. What a gardener does is attempt to balance the

order and the disorder while accepting that he can never, ever control everything.

KW: Currently there's a debate in critical theory about what Derrida calls logocentrism, by which I think he is referring to the notion that the word, centered in a sort of godly presence, creates everything, a concept that feminists and others have criticized as being disembodied. Western tradition privileges the mind and heaps contempt on the body. I've noticed in your writing and the writing of other American Indians like Louise Erdrich that there is a simultaneous deep attentiveness to storytelling and to material reality. If I could frame the question—I don't mean to trivialize it—which would you say comes first, the word or the body?

JB: Again, according to one of our old stories. Ktsi Nwaskw, the Great Mystery, the spirit was there, and there was no form and then the spirit created form. Is that influenced by Christian thought, or is it something older? I'm not sure, but the Great Mystery is called "the Great Mystery" in many different Native languages. The concept of mystery implies it is what we cannot know. We can look towards the mountaintop, but the actual understanding is beyond us. That does not bother me as a writer.

KW: So the great mystery created form . . .

JB: Yes.

KW: Did the great mystery assume form or create form?

JB: It is like the song that comes out of nowhere. Music, storytelling, and existence all come into being as one. What was there before was the mystery. It's like the chicken and egg debate. Another thing that I find very reassuring is that it is perfectly all right to have two contradictory ideas at the same time. After all, we have two ears and we can listen to two sides of everything. There is room for disagreement and for ambiguity. I mean, we have many worlds. We have many ways of seeing the world. In Abenaki tradition, we human beings are not just body and spirit. We are made up of four different spirits. There's a "bone spirit" that goes into the earth after death. There's a life spirit that came from and returns to all that is alive around us. There is an individual unique spirit that never lived before. That spirit goes up the road of stars. We sometimes say that it becomes

a star. Then there is the returned spirit, the reincarnated spirit within you that came from someone else who lived before. Does everyone have that reincarnated spirit? I don't know, but there is that possibility.

KW: You mentioned yesterday that two scientists who won the Nobel Prize were postulating that perhaps someday we will discover one law that accounts for everything?

JB: Yes, the unified field theory that Einstein was seeking at the end. No one then could believe that it truly existed. I think that there is a unity of things, that everything is related. Whether it has a purpose or not I cannot say, but it does have a continuity. Some of our Native languages are better equipped to talk about these complexities—the interpenetration of things and the deep relationship of things—because our Native languages often deal with that process of one thing turning into another and one thing relating to another.

KW: That reminds me of the Navajo code talkers in World War II who were the only ones who could make an unbreakable code.

JB: Yes, and they did it in a very interesting way. I was at a program at the National Museum of the American Indian in New York several years ago when the daughter of one of the code talkers described how her father and the others went about this process. She interviewed a number of old men to find out how they went about it. Because they didn't just speak Navajo, they were able to develop a Navajo code that related to English. They used certain Navajo words to stand for different numbers and letters in English. They had more than one Navajo word that they could use for each of those English letters and numbers. In some cases, they chose Navajo words that described modern weapons or machines as a Navajo might see them. There were no helicopters in World War II. However, to see how they did it, she asked these old men who were former code talkers what word they would use for a helicopter? They talked it over and finally they came up with the word in Navajo for sparrow-hawk, a hawk that hovers in the air a bit like a helicopter.

She told an interesting story that showed how effective the code was. A Navajo man was on the Bataan Death March—the same event that Leslie Silko writes about in *Ceremony*. The Japanese intelligence officers were pulling people out of the line who looked Asian, thinking they might be Japanese-Americans who could possibly be used for propaganda. They pulled this guy who had a Navajo name that

sounded Asian. They began interrogating him and realized he wasn't Japanese-American. One of the interrogators who had lived in the United States, as had a number of intelligence officers on the Japanese side during World War II, recognized him to be an Indian. He asked, "What kind of Indian are you?" When he said, "Navajo," they put him on a plane and took him somewhere. When he got there, Tokyo Rose, the woman who did propaganda broadcasts in English on the radio, began talking to him. Soon she said, "Yes indeed he is a Navajo. He does speak his language. We can use him." They took him into a room where a bunch of people with headsets were listening in on American communications. They handed him a head set and said, "Listen to this. What is it?" He listened. Someone was talking in Navajo. They had tuned into the code talkers. "What are they saying?" the Japanese asked him. He said, "I hate to tell you this," and he did because he knew they would beat him if he didn't give them the right answer, "but what they are speaking in Navajo is just gibberish. It makes no sense." Even a Navajo who had not been taught couldn't break the code. Isn't that a great story?

KW: It is. He survived?

JB: He survived, even though he was tortured and put into a POW camp. He survived World War II and told that story after he was liberated at the end of the war.

KW: You have expressed great admiration for the work of Chinua Achebe, with whom you studied. Certainly one can see a kinship between your novels and his, especially *Dawn Land* and *Things Fall Apart*.

JB: First of all, I think Chinua Achebe is a writer who should be awarded the Nobel Prize. If any writer in the world deserves it, he does. He dealt with colonialism in a way no one had ever dealt with it before. His description of one event while he was going to school really touched a responsive chord in me. He had to read novels such as *Mister Johnson* by Joyce Cary, which represented Achebe's Igbo people as ignorant, superstitious, dirty, pathetic, and sub-human. I thought, oh my gosh, it's the same experience, with the books I've had to read, the films I've had to watch, such as *Northwest Passage* by Kenneth Roberts. Achebe grew up speaking both English and his native language, as did many Nigerians. English is the lingua franca of Nigeria. That is one reason why Nigerians overseas feel upset when

some well-meaning person says to them, “Where did you learn such good English?” When Achebe began to write, he wanted to write a novel that was counter to *Mister Johnson*. So he wrote *Things Fall Apart*. And in writing it he did several things that I truly identify with and that I did more or less subconsciously and then later realized it was what Achebe had done long before me. Achebe incorporated Igbo proverb and Igbo story telling. The structure of the story is determined by Igbo tradition, and the setting is firmly within the Igbo culture. That is what I have done with *Dawn Land*, although unlike *Things Fall Apart* my story takes place thousands of years ago rather than at the time when Europeans first appear and upset the balance of a traditional culture.

Achebe also said that in choosing his words, again and again he wrote in an English influenced by Igbo thought patterns, an English idiomatically related to the Igbo language and traditional worldview.

In the writing of *Dawn Land* I did something similar. The speech of my characters reflects the idioms of Abenaki. I avoided words, phrases, and descriptions that would be unlikely or absolutely wrong in Abenaki. Instead of referring to the sun as the sun and the moon as the moon, I translated what those words mean in Abenaki. I avoided modern time references, describing the passage of time without mentioning hours and minutes and seconds. I’ve often read historical novels in which, long before the conventions of clock times were introduced, people were doing something in “five minutes” or “a few seconds.” You also see this when a metaphor in a work of historical fiction is based on something out of modern or western culture rather than something out of the proper era of the native culture. So I tried very consciously to purify the language of pre-contact anachronisms and inappropriate terms, even though I was writing in English.

I wrote *Dawn Land* in English. I couldn’t have written it in Abenaki; I’m not fluent enough, unlike my son Jesse who might have done it that way. However, I attempted to write it in an English that could be translated idiomatically back in Abenaki which would make sense if an Abenaki speaker read it. I am sure there are places where I have failed in that respect, but that was my intention.

KW: Achebe, in “Writing the Novel in English,” says he will write in English but will do unheard of things with the language.

JB: Indeed. We’ll do things in our own way and we’ll create a world which represents our world view. One of the good things about English is that it is a very flexible language. It absorbs so many things

that I can even use English to describe the way in which native languages work, even though it may not sound quite right in English. For example, I mentioned that in Cherokee instead of saying “I see the bear,” I say, “the bear has made itself visible to me.”

KW: Right. Another reviewer compared your work to Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*. What do you think of that comparison?

JB: I’ve always been an avid reader of fantasy novels. I’ve been a big fan of Tolkien for over thirty years. I like what he and the Inklings (his literary group that included C. S. Lewis) did in the way that they created their alternate, semi-medieval realities. Much of their work really had to do with faith and the conflict between the industrial revolution and a more nature-oriented view of humanity. I like what’s behind their stories, something more complex than simple adventure stories or escapism. However, I did not set out to make an alternate world. I didn’t create characters which don’t exist and are universal symbols, but tried to tap into ancient traditions—although I suppose you could say Tolkien did the same thing, using traditional stories out of the Anglo-European culture in a period long before the present day.

KW: His work is more allegorical whereas yours is more literal.

JB: You can read allegory, I suppose, into some of what I have written. People have done that; in fact, they’ve talked about how I used Christian allegory in the redemption of the character Weasel Tail. A villain is washed in the river and transformed. How Christian that is! I found the interpretation amusing because that scene is totally native, absolutely in the context of Abenaki culture. In innumerable American Indian stories, a person who is twisted in mind can be straightened and turned into a person who has then been redeemed. Taking him down the river may seem like baptizing him, but he’s just washing off the dirt and being cleansed by the power of the river. Going to the river, or “going to the water,” as the Cherokees put it, is a very old tradition in many native cultures on this continent. Among the Cherokees, for example, you go to the river, wash your hands, wash your face, and then if there is a bridge you cross over it.

J.T. Garret, a Cherokee medicine person, told me a little something about that while I was down in Cherokee, North Carolina last year. As we walked across that river crossing we came to a point where he said, “Stop here. Listen to the river and then turn in the direction that is calling to you the most. Notice which way you’re looking. If you are

looking upstream then you are still in the struggle, trying to go against the current. If you're looking downstream then you're going with the flow." That's a very nice way of figuring out what path you are on and one example of the way you can see things in the river. The river is a living presence and also a metaphor. In the same way, things within our native languages and our native traditions may seem allegorical simply because the world itself can be read as allegory.

KW: It strikes me as a form of colonialism to read your scene as a Christian allegory.

JB: Oh it is, it is. It's also the kind of colonialism we find in a book like *Four American Indian Literary Masters* where everything is justified by comparing it to established novels written by non-native people. It says something is good because it is as good as Steinbeck, or because it makes us think of Shakespeare, instead of admitting that American Indian Literature may have a reality fully its own that doesn't require a comparison to any European model to make it relevant.

KW: I was struck in your *Dawn Land* trilogy by a worldview that is not Christian, although you emphasize the importance of certain ideas that Christianity wants to claim for itself, like, for example, forgiveness.

JB: Don't all the great religions—that are truly great religions—embrace the importance of forgiveness?

KW: Yes, it's an important part of life. I've been impressed at how careful you have been not to participate in Christian ideology. I was astonished at a conference to hear a nun present a paper arguing that Louise Erdrich is a profoundly Catholic writer.

JB: That's interesting. I suppose you could say she is a writer profoundly influenced by Catholicism. She was raised in the Catholic Church, and so you could claim she's Catholic. You could do it that way, you could make that little switch. You could also look at all the nuns in her stories who are always beating Indian children, especially that one nun who turns out to be Indian. Hating herself had made her an Indian hater. Catholicism has had a very strong influence on native people. Perhaps more than any other branch of Christianity, Catholicism has a wonderful love-hate relationship with native people. When Pope John Paul came to Canada some years ago he stood before

a Mohawk elder who used an eagle feather to bless him. There were tears in the eyes of Pope John Paul as he accepted that blessing, an old very non-Christian blessing. And this is a Pope who's been militantly Catholic and not at all as ecumenical as some who came before him.

KW: One of the ways that Erdrich is most profoundly not Catholic is that she not only does not embrace Catholicism but she doesn't completely exile it or vilify it either. She has Catholic characters who are loving, humane, well-meaning people. She doesn't cast the world in a good-evil binary, the binary opposition that is one of the central characteristics of Christian thought.

JB: Absolutely. I deeply respect Louise's writing. She's so clearly learned one lesson, or exemplifies one lesson, that all writers must realize—we need to love all of our characters, even the ones we hate. I truly think Louise loves all the characters she creates, even the ones who are despicable or deeply damaged. Because of that we can better appreciate and get into her writing. She lets us in in a way that black and white thinking cannot achieve.

KW: I see a similar thing in your writing. Although your stories are, in a way, action adventure tales where you have a good force fighting against an evil force, you refuse to allow the struggle to be categorized as black and white. There's complexity and compassion extended to each character.

JB: I've tried to do it not just with the human characters but even those characters that are non-human. We all, human beings and animal beings and all living things alike, are in the middle of a flow of time. We are always living within the present moment but also within those things that happened to us before, even before there were human beings. People in the modern world forget that, and we set up a world around us made of cardboard figures. The trees and the earth itself become nothing more than a backdrop that we can walk past. That's not true in Louise's writing.

KW: That last comment reminds me of one of the things I love most in Tolkien: the tree people.

JB: The Ents.

KW: They are marvelous; they remind me of the Sequoias, the magnificent redwoods in California.

JB: I've always loved Tolkien's Ents. But that shouldn't be surprising. Early on in *Dawn Land* you'll find the Abenaki story of how humans were created. When Ktsi Nwaskw made human beings the first time, they were made of stone. But those stone beings were hard-hearted and crushed things beneath their feet. So Ktsi Nwaskw tried a second time. This time men and women were made from the ash trees and like the trees, they were rooted to the earth and loved it. Like the trees, their hearts were growing and green. So, as an Abenaki writer, you could say I've been trying to remain true to my roots.

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Book Reviews

***Killing Time with Strangers*. W. S. Penn. Sun Tracks Vol. 45. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2000. ISBN 0-8165-2052-6. 282 pages.**

Throughout his writing, W. S. Penn examines the experiences of “urban mixbloods,” individuals of part Native American descent who have been raised primarily apart from reservations or other indigenous communities. A self-described urban mixblood of Nez Perce ancestry, Penn was born in Los Angeles, grew up in suburban California, and currently resides in East Lansing, MI, where he is a Professor of English at Michigan State University. Like his 1994 novel *The Absence of Angels* and his 1995 collection of autobiographical essays *All My Sins Are Relatives* (winner of the North American Indian Prose Award), Penn’s novel *Killing Time with Strangers* emphasizes the necessity for urban mixbloods to “bridge the gap between themselves and the dominant culture around them, as well as the gap within themselves” (“Introduction” 3).

In *Killing Time with Strangers*, protagonist Palimony Blue Larue’s main challenge is to develop a sense of self independent from the degrading, stereotypical concepts others have of him. Penn’s model for such self-imagining is Pal’s mixblood Nez Perce mother Mary Blue, who, in rejecting the fatalism and despair of her Scots-Irish father, has emulated the cultural centeredness of her Nez Perce mother. Though she lives far from her Nez Perce relatives, Mary Blue retains a strong connection with her Nez Perce heritage, as well as an accompanying suspicion of Euramericans, whom she refuses to see in any other light than as “conquerors.” When young Pal asks Mary, “What’s a minority?” she replies, “It’s what we are in this city. . . . It’s what they are in the world” (69).

Pal’s father, La Vent Larue, is the polar opposite. La Vent, whose mixblood Osage father “never sat him down and told him stories about oil leases and Osage people who were murdered for them” (27), grows up seeking to please others, especially authority figures. After marrying Mary Blue, La Vent is offered a job by the mayor of Gilroy, a small town south of San Jose, as a zoning consultant. Pathetically grateful for what he perceives as acceptance—“They really do want me, see” (37)—La Vent becomes the dupe of the corrupt white mayor, who assigns him such projects as reclassifying land used for migrant worker housing to allow for the construction of an upscale

condominium complex and golf course and rezoning an ancient Native burial ground for construction of a shopping mall.

Pal has inherited characteristics of both parents. Like his mother, who houses and feeds the very migrant workers La Vent helps to displace, Pal feels a sense of solidarity with oppressed groups, including Hispanics and African Americans. Like his father, however, Pal exhibits a desperate need to be accepted. Penn traces Pal's sense of self primarily through his romantic relationships. After not pursuing his interest in LeeAnn Vezzani—"Italian and feeling as out of place in Gilroy as Palimony Larue"—because he "believed clear down to his toes that he was not worthy of someone like her" (88), Pal drifts through a series of exploitative relationships with women who to varying degrees try to transform or humiliate him. Nymphomaniac Baptist Sally Pedon uses sex to win a convert as Pal prepares to be baptized in order to please her. After an interlude with waitress and would-be jazz flautist Brandy Goosechurt, Pal becomes involved with spoiled socialite Tara Dunnahowe, whose frequent address "dumb shit" epitomizes her treatment of Pal.

Tara is, in fact, typical of many of the Euramerican characters in the novel, who are almost uniformly repulsive and openly racist. Some are grotesquely savage, such as Mayor Packard's son Pryce, who "raped, doused with gasoline, and burned" a young Chicana, and young Ruthie and Paulie White, preacher's children who drug and crucify their parents. Such scenes could have come straight from Gerald Vizenor's *Bearheart*. Also like Vizenor, Penn frequently assigns his characters emblematic names, such as the contractors Bill Diggum and Henry Pavum; the history professor Joe Manifest, for whom Tara discards Pal; and the "Indian" professor Gyp Carnal, whose sense of identity rests solely on his official enrollment card. (Interestingly, "Gyp Carnal" is the same name Penn uses in his essay "Feathering Custer" for the senior professor who seeks to block junior professor "Big Little Man"'s bid for tenure by questioning if he is "really" Indian, a scenario Penn suggests was based in part on his own tenure struggles at Michigan State University described in *All My Sins Are Relatives*). Penn's creation of such caricatures often lends a polemical heavyhandedness to much of the novel.

Countering the various forces of oppression and degradation is Mary Blue's strong desire for Pal to develop a sense of self worth. Mary's primary means for this task is Chingaro, her *weyekin*, or Nez Perce spirit guide, who is, in fact, the narrator of the novel. Mary has dreamed Chingaro into existence in order to help Pal dream into existence Amanda, a woman who will appreciate Pal and with whom

he can develop a healthy, nurturing relationship. As Pal's self-esteem increases, his vision of Amanda becomes clearer and more detailed until by the end of the novel, he has indeed fully imagined Amanda into being; she assures Pal, "I'm real. . . . And I plan on staying, if you want" (266). Chingaro satisfactorily muses that whereas other women isolated Pal, "Amanda connected him" (268).

Connected him to exactly *what* is an understandable question of the reader. The creation of Amanda certainly marks a triumph of Pal's imagination, his growing sense of self-worth. Yet as unambiguous as the novel is in denouncing social oppression of Native Americans and mixbloods (as well as Hispanics and African Americans), it is equally ambiguous in suggesting just what Amanda is to represent. Part of this ambiguity derives from Penn's treatment of Chingaro. Though Chingaro informs the reader at the outset of the novel that he is a Nez Perce spirit guide, Penn doesn't use this figure to simulate "authentic," "traditional" Nez Perce spirituality. Indeed, similar to Thomas King's strategy in the storytelling frame of *Green Grass, Running Water*, Penn frequently uses Chingaro to lampoon Christian belief, Western literature, and a variety of other targets. For instance, Chingaro often regales the reader with anecdotes involving fellow *weyekin*, including Henny Penny and Chicken Licken, both of whom service "Anglos and other white folks" (7). "Henny was one of the original angels dreamed up by Dante Alighieri to hang around singing hosanna, stuck like a bee to flypaper on the multifoliate rose until the day God died. Chicken Licken, well, you know who Chicken Licken is. His spirit is small and afraid" (7). Elsewhere Chingaro describes Samuel Taylor Coleridge sexually assaulting Samuel Johnson, "Coleridge docked like a shuttle with Johnson's space station" (24).

