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Spirit Armies and Ghost Dancers: The Dialogic Nature of American Indian Resistance

Edward Huffstetler

Postmodern critical discussions have created something of a dilemma for those of us who routinely teach and write about Native American fiction. Are Native American texts the most cutting edge examples of postmodern fiction, or do they stand in some sort of undefined opposition to it? So far, there seems to be surprisingly little consensus on the issue.

There are, of course, those critics for whom postmodern discourse seems ideally suited to Native American texts. Gerald Vizenor, in his collection of essays *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*, celebrates the connections between postmodernism and Native American fiction, arguing that it liberates these texts to be what they in fact should be, whereas modernism had the tendency, he argues, of constraining American Indian authors to certain forms, certain discursive structures. In his essay "Textual Perspectives and the Reader in *The Surrounded*," James Ruppert sees Native texts being particularly suited for postmodern study, since the connections between speech and writing are at the core both of Native texts and deconstructionist criticism, and, as well, the attention given to issues of power, à la Foucault's arguments. Caren Irr, in her essay "The Timeliness of *Almanac of the Dead*, or a Postmodern Reading of Radical Fiction," champions Silko as a "postmodern radical" and sees her novel as fulfilling Frederic Jameson's call for a new, postmodern, political art (225). In his "The Dialogic of Silko's *Storyteller*," Arnold Krupat (using the work of Mikhail Bakhtin) argues that Silko's narrative is (although still thoroughly Pueblo in design) postmodern in that her voice is not a single author's voice, but rather a communal "plurality of voices" (65). Gretchen Ronnow, using Jacques Lacan as her starting point, argues in her essay "Tayo, Death, and Desire: A Lacanian Reading of *Ceremony*" that Tayo eventually learns that his existence is really a series of interconnected stories, rather than the "primal unity" he imagined it was initially (69). And Catherine Rainwater, in her work *Dreams of Fiery Stars: the Transformations of Native American Fiction*, sees (like Vizenor) that postmodern expectations have made audiences, in general, more receptive to the strategies of Native American texts.

On the other hand, it is hard for us to ignore that there are some aspects of postmodern critical discussions that seem at times antithetical to the general thrust of most of the fiction. The work of many

postmodernists, post-structuralists, and post-Marxists, as Philip Brian Harper outlines it in his work *Framing the Margins: The Social Logic of Postmodern Culture*, stands in direct opposition to some of the most basic concepts found in Native American fiction. For instance, the notion that individuals living in the postmodern world are unable to orient themselves in relation to objective reality—that we have lost any viable connection we might have had to the past, that we can no longer see it as relevant and continuous with the present—is sharply contrasted by most Native American narratives which emphasize and reinforce those very connections. Too, the understanding of language as “pure material signifiers,” and the increasing disconnection seen between discourse and the reality it supposedly represents seems a problematic argument for most American Indian authors as well (Harper 8).

And, despite arguments to the contrary, one would think that American Indian authors, in general, are ill suited to respond to Frederic Jameson’s call for a new postmodern fiction. After all, Jameson makes postmodernist arguments that would seem contradictory to most American Indian perspectives, such as his view that “postmodern is what you have when the . . . process is complete and nature is gone for good” (Jameson ix). He argues that in the new postmodern realities, the *other* is no longer nature, but technologies and the power/knowledge they represent. He argues that in these new postmodern conditions, “the past itself has disappeared” (Jameson 309). To Jameson, these patterns in postmodern society are the results of our increasing interaction with technologies and the development of what he calls (using Ernst Mandel’s term) “late capitalism,” an advanced stage of capitalism that is all encompassing and inescapable. In Jameson’s understanding of things, American Indian voices, American Indian visions, and American Indian religious traditions are simply so many sets of ideas contributing to the postmodern monolith that society is becoming, one more example of a people in the process of becoming, as Jean Baudrillard would say, simulacra.

Jameson also argues that this new political art, whatever it may be, must center its efforts on the realities of late capitalism and the necessity for new “cognitive mapping” that is not so much reorienting our spatial relationships as it is our social (Jameson 54). Jameson, of course, sees this entire postmodern process as disconnected to the spatial, to nature if you will. Most postmodernists (such as Paul Virilio in *Speed and Politics* for example) tend to see these forces in one way or another eradicating real space in favor of a new, virtual world. But in Native American fiction generally (as Robert Nelson argues in his *Place and*

Vision, as Paula Gunn Allen points out in her essay “Iyani: It Goes This Way,” and as Leslie Silko says in *Yellow Woman*), there can never truly be this disassociation with the spatial dimension, since it is through an active connection to the land that indigenous peoples define themselves.

But, despite the uneasy fit, it can certainly be argued that the most useful approach in recent years has been in applying Mikhail Bakhtin’s work to Native American texts. What Sue Vice says of Gabriel Garcia Marquez can be said of American Indian authors as well. They are, to use current post-colonial jargon, hybrid writers, and hybrid writers by definition are “open to two worlds” and therefore more open to the naturally dialogic interplay of storytelling (64). In fact, Bakhtinian discussions of carnival and its upsetting of established social order, as well as the very concepts of heteroglossia and dialogism seem especially compatible to Native American studies discussions of trickster tales and examinations of the ongoing nature of communal discourse, which often result in multi-authored, collaborative texts.

David Moore, in his essay “Decolonializing Criticism: Reading Dialectics and Dialogics in Native American Literatures,” using James Clifford’s landmark work, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, argues for a new critical approach to Native American texts, an approach based on an understanding of the dialogic nature of both the cultures and the texts those cultures produce. Clifford, who himself applies Bakhtin, not to texts alone but to a new understanding of the epistemological dynamics of culture itself, provides Moore with his starting point. Clifford contrasts two opposing modes of thinking, two opposing modes of cultural interaction—one dualistic, seeing the range of responses leading to one of two possibilities, either *resistance to* or *absorption by* the dominant culture—and the other dialogic, which describes interactions that form what Moore calls a “nexus of exchanges” between cultures (9). Moore then further defines the difference between the terms dialectic and dialogic, the one leading to hegemonic synthesis and the other to an ongoing cultural polyphony, one in which none of the diversity of voices or influences become normative. The three terms, dualistic, dialectic, and dialogic, express for Moore the dynamics of cultural interaction and ultimately express the interactive nature of everything from Native American art to Native American religious traditions to Native American politics. He says that “‘resistance’ would equal a dualistic pattern; ‘absorption’ would equal a dialectic pattern; and a ‘nexus’