However playfully he treats Chingaro and his fellow *weyekin*, Penn seems quite earnest in his treatment of Mary Blue's dreaming. Chingaro asserts about Mary Blue, "She can see things because she has foreseen them. She's made them be. Or not made them be, but made the context in which they can and will come to be" (4). It's interesting to compare Penn's treatment of dreaming in *Killing Time with Strangers* with his essay "Dreaming" in *All My Sins Are Relatives*, in which he describes dreaming in the following manner: "I turn away from anger—or overheated love—and turn toward something which to most people is not, evidently, real. And yet it is real to me; it allows me to survive" (31). The essay goes on to cite examples of dreaming that allow individuals to endure unpleasant events, such as a sister hearing with placidity an insensitive remark by her step-mother or Penn's own account of the calm state of mind he was able to achieve

which allowed him to feel “distant and out of reach from the people who had, for the third year in a row, denied me tenure” (46). These examples emphasize dreaming as a coping mechanism, a means of deflecting pain. Certainly Pal’s dreaming of Amanda has this function as Amanda possesses all the qualities of an ideal partner absent from Pal’s previous relationships. Yet if Amanda is a product of Pal’s imagination, if she is a dream-lover, then this raises the question of what kind of connection she provides for Pal. Who exactly *is* Amanda? Amanda’s ontological status is the most intriguing and at the same time the most perplexing aspect of *Killing Time with Strangers*.

Randall Davis

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***The Crooked Beak of Love*. Duane Niatum. West End Press (distributed by U of NM Pr) 2000. ISBN: 0-931122-96-1. 70 pages. \$8.95**

I dreamt a seal brought me a drum
and a song that would soothe my nerves.
Seal said my life would be formed by the sea
but I would know this mother mostly by land.
“We Sing in this Life so the Dead Come Home,” (20)

With this latest collection of poems Duane Niatum sings us a song of many parts, of life in the Northwest, life in North America, of the

loves in his life, and of the state of his life in general. The five sections of *The Crooked Beak of Love* provide a congenial mix of traditional and contemporary observations and issues. A strong autobiographical element throughout explores the lives of Niatum's family members, going back several generations along his Klallam roots, and into the future, including speculation on the life of a daughter he never had. The book is divided into sections: "First People"; "Windows"; "Love Changes the Spirit and the Dance"; "Poems to Leave Under a Tree"; and "Moon Stories".

Niatum examines the familiar Northwestern Washington landscape, but in the process makes the commonplace seem momentarily exotic. He asks readers to examine the world they pass through daily, and to find the spirituality and beauty of the environment there. The water we take for granted, the trees, plants, birds, and human elders on the street we largely ignore, are avatars of a world much older and richer than we realize. By highlighting the familiar but bringing to it autochthonous interpretations, Niatum has demonstrated what he first highlighted in his 1987 *Harper's Anthology of 20th Century Native American Poetry*, that "Native American poetry is the poetry of historic witness. It grows out of a past that is very much a present" (xvii). The past/present juxtaposition encompasses far more than the human history of European/Indigenous relations; it relies on today's natural world as source of powerful historic and contemporary relationships with the spiritual world.

The demand for cultural literacy runs throughout Niatum's musing on the Northwest. Niatum helped me re-see the world where I grew up. He uses familiar objects as touchstones, but in such a way that these objects would seem exotic to those not from the Northwest, or who haven't paid attention to their surroundings. Hence, as with any poet, the more one digs, the more meanings one finds in his poems. As illustration of this, consider the subtlety in Niatum's "To Our Salish Women Who Weave the Seasons" that says "I drop / a red cedar wreath / into the Hoko River to put the family ghosts / to bed." It would be tempting to read over the top of this, imagining simple greenery dropped into the river. But the wreath is of red cedar, one of the most revered of ancient trees of the Northwest. Through all stages of its existence this amazing tree nurtures life. In the early supple years some bark can be stripped from the trees for weaving many useful articles, from mats to baskets to garments. As the trees grow huge, the tannins create a durable wood, whether for plates, masks, plaques, canoes, totem poles, buildings, or shingles. As the trees mature into the hundreds and thousands of years, the hearts rot, and the hollow trees

provide shelter for humans and animals alike. Once these giants fall and after many years begin to rot, the dry square crumbles of the rotting orange wood will burn quickly and cook a meal or save a life in cold weather, and the wood or leaves are burned ceremonially. This is the grandmother of trees in the Northwest. The wreath invokes the life cycle of the most powerful of trees to put family ghosts to bed.

This kind of plant/animal/human nuanced relationship with the environment is found throughout these poems, but it doesn't stop at the geographical boundaries of the Pacific Northwest. For that matter, Niatum doesn't keep his subject matter exclusively North American or Indian, but in this book, whatever the setting, the land is integral to the human relationships. In a portion of "In Your City of Stone, Sculpture, and Ruin" (for Rosa), Niatum observes

Born in the greenest folds of France,
your dark almond eyes trace from memory
the home that marks the healing ground
of our grandmother's circle,
the cypresses and willow, creatures
of the Seine River swimming and leaping
and diving past your grandparents'
house at Beaulieu. (44)

He may or may not have known what all of the "creatures of the Seine River" were, but clearly he was aware of their presence and called to them as a group to bring their spirits to bear in this love poem, to show he also loves and understands the place from which her spirit emanates. Though these poems are largely propelled by Niatum's exploration of his Klallam roots, he speaks an ecological language recognized by Indian and non-Indian alike, of relationships with water, air, plants, mountains, animals—the philosophical and emotional Gaia that underpins the spirit of place. Who would not be swept up by the beauty of

"The Washington Park Arboretum"

Within the lazy drifts of cattails,
two mallards doze, drunker than the sun.
A dragonfly is as translucent
as the lily pad it has pinned itself to;
a swallow-tailed butterfly, the path's
amulet, disappears in the reeds;

Summer's farewell dangles like dusk.
Ready to walk into this painting
I step closer to the white-edged water
turning to smoke, touch the bottom
of the lake, slip from my shadow. (29)

Though all of the poems in this book cry out to be sampled, another gem is

Coastal Storm
(for Sue)

The sun teeters vertical on the marginal;
the wind and rain catapult the wave
up and over the other side of the dune.

Chasing bubbles of sea-scum down the beach
we spot an oil-slicked common murre,
pretending to hide in a clump of eelgrass.

I catch the bird so we can take it to a vet,
though it already looks a burr of death.
Off the road the fields shadow-pace the marsh hawks.

The hawks, earth-hatched for the spirals of air,
hovered in the wake of the sea-fed moon,
banked to where the crest-cradled dawn rises. (58)

This *is* a collection of poems by a mixedblood American Indian poet, and his Klallam culture *is* an important element of his poems. But it should be stressed, as Niatum himself states in his *Harper's Anthology*, that "too often a classification can reduce attention to what is special; it can be used to pigeonhole and thereby deny full regard . . . if we use a term such as 'Native American Poetry' appropriately, if we use it knowing that such a grouping is only . . . an aid to understanding that leads to reinforcement and intensification of attention, then it is useful" (xviii). "A Moment of Recollection" begins

You have become Euterpe, Mnemosyne's green-eyed
daughter who lounges in the unused study
of my mind. Yet your chance reappearance is not
nostalgic, but a sign of your tenderness.

Like the sixteen years it will pass.
We were bound more by dance than earth. (39)

By following Niatum's advice, readers allow him to commingle Klallam songs and European classical dance, and will give equal attention to both. As Niatum observed of the poets he included in his *Anthology*, the poems collected in *The Crooked Beak of Love* "can hold their own in the American literary scene today" (xix).

Margaret Dwyer

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***Voices of American Indian Assimilation and Resistance: Helen Hunt Jackson, Sarah Winnemucca, and Victoria Howard*. Siobhan Senier. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001. ISBN0-8061-3293-0. 272 pages.**

Siobhan Senier sets some rather modest goals for her study of three women authors of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In a narrow sense, she examines these authors in order to challenge the assumption, held by many over the years, that these women who depicted various American Indian societies and spoke out on Indian issues favored assimilation in general and the Allotment Act of 1887 in particular. In a broader sense, she engages in a reexamination of these women's works to reveal the intricacies of their literary performances in light of their underlying cultural and political aims. She seeks to shed light on the relationship these women had to the social and political power structures of the era and she hopes to demonstrate the various difficulties they faced in voicing dissent on the issue of "the Indian question."

But, in the end, Senier accomplishes much more than this. By showing us the dynamics involved in these voices of opposition, Senier gives us insight into the deeper issues surrounding the overall discourse of American Indian resistance itself—the range and overall nature of this unique dialogic discourse that James Clifford described in his work *The Predicament of Culture* as a “nexus of relations and transactions,” a web of cultural interactions and exchanges that are neither simplistic nor static. The complexity of these interactions and the shifting cultural contexts from which they emerge may sometimes give the general impression that these authors had, like almost everyone else in the period, a tacit acceptance of the doctrine of assimilation, but in reality their work represents a fluidity of thought and expression passionately committed to the survival of indigenous communities (Clifford 344).

Senier begins her study by discussing the “Era of Assimilation,” the historical period she identifies as dating from 1879 to 1934 and epitomized by the passing of the Dawes Act, or General Allotment Act of 1887, which discouraged tribal identification and collective ownership of land in the hope of hastening Indian assimilation, a goal that was almost universally agreed upon within the mainstream culture as necessary to Indian survival. Senier argues that even though it has been assumed in the past that these women authors were supportive of governmental efforts at assimilation, the values they express in their respective works don’t bear this out. Senier believes the values they most often express are, using Jace Weaver’s term, “communitist” in nature, firmly in support of the continuation of tribal communities as viable and necessary for Indian survival, and thereby expressing (whether overtly or not) opposition to assimilation on a variety of levels (Weaver 34).

Senier first turns to the work of Helen Hunt Jackson, whose book *A Century of Dishonor* (1881) directly challenged many governmental policies toward American Indians. But in this study, Senier focuses on Jackson’s book *Ramona* (1884), which has sometimes been called “the American Indian *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.” She first discusses the general political nature of Jackson’s work as well as the broader issue, often discussed by feminist critics, of the nineteenth-century sentimental novel as a basic vehicle for political dissent. Then, she looks more closely at Jackson’s implicit “political message” in this text, a message perhaps made somewhat problematic by Jackson’s white, middle class New England background. Senier finds in *Ramona* a host of conflicting elements that seem to be an odd blending of American Indian outrage at attempts to destroy tribal unity and a white liberal

resignation that assimilation may be the only way for these peoples to survive. And yet, Senier ultimately sees Jackson's work as "communitist" in that despite its multicultural and sometimes conflicting voices, the book consistently argues for the inherent legitimacy of the indigenous communal society it portrays.

The second author Senier turns to is Sarah Winnemucca, whose *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* (1881) has sometimes been compared to Harriet Jacob's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. This work, Senier argues, speaks with a more overtly "communitist" voice. Winnemucca speaks with a collective voice in her narrative, telling the story of an entire people rather than that of a single individual. But more than this, Senier says, Winnemucca argues for the viability of a tribal consciousness even when it appears on the surface that she's speaking in support of allotment. She supports allotment because she's committed to the protection of tribal lands from white encroachment so that those lands can continue to function as a legitimate basis for tribal unity. Because of this, Senier sees Winnemucca's work as a strong voice of resistance to the basic concepts underlying arguments for assimilation. Senier believes that in her text "Winnemucca thus expresses a communitist ethos over and against, though not in strict opposition to, Anglo-American institutions and presence" (97).

But what is even more exciting about Senier's Winnemucca section is the way she illuminates the intricate nature of the political discourse itself, a discourse which weaves together various cultural influences and expectations in order to "alter the politics of cross-cultural communication itself" (92). Winnemucca's ability to understand her audience, using their own sensibilities and cultural expectations to circumvent and undermine their political assumptions, is a wonderful example of the sort of "nexus of exchange" David Moore, using Clifford's terminology, describes in his essay "Decolonizing Criticism: Reading Dialectics and Dialogics in Native American Literatures" (17). And yet as Senier reminds us, this exchange—no matter what it may represent in terms of cultural interaction and changing perspectives—primarily functions in Winnemucca's book as a powerful means of political resistance.

Senier turns her attention next to Victoria Howard, the enigmatic figure who, in collaboration with Melville Jacobs, produced the collections of stories called *Clackamas Chinook Texts* (1958). The work grew out of interviews and transcribed storytelling sessions conducted by Jacobs and Howard in the 1930s. Senier devotes two chapters to Victoria Howard, one to discuss Howard's narrative

presence and another to more fully examine the tales themselves, and it is here that Senier's arguments come fully into focus. To demonstrate the text's "communitist" nature, Senier points to the multivocal and performative qualities of the stories as well as the frequent intrusion of footnotes, extranarrative remarks, etc. Moreover, she argues that the tales themselves often depict strong female characters—characters that almost always represent the community in one way or the other—resisting the power and authority of those who would threaten that community.

But within the analysis of Howard's narrative presence, Senier goes even further and describes a performance that demonstrates and celebrates American Indian resistance to the dominant culture while at the same time exhibiting an attitude of resistance that has been enriched and made stronger by the influences of that dominant culture. Howard's tales, says Senier, are "communitist [stories]...[that do] not construct feminine resistance and power in opposition to a monolithic notion of male power or of tradition, but rather insists that tradition be supple enough to accommodate changing needs and thus to endure" (175). This recognition and utilization of the "nexus of exchange" between cultures is what Moore claims defines an Indian understanding of this process and has always been a strong feature of any Indian discourse of resistance (Moore 18). Senier believes that Howard functions as an ideal example of that process at work. She argues that Howard's achievement can "model forms of resistance and expression that might be useful at this seemingly ever more multicultural turn of the century" (161).

Senier ends her book with a caveat concerning the issue of her own legitimacy as a non-Native scholar and the dangers of representing and interpreting tribal discourse from without. It is entirely appropriate that she do this, given the dynamics of the processes she is trying to illuminate. But more importantly, Senier seems to avoid another, more important, danger—one that Moore focuses on at some length—which is the tendency to see only two possibilities for Indian peoples . . . inevitable assimilation with, or active resistance to, the dominant culture. Senier avoids this tendency and finds in the work of these three women strong voices of resistance that, to be sure, have been altered by the overwhelming influence of assimilation. And yet she demonstrates that despite those influences they, nonetheless, remain voices firmly committed to resistance.

Edward Huffstetler

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***Winning the Dust Bowl*. Carter Revard. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001. ISBN 0-8165-2070-4 cloth. ISBN 0-8165-2071-2 paper. xvi + 212 pages.**

In "Getting Across," one of the chapters in *Winning the Dust Bowl*, Carter Revard remembers walking about the Dunvegan Peninsula on the Scottish Isle of Skye, "and seeing the peninsula hold like a gentle hand its fields and houses, I wanted my hand to hold the Buck Creek Valley that way." The experience inspired a change in his poetics, from "squared," as he calls it, metered verse to more fluid forms. The image of the valley gently holding, a feeling vision of its landscape and its human and other creatures, also befits the theme of the present volume. Here the author draws together family and personal memories, photographs, and poems into a thoughtful, "hand-held" meditation.

Winning the Dust Bowl gathers the reflections of a mature author, a man at ease with his retrospection, who cradles in that hand-held memory the pastoral vision of Buck County, jetliners and space exploration, Merton College and the training of racing greyhounds, outdoor (absence of) plumbing and computerized dictionaries. Poems and prose are placed in dialogue with each other, and even closer synthesis comes about when the poet fuses forms that come down from ancient English bards with everyday and contemporary matter. Riddles, *Piers Plowman*, Shakespeare, and alliterative verse weave together with chronicles of bootleggers, tornadoes, old-time religion, oil riches and rural poverty, generosity of spirit, penetrating intellectual curiosity, and the close observation of something as easy to miss as possum tracks in mud. History permeates everyday life: the depression and its effects on Osage oil income, prohibition, the dust bowl and two

world wars, the siege of Wounded Knee and the horrors of El Salvador in the 1980s, all are part of the poet's life and consciousness. Much in the text is tribute to the complicated and various extended families that the author is a part of: Osage, Ponca, and as he says, "other." One could compile extended lists. From much potential for chaos the steady, compassionate gaze draws together meaning and sense.

Comparisons of *Winning the Dust Bowl* with works like Leslie Silko's *Storyteller* will be inevitable and not irrelevant, for besides enriching our understanding of this growing body of experimental writing, such comparisons can foreground important differences and the distinctive contribution of this particular experiment. Whoever wrote the back-cover blurb describes the book as "memoir in prose and poetry," which is accurate enough, and alerts the reader that this is not simply a "collection," although it is that, too. The real innovation is the author's adaptation of the format of a poetry reading to draw together commentary and poems, to which he adds pictures of members of the family who have been so much of his inspiration. (Having arranged a reading that Carter gave a few years ago, I recognized some of the poems and their framing commentary. A few of the poems in this volume have been published in previous collections, too.) Using the relatively formal but still familiar model of the public poetry reading creates new ways of blending narrative, lyric, and dramatic modes. The print form allows for visuals not usually possible in a live reading, although the downside is the absence of audience interaction. Certainly, transferring the immediacy of oral recitation into written form has been the great critical issue of American Indian literature as it has been defined up to now. *Winning the Dust Bowl* adds yet another paradigm, challenging for any poet.

There is another parallel in the long tradition of voice-into-print in American Indian literatures: oral autobiographies. Readers coming to *Winning the Dust Bowl* expecting ethnographic particulars may be surprised to find that the oral tradition mostly cited is Old and Middle English epic and lyric verses and to further find that for this author one of the most important exemplars of American Indian literary tradition is fellow Rhodes scholar Washington Matthews. However, this most writerly of texts probably offers the closest published approximation to the *process* of oral autobiography that most of us are likely to find. With its origins in oral performance for an audience, the text suggests just that intermediate stage in the production of oral autobiographies that never gets into print: that point where the narrator/author has created a text and the listener/editor has yet to intervene towards

chronology, succinctness, and narrative expectations of non-Native audiences.

A book as inward-looking as this one is will invite personal responses in the reader, and my response to the invitation is to note my own here. Pursuing an endnote to part of an address at a Phi Beta Kappa installation, I found a moving tribute to Franklin Eikenberry, one of the author's instructors at the University of Tulsa, which, lacking much of a national or international reputation, still was fortunate to have this extraordinary and brilliant teacher. Other readers are likely to find other passages as suddenly relevant and moving.

Intensely personal, yet at the same time reserved, not at all chronological, moving with lightning speed through disparate associations but leisurely in its musings and appreciations, full of family and a deep sense of connection to place, *Winning the Dust Bowl* is a book to savor, to read through or just to read around in, to puzzle over, to annotate, to return to, to give as a gift or to recommend to a friend.

Helen Jaskoski

***The White Path* by Robert J. Conley. The Real People Series, vol. 3. 1993. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000. ISBN 0-8061-3274-4. 183 pp.**

***The Way South* by Robert J. Conley. The Real People Series, vol. 4. 1994. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000. ISBN 0-8061-3275-2. 176 pp.**

***The Long Way Home* by Robert J. Conley. The Real People Series, vol. 5. 1994. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000. ISBN 0-8061-3276-0. 182 pp.**

Many have written about the history of the Cherokee people, and some have done it well. Few, however, have traveled through the richly textured terrain of the Cherokee past with such skill as Keetoowah Cherokee writer Robert Conley. His ongoing Real People series chronicles the history of the *Ani-Yunwiya*, the Real Human Beings, from the earliest days in our mountain homelands through

cataclysmic internal strife, social regeneration, and alliances and confrontations with both indigenous and alien enemies. Conley's historical fiction bears the mark of both a keen-eyed tribal historian with a strong understanding of the old ways and understandings of the world, and a storyteller's gift for giving breath and spirit to the lives and people whose struggles shaped the continuing tribal survival of their diverse descendants.

The White Path is the third in the Real People series, and it begins in the aftermath of one of the most calamitous periods in Cherokee history—the uprising of the people against their power-mad priests, the *Ani-Kunati* of Men's Town. Edohi, whose first wife was butchered in sacrifice by the head priest Standing-in-the-Doorway, leads the revolution against the *Kunati*, but his part in the victory is a hollow one: not only is his wife Corn Flower gone, the society of the Real People has begun to collapse with infighting and increasingly violent squabbling. Whatever their abuses, the *Ani-Kunati* had been arbiters of law and social stability to the People, and their absence has left the world in chaos.

Again Edohi is called to lead his people, this time to find a way to bring back some semblance of structure to the community, but without giving too much power to individuals or small groups. At the same time, Edohi must deal with increasing tensions with the Suwalis, whose destruction of a town of the Real People has further shifted the world out of balance. They capture the warrior Cuts-Off-Their-Heads and return in triumph to their own territory, planning to celebrate with his torture and execution. Cuts-Off-Their-Heads escapes, and with him carries as captive the lovely Rising Fawn, whose brother follows the pair back to the land of the Real People with blood and war in his wake.

To head off the conflict from without and from within, Edohi seeks guidance from the old conjuror Gone-in-the-Water, from his mother and his uncle, two highly-respected clan leaders, and from Dancing Rabbit, once Like-a-Pumpkin, the only *Kunati* left alive after the massacre at Men's Town, and the only person who still knows the greatest secret of the ancient priesthood: the sacred writing that gives physical shape to the language of the Real People. But Dancing Rabbit is fearful that the anger that brought destruction to Men's Town will one day find him, and his fear threatens to overwhelm his promise to Edohi to bring back some of the old ways and thus renewed balance to the People.

The Way South takes place a generation after the events of *The White Path*. Dancing Rabbit's nephew, Carrier, has grown into a man,

and is preparing to travel as a trader with his uncle to the unknown land of the Timucuas to the far south. When Dancing Rabbit is crippled in a fall, Carrier must travel alone for the first time. Though fearful, he is also eager, and he is particularly fascinated by the rumors of the strange foreigners recently appearing in the land, creatures that are “horrible to look at. They are hairy all over their bodies and their faces [. . .] [t]heir skin is pale, nearly white, but there’s a redness that shows through, almost as if you can see the blood beneath the skin showing through” (37).

Carrier’s interest quickly turns to terror when he comes face to face with the destruction brought by the *Ani-’squani* invaders, the Españols whose ravenous appetite for slaughter and gold drives them in a murderous frenzy throughout the lands of the Timucuas. They rape, pillage, and devastate all they encounter. Carrier is swept along into the Timucuas’ resistance struggle, soon falling in love with the war-woman Potmaker. Together with her brother Tree Frog, the Timucua chief Big Conch, and the escaped Calusa slave of the Españols, they help to craft an alliance of Timucuas, Calusas, and one lone warrior of the Real People against the invaders.

The fifth volume of the series, *The Long Way Home*, takes place another generation in the future, during the devastation that accompanies Hernando De Soto’s fruitless quest for gold in the lands of the Real People and their neighbors. The old priest Deadwood Lighter, once thought long lost in slavery to a fierce people to the west, has returned to the Real People to warn them of the coming storm. He tells a crowded council house of his days as slave and interpreter to De Soto’s expedition, a story drenched in the horror of mass slaughter and butchery, the macabre legacy of De Soto’s fanatical greed and unrelenting desire for power. Among the gathered people is young ’Squani, the adopted son of Carrier whose unknown Español father had been one of Potmaker’s rapists. He is torn by Deadwood Lighter’s story: aware of his bloody heritage, and of his difference from his father’s people, but still dedicated to the people who raised him and of whose world is the only one he knows. Fascinated and repulsed, ’Squani listens, and he looks to the future. All gathered feel the shadows gathering on the horizon. A new threat has arrived in the land of the Real People, and they will need all their strength to withstand the coming storm.

To read this series—with eleven volumes published or forthcoming, and more on the way—is to not simply step back into particular moments of the Cherokee past; it is to also experience the richness of a living Cherokee consciousness, one that still endures in

spite of centuries of colonialist oppression. Conley's knowledge of traditional clan relationships, spirituality, and socio-political structures is unsurpassed; the world of the Real People is fully alive and multi-dimensional, a worldview clearly unveiled through the mists of history and memory.

The strength of these books is not in their characters: Conley rarely crafts fully-developed personalities; if anything, they tend to be rather repetitive in their characterization. The protagonists of each novel—all men—are noble, brave, and handsome, the women lovely, graceful, and virtuous. Edohi is hardly distinguishable from Carrier, and both *Dancing Rabbit* and *Deadwood Lighter* share the same insecurities and fearful approach to the world. Sohi, Edohi's second wife, is very much like Potmaker, who is very much like Falda, the Timucua slave who accompanies *Deadwood Lighter* on much of his journey. Women, while central to the clan system and social fabric, are secondary characters in most of the series (although a later volume, *War Woman*, does focus primarily on a female protagonist), an unfortunate imbalance that seems more generational than intentional. Some of the more interesting characters, such as the conjurer *Gone-in-the-Water*, the witch *Breaks-Things-Up*, the Caluga slave *He-Fights-with-Alligators*, and the "Queen" of *Cofitachequi*, are given more personality than most of the primary figures, with rather regrettable frequency.

But Conley's aim is not simply to tell the stories of individuals, no matter how influential they are or how fascinating their personalities may be. His is a passionate undertaking of tribal nationalism; Conley draws from national history of the Real People from a rich and varied past. The community is center and source of the Real People series; it is well-developed, complex and multi-dimensional. These are the stories of the *Ani-Yunwiya*, even when flawed or lacking in the full range of representation, not just those of a privileged few individuals.

The continued survival and enduring strength of the Cherokee people is integral to this project, for Conley draws on traditions and knowledge still held by traditional people in Oklahoma and Arkansas, as well as North Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, and other Cherokee lands and paths. But he does not simply expand from an existing tradition; he also gives back to it through imaginative resurrection of a proud past.

These books, while popular throughout the United States, are particularly appreciated in Cherokee country. When I attended the 49th annual Cherokee National Holiday in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, the books of the Real People Series were on display everywhere. I often stopped

and talked with Cherokee vendors and artisans; more often than not, the conversation would come around to Conley's faithful and richly-textured narratives. We'd share our favorites, then chat about some aspect of the books, or discuss what we thought the next book would be about. In the prodigious and growing body of contemporary Cherokee literature, including such authors as Marilou Awiakta, Diane Glancy, Betty Louise Bell, Thomas King, William Sanders, and Ralph Salisbury, Conley's work stands as some of the most energetic and immersed in tradition and a community ethos. While his books are often lacking in the artistry seen in Awiakta's poetry and prose or the textured development of plot and character found in King's work, they are nonetheless enriched with drama, historical intrigue, and the heroism of ordinary people in extraordinary times.

Though once best known for his award-winning Westerns, Robert Conley is truly now a storykeeper for the People, and these three slim volumes demonstrate that he is well qualified to fill that role. The Real People Series is not a fictionalized ethnohistory of the Cherokees; it is a sweeping visionary epic that further enriches our understanding of ourselves, our history, and our ability to endure and to thrive, even against unimaginable odds.

Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee Nation)

***Captured in the Middle: Tradition and Experience in Contemporary Native American Writing.* Sidner Larson. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000. ISBN 0-295-97904-6. 183 pages.**

As scholars and teachers of American Indian written literature, I think we all share a goal of participating in the transformation of ragged and troubling Indian stereotypes that the practitioners of the literature have undertaken. We use the works of writers like Louise Erdrich, Leslie Silko, and James Welch to show, in part, that Indians are not creatures of some backlit Hollywood past, but rather are people, living now, struggling to make sense of their experience. In Joy Harjo's words, we seek to demonstrate that the literature "is not exotic," but rather that it "defines America" (*Reinventing the Enemy's Language* 31).

In my classroom experience, the idea that America is defined by native literature strikes majority culture students as both apt and

bizarre. They like the idea that tribal myth defines the interrelation of humanity to nature, but when we turn to contemporary works where characters try to make sense of their identities, of the social, cultural, and institutional racism they encounter, as well as just getting down the road of day-to-day life, many students share the confusion of one of their engaged and empathetic classmates. At our opening discussion of Silko's *Ceremony*, this young man asked, "When is this story set?" In response to my explanation that Tayo's story takes place during the years immediately following World War Two, this student responded, "I thought the story would be set in the old times," meaning of course the Hollywood past (not the immemorial times where much of *Ceremony* is indeed set).

This intersection of majority culture perceptions of and confusion about Indians is one of the starting points of Sidner Larson's discussion of native literature in *Captured in the Middle: Tradition and Experience in Contemporary Native American Writing*. In the book, Larson describes himself as "intrigued by a transformative project that seeks to influence culture by means other than militant or nationalist approaches" (3). The means Larson favors for this transformative project are "the older American Indian conceptions of the Great Mystery as well as Keats's idea of negative capability" which he defines as "the power to remain open to mysteries, uncertainties, and doubts" (3). That is, in *Captured in the Middle*, Larson explores the intersection between "older American Indian conceptions" from tribal traditions as well as non-Indian sources like Keats as a means of dialogically drawing on all (not just selected) aspects of his diverse learning and bringing them into his criticism. Though he draws on non-Indian sources like Keats and Trilling, he does so by placing their works in the context of American Indian thought (not vice versa). In this way Larson's criticism seeks to imagine a pragmatic balance between personal experience and the ethical grounding of tradition, while also imagining a cross-cultural dialogue where the ethical grounding of Indian thought defines the intellectual history of America. In this way he offers a critical recontextualization of the Euroamerican intellectual tradition as part of the project, begun by scholars like Robert Allen Warrior, to articulate an American Indian (written) intellectual history. It is in this sense that Larson's work reminds me of Harjo's assertion that indigenous literature defines America.

Indians, in majority culture stereotypes, are often represented as caught between the two worlds of Euroamerica and Native America, struggling to gain a foothold in one or the other of these worlds, and Larson's title—*Captured in the Middle*—plays off this stereotype with

an irony that transforms the metaphor from the marginalizing work it does in majority culture to an acknowledgement of an Indian intellectual tradition. Larson argues that “Part of the difficulty in understanding Indian identity comes from the process by which it was first destroyed by European colonizers, then reconstructed in ways that served the colonizers’ purposes” (35). As a result of this process of destruction, Indians become, in the Euroamerican reconstruction, caught between two worlds. As part of the transformative project he imagines American Indian intellectual history undertaking, Larson turns this image of confused identity from the colonizers’ purposes and recontextualizes it with reference to American Indian conceptions. The “captured in the middle” of his study does not refer to being trapped between white and Indian worlds, but rather draws from Black Elk’s vision of the “intersecting realities” (as Larson puts it) of the Red Road of the spiritual world and the Black Road of earthly life. Larson argues that his conception of pragmatism (one of the key ideas in his book) is related to “plains Indian philosophies [like Black Elk’s] that attempt to create a balance between engaging the world as it is encountered and honoring a world of inherited traditions” (129). “Captured in the middle” refers to seeking ways to recognize and articulate the intersection of the worlds of tribal tradition and earthly experience.

The colonizers’ destruction and reconstruction of Indian identities has wrought terrible devastation across the length and breadth of Indian country, leading Larson to declare that Indians are a “postapocalypse people.” Indian people, Larson writes, “have recently experienced the end of the world . . . [and], as such, have tremendous experience to offer all other people who must, in their own time, experience their own cultural death as part of the natural cycle” (18). The Indian experience with the end of the world, through which they “have suffered, survived, and managed to go on, communicated through storytelling, has tremendous potential,” Larson argues, “to affect the future of all mankind” (18). Spinning outward from this observation Larson articulates what he calls “postapocalypse theory.”

Postapocalypse theory, as Larson develops it, revolves around a variety of central points, the most crucial of which, reflecting his text’s metaphor of “captured in the middle” of tradition and experience, is to “balance the hold of the past [the end of the world] with considerations of the future” (153). In other words, people need to avoid the trap set by the colonizers’ reconstruction of indigenous identity, which ceaselessly asserts that the past is the only authentic terrain Indians may dwell in. (*Last of the Mohicans* or *Dances with Wolves* are the most popular recent baits for this trap.) Memory, he argues, needs to be

balanced between the experience of loss and the need for “a better-imagined future.”

Sidner Larson enters into the task of not defining but creating a tradition of American Indian intellectual history that works towards this future. His work steps outside of the boundaries of much mainstream criticism and enters the discursive community that includes critics like Kenneth Lincoln, Louis Owens, and Robert Allen Warrior. Larson writes that there is “an immediate need” in the American Indian intellectual community to practice the kind of criticism that “cultivates many of the intersections of their interaction with tradition and contemporary experiences” (154). The need for this type of criticism grows in relation to the work of American Indian writers like Louise Erdrich, James Welch, and Leslie Silko who have cultivated these intersections of experience and tradition in their novels.

Rather than articulating this need in conventional academic fashion with a theoretical introduction that is the applied like an analgesic balm to the literary works in question, Larson puts his ideas into practice and lets the theory emerge over the body of his book. Larson’s method is more discursive, almost digressive, recounting incidents and events from his experience as a Grovon (Gros Ventre) Indian, an ethnic scholar, and a writer that illuminate or reflect his readings of intellectuals and artists like Vine Deloria, Northrop Frye, Louise Erdrich, and Leslie Silko. His personal and intellectual experiences and readings are grounded in both an always unfolding critique of the apocalypse visited upon Indian peoples by the European colonizers, and in, more critically, “honoring a world of inherited traditions” that constitutes the true depth and meaning of the past—and the past’s ability to direct us to a “better-imagined future” that Larson hopes for all of us.

Carter Meland

***The Cherokee Sacred Calendar: A Handbook of the Ancient Native American Tradition.* Raven Hill. Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 2000. ISBN 0-89281-804-2. 141 pages with tables.**

In late August, I ran into two books in a local used-and-new bookstore. In the “New Age” section, I found *The Cherokee Sacred Calendar*. In the used bin, I found the *Cherokee Testament* [Kanohehv

Datlohisdv] that had belonged to Harrell Biard of Muskogee, Oklahoma. Like me, Harrell had a light grasp of the syllabary, and so the first few stanzas of Matthew were “ponied” with romanized versions of the Cherokee words. The ponies haven’t run much farther in my hands; when I pick up Harrell Biard’s book, I think of my great-grandfather “Preacher Cannon,” who renounced all things Cherokee for a circuit rider’s universe, and hear the “Cherokee National Anthem” of Amazing Grace rattling around my imagination of Northeast Georgia before Wal-Mart. Though I have little link by blood and no grandmother stories at all to justify my thinking of myself as Cherokee, I believe the contrast of these two books would be anything but a simple challenge for full bloods too. Statistically, which book is the more Cherokee? Elias Boudinot would have us believe that, pre-Removal, Cherokees were overwhelmingly Christian, and while he may have exaggerated at the time he said it (1820, *An Address to the Whites*) to his white audience of potential donors, it is probably now true. Go back ten years, when Boudinot was still Buck Watie or Gallegina, and we’re less sure. Go back another generation, when full-blood Susannah Wickett (Sehoya) urged Major Ridge (Boudinot’s uncle) to “clear land for a farm and to build a house like those of the whites” (James W. Parins. *John Rollin Ridge: His Life and Works* [Lincoln: U Nebraska, 1991], 4), and the Cherokee sky may have contained twenty day-signs, each for a 13-day week.

The first book’s publisher, Destiny Books, is unabashedly New-Age, a division of Inner Traditions International, and *Sacred Calendar* itself boasts that “Cherokee spirituality is not just for Cherokees — It is for the Children of Mother Earth” (frontispiece). The comparative explanations speak for a widely read author: “Agise’gwa and Wa’hyaya’ fill the same roles as Anubis and Upuaut, twin Jackal Gods of the Egyptian Otherworld” (4). The explanation of the Cherokee calendar’s cultural history summarizes both for what one might call a “lapsed Cherokee” audience and the New-Age culture dabbler. One minor error appears: including Boudinot as one “possible English name” offered by census-takers, stands quite contrary to Elias Boudinot’s own report of his self-naming (2). Most explanations, though, should work as an introduction to multi-worldness: “. . . every single thing in this world is an Earth-reflection of a Star. This includes not only people and animals but inanimate things such as rivers, stones, trees, and flowers” (3). Origin stories for each of the constellations appear, and their places stand in the Cherokee ephemeris.

For me, with all four grandparents dead by the time I was listening, kitchen stories consisted of all the back-stair gossip a family that ran a

hotel, a store, and a post office could muster; my great-grandmother parked me in a corner with a book most of the time. I recall puzzling over *Gone With the Wind* at one visit, while the grownups talked retail. The world wasn't created; it came fully made from Sears and Roebuck. The best stories came later, over jars of pickled peaches, with my Uncle Mac, and stories have been my only trusted thread to this world's secrets ever since. I can never be an Indian, no matter how much I reconstruct or imagine, but I try to follow Wendy Rose's warning (which I pass on to my north Atlanta urban students) to never act as if one has no relatives. Would I recommend *Sacred Calendar*? Perhaps to a semi-scholar trying to work out the Cherokee sky-map in his imagination, or to someone who did hear all the right stories at her kitchen table while growing up but wants to brush up on the particulars. For most readers, especially new-agers, I'd suggest that you go visit your grandmother instead, even if she's an MBA. I do look forward to Raven Hail's other stories, though. Raven Hail's other publications include a very pleasant little-people story, "The Crystal Cave," in Anna Lee Walters' *Neon Powwow: New Native Voices of the Southwest* (Flagstaff: Northland, 1993) 111-116.

David H. Payne

***Throwing Fire at the Sun, Water at the Moon.* Anita Endrezze. Sun Tracks v. 40. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2000. ISBN: 0-8165-1972-2. 203 pages.**

In 1521, Cortes razed the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan, including its magnificent aviaries. In her third and latest book, Yaqui poet and painter Anita Endrezze twice reconstructs this spectacularly sad moment. A brilliant acrylic, one of several gathered at the back of the book, sends a stylized bird with a realist human face soaring skyward through fiery stripes. Earlier, a poem cites the frantic bearer of the news: "Cortes set fire to the bamboo cages. The hummingbirds with their iridescent feathers flared into tiny puffs of light. The herons fell in blackened lumps onto the red clay floor. The parrots with their noble feathers of green, blue, turquoise, and yellow were burnt, beaks and bones crushed into the stinking mass" (40).

At first, the poem's Yaqui speakers, who haven't yet seen the so-called conquistadors themselves, are numbed: "We don't know what

this has to do with us. It's good we live so far away. But," they continue, "some of us think that it will affect us, too" (40). And so, in the next poem, we meet Ana Maria, a wise woman "asked by the Yaquis to measure the breadth of their lands". Rich in "the knowledge but not the strength," she calls on a giant to shoot three arrows—to Guaymas, to Ba'a poosi, to Ta kala'im, marking out the homeland that was there "when the Spaniards came" (42).

Like "The Woman Who Measured Yaqui Country," Endrezze herself has a powerful vision of tribal terrain, the more powerful for acknowledging its connections to others' fates and others' creative powers. An army of voices does her bidding. She proceeds from the earliest writings about La Virgen de Guadalupe, noting they were first in Nahuatl, not Spanish, in 1549; and from these spins a range of creation and trickster stories that capitalize on the connections among Indian and Spanish ("Jesus as Hopul Woki (Folded Feet)") past and present ("La Morena and Her Beehive Hairdo").

Endrezze also scours the diaries of Jesuit missionaries. She turns the racist Father Och into the self-parodying speaker of "Indian Vices": "They would rather lie on blankets/ . . . / than work in the fields/ nor do they think of tomorrow/ and the profit that must be made" (85). She raids Perez de Ribas for precious information about Yaqui oral tradition—even about ancient practices the priest misunderstood. As she did with Cortes's atrocities, she fashions de Ribas's colonial arrogance into new colors, a new account of indigenous endurance:

The orphans were taken to the sandpaintings
and rubbed all over with birds
and small animals of colored sand.
After this they ate and received gifts
from their foster parents.
When they bathed in the river,
they were a happy family.

Later the priests came,
forbidding the pagan aspect
of sand animals,
so the men drew the Holy Mother
and Child in brown, red, white, yellow, black.
("Ceremony of Adoption of Orphaned Children," 63-64)

Throwing Fire at the Sun, Water at the Moon is, then, a tribal and family history that seeks to explain what it means to be Yaqui, how Yaqui histories are connected to other histories, and how Yaqui people have survived by taking in others. Formally, the book will be recognizable to readers of works like Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*: it melds prose, poetry, essay, autobiography, colonial history, oral tradition, family lore, and now painting. It also adds a self-consciously female presence to the emergent and vibrant body of Yaqui written literature by Felipe Morales, Refugio Savala, and others.

What is most striking about *Throwing Fire at the Sun*, perhaps, is Endrezze's capacious imagining of others. Like her heroine Ana Maria, who will not be tricked into thinking that the arrival of Cortes to the south is a remote event, Endrezze sees the connections between Yaqui peoples and their lands, and peoples and lands that may appear to be "so far away." Perhaps this is because, as she tells us, her own background is so highly mixed—Slovenian/Italian/Romanian on her mother's side, Yaqui on her father's. And perhaps it is because, like so many peoples, the Yaqui themselves have long been profoundly multicultural, with very old connections to Aztec cultures, historical ties to the Spanish and Catholicism contemporary ties to California and Arizona (where, having demonstrated their linguistic and cultural continuance, the Pascua Yaqui Indians won federal recognition in 1978 and today maintain much of their language and distinctive tribal practices). Raised without having lived in that community or having learned the Yaqui language herself, Endrezze recently went on her own pilgrimage to Sonora, seeking out faces that would look familiar, speaking to people in a mix of Spanish and English, and visiting the places whose names she recognized from family stories and tribal tradition.

Out of this lived experience, reading, listening, and travel, Endrezze builds her tribal and personal history around connections to others. And she shows those connections to be the active work of women. Thus, she writes a homage to Corn Mother connecting the Yaqui across space and time: "small icons of corn women/ carrying bags of groceries! in Los Angeles, Guaymas,/ Spokane, Portland, Seattle" (17). She leaps into the heart and story of a great-grandmother, who pulled two pistols on a local official to clarify her demand that he find who killed her husband.

Endrezze speculates that early Yaqui culture was matrilineal; the Yaqui creation story, one of her many sources, centers on a female figure who is translator and sayer for her people. Many of her poems and stories therefore celebrate female power, sass, and resilience. But

there is also an urgency underlying these celebrations, an immediate need to seize that female power and, as she says, “pass it on” (xix). Endrezze worries actively, for example, about the high costs of disconnection from history and community to the teenage girl who monologues, “Yeah, I’m part Yaqui and it’s cool. I like going to powwows and dancing and eating fry bread. But I don’t live in the past the way they do. I can be Yaqui and just get on with life. That’s what I think anyway” (“Great-Granddaughter of a Butterfly,” 155). Endrezze also sees the costs of these disconnections to men, of course, and writes about them as often, and as eloquently, as she writes about their costs to women. But she is especially skillful when she ponders the complicated positions of each. One of her most poignant poems, for example, recalls an early family vacation through Indian country, her father’s anguished denial and her mother’s vexed balancing act between maternal nurture and complicity:

My mother’s white. Her milk is sweet.
Her freckled skin looks like flour tortillas.
Our truck lulls me to sleep, subdues me
as we drive through Klamath country,
past every historical marker Dad ignores
determinedly. My mother carries me
over the unmarked killing grounds:
the highways of America.
We never stop. Dad drives.
He drives. We never stop.

Mom speed-reads a historical map:
If you are Indian,
you are not
here X.
 (“Lost River,” 134)

This hugeness of spirit—imagining parents, grandparents, people she has never met—Endrezze extends to her readers. Indeed, she writes like the practiced storyteller that she is, constantly guiding her audience through territory that she admits she has found difficult herself. She loads the text with annotations to individual poems and stories, creating a visible authorial presence as voracious scholar of the written and the oral. She adds a bibliography of suggested further readings about the Yaqui; a family tree. She also adds essay-poems explaining everything from how and why she wrote certain pieces to how she thinks about her

own Yaqui identity. She weaves in, and circles back to, central Yaqui and Spanish words and images, literally inviting the reader into her world and her process of defining it. Endrezze is, to borrow a term the literary critic Susan Brill once coined in this journal, deeply “conversive”; she uses a style that is, like oral tradition, conversational and transformative, predicated on interrelations among people within and surrounding communities, among storytellers and listeners . . . and readers.

Siobhan Senior

***Sarah Winnemucca.* Sally Zanjani. *American Indian Lives.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001.0-8032-4917-9. 369 pp.**

Readers familiar with Sarah Winnemucca’s remarkable life and writing probably know her through two sources—her 1883 autobiography, *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* (reprinted by the University of Nevada Press in 1994) and Gae Whitney Canfield’s biography of Winnemucca, *Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiutes*, published in 1983 by the University of Oklahoma Press. To these sources, Sally Zanjani adds *Sarah Winnemucca*, an accomplished biography written with admiration for Winnemucca’s compelling life. Zanjani begins by comparing Winnemucca to her “two most famous predecessors, Pocahontas and Sacajawea,” but reveals what especially attracts her to Winnemucca’s story is her belief that, more than the other women, Winnemucca “created her own role” and “chose herself.” This Paiute woman recognized early in life that “Indians needed the white man’s skills in order to survive” and made great contributions to the intellectual realm—notably, her autobiography, the first written by a Native American woman (1-2). Through Zanjani’s carefully woven narrative, we follow Winnemucca as she first encounters whites; develops as a young girl in “frontier” culture; plays a heroic role in the Bannock War; marries on at least several occasions; translates and advocates for the Paiutes; and creates a bilingual school for Native American children that enables them to remain with their people. Throughout, Zanjani represents Winnemucca as a “heroine, fired in the crucible of terrible events” (134).

Although the biography does not claim to provide substantially new information about Winnemucca’s life, it skillfully places

Winnemucca's story in the context of United States-Indian Relations, the history and politics of the "West," and Northern Paiute culture. In this respect, it is a welcome complement to Canfield's biography. That work, through its inclusion of often lengthy abstracts of primary sources, provides valuable information on Winnemucca and leaves room for readers' speculation, but can be a bit jumpy. By contrast, Zanjani more consistently indicates how Winnemucca's story intertwines with other stories. For example, Zanjani demonstrates how the United States efforts to bring Chief Winnemucca's (Sarah's father) band to Camp McDermit was part of the larger "theater of operations" in the Black Rock Desert region; she carefully contextualizes the relationship between the Paiutes and other Indian tribes; she details in a clear manner the incidents and tensions leading up to and following such key events as the Mud Lake massacre and the Pyramid Lake War; and she informs the reader, when necessary, about the government's changing policy toward Indians. Zanjani (who is also author of *A Mine of Her Own: Women Prospectors in the American West, 1850-1950*, published by the University of Nebraska Press in 1997) draws upon her considerable knowledge of the "West" to flesh out the people and events important to Winnemucca—giving us detailed information, for example, on Major William Ormsby, the head of the household in which "Sarah gained her first real knowledge of the white world" (45), on the culture of the "West" that allowed Winnemucca to profit by presenting lectures and tableau vivants, and on General Oliver O. Howard, who relied on Winnemucca's skills so heavily during the Bannock War.

Repeatedly, Zanjani weaves Winnemucca's Paiute perspective into the story, whether it be for seemingly minor or major events in her life. A case in point: When the young Winnemucca travels west for the first time and becomes extremely ill, she blames the cake given to her by whites. Zanjani explains that this assumption was in "keeping with the Paiute belief that the sorcery of a malicious person causes illness" (32). Similarly, Zanjani interprets Winnemucca's rise and fall as an advocate for her tribe through Paiute social roles, noting that as a woman, Winnemucca "could not be a chief like her father and brother," who were chosen by consensus or election. Rather, she could opt for the more limited role of spokeswoman, interpreter, and mediator, roles that Zanjani points out are more analogous to a shaman or rabbit boss than to a chief in Paiute culture. However, "[l]ike the shaman whose patients die or the rabbit boss who drives few rabbits into the net, Sarah lost the confidence of her people when she failed to deliver results. . . . Sarah recognized, with how much pain can only be imagined, that her

people turned away from her because she had too often served as the messenger for white men's broken promises" (303-04). At times, Zanjani frames her chapters and Winnemucca's story by employing Paiute oral tradition, such as when she compares Winnemucca's trip to Washington, D.C. in 1880 to Tavu, the little rabbit who set out to conquer the sun. "Tavu had his arrows; Sarah's weapon was her eloquent tongue" (204). Zanjani also points to times when gaps in the perspectives between whites and Paiutes complicated matters, particularly when the whites insisted on having one spokesperson to hold responsible for the entire Paiute people. To Zanjani, the gaps between cultures ultimately resulted in what she calls Winnemucca's "fall from grace": "the partial adoption of white men's ways that had enabled her to straddle both worlds in her role as spokeswoman and mediator also alienated her from her people" (304).

As Zanjani's analysis of Winnemucca's role of mediator suggests, the biography highlights several areas rich for additional consideration, including how the intercultural nature of Winnemucca's world influenced the roles she could assume as a woman. Indeed, one wishes that Zanjani pursued further some of the contradictions she presents. On the one hand, Zanjani suggests that Paiute culture allowed for flexibility in women's roles, at least in relation to the strict moral codes imposed upon Victorian Euro-American women. On the other hand, Zanjani depicts Paiute culture as regulating women to traditional roles, despite changes resulting from contact. Speculating on why Winnemucca married primarily white men, for example, Zanjani argues that marrying an Indian "would have meant reversion to the role of a traditional Indian wife primarily occupied with gathering food for her family instead of pursuing that path of her own strong ambition" (229). Yet one wonders why traditional Euro-American society, with which Winnemucca was certainly familiar, would offer any greater flexibility.

It seems to be the contact zone itself, the intercultural nature of Winnemucca's world, that allowed her to—in Zanjani's words—create "her own role." Zanjani hints at this when she suggests that had Winnemucca's people been left on the Malheur Reservation under good care, Winnemucca's life "story might have wound itself into a succession of halcyon years, with Sarah contentedly ensconced at Malheur." Instead, the events that followed turned her into the heroine that "history remembers" (134). Such speculation hints that the dynamic events of Winnemucca's world fractured gender roles in both cultures, and Zanjani's text implicitly demonstrates these ruptures. Readers might wonder, for example, why Winnemucca chose to play the part of advocate and war hero, while her father withdrew to the

mountains to pursue a spiritual quest. Did contact open a space for Winnemucca, one into which her father and brothers could not climb? At times, rather than addressing such issues, Zanjani retreats into a rhetoric of “two worlds” that is a bit disconcerting. When addressing Winnemucca’s relationship to her culture, for example, Zanjani notes “[h]ow deeply she would have felt the loss if there had ceased to be an Indian world to which she could from time to time return” (125). But Winnemucca seems to have known that there would be no “world” to return to “from time to time” that was unaltered by contact; she seems to have understood that contact itself was the defining phenomena of both worlds. How, then, do we address issues of gender in what Zanjani calls the “crucible of terrible events” that make up such a contact zone, especially when that zone is based on what ethnohistorians Martha C. Knack and Orner C. Stewart call a “contact history virtually unique in North America” due to its rapidity (45)?

In choosing Winnemucca as her subject, Zanjani faced issues confronting anyone telling an Indian life based primarily on Indian autobiography. Zanjani indicates that although the sources on Winnemucca “far exceed the information normally available on an Indian woman of Sarah’s day, the heart of any chronicle of Sarah’s life must inevitably be her book.” Deliberating on the reliability of the text as a source for contemporary biography, Zanjani argues that “anything that reflects badly on the Paiutes or on Sarah has been omitted,” and notes that Winnemucca makes “understandable” mistakes in “chronology, dates, and numbers,” because she was “not trained early in the white man’s chronological mode of thinking and calendar.” Nonetheless, she concludes that Winnemucca’s “memory for people and events was extraordinarily correct,” and repeats her assertion of Winnemucca’s essential truthfulness on several occasions, claiming, for example, that “moments most deeply felt are least likely to be forgotten” (3-4). She draws upon psychology to argue for two distinct forms of memory, “semantic for facts and episodic memory for events personally experienced,” which she claims helps explain Winnemucca’s “extraordinary memory for events and her unreliability with dates” (241). But readers familiar with scholarship on Native American autobiography, as well as post-colonial theory, may wish for a more theoretical exploration of how autobiography intersects with biography. One might ask, for example, how fundamental concepts of “self-life-writing” in the genre of autobiography complement and conflict with what Hertha Dawn Wong has outlined as a more suitable term for much Indian self-expression, *communo-bio-oratory* (community-life-speaking) (20). How, in other words, does the

dominant way of telling an Indian life at the turn or *our* century relate to the way in which Winnemucca tells her life, and how does this influence our search for historical “truth”? Zanjani skirts these questions, although one could argue that they complicate our ability to hear “voices otherwise dead and lost” through Winnemucca’s text (242). Likewise, Zanjani replicates her perhaps too seamless movement among memory, text, and truth in her representation of translations, one of Winnemucca’s most essential roles. Despite scholarly work that complicates our understanding of translation, such as Eric Cheyfitz’s *The Poetics of Imperialism*, Zanjani consistently casts Winnemucca in the role of the invisible translator, arguing, for example, that “If Sarah was the one who spoke for [one Quinn River Paiute], we can be sure his words lost nothing in translation” (105).

Given the attention Zanjani pays to analyzing the veracity of Winnemucca’s text, one might expect more discussion of the other sources informing her biography, such as the newspaper accounts she draws upon to fill out the details of Winnemucca’s life. Certainly, Zanjani hints at the biased perspective of many of these papers—“Predictably,” she says of Winnemucca’s marriage to Lt. Edward Barlett, “the wedding brought ridicule from the press” (109). Likewise, she comments that when Winnemucca won acclamation for her conversational skills and civilized manners, “[s]uch acclaim for an Indian woman could not pass without contradiction in Nevada in 1873” (113). Yet Zanjani also states some stories from newspapers as seeming fact (such as Winnemucca’s fight with a white waiter), and it is unclear why she has determined that these accounts are more reliable than the others. Perhaps the same detailed elaboration of context that Zanjani provides in respect to so much of Winnemucca’s life would have helped her, particularly an analysis of the media’s representation of Indians (and here *The Newspaper Indian* by John M. Coward comes to mind).

These concerns, however, have more to do with the disciplinary perspectives and paradigms (Zanjani is professor of political science) than with the quality of the text. Indeed, Zanjani delivers a biography of Winnemucca that is also a story of the “frontier” and of United States-Indian relations. *Sarah Winnemucca* is an engaging work that narrates with appreciation and force the story of one of the most important women of the “West.”

Carolyn Sorisio

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***American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice, and Ecocriticism: The Middle Place*. Joni Adamson. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2001. \$19.95 paper, ISBN 0-8165-1792-4. \$45.00 cloth, ISBN 0-8165-1791-6. 214 pages.**

A powerful work of narrative literary scholarship, Joni Adamson's new book deals with a fascinating, important topic—environmental justice issues in literature by contemporary American Indian writers—and combines knowledgeable, insightful literary criticism, absorbing personal narrative, and a compelling theoretical argument on the implications of contemporary Native American literature for ecocriticism. Clear, accessible, and engaging, this book will appeal to a broad range of readers who are interested in this literature.

The backbone of Adamson's book is a series of readings of major contemporary American Indian authors in terms of their attitudes to the environment, with close studies of Simon Ortiz, Louise Erdrich, Joy Harjo, and Leslie Marmon Silko. Into this literary/critical milieu Adamson effectively splices short personal narratives about her ten years of work teaching composition and literature courses featuring Native authors to American Indian students in southern Arizona in Tohono O'odham high schools and at the University of Arizona. In those years, she taught Dineh, Hopi, San Carlos Apache, Tohono O'odham, White Mountain Apache, and Yaqui students as part of the

University of Arizona's programs of retention and outreach to Indian students. Adamson's narrative technique is effective because her stories elaborate, clarify, and tightly weave together the book's literary-critical essays. For example, as she tells a story about the way her students redirected her focus as a teacher, Adamson observes, "discussions of Tayo's symbolic battle with the 'Destroyers' to save the earth were transformed into discussions of the novel's depiction of the literal radioactive poisoning of the Four Corners communities where many of the students live" (xv). From there the discussion ranged to rates of teenage pregnancy, suicide, or alcohol abuse. Such discussions made it impossible for Adamson to read the novel in the typical ecocritical fashion (as a "symbolic battle" in order to "save the earth") and turned her attention to ways in which *Ceremony* works with "power inequities that have distinct and interconnected social and environmental consequences" (xv). These kinds of deep, complex interconnections drive Adamson's book, and her stories strengthen and clarify that.

Adamson's general argument is that this group of contemporary American Indian authors, who are popular now among ecocritics and other environmentalists, demand a different kind of reading than established ecocriticism, such as in ASLE, the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, the major national ecocritical organization. The term Adamson uses to describe that difference is environmental justice.

The environmental justice movement, as is fairly well-known, historically has been a loose network of regional, multiethnic coalitions of local grassroots groups led mainly by women and composed mainly of people of color. Both theoretically and in practice the activists' focus has been on patterns of environmental racism and other forms of unequal protection from environmental hazards. Environmental justice activists have used the term *justice* to distinguish themselves from white, middle class environmental organizations in this country and, more importantly, to establish connections between social justice issues (of race, class, or gender, for example) and environmental problems. In like manner, Adamson's work shows that for these Native authors issues of gender, ethnicity, class and colonialism are intricately related to environmental issues, and the stories and poetry are part of this contested terrain.

In these texts environmental issues are not located somewhere else "out there" in nature or wilderness, as in the western environmentalist tradition, but right at home, where people live and work. They all write in and about a "middle place," according to Adamson, a cultural and

literary location not unlike a garden (for Adamson, a Pueblo garden) that completely integrates the western dualisms of nature and culture or wildness and civilization. Contemporary Indian writers demand new kinds of ecocriticism, then, as Adamson argues, because their approaches intertwine culture and nature, humans and environment in such different ways, such particular, precise and complex ways as to resist translation into American environmentalism and its descendant, ecocriticism. This “middle place” thus cannot be read as a western, environmentalist utopia. Instead, middle places are local sites of contestation, “home places” (Ortiz), which are both intricate, storied, long-term local cultures, places of detailed environmental knowledge and symbolic geography—and un-romanticized places of environmental and cultural destruction, places of struggles for and about cultural survival and sustainability.

Adamson’s opening chapter makes a strong case for a more inclusive, diverse, multicultural ecocriticism and provides one of the best examples of Adamson’s style of narrative scholarship, showing how her practical experiences teaching Indian students in Indian nations and landscapes changed her as a teacher and scholar of environmental literature. Her second chapter opens with a critique of *Desert Solitaire* and shows how profoundly and unconsciously colonial Edward Abbey was in his attitudes to both Indians and the land. This chapter also helps Adamson introduce alternatives to Abbey’s classically American brand of wilderness-oriented, environmentalist eco-colonialism. Her third chapter on Simon Ortiz is the best single chapter in the book, and is easily the best chapter-length study of Ortiz I have seen. Through the figure of the “middle place” as boundary/transition zone and as pueblo garden, Adamson shows the close relationships Ortiz has consistently established in his poetry and stories between classic environmental justice issues (of environmental destruction) and contemporary Native literary and cultural issues of sovereignty, cultural survival, identity, language and place.

Adamson’s chapter on *Tracks* elucidates Erdrich’s sketchy presentation of alternatives to Americans’ currently unsustainable economic relation to the land and argues for a culturally and geographically knowledgeable “local epistemology” that should drive our practices as teachers and readers. In a similar vein, her chapter on Harjo’s poetry concerns the search for a “land-based language” (Harjo’s term) as a form of both identity recovery and environmentalism. While these are both insightful readings, and Adamson on Harjo is interesting to pair with Craig Womack’s work on

Harjo in *Red on Red*, the best entire section of Adamson's book is her last two major chapters on Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*.

Not enough scholarship has been published on the *Almanac*, and the quality of it has been uneven. That may have begun to change, however (e.g. Barnett and Thorson 1999 and Anderson 1999, et. al). If not before, things have certainly changed now. Taken together these two chapters constitute the most complex, insightful and in-depth piece of writing I know of on that difficult novel. Her chapters make the most sense of the book's whole structure as almanac—as composite oral tradition, historical narrative, political tract and prophecy; she is one of the most effective at showing how the book's major women characters structure it, and how gender issues inform the novel; she is the only critic to effectively elucidate the book's thorough critique of mainstream American environmentalism; and above all, Adamson is the only one who has linked the novel in a complex, detailed way to particular native environmental justice issues in the Southwest such as uranium and coal mining, water policy, and real estate development—as well as to the Zapatista revolt in Chiapas, which Silko's novel uncannily predicted by several years and which Adamson reads convincingly as an environmental justice movement.

Adamson's work on Silko's *Almanac* is pathbreaking, because it finally reveals this astonishing novel as the most challenging, complex, and profound novel of environmental justice in the American canon, but much remains to be done. The vast, complex, and loosely structured *Almanac* resists readings of even this length. More book-length work needs to be done on it in this vein, especially regarding issues of prophecies, colonialism, and stolen land, and it begs to be read as a form of toxic discourse itself. Nevertheless Adamson opens up an important critical conversation about the environmental issues which dominate Silko's work of the 1990s, and about links between contemporary environmental problems and classic Native literary issues of identity, hybridity, place, stereotypes, cultural sovereignty, and survival.

My gut reaction to Adamson's book as a whole is a sense of relief. "At last," I think, and "It's about time." For the most part, with a few notable exceptions (such as Patrick D. Murphy and Rachel Stein), ecocritics writing on these texts have been unfortunately eurocentric in their ways of reading, essentially reading Native writers as literary environmentalists who are working out of or responding to Western traditions, practically ignoring the Native American literary criticism and key cultural and historical contexts. But Joni Adamson is different: she is as much Native American literary scholar as she is ecocritic, or

more. Her work shows that she was studying American Indian literatures for years before ASLE came together (in 1995). She is clear about where she comes from—she is an Anglo-American—and is careful not to speak as a cultural insider, but her work shows that she is knowledgeable about the texts, the surrounding Native American literary history, criticism, and theory, and the particular cultural contexts involved—which are mainly in the history and cultures of the Southwest. At the same time, Adamson has particular strengths in the region's environmental issues and native/multiethnic environmental justice activism in the Southwest, such as the Indigenous Environmental Network, the Dineh Alliance, or the Southwest Network for Economic and Environmental Justice, and she writes of these contexts without romantic illusions and with clarity, emotion, and power.

This is what makes this book so important. Adamson is not only doing insightful, careful, original scholarship within the field of American Indian literature; she is practicing a new kind of ecocriticism. This is the kind of work ecocritics should have been doing for years now—a knowledgeable, sophisticated criticism which functions as well within the fields of Native American literary and cultural studies, and which is simply responsible and respectful in that she takes into account what the Native critics, historians, and cultural studies scholars have been saying about these texts and about the particular cultural and historical contexts involved before claiming this literature for ecocriticism.

Joni Adamson's book ought to become a turning point in ecocriticism. It will certainly expand the parameters of what is currently considered environmental literature—but this brilliant, urgently political book contributes substantially to contemporary American Indian literary criticism as well. Actually, it represents a new intersection between the two fields, a form of border writing, or transcoding, or what Louis Owens calls "crosswriting."

Jim Tarter

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Edward W. Huffstetler is a Professor of English and American Literature at Bridgewater College of Virginia where he teaches (among other things) courses in Native American literatures and cultures, Nineteenth-century American literature, Twentieth-century American literature, and creative writing. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Iowa (1988) and has published a collection of Native myths, *Tales of Native America* (Michael Friedman Publishing, 1996) as well as articles on a wide variety of subjects from Walt Whitman to *avant garde* primitivist poets such as Jerome Rothenberg, to Native American authors such as Leslie Silko and Louise Erdrich. He also publishes poetry and fiction.

Helen Jaskoski was the founding editor of the second series of *SAIL*. Her publications include *Leslie Marmon Silko: A Study of the Short Fiction* (Twayne) and *Early Native American Writing: New Critical Essays* (Cambridge).

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Remembering Louis Owens

I have always held that those of us who study American Indian peoples from within the relatively privileged space of Universities in the United States make up a strangely familial community. We map out complicated genealogies, create new relations, craft sophisticated alliances, all across the usual boundaries of tribal nation, ethnicity, race, and we do so (at least I do so) in order to participate in something larger than ourselves. I was always taught that a community remembers itself through the stories it tells. When one member walks on, that passing is marked with tellings, stories to remember that person's life within the life of the community. The stories that follow are set down here to remember the life of Louis Owens, not as a hero but as a human, as one of us whose presence will be greatly missed.

In the circle, these tellings would happen organically, the order determined by those who chose to stand and speak. In that spirit, I've arranged the following tellings in the order that I received them. And since it was my call that invoked these stories, I'll end with this - Good journey, friend, may we learn well from the lessons of your life and continue to tell your stories until we join you on that long road.

Neewe,
Malea

Obituary reprinted from the University of California, Davis:

Native American Critic and Novelist Louis Owens Dies July 30, 2002

Louis Owens, an internationally acclaimed novelist and a scholar of Steinbeck and Native American literature, died Thursday in Albuquerque at the age of 54.

Considered the country's leading critical interpreter of Native American literature, Owens received several top book awards for his fiction and scholarly work, had his novels translated into other languages and most recently participated in a lengthy interview on national television about his Steinbeck scholarship during the centennial celebration of the Salinas Valley writer.

Owens was the author of five novels—one of which, *Nightland*, won the American Book Award in 1997, four books of literary criticism and a new collection of essays, *I Hear the Train*. His academic career spanned two decades and five universities. Most recently, he was a professor of English and Native American studies at the University of California, Davis, and headed the campus's Creative Writing Program.

His colleagues described him as the rare literary polymath with expertise as the leading critic of Native American literature, a major scholar in mainstream American literature through his work on Steinbeck, and as an award-winning novelist and non-fiction writer about Native Americans.

Gerald Vizenor, professor of American Studies at University of California, Berkeley, and a national figure in Native American literature, said Owens was the "most original scholar in critical theory" for Native American literature.

"Louis Owens was an inspired, original literary artist, a masterful storiator, and he was an exceptional teacher," he said.

"His writing is really important in American literature, overall," said Luci Tapahonso, a Native American poet and professor of American Indian studies and English at the University of Arizona, Tucson. "He challenged people to rethink their approaches and touched on topics that hadn't been considered before."

“Often academic departments do not hire their own; his coming back was extraordinary, by any standard,” said Hicks, pointing to Owens’ many accomplishments and accolades, including an invitation from Harvard University to spend a year there in 2004 as a scholar-in-residence. Just this spring, Owens’ own work was the subject of a book, *Grave Concerns, Trickster Turns: The Novels of Louis Owens*, by Chris LaLonde.

Born in Lompoc, Calif., to migrant laborers, Owens spent his childhood moving between Mississippi and the Central Valley, picking beans and living in poverty. Owens has written of that period in an essay called “Finding Gene”:

“My first memories are of Gene and jungle-like woods that grew thick between our cabin and the deep-edged brown water of the Yazzoo River. Three, 4, 5, and 6 years old, I followed him everywhere, swinging on muskedine vines and eating the acid-sweet purple fruit, climbing pecan trees that we called pee-cans, fishing in the endless, muddy current of the river, jumping in the wire-sided cotton trucks filled with white boles. The washtub where I had to bathe in gray water after him, leaning toward the wood cook-stove on cold Mississippi mornings. The log shed we’d check each morning to see what skins our father had nailed up during the night.”

Of the nine brothers and sisters in the Owens family, Louis and brother Gene were the only two who completed high school and Louis was the only sibling to go to college.

His mentor and major professor for his doctorate, UC Davis Professor Emeritus James Woodress, said Owens was first drawn to the work of John Steinbeck because he knew intimately the life and history of the Salinas Valley. “Because Louis came from very poor parents who were farm laborers, novels like *The Grapes of Wrath* moved him a great deal,” Woodress said.

Owens’ first book, *John Steinbeck’s Re-Vision of America*, was published in 1985, followed by *The Grapes of Wrath: Trouble in the Promised Land* in 1989. In May he was the subject of a lengthy interview on C-Span regarding John Steinbeck and his literary legacy.

Owens earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in English from UC Santa Barbara before coming in 1978 to UC Davis for his doctorate. During graduate school, Owens and his wife spent a year in Pisa while Owens taught at the University of Pisa as a Fulbright Lecturer.

Throughout his career, Owens was known for being extraordinarily prolific. Due to the number and quality of his publications, the time between his receiving his doctorate and being promoted to full professor at UC Santa Cruz was the shortest in the history of the University of California. Even in graduate school, while not working on his Steinbeck dissertation, Owens wrote his first novel, *Wolfsong*, about copper strip-mining in Washington State's Glacier Peak Wilderness, where he had worked as a ranger and firefighter for the Forest Service.

It was through this first novel, published in 1991, that Owens explored his Choctaw and Cherokee roots, said Hicks, a young assistant English professor at UC Davis while Owens was attending graduate school.

"He told me he had a novel and asked if would I read it, and it was then that I found he was Native American. Quite clearly, to write a whole novel about one's heritage indicates it is alive in your life and your imagination," Hicks said. "By the end of the first book, being Native American was something that was alive for him."

Owens, who considered himself a mixed-blood American, explored the dilemmas of being from multiple heritages through much of his writing—both in fiction and non-fiction. He won a Wordcraft Circle Writer of the Year Award in 1998 for *Mixedblood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place*.

Owens' academic reputation in Native American fiction started in 1985 with an article, "A Map of the Mind: Darcy McNickle and the American Indian Novel," published in *Western American Literature*. He wrote many articles on Native American fiction before publishing his 1992 book, *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel*, which by now has become required reading in many college literature classes. In 1993 he won the PEN-Josephine Miles Awards for *Other Destinies* and his novel, *The Sharpest Sight* (1992). He also was awarded with the Julian J. Rothbaum Prize for his 1992 novel *Bone Game* in 1994.

In his novels, Owens said he wrote to two audiences: mainstream readers and his Choctaw and Cherokee relatives. He wove in layers of Native American metaphor and myth through his complex mystery plots, so that two stories were being told at the same time.

One of the awards he displayed proudly in his office was the 1995 Roman Noir Prize, a French award for the outstanding mystery novel published in French given to *The Sharpest Sight*. His novels were translated into French, German and Japanese, and he appeared on French television more than once.

Extraordinarily generous with his time and attention to students, Owens was a dedicated teacher who mentored and encouraged his students and other writers.

“He gave an incredible amount of time to his students, time spent on reading and critiquing their work, time spent in meeting with them and working out the myriad problems that are associated with the scholastic life, and time offered in the spirit of camaraderie and friendship,” said Spring Warren, a 2002 graduate of the UC Davis Creative Writing Program.

Among the many recognitions for teaching that he received were the University of New Mexico Alumni Award for Teaching Excellence, the University of California Santa Cruz Alumni Association Distinguished Teaching Award, the UCSC Student Alumni Council Favorite Professor Award, and the Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award from the International Steinbeck Society. He was a Presidential Lecturer at the University of New Mexico for two years.

From 1992 to 2000, Owens served on the faculty of UC Davis’ Art of the Wild, a summer writing workshop on nature and the environment that drew nationally acclaimed writers. Owens was featured on a PBS one-hour special about the workshop.

Owens is survived by his wife of 27 years, Polly; and his daughters, Elizabeth, 19, and Alexandra, 16, all of Tijeras, N.M.; his father Hoey; his brothers Gene, Troy and Richard; and his sisters Judy, Linda, Juanita, and Brenda.

For Louis Owens

I think I first met Louis Owens at the “Narrative Chance” Conference Gerald Vizenor sponsored at U-Cal, Santa Cruz in 1989. We didn’t say much to each other on that occasion. Louis still wore—maybe literally, maybe only figuratively—his dark cowboy hat, the hat in some of his book jacket photos. And Gerry joked about Louis driving a pick-up truck with flames painted on it (whether this was true or not, I don’t know, although I would guess that it was—and it was only after remembering this that I learned that it was in a pick-up truck that Louis apparently shot himself). Louis kept his distance, and gave me, I thought, lots of distrustful looks: after all, he was the wilderness ranger and cowboy and Native writer, and, me—well, I was probably some snotty little eastern shit, high on all kinds of *the-o-ry*, a wannabe asshole who thought he knew about Indians.

If that’s what he thought, I know he changed his mind before long, and maybe even that he and I, oddly enough, might have some things in common. I discovered this at another conference we both attended, this one sponsored by the Stanford Faculty Renewal Program and held in Santa Fe, in 1993. Gerald was also there, and Kim Blaeser, Ed Castillo, Cliff Trafzer, if I recall, and lots of wonderful Native writers and scholars, as well as some passionate Native teachers from reservation high schools. I think I may have been the only white guy. Anyway, one morning, walking with Gerald and me, Louis told stories that I felt were meant to instruct me (Gerry already knew) in who he was apart from his books. I particularly remember his story about dehorning and castrating calves, work he had done somewhere, some time before academia. Those calves came in one way, and sure went out different! he said. I could only tell stories about gang wars on the Lower East Side of Manhattan where I’d grown up—poor, so far as economics were concerned, but not so poor as Louis had been. He wrote about going out and shooting squirrels as a kid when he was hungry; my squirrels existed only in dilapidated, urban public parks, and although drunks threw rocks at them, nobody, to my knowledge, killed and ate them. But Louis and I knew that, in Linda Hogan’s words, we both came from people without privilege. Curiously—I mean “curiously” in that neither one of us took *class* as quite central to our work—I think a certain class solidarity brought us closer. I quoted Louis (although I didn’t give his name) in an essay of mine, as follows. Louis said,

When you're at one of these fancy academic conferences or receptions, don't you always expect someone to come and say, "Hey, you! Beat it, you don't belong here." You just wait for them to find you out, to announce what you've known all along, that whatever you've done, whoever you've become, you just aren't ever really going to be one of them.

And a good thing, too! I know both of us thought—for all the fact that "they" were the ones who owned the world, and still had the power to make us feel uncomfortable.

Other Destinies seemed to me when it appeared—I think this still, today—not only the best treatment of its subject to have appeared, but about the best anyone could do in a single volume. I said things to that effect in one or another of my publications. I turned to *Other Destinies* fairly regularly—and just a couple of years ago, when, preparing an essay on Mourning Dove's *Cogewea, the Half-Blood*, I realized how indispensable to my thinking Louis' prior account was. I dedicated the essay that resulted to him, and I know he was pleased about that. The dedication stood when the essay appeared as a chapter in a recent book of mine. I hope Louis got to see it; I hope, again, that it pleased him.

As will be clear from what I have said thus far, Louis and I knew each other mostly in terms of our work. I do believe it was important to him to know how deeply I respected his criticism and how moved I was by his novels—most particularly, *The Sharpest Sight*. And when he referred to my work, although he never failed to point out something I had missed, some way in which I had fallen short, he always offered his criticism in a friendly and constructive way. That was important to me.

Those who knew Louis very closely, who loved him as mentor, close friend, husband, father, and teacher obviously knew him better and more intimately than I ever did. But for me he really was part of the *community*—and I use that word in all the fullness of its possibilities—that I believe in and that sustains me, a cosmopolitan community of like-minded people, writers, scholars, teachers, students, all engaged in a common project, the project of producing and commenting on a Native American literature that is one of the glories of this continent and all the wide, wide world.

In *The Sharpest Sight*, Louis has one of the characters talk about how important poetry is, and how unfortunate it is that it so often doesn't get to those who need it most. Maggie Dwyer has spoken of

Louis' ability to quote at length from all sorts of poetry. (Although, unlike so many other Native American prose writers, he didn't, so far as I know, write poetry himself—or perhaps he did?) The line that occurs to me just now is from John Berryman, and I think Louis would not mind that turn. It's the line that goes, "We are on each others' hands, who care."

I cared for Louis a lot, for all that I saw him only a little. I learned of his death on Sunday, July 28, when I opened Daniel Justice's post to the ASAIL listserv; and the surprise and shock of knowing Louis is gone remain raw as I write this. He was handsome, he was strong, he was wonderfully intelligent, vividly creative, widely experienced and talented: his death is a very great loss. I miss him.

— Arnold Krupat

Burden and Lament

July 29, 2002

for Louis Owens

Once, driving down the Valley of the World,
you told us how you wanted your dead body
lifted into a tree for the bonepickers.

Four states away today friends speak your name,
over your ashes. I am driving down
the coast and everywhere the wounds are fresh

with memory. Why Louis? Why? Your voice
echoes in the hum and thump of changing lanes,
and I'm not sure I want to understand

even as I reach Templeton and start
to chant, *Come home. Please Louis, rest in peace.*
Come home. And so Atascadero, and

God damn it, asshole! Who're you trying to kill?
I catch myself, laugh softly once, through tears

pick up the words again, ... *Come home. Please, Louis...*

on up the Cuesta Grade, the words—repeated,
lifted by earth, impaled by air, and burned
by the sun—rise, I hope, to meet a wind

whose gray, sea air will smoke across these hills
until they fall.

— Kevin Hearle

Fishing the San Juan

for Louis

The rainbow
is its own
undoing:
beginnings
and endings
the same place.

His body reproduces
his world: white
red black blue
sky water rocks
and motion.

He knows well
the subtle shifts
in shadows and shades,
backwaters and mainstream,
the game of diligence
and flurry: caddis,
nymphs, gnats
the lure

of that other
world beyond.

He has learned to
resign himself
to the hook, going
against the current
moved by the logic
of termination,
of loss and return.

Louis kneels,
cradles the fish
in his gentle, cupped
hands, deftly
withdraws the point
and smiles a
benediction over
his back.

You support him
there, your two hands
a reason to stay;
the pink flap of his gills,
no longer burns, draws
life from this wet ether.

The trout does not leave,
hangs suspended between
these two worlds
of fire and substance,
and then moves on,
trailing us in the wake
of his passing,
where catch
and release are
the same point.

— John Purdy

Comparative Lit

for Louis

-It must have been the tongue. We had not considered that a hawk might have a tongue. It seemed too personal, private, even human.
-James Welch

-Ever see a cock pheasant, stiff and beautiful... You pick him up-bloody an' twisted, an' you spoiled somepin better'n you; an eatin' him don't never make it up to you, 'cause you spoiled somepin in yaself, an' you can't never fix it up.
-John Steinbeck

Between the two of us, one complete Indian speaking, I suppose, to himself of better things. Better than us...

the crow outside my window.

Too personal, private, yes, even...

The white man between us went on sowing Steinbeck, who understood the flight of
those wooded westward.

I sent you a book before I left for China, fleeing west to reach far east.

I saw the phoenix & the dragon inside Longhua Temple. Noting the tiny tongue of the phoenix, I thought of you.

I returned, then left for Italy. In Venice on a corner there hung a streetlamp,
a screaming phoenix supporting a bright red globe.

And it must have been the tongue

that made
me think of you
and I in a classroom once
delighting in Steinbeck and Welch
and words.

Returning home to the loss
of something
better than me.

— James Thomas Stevens

Speaking of Oaks

It is not true
that the oaks are silent,
memories of past seasons lost
as the shapes of leaves
whitening on the ground.

It's just that words
must be carefully chosen
when speaking of decomposition
and other
privileged matters.

To modify
the basic nature of schist,
they must be
sour-sharp as acid
leached from duff.

In the presence of changing light,
these same words
must hold a lover's warmth—
tender with the strength
of deepening shadow—

yet they must be precise enough
to chart the source of rivers

flowing skyward under the bark,
narrowing and dividing
until they disappear.

Sometimes we almost taste
the fullness of these words,
hints of their foreign roots
whispered to us
by the delicate lips of truffles.

For Louis
11/93

A Different Story

No Saint Rooster in the chicken yard
hidden by raspberry canes
in the tangle of old suburbs,

possessed mid-morning
by some change
in the egg-collecting ritual.

No four-year-old left outside this once
by her grandfather
to scuff dirt with bored hens,

red-brown ruffled skirt
a threat
pointed as the rooster's beak

after her down the path
pushed to the fence
by low-hanging plum,

past the strawberries, across the lawn,
and up the back steps—
pinned against a door that won't open.

No raucous pecking.
No screams

stronger than next-day soup.

My daughter's story will be different.
Finer than sugar sand
in the time of cygnets

when June sun teases the cold water
of Grand Traverse Bay,
and sharp green anchors low dunes.

Her path will be straight
as it tunnels through sedge,
weathered boards fading to beach.

She will stop
just out of sight of the house,
fear opening white—

wings so powerful
she has heard Al say
they can kill a man.

And in the instant of their folding,
she will measure her four years
in the abstract curve of the neck,

eyes fixed by the black mask—
perfect impress of mute swan
in the wet sand of her child's heart.

For our daughters

— Linda Helstern

It's easy, for those who are, in the words of Zitkala-Sa, "hanging in the heart of chaos," to lose sight of Louis's extraordinarily wry sense of humor. As one of the few graduate students who worked intensively with Louis during his four years at UC Santa Cruz, I would like to share some humorous turns I remember from that time.

With Santa Cruz, home to every conceivable counter-culture, where people apologize for eating meat and where there are more yoga teachers and certified massage practitioners per square mile than any other place on earth, Louis had a perpetual field day. It was no different on campus, where the normal rules of most colleges didn't always apply. Take, for example, the alleged campus policy of allowing student nudity. One day, Louis was showing around a guest speaker, when a male student casually strolled by, clothed in nothing but a backpack.

When it came to American Indians, many Santa Cruz students were much like other coastal Californians—mesmerized by their own mystical inventions. Louis once told me of giving a reading in San Luis Obispo. A young white man carrying a drum solemnly walked up to him afterwards, asking Louis to join him. Louis politely said “no.”

Louis found perverse delight in such moments, transmuting them into material for future work. As a Teaching Assistant for the introductory course in Native American Studies, I would share some of the written statements of students, who, on their first day of class, were asked to explain their motivations for enrolling in the course. One of our favorites was a female student's note, which read in part: “Maybe it was the fact that my mother read *Black Elk Speaks* to me in the womb . . . that I am so attuned to Native Americans.”

While Louis loved the beauty of the Santa Cruz mountains, he did choose the area, his colleagues and students, and his then-place of employment, as his setting for *Bone Game*. During the time he was writing it, Louis would grin as he would tell me about who or what he might be including in the novel. As soon as the novel was published in 1994, several of us gleefully skimmed it for the references we knew were coming. From the “white boy/girl at the fish pond”—an actual student who dressed only in white and who kept dead white pigeons in his dorm room near Louis's office—to the bed-hopping professor spotted at an Elvin Bishop concert at the local rock club *The Catalyst*, Louis captured—perhaps too closely for some—the richly strange ambiance of the place. What Louis had *not* revealed before the book's publication was that one of the murderers in the novel is an English graduate student. We asked him which one of his Teaching Assistants he had used for creative inspiration. He replied simply that “he'd never tell.”

— Susan Bernardin

Louis Owens, *The American*, and Me:
A Lesson in the (Uncomfortable) Art of Teaching

“What do you do when silence breaks out in your class, the times when . . . you ask a question no one answers, and you sit there wishing you were dead, blush rising from the throat, face hot, throat clenched?”

— Jane Tompkins, *A Life In School: What the Teacher Learned*

“Does man love Art? Man visits Art, but squirms.

Art hurts. Art urges voyages—
and it is easier to stay at home . . .”

— Gwendolyn Brooks

Most recollections in this issue of *Studies in American Indian Literatures* will probably revolve around the mixedblood identity, the novels, and the friendships of Louis Owens. I could write about the first two only after more distance from July 25, and I am unqualified to talk about the last, so I offer a very small glimpse into what he did almost every day: teach. He was my literature professor in the late 1980s at the University of New Mexico. In my American literature course, he would enter the room and sit on or stand next to a small table in the front of the room, and our 30 or so desks would form a two-tiered U around him. We read “The Jolly Corner,” *Daisy Miller*, and *Sister Carrie*, among others, but I most remember our work with Henry James’s *The American*. To this day, even the memory of the novel gives me butterflies because of one particular moment in this class with Henry James, 30 students, and Louis Owens.

Professor Owens usually walked in with his beat-up old satchel, plopped it on the table, and took out his papers, some folders, and a book or three. He’d then breathe slowly, smile gently, and look at us expectantly. He’d start with a few basic questions about the day’s reading before offering a more provocative one to launch us into some of the best discussions I remember from my undergraduate years. On this day, though, his initial questions were fruitless.

“Tell me what you know about Newman.”

Silence.

“What happens in the first five chapters?”

Nothing. Even the girl who regularly chomped on carrots while talking in class was motionless. Professor Owens then called on a few whom he probably considered “sure things.” He called on me, and I admitted perhaps too bravely, too naively, “I didn’t get very far. The

book is boring, so I just couldn't do it." He looked at me, then at my classmates.

"Did anyone read it?"

Silence.

What he did next shifted something in me. He packed up his papers, his folders, and his books, picked up his satchel, and walked toward the door.

"Let me know when you're ready to discuss *The American*," he said as he left. We sat still, stunned. None of us said a word. I don't even remember exchanging glances.

His response may seem harsh, but it wasn't. It never felt like anger, just disappointment, and we'd wanted only to please him, to impress him, and to have more discussions with him. We simply hadn't held up our end. We were perfect illustrations of the problems Robert Scholes describes in "The Transition to College Reading": students who refuse to read what they don't like, what doesn't reflect their worldview, what isn't familiar. Of course, Owens was frustrated with us. Not only were we lazy for not reading what we didn't "like," what we'd judged as "boring" (what did I know at 20?), but we were also resisting an understanding of his critical project—*The American*—not only James's text but also the cultural concept of Owens's entire course and even his career (What is an American? What wasn't an American? And what isn't an American?). Reading *Bone Game* a few years later, I wondered about when Cole "flinched at the memory" of his lecture on Modernism that didn't go well (41). Did Owens flinch at the memory of our class? This question haunted me. Our laziness, I fear, suggested to him that he hadn't engaged our attention enough, that he didn't interest us because James didn't interest us.

In the classroom silence and the days before we saw him again, I burned with the idea that I'd sent this message to one of my favorite professors, so I readied myself to prove him wrong. At our next class meeting, everyone was there. He came in on time, with his satchel full of the usual materials, and—miraculously—he started where he left off, with the same questions. We were ready, and then some. He encouraged us, he forgave us, and that class period was as good as the best of the previous ones.

In *A Life in School: What the Teacher Learned*, Jane Tompkins begins her chapter about the most vulnerable moments of teaching with her thoughts about surviving such uncomfortable moments:

... living through those silences taught me something.
They had a bonding effect, like living through a war.

As a result of this experience I've come to think pain and embarrassment are not the worst things for a class. At least the moments are real. At least everyone feels intensely. At least everyone is *there*.
(141)

In "Soul Training," Mark Edmundson similarly remembers one of his teachers who "had the wherewithal to go at us." Edmundson writes that this ability to make students uncomfortable and then encourage them "is a central element in great teaching," extending all the way back to Socrates who "looked into the minds and hearts of his students and let them know, kindly, generously, that he did not much like what he saw. Then he began to help them to change." Through Owens, we'd seen into our own hearts and minds, and we didn't like what we saw either.

He had artfully made us "squirm," "urging" us on "voyages" of Americans abroad and the critical examination of American identity, though we had only wanted to "stay at home." Leaving us alone in our ignorance and our laziness was an act of great teaching. Indeed, after that day in Owens's class, we were all "*there*": beyond being present, he had awakened us. After we had been so blunt, so ungentle with him, he treated us gently by forgiving us and letting us make it up to him and to ourselves. And thus he helped us—me—change. Today, I am what we would call an "Americanist" with a focus on multicultural literature. The "voyage" Owens started me with continues to this day in the content of my work.

Owens also pulled me out of a lazier attitude about my own education. He challenged me by refusing to cater to my worst habit, and I could never again be comfortable expecting someone else to think for me. He taught me as a student what became central to my teaching years later, what I now know of active learning and the significant roles of silence, discomfort, and forgiveness. In my undergraduate timidity, I couldn't tell him what this experience had meant to me, and I always wondered what he thought about what we'd now call that "teachable moment." When I started to teach, I wondered if he worried about it or thought he'd done the wrong thing, as I'm sure some would say. I'd hoped he had at least seen that the class changed for the better after that day. Now, as I stand at the center of my own two-tiered U's and students complain about what we're reading, I tell them this story, though the ending is different now.

I saw him again some ten years later and exorcised my demon. When I was a graduate student at the University of Georgia, Louis

Owens—by then a major scholar and author in Native American literature—was brought to campus as a guest lecturer. After his presentation, I asked a question, and he recognized me, so I walked him to his car, where I reminded him of the incident. He didn't remember it. Perhaps he never flinched at the memory of the class. Perhaps he always knew what he'd done for us, but I thanked him anyway. Now, after his death, I'm glad I did.

— Nancy L. Chick

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Smoke and Mirrors for Louis Owens

*But since it falls unto my lot
That I should rise and you should not
I'll gently rise and softly call
Good night and joy be with you all*
"Parting Glass," traditional Irish song

The exquisite conclusion to “Parting Glass” is one of several moving expressions of sorrow I contemplated in my attempt to understand a dear friend’s suicide. Louis didn’t gently rise from the table and go on his way. He stood abruptly, knocking over the table and chairs of his companions, then left the room with his face fixed in a mask of pain. Joy is not with us all, but I begin to understand what happened. In liberating himself of what pained him, Louis let go of many people, and, in some cases, liberated them as well.

How will I remember him? As two distinct Louises. His novels *Nightland* and *Dark River* told us there were two, if we had paid attention. They described the wise and foolish things men do, and the good and bad. Because we both so disliked reductive binaries I will suggest that his novels represented mobile characters residing in many positions along a sliding scale he constructed on which one end was honor and intellect and the other was folly and untreated emotional pain. *Dark River* now has a twin; for me, it serves as the summing-up of two troubled lives that ended with gunshots, Jake Nashoba and Louis Owens.

Twins were a common theme in his later fiction, all sorts of twins. The two Louises I knew were the one I met in the Forest Service years ago and the academic Louis I rediscovered in the early 1990s. Only through conversation did I learn of the period in the middle that I missed. This missing history turns out to have been a transitional period, a time when he moved away from forests and into the scholarly world, when his daughters were born, and when he became a doting husband and father. Only through conversations with other friends following his death have we all put together a puzzle and learned of facets of those two Louises that went undiscerned, even by those with the sharpest sight.

We sat out on the back patio at his Tijeras house in the summer of 1996 or ’97, each drinking a Negra Modelo, relaxing after work on his new horse shed. Our animated task involved sawing off the tops of vertical 4 by 4 beams sunk into the ground to support the roof. Louis perched on the ladder against a post and held the chainsaw above his head while I stood below, supporting the ladder and ready to thrust out a hand of support should he wobble. “I’ll throw the saw over to the right if I start to fall,” he warned, as we began sawing off the posts. No one fell, and the saw wasn’t thrown, but the task transported both of us back to the efficient world we had shared as Forest Service workers in Washington State during the 1970s. We fought fires, thinned brush,

built foot bridges and trails, and walked many miles alone or in small groups through backcountry and wilderness in all sorts of weather. The task had been clear, directions simple, and resourcefulness a gift. You relied on yourself to stay safe, and you relied on your crew not to endanger you or the entire crew as you worked. These crews were in peak physical fitness and the ultimate busman's holiday for a few of us was to climb mountains on our days off.

"Do you talk about the Forest Service much?" he asked, taking another drink of the beer.

"No, not in years. Only with you. No one else would know what I was talking about." My gaze wandered to the latest form taken by much of his climbing hardware; webbing and carabiners were now retired, acting instead as the supports and mechanism of a boxy polished wood tree swing for his wife and daughters in the back yard.

"I wasn't using it for climbing anymore," he explained as he took in my silent examination of the swing. "They like it."

In the world of federal land management, there is a category of worker called a "Seasonal." They might be foresters or naturalists or lookouts or wilderness guards or trail crew or fire fighters or they might simply muck out campgrounds every week. But they don't do it all year 'round—they work for only a few months a year, usually in the summer. For "The Season." If you played your cards right, you worked a regular forty-hour week for part of the summer, but as fire danger grew, so did the hours and the overtime and hazardous duty pay and per diem. A hot summer with a few good fires could, coupled with unemployment benefits, pay for a substantial part of a year at the university.

The work was hard and repetitive, but it was an excellent world for writers. Those on the trail crew or who were wilderness guards spent ten days at a time in the Cascade mountain backcountry. If your food and goods weren't packed in by mules, you lived out of your backpack on spartan freeze-dried foods, supplemented by fish and berries, in a world where your body worked hard but your thoughts were free to range at will. The repetition of chopping or digging or walking allowed you to get the pace just right on the words running through your mind as you worked. It was also a world where the close study of a text was a given when you could carry only one paperback per trip.

This Forest Service/writer's world can be described best to outsiders by smells: oil on the roads to keep the dust down, creosote soaked wood, gasoline and diesel fuel in drip torches, dew on evergreens, rainfall-saturated duff, small mossy creek banks along gravel roads and trails. The ozone-filled smell of sublimating snow off

of a cool glacier, its cold wind like that of opening your freezer door on a grand scale. Elderberry branches broken off in your hand as you climb cross-country, pitch from fir trees, your socks and clothing after many cool days in raingear or after steamy hot summer days, and most powerful of all, smoke. The smells of the campfire and wildfire, and later, of mop up; white ash as it explodes off of a hot spot as you give it a squirt from a backpack pump, or of charcoal glowing in the root of a tree as you chop it out.

Louis was my upstairs neighbor in the crewhouse for several years in Darrington. I know, more than anything else I know about Louis, that he loved the job and his comrades and the places we worked in all of those seasons in the U.S. Forest Service. And he loved writing. He came away from those years, in the words of another forester, “thinking like a mountain,” and it is the time in his life he mentally returned to again and again as he wrote his novels.

At his memorial service on July 29, 2002, I rose to speak of those Forest Service years, because no one else present, except his wife, Polly, had first-hand knowledge of that time. This is a portion of what I said:

Among other places, we would meet every so often at conferences, and he early on said to me “Don’t tell any Forest Service stories about me—they won’t understand them.” But I’ll tell you a Forest Service story today. Louis was, in later Darrington [Washington] seasons, a Wilderness Guard, and the irony of “guarding the wilderness” was never lost on him. There was one afternoon at the crewhouse when I met Louis in the yard, bent over and stiff, complaining about his trip out of the mountains earlier in the day. His backpack must have weighed 80 pounds he said. I asked what he’d been carrying and he told me of finding an old buried cache of food in cans, and that he’d packed it all out. I looked at him, and thought, then asked “Louis, why didn’t you open the cans first?” The expression on his face was one of epiphany. He had worked so hard to do something so dumb, and suddenly realized it. I can only imagine the same kind of expression or process occurring at the moment he shot himself. But this dumb mistake can’t be fixed, and it hurt us all. He hit us all with that bullet. This time he couldn’t

apologize or take it back, and now we need to understand that, and need to love him and need to forgive him, and need to keep telling his stories.

I also told the readers of the ASAIL list of Louis' story of an early season solo climb of Snow King Mountain in the North Cascades. It was a story he told fondly of his being found out by our boss, and of climbing for the pure joy of it. In his essay "In the Service of Forests," Louis concluded "In my dreams I seek out wildfire and search for eagles that soar over granite and glacier. In my next life I will do it all over again, every single thing" (63). I sincerely hope not, but I wish him all of the best in inspiring writers and in pursuing his wild mountainous world of the North Cascades.

- Maggie Dwyer
September, 2002

Mixed Messages of "the Other," Blood, and Destinies: My Ten Year Encounter with Louis Owens

I met Louis Owens ten years ago at the first annual "Art of the Wild" writers conference. Earlier that year I had taught Native American literature at Virginia Tech, the first time such a course had ever been offered there, but I was untrained in methods of teaching this important field. Despite my lack of preparation, this was a very popular course with the students, many of whom suggested it should be a regular part of the curriculum. I left Virginia that summer to return to my native Utah, stopping at significant historical Native American sites along the way: Effigy Mounds, Cahokia, Pipestone National Monument, Wounded Knee, Little Bighorn, and, after unloading my truck in Utah, on to Mesa Verde, Four Corners, and Monument Valley. The essay I submitted to the Art of the Wild conference concerned my experience of teaching Native American literature, and one of the participants in my group recommended I show it to Louis Owens, as she had known him at U.C. Santa Cruz, and she introduced us. Over that week Louis was extremely generous with his time, first reading my

essay and offering suggestions, discussing issues related to Native American continuance over lunches and coffee, recommending additional readings, and introducing me to Blackfoot novelist James Welch. After leaving the conference I corresponded with Louis while teaching at Weber State University, where I implemented his suggestions in that school's first ever course in Native American literature. When I realized that my only hope for employment security depended upon obtaining the Ph.D., the University of New Mexico was my only choice, as Louis had returned there to teach. I wanted proper training in teaching these literary materials that had changed my life and that had come to mean so very much to me. Louis graciously wrote a letter recommending my acceptance into the program and subsequently agreed to chair my committee of studies and to direct my dissertation.

The title of this short tribute essay derives, obviously, from the titles of two of Louis's books, but it also represents the major highlights of my experience of this complicated man who was my teacher, mentor, and friend. What I learned from Louis has to do with emphasizing how Native voices had long been silenced, marginalized, how blood quantum related to that silencing, and how destiny, including my own, determined the importance of teaching in this field. His death was a severe blow, and while he will be missed, his legacy will undoubtedly grow as his students and theirs continue to express the continuance he emphasized as one of the central concerns of Native American literature—and therein lies one of the mixed messages. Like so many of his students and fans, I wish his own life was continuing.

Louis's writing about the elements of Native American literature is well known and readily available, and I will not rehearse those elements here, but I will reiterate that his work contributes to our understanding of Native Americans being marginalized as "the Other" and silenced as a result. His teaching at the University of New Mexico emphasized inclusion of Native American writers as part of the American literary tradition, efforts on the parts of these writers to insist that Native people be heard. Part of the literary "theory" that Louis presented in his classes was to recommend that readers and teachers of this literature listen to what Native people and scholars had to say about their cultures and representation of those cultures in any attempt to understand the resulting literature. Louis's teaching and scholarship aimed to controvert stereotyping, and, in turn, to demonstrate that the characters in Native American novels should be understood as individuals rather than types. As such, these characters mitigate against

essentialization and therefore speak to continuance of particular Native cultures in the context of contemporary realities.

Part of the “mixture” of the messages received from Louis involved other literary theory as well, especially that published under the rubric of “postcolonial” theory. Under Louis’s direction I read a considerable amount of postcolonial theory in the effort to contextualize the writers I studied for my dissertation. While that reading was useful in many ways, it generally covered geographical regions that were making efforts to decolonize, and one of Louis’s central points was that the Native American writer works within what continues to be colonized space. Louis, for all his generosity, was a very demanding teacher, and I found the forays into theory difficult and discouraging.

On matters of “blood” Louis was equally helpful to me as a student and teacher of these literary traditions. I enjoyed the privilege of team-teaching Native American literature with another senior teacher at the University of New Mexico. Patricia Clark Smith is mixed-blood as well, having Micmac ancestry; I am clearly of exclusively European descent. With the exception of occasional small enclaves of integration, this large section of around forty students consistently divided itself in the room by race, primarily black-haired students on the left, others on the right. Distressed by this, I often discussed with Louis how to integrate the class, and how to understand the reasons for the separation. On one ill-fated occasion I had the class to myself as Pat, my teaching companion, could not be there due to illness. Attempting to clarify to the non-Native students that a reference to a spiritual condition in Chickasaw writer Linda Hogan’s *Mean Spirit* should be understood as real to the characters involved, not metaphorical, I made the mistake of stepping outside the text to reference Lakota holy man Black Elk’s collaborations with John Neihardt and Joseph Epes Brown in describing alternative states of being. Two students from the left-hand side of the class, a mixed-blood Cheyenne and a mixed-blood Dakota, took offense, stood up, and walked out of the class. I was mortified. The very last thing I want to do in my work with Native American literature is to alienate Native American people, and I quickly acknowledge my fault in this particular incident.

I went to Louis immediately after that class meeting for advice, reminding him that I have never claimed to be an “Indian expert” or a “wannabe,” but rather a student of literature, interested in the phenomenon of culture contact and in attempts to bring about understanding between the peoples of this land after so very many

generations of cruelty and stereotyping. How Louis advised me on this occasion is personal, and I will not relate most of it here. I was prepared to leave the field entirely as a result, because, as already stated above, the very last thing I wish to do is to give offense. What I am willing to share relates to destiny, which I present below in my final paragraphs.

When I told Louis that I was prepared to give up studying and teaching in this area as a result of the incident described above, he responded, "There are so few Indians with Ph.D.'s, if you won't teach this material, who will?" Now I know this will be controversial to many readers, having followed the arguments about who can or should teach in this area. With Louis gone, there is one fewer Native American with a Ph.D., one who had the potential to influence so many more. Another mixed message. Unfortunately, I was not able to complete my dissertation before Louis left the University of New Mexico to teach at U.C. Davis; I finished with other signatures, including Pat Smith's, as co-directors of the dissertation.

Since that time, however, I have been privileged to teach Native American literature to Native American students for the last three summers in the American Indian Summer Bridge program at the University of New Mexico, with very positive responses, and this too is part of Louis's legacy. The honors I have received from the American Indian community at the university as a result honor Louis as well. Because I learned from Louis and passed on my understanding to these students of Pueblo, Navajo, Yakima, Apache, Choctaw, Cherokee, Cheyenne, Nez Perce, and Lakota background, they are reading widely in Native American literature and no longer regard Tony Hillerman as a Native American writer. This spring I will teach the first ever Native American literature class at Truckee Meadows Community College, and it will be a continuing part of our curriculum. Additionally, I am working to establish a week-long program of Native American awareness at our college, work that has put me in touch with the local tribal people: Paiute, Washoe, and Shoshone, as I insist to the college that Native people be those who determine how their cultures should be represented. Working in this field has become part of my destiny, one that Louis contributed to so tremendously. Sorry that he is gone, I am pleased to think I can contribute to his continuing legacy. Good journey, good friend, you will be missed for the rest of my life.

— Rick Waters

Louis Owens: First Impressions and Last Words

In these many weeks since his death, I find myself, searching through files and folders for more of his words. I re-read only snippets of his books, afraid that inevitably I will reach the end of his voice, the last of his words. As we call out to Louis in these tributes, I wonder, will he lose his way as he sets off to the next place? But I realize the collective acts of telling the stories, reading his words again, and calling to him are re-creating a not-the-same-Louis but a differently good one. Coyote reassembles his bones so he can go along with us still.

My contribution to the bigger story isn't as much about Louis as it is about my own Coyote story of 1989, during which I met him.

At the Western Literature Association conference in Coeur D'Alene, Idaho, I delivered a paper on female tricksters. Just prior to showing up in the tiny, packed conference room, I burst from my room all gussied up in my Big '80s Power Red dress, a holdover from the oil business (pronounced "awl bidness"), accessorized smartly with stockings and garters. The logic of these stockings and garters is lost upon me now, but I vaguely remember rejecting the loathsome and mundane panty hose as Signifier of The Oppression of Women, or something very polysemic like that (I was in my second year of graduate school, remember).

As I walked down the hall and got into the elevator, I had an odd feeling that didn't fully impact me until I was on the conference level and halfway down a deserted hallway: my stockings and garters had liberated themselves and were making slow and steady progress towards my knees. And worse, open and vulnerable, my ankles were Atlanta waiting to be invaded by the relentless march of garters and stockings.

Because this conference hotel was the posh resort on Lake Coeur D'Alene, a gift shop lay right in my path. My wandering undergarments and I ducked in where I took about three seconds to select a pair of "establishment" panty hose, charging them gratefully to the room. A quick change *et voila!* I was in control of my underwear again, and back to power conference mode.

My paper was first on the slate for that session. In I breezed, with my brassy Texas bottle-blonde, confidently panty-hosed, dressed-for-success self, at the peak moment when both panel and audience are caught in the headlights of anticipation, anxiety, and academic fervor just before a session begins. Standing at the back of the room was a native grad student in a Pendleton jacket who made meaningful,

approving eye contact during my paper; in the front row chairs was another Jay beaming at me, as I intoned on Trickster and her antics in contemporary literature.

At the end of four papers on Silko, tricksters, and Grandmother Spider, 25 people had bonded in a stuffy, academic sweat, ready for the post-session networking to begin. However, I couldn't wait to get back to my room and shuck off that red dress and panty hose—symbols of my folly, proof that Trickster was firmly in control of that session and my skivvies.

But before I could bolt, I fielded a couple of inquiries for copies of my paper, gladly contributed it for an issue of *Wicazo Sa*, and was asked to join the other Jay for coffee down the hallway—"Excellent paper . . . there's someone you've got to meet." "Yeah, thanks. Duh. Ok." I longed to be in my black jeans, boots and down vest. I was inwardly shrinking from the academic buzz, thinking of that big lovely lake and the crisp autumn breaking just outside the hotel doors. "Yes, I'll meet you by the coffee table in 10 minutes," I said, plotting to myself that I would just slip away without benefit of caffeine and society.

Once the familiar jeans and boots were on and I was comfortable, I relented and dutifully went back to the coffee and donuts table, feeling like the deer in the headlights now. As I walked into the hallway, I immediately saw another pair of eyes, glinting and frozen in the fluorescent glare of the coffee break. Holding a Styrofoam cup of truly tasteless brew, Louis Owens was charming a group of students and fans, secretly drinking up the attention faster than the coffee. The other Jay introduced us, and Louis shook my hand: "I hear you delivered an excellent paper on Trickster." "I suppose I did," I said, flattered. "But I've heard nothing about you. [pause] Who are you?" "Oh, I'm nobody, I guess." "Really? Me too."

The other Jay leapt to praise Louis' books (the novel published, the novel in progress, the scholarship); Louis and I just grinned and nodded stupidly at each other. After two minutes of this, filled with his silent mugging and mock appreciative nods, I said, "well, now I know who you are, I guess." Louis said, "Oh yeah, definitely." It was awkward as hell, and just plain funny. He was being called to Be Impressive, I was being asked to Be Impressed. We both just grinned and nodded some more, trying to fulfill our roles.

My next thought was for decent coffee, at the exact moment Louis said aloud, "I was just about to get out of here and find some real coffee." Finally, my chance to bolt. So we escaped for a real cup of coffee and a walk along the lakeshore, then to lunch. We talked for a

few hours. About Europe, Trickster, graduate school, literature, Steinbeck, horses, dogs, children, academe. (I told no one about the garters *for years* though I laughed a bit too hard when Alex the cross-dresser showed up in *Bone Game*.) Eventually, I walked with Louis back from the restaurant to the parking lot and his rented car. He was driving to Seattle that afternoon, and then flying home. I didn't see him until the next WLA, but many times, we ran into each other while ducking out of sessions and heading to the nearest fresh air, good coffee, or whatever natural beauty the conference locale had to offer.

I think back to that first conversation, which lasted most of the afternoon, and see that I received about three semesters' worth of mentoring in that time (not to mention one cup of good coffee and two microbrewery pale ales). Louis quoted my paper in his book *Other Destinies*, and a treasured friendship began. There were other conferences and academic meetings where the sudden appearance of Louis would punch a hole in the huge overly serious gasbag that would form around my head, letting in the oxygen and levity, restoring my soul.

I learned well from Louis. I later photographed him, caught his trickster guise in a photo he preferred to the more formal poses of him with an overly serious gasbag around his head. I told him about the southbound garter belt one day when a couple of margaritas had eased my embarrassment, which he met with loud uncharacteristic shouts of laughter. Over the years, we traded scathing email satire. As near as I can recall, my last words to him were in a voice message: "Do you have Prince Albert in a can?" His last words to me were a comparison between my upcoming wedding and a Sioux wedding.

When I returned to the hotel after meeting Louis that day in Idaho, there was a message light blinking. The hotel operator laughingly delivered the message: "Well, I don't quite understand it, but it says: 'I'm the Indian in the Pendleton coat in the lobby.'" And that's all it says." I smiled.

Yeah, okay, Coyote, I saw you.

— Jay Ann Cox

Chocolate Chip Cookies and Chicken Pad Thai

Chicken pad thai, beef jerky, café latte, lemon cornmeal cake; mixed green salad with goat cheese and toasted pecans at The Mustard Seed or a platter of Safeway cold cuts after class. During the brief two years that I knew Louis Owens, we spent a good deal of time together with or close to food. This wouldn't seem remarkable if I were talking about my relationship with a family member or life-long friend, but to hunker down over an open bag of Doritos and a jar of Rosarita salsa with a world renown scholar of Native American literature was . . . well, nice. Chomping on chips and talking with my mouth full to Louis seemed comfortable, familiar, and erased the artificial demarcations between lowly graduate student and lofty professor; it just made us feel like humans together, sharing the gift of food, of plenty. In the spirit of Native communities, serious business cannot possibly be discussed without everyone present first being fed, being sated, and so we broke bread together: at readings, at department gatherings, at local lunches during my two quarters of independent study with Louis, at fancy formal receptions for prestigious visiting scholars, and during casual coffee klatches at UCD's MU.

Louis was a man of many tastes, of many hungers, with a variety of appetites. "I draw the line at eating anything that's still moving," he once told me over lunch—a gargantuan bowl of Vietnamese noodle soup on that occasion—but beyond that, any fare was fair game. His omnivorousness extended beyond food, of course, to literatures, activities, types of people, forms of knowledge. It was his combined consuming passions for all of these, I believe, that made him so easy to be with, that allowed him to make each of his students feel recognized, acknowledged. Louis had the gift of being able to say the one simple thing—about an essay we had written, or about something we had cooked—that let us know he was paying us individual attention. At potluck events—common for Native Studies grads, whose functions are funded in inverse proportion to our desire to eat—Louis would ask my classmate Susan, "You *made* these? They're delicious!", as if her batch of brownies, or Catherine's chocolate chip cookies, contained a cosmic mystery. It always made us feel good when he spoke this way, and feeding him was, I know, a small way in which some of us felt we could return to him part of the ongoing banquet he constantly prepared for us each time he stood before us and spoke.

When Louis spoke to us during class or in his office hours, we were like little birds waiting to be fed, our mouths literally hanging open part way at times—I have seen this—to take in the morsels of his knowledge, his insights, his stories. We feasted on the workings of his mind in lectures and at readings, as well as during the simplest conversations. We gorged ourselves on his casual brilliance; some of us also, I must admit, feasted our eyes on him at times. As with any successful dinner party or luncheon, time with Louis always flew by. “It’s time to go?” someone would inevitably ask as Louis seemed to be wrapping up. Slightly stunned, we’d look at each other in disbelief, still digesting that day’s conversation and new ideas.

For a foodie like me, who at around nine-thirty in the morning begins thinking about what I might cook for dinner that night, I was sometimes truly concerned that Louis wasn’t getting enough to eat. Especially last year, his second at Davis, when I began to notice the pressures Louis felt to keep up with his many duties: Creative Writing director, instructor in English and Native American Studies, his many independent studies with graduate students and his ceaseless attention in office hours or via e-mail to connect with students, friends, and colleagues; his constant round of faculty meetings, and his time outside the university to give interviews or speak at conferences, writers’ workshops or commencements—not to mention his commitment to travel home to Albuquerque as often as possible to be with his family. Appropriately enough, he was living that year in a sort of caretaker’s cottage next to a farmhouse outside of Davis, surrounded by flat fields and few people. When he told me the place had an outhouse and no indoor bathroom, any romanticism I may have had about a picturesque country cottage evaporated.

“I worry about you out there, Louis,” I said to him that spring. “You’re always running around, driving here and there. Do you ever *eat* anything? Do you *cook* for yourself out there, do you buy *groceries*?”

He smiled and his blue eyes snapped. “Well,” he said, “there’s a turkey out there who seems sort of lonely and likes to hang around my back door. I guess if I ever get too desperate I can always eat him.”

“Do me a favor,” I said. “If it gets to that, let me know. I’ll bring you a turkey sandwich.”

“OK,” said Louis. “It’s a deal.”

I did bring him food sometimes: a pound cake once, some jerky and dried plums for his long drives another time, and on one occasion a goodie bag as a thank-you for what seemed like the dozens of

recommendation and scholarship letters he had written for me by then—which he *always* found time to write for me, no matter how last-minute my frenzied requests to him might have been. Rushing off to campus, late as usual, to meet Louis for our weekly independent study, I wracked my brains for what I might be able to do for him in meager exchange for all I felt he had given me. I thought about his hectic schedule, his living situation at the aggie outpost with the dysfunctional turkey, and stopped off at the Woodland Nugget market for a small bag of groceries. We must have been talking about his trips to France recently, or maybe we'd been discussing *The Heart Song of Charging Elk*, because I came out of the store with some chunks of good cheese, a container of assorted olives, a bar of Toblerone chocolate and a seeded baguette. When I arrived at this office and plopped this hodgepodge in its crinkly plastic sack on top of his desk, you'd have thought I'd just awarded him the Nobel Prize for Literature: he seemed flabbergasted by this small act, and wrote in a later e-mail, "You keep stunning me with your generosity."

Such a compliment from Louis both flattered and baffled me. I was almost embarrassed to be thanked so profusely by this extraordinary person, one of a very few mentors in my life, for a quick gift of snacks costing less than twenty dollars and which could never begin to compensate for the extraordinary gifts Louis had given me of his time, his knowledge, his humor, his respect for my work and attention to my writing. But of course Louis didn't look at our exchanges as "compensatory," and my monetary expenditure had nothing to do with the value of the comestibles I gave him on that day. I think I had just given him something he needed, a simple thing but just right somehow, for reasons not entirely clear to me then or now. That simple bag of groceries touched him, it was an acknowledgement or an attention that fed something in him on a deeper than physical level, that went beyond bodily nourishment. I'm happy when I remember this moment, a time when by dumb luck I was able to give Louis something he could really use.

We are what we eat is more than a meaningless platitude. On a very real cellular level, the food we take in remains part of us, becomes part of our molecular constitution. For those of us who had the tremendous good fortune to have been Louis's students, the knowledge we consumed, the stories and insights Louis fed us, will always remain part of our bodies, our hearts, and our spirits: the meat and matter of who we are.

I'll be seeing you, Louis, I'll meet up with you again not so long from now, in that next place where you already are. And Catherine will bring chocolate chip cookies, and Susan will bring brownies, and I—well, I'll surprise you with something good. We'll all sit down and feast together again, Louis; we will feast. And no one will leave that table hungry.

— Jane Haladay

Resisting Shape or Language

Perhaps I saw you best
across breakfast tables or diner counters
some small distance from conference conversations
in whimsical recitations of country western lyrics,
perhaps in the words
squeezed
between the opening and closing
of elevator doors
on the way to identities we might assume
in the fractured
consolation of public admiration.

Death isn't a story for me
to be rehearsed with each telling
disappearance reappearance remembrance
not an AP report nor NPR news flash,
I stumble awkwardly with the public spoken
all my words turn inward
to be whispered in darkened rooms
poured out to the scarlet upholstery
of a rented car.

What I collect that resembles memory—
small wrinkles in newspaper profiles
ellipses in authority
the day Milwaukee piled shoulder high
and the reluctant crooked smile
a line never written

but worn
and one you bothered to repeat
when I could not hear
above the applause of a life
you spoke over.

— Kimberly Blaeser

Like many who mourn Louis Owens' death, I also celebrate the generosity and brilliance of his life. He was a vibrant and inspiring writer and speaker, a celebrated scholar and teacher. And he was humble, someone who downplayed his own accomplishments. He remained grounded to the early experiences of his life and this personal encounter with the issues of race and class in America influenced his stance in teaching and writing, and in the way he lived his life. With fine humor he dismantled the calculated categories and expectations of academia. A blue-jeaned scholar, word magician, a warm and witty friend—he will be missed.

Mixed-Trout Messages

At the memorial service for Louis Owens held in Tijeras, New Mexico in July, one young man rose and introduced himself first by name and then by appellation: “*I was Louis Owens' favorite student.*” Like his mentor, his timing was impeccable. He waited one beat, two, as those present processed this, not quite willing to chance a wrong reaction, until he added, “*That's how he made me feel. I'm sure many of you out here today would say the same.*” We all laughed at the moment of warm humor, felt the truth of his testimony. Louis Owens had a gift for making those he encountered feel special, feel valued. Whenever he introduced me to someone, it was with a specific and, I believe, heartfelt statement about the individual's work or person. Owens' generosity to his friends and students included not only gifts of appreciation and encouragement, but also of time, careful commentary, and sound advice. The mark he has left on the fields of Native and American Literature would be significant even if measured solely on the basis of the imprint he made on other writers and scholars.

But, of course, we also have the richness of his own critical and creative works. *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel* is arguably the most valuable, intellectually sound, comprehensive, and accessible work available on Native American Literatures. Add to that witty and eloquently written, and it becomes

clear why Native Studies scholars around the world have turned to this volume in their study and teaching of American Indian literatures. Besides *Other Destinies*, Owens' publications include five novels, two collections of essays, two books on the work of John Steinbeck, edited volumes, and literally hundreds of essays, reviews, and stories in journals and anthologies. He won numerous awards for both teaching and writing including the American Book Award and the Roman Noir Award for the French edition of his novel *The Sharpest Sight*. At the time of his death he was scheduled to serve as distinguished scholar-in-residence at Harvard.

If asked to name only one characteristic of his writing, I think I might search the thesaurus to the very last word or invent a phrase of my own. *Incredulous belief*. An oxymoron, of course. His persona, his narrative voice, his perspective stood slightly apart, skeptical, deeply searching, deconstructing the artificially obvious. And yet, he wrote with deep faith, his words carried the markers of truths, perhaps were themselves the trailings. His "American Indian" novels arise deep in conversation with all manner of literature and being. His essays, particularly the collections *I Hear the Train* and *Mixedblood Messages*, weave together strands of history, family story, criticism, and national mythologies. In good humor, he invites us into some questionable journey and unable to resist his manner we embark, never realizing what we signed on to see.

As the years of our friendship passed, tales I heard first in conversation began to reappear in print, moments of experience became recast in fiction. Enlarged, illuminated, "refracted" somehow by the nuance of story and imagination, the unruly swarm of experiences—voices, sensations, and encounters—cabbaged themselves into a shape somehow simultaneously more true than real, more real than true. In his writing, Owens both saw and saw through the everyday. Traveling with him in literature, conversation, or life meant holding the reins of several strands of vision.

My last email exchanges with Louis in many ways characterize the varied terrain of our companionable journey through the dispromised land these last ten plus years. We spoke of literature, teaching, publishing, film, and of course, children, dogs, and fishing. We had planned an early fall fishing trip together with Gerald Vizenor. "*Picture the three of us,*" he wrote, "*flyfishing on the San Juan while wearing ribbon shirts. Warriors of the dry fly, rainbow trout warriors, mixed-trout messages . . . I'll take a picture of you with a twenty inch rainbow on your line and Jerry grinning in the background.*" And then, referring to Vizenor with a typical Owens appellate, he said,

“Think of what a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity it is to go fishing with the greatest living writer.” I think of it. As I do, I know I have been fishing in deep water this last decade with the very finest writer.

July 29, 2002
Tijeras, New Mexico

Small nest of voices
keen beneath Sandia range—
sometimes warriors fall.

— Kimberly Blaeser

Announcements and Opportunities

Call for Papers

Special Issue of *American Literature*: “Literature and the Regeneration of Indigenous Societies”

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS: June 15, 2003

Guest editors Christopher Newfield (University of California, Santa Barbara) and Taiaiake Alfred (University of Victoria) invite submissions for a special issue of *American Literature* that considers how Indigenous peoples are imagining the societies of the future through literature and culture. What kinds of futures are envisioned by those committed to preserving the traditions of Indigenous peoples? How do contemporary issues indicate alternative possibilities? How are Indigenous peoples shaping both local and global discourse? What processes are currently being imagined? Submissions on any aspect of Indigenous life that transcends modernity are welcome.

Authors should send four copies of each submission of under 12,000 words (including endnotes) to *American Literature*, Duke University, Box 90020, 327 Allen Building, Durham, North Carolina 27708; the envelope should be clearly labeled “Special Issue Submission.”

Comparative American Studies An International Journal

Comparative American Studies: An International Journal is an exciting new journal that will extend scholarly debates about American Studies beyond the geographical boundaries of the United States, repositioning discussions about American culture explicitly within an international, comparative framework.

The main disciplines covered in the journal will be: literature, film, popular culture, photography and the visual arts. Attention will also be given to history, the social sciences and politics, particularly insofar as these fields impact cultural texts.

Topics covered will range widely and include:

- American Studies and Interdisciplinarity
- Intercultural American Studies
- American culture and Globalization
- The United States and the Americas
- Borderlands, Migrations, Diaspora
- Transnationalism, Transculturalism, and their Prehistories
- Languages and the Americas
- American Literature in Comparative Context
- The International Slave Trade
- Comparative Approaches to Race, Gender, Sexuality
- Ethnicity, Multiculturalism, Fundamentalism
- Environmentalism and Regionalism
- Religions: National and Global
- Hollywood and the World
- Technology, New Media
- The Postnational City
- American Music, America in Music
- Visual Aesthetics, Art, Photography

Articles should be between 5-7000 words. Four copies of the manuscript should be submitted, typed in double-spacing on one side of A4 paper only and must include an abstract of 100-150 words on a separate sheet. In addition an electronic version should be sent by email. Submissions will be refereed anonymously by at least two referees.

The journal uses the Harvard system of referencing with author's name and date in the text and a full biography in alphabetical order at the end of the article.

Submit contributions from North America to:

Jane Desmond, The International Forum for US Studies (IFUSS), 226 International Center, The University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242, USA Tel: +1 319 335 2476 Fax: +1 319 335 0280 Email: jane-desmond@uiowa.edu

Submit contributions from Rest of the World to:

R.J. Ellis, The Nottingham Trent University, Department of English and Media Studies, Clifton Lane, Nottingham NG11 8NS, UK Tel: +44 (0) 115 941 8418 Fax: +44 (0) 115 948 6632 Email: r.j.ellis@ntu.ac.uk

Native American Literature Symposium

March 20-23, 2003
Mystic Lake Casino Hotel
Minneapolis, MN
Featured speakers: TBA

Proposals and abstracts are due December 6, 2002.

Papers and panels will be presented on many aspects of Native American Literature. Topics to be covered will include tribal sovereignty, narrative strategies, cultural mediations, interdisciplinary arts, literature and history, cultural contexts, and individual authors. There will also be panel discussions on pedagogical methods, individual texts, authors, and film. We are pleased to locate our symposium at a tribal venue again this year and look forward to your spirited participation.

MELUS Journal: Special Issue on Katharine Newman and Ethnic American Literary Studies

Call for Submissions Due December 7, 2002

Proposals or completed essays are invited for a special issue of *MELUS*, the quarterly journal of the Society for the Study of Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States. Two \$500 cash prizes will be awarded for the best articles published in this issue, scheduled for publication in late 2003. It will honor Katharine Newman who is widely acknowledged as the moving spirit behind the founding of MELUS in 1972 and who passed away in 2001.

Our objective in bringing out this special number is to preserve and expand Professor Newman's legacy by attempting a retrospective evaluation of the role played by MELUS during the past three decades in the ongoing redefinition of American Literature, by taking stock of developments in ethnic and cultural studies since the 1960s, and also by gathering a number of tributes to and/or reminiscences of Katharine Newman in a special section. Especially welcome will be essays on multi-ethnic American Literature addressing

- * the development of ethnic literature as a discipline: issues of recognition and inclusion
- * the pedagogy of ethnic literature
- * the theorizing of ethnic literature
- * the relationship between ethnic literary studies and Cultural Studies/Post colonial Studies/Gender Studies/Whiteness Studies
- * MELUS or ethnic literary studies in global and transnational contexts, including the role of MESEA (formerly MELUS-EUROPE), CAAR (Consortium for African American Research) and MELUS-INDIA
- * The Role of Anthologies (such as Heath's) and Critical Editions (such as Norton's) in transforming the American Literature curriculum in the U.S. Europe, Asia, etc.
- * Ethnic Studies and American Studies

Proposals and submission (4,000 words or less) may be directed in duplicate to either of the following by 7 December 2002 (with revised and finished versions by 31 January 2003).

C. Lok Chua
Professor of English
M.S. #98, Calif. State University
Fresno, CA 93740
559-278-4928
FAX: 559-278-7143
chengc@csfresno.edu

Amrijit Singh
Professor of English
Rhode Island College
Providence, RI 02908
401-456-8660
FAX: 401-334-4778
amrit378@earthlink.net

The Fifth Biennial Conference of ASLE

3-7 June 2003
Boston University

The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) invites proposals for its Fifth Biennial Conference, to be held 3-7 June 2003 on the campus of Boston University. Taking as our theme a phrase from Henry Thoreau's "Ktaadn" ("the *solid* earth! the *actual* world!") we seek proposals for papers (15-minute presentation time), panels, roundtables, poster sessions, workshops, and other verbal performances that pertain to relations of language and place. As always, we welcome interdisciplinary approaches and readings of environmentally inflected creative nonfiction and poetry. Proposals are especially encouraged on (but not limited to) the following topics:

- * Coastal Literature/Literature of the Sea
- * Urban/Suburban Nature and Nature Writing
- * Environmental Justice, Activism, Literature, and Ecocriticism
- * The Emersonian/Thoreauvian/Transcendentalist Influences on Nature Writing
- * Literature of the Park and Garden/Landscapes with Figures
- * Environmental Issues of the Northeastern United States
- * The Place of Science in Ecocriticism/of Ecocriticism in Environmental Studies

Send one-page proposals for papers, poster sessions, workshops, or roundtables by 31 January 2003 to:

Ian Marshall
Penn State Altoona
Ivyside Park
Altoona, PA 16601-3760
ism2@psu.edu

JOINT NATIONAL CONFERENCES:

- National Association of African American Studies
- National Association of Hispanic and Latino Studies
- National Association of Native American Studies
- International Association of Asian Studies

February 17-22, 2003
Omni Houston Hotel Westside
Houston, Texas

Abstracts, not to exceed two pages, should be submitted that relate to any aspect of the African and African American, Hispanic and Latino, Native American or Asian experience. Subjects may include, but are not limited to, literature, demographics, history, politics, economics, education, health care, fine arts, religion, social sciences, business and many other subjects. Please indicate the time required for presentation of your paper (25 minutes or 45 minutes).

Abstracts with home and school/agency address **MUST** be postmarked by November 15, 2002.

Send Abstracts To:

Dr. Lemuel Berry, Jr.
Executive Director, NAAAS & Affiliates
PO Box 325
Biddeford, ME 04005-0325
Fax: (207) 282-1925
E-mail: naaasconference@earthlink.net
www.NAAAS.org

Opportunities

Native Writers' Circle of the Americas

First Book Award Competition - Guidelines for 2003
FROM: Geary Hobson, Project Director of NWCA

Since 1992, the Native Writers' Circle of the Americas (NWCA), in conjunction with the Native American Studies program at the

University of Oklahoma and Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers, has been conducting the annual First Book Awards competition. Several judges serve each year to evaluate manuscripts in poetry and prose before selecting the winners in each of the two categories. At present, a consortium of university and small presses is being assembled to assist in the eventual publication of each winning manuscript. The competition is open to writers of Native American background (full-blood, mixed-blood, enrolled, unenrolled, Metis, Alaska Natives, Canadian Natives, Latin American Natives, etc.). Past winners of the competition and the titles of their books may be found on the OU-NAS webpage and also at literature.awards.com. Here are the guidelines for the upcoming competition for the year 2002-2003.

- (1) The acceptance period for manuscripts will be from October 1, 2002 to January 1, 2003.
- (2) Two copies of the submitted manuscript must be sent to:
Geary Hobson
English Department
University of Oklahoma
Norman, OK 73-19-0240

Judges (who shall remain anonymous) will then evaluate the submissions. The evaluation period will run from January 1, 2003 until late March or early April. The winners in the two categories (poetry—prose) will be announced soon after the evaluation period is ended.

(3) First Book, for the purpose of the competition, means the first book, of any category, to be published by a particular author. If, for example, an author has previously published a nonfiction book (regardless of content and subject), an anthology, a novel, or even a cookbook or genealogical volume, etc., and then submits a first book of poetry, such a work cannot be considered in the competition.

(4) For the purposes of determining the qualifications of a book for the competition, the following criteria is to be observed:

Poetry: Manuscripts must be at least 50 pages of poetry (not including title page, copyright page, blank pages for art and/or photographs, etc. 50 short poems—one to a page—is permissible, or even a single 50-page poem, but the poetry text must be a minimum of 50 pages (again, this does not include prospective pages of illustrations or photos.).

(5) The following information must accompany each submitted manuscript:

(A) Author's address(es), especially a mailing address and phone number, but email and FAX numbers may also be included.

(B) An acknowledgements page, to indicate the incorporation of possibly published work within the context of the submitted manuscript, with citations as thorough as possible

(C) A brief biographical note, including place of residence and professional background, tribal background, writing career notes (where published, etc.), of no more than a paragraph.

(6) Please DO NOT email submitted manuscript as an attachment. IT WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

(7) The winning authors will receive a cash award of \$500.00 and a plaque, which will be bestowed during the annual Native Writers' Circle of the Americas awards ceremony sometime in the fall of 2003, along with the NWCA Lifetime Achievement Award winner and the Teresa Palmer Award winner.

Fellowships

School of American Research

Resident Scholar Fellowships are awarded each year by the School of American Research (SAR) to six scholars who have completed their research and analysis and who need time to think and write about topics important to the understanding of humankind. Resident scholars may approach their research from the perspective of anthropology or from anthropologically informed perspectives in such fields as history, sociology, art, law, and philosophy. Both humanistically and scientifically oriented scholars are encouraged to apply.

Resident scholars are provided with an apartment and office on campus, stipends, a small reference library and library assistance, and other benefits during a nine-month tenure: September 1 through May 31. Books written by resident scholars may be considered for publication by the SAR Press as part of its Resident Scholar Series.

The resident scholar program is funded by the Weatherhead Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Katrin H.

Lamon Endowment for Native American Art and Education, and the School of American Research.

For information about the Resident Scholars Program contact us at scholar@sarsf.org .

Native American Graduate Fellowships in Resource Management at Central Washington University

Eligibility and General Information:

Any qualified Native American or Native Alaskan with a Bachelor's Degree is eligible to apply for a Graduate Fellowship. The program is intended to support Native Americans in their educational goals and to better prepare tribal members to manage cultural and natural resources, their own and those of the planet in general.

Each year, two to four new students will be selected on a competitive basis. Applications may be submitted at any time, and simply consist of a letter to the Program Director requesting consideration. Please include your tribal affiliation and enrollment information.

Application for admission to the Graduate School must be submitted separately. Decisions on awards for the following academic year are usually made in April. Each student's program of study is designed to meet individual needs and goals. Necessary undergraduate course work may be a part of it. Most students will include a supervised internship in their program. Participants making satisfactory and continuous progress may be granted a second year of support, but renewal is not guaranteed.

The Fellowships are funded by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

Features of the Fellowship Program:

- * Full tuition for up to six quarters of study.
- * A monthly stipend of \$1,000 through the academic year. Students may teach or be research assistants, but it is not required.

* A summer stipend of approximately \$2,000 for a two-month supervised research period that will assist in the development of a field project or thesis to help meet the Masters Degree requirements.

* A limited allowance for books and copying, plus assistance with costs for travel to selected professional meetings.

Admission to the Graduate School:

All participants must be admitted to the Graduate School. Though not required, most participants will pursue the M.S. degree. To obtain graduate school admission materials, contact:

Admissions and Academic Services
Graduate Admissions
Central Washington University
Ellensburg, WA 98926-7510
(509) 963-3103
E-mail: masters@cwu.edu

Your request to be considered for the Fellowship, and any questions, should be addressed to the Program Director:

Robert Kuhlken
Associate Professor
Department of Geography and Land Studies
Central Washington University
Ellensburg, WA 98926-7240
Ph. (509) 963-2795
FAX (509) 963-1047
E-Mail: kuhlkenr@cwu.edu

MAJOR TRIBAL NATIONS MENTIONED IN THIS ISSUE

This list is provided as a service to those readers interested in further communications with the tribal communities and governments of American Indian/Native nations. Inclusion of a government in this list does not imply endorsement of or by *SAIL* in any regard, nor does it imply the enrollment or citizenship status of any writer mentioned; some communities have alternative governments and leadership that are not affiliated with the U.S., Canada, or Mexico, while others are not recognized at this point by colonial governments. We have limited the list to those most relevant to the essays published in this issue, thus, not all bands, towns, or communities of a particular nation are listed.

We make every effort to provide the most accurate and up-to-date tribal contact information available, a task that is sometimes quite complicated. Please send any corrections or suggestions to *SAIL* Editorial Assistant, *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, Department of American Thought and Language, 235 Bessey Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1033, or send e-mail to sail2@msu.edu.

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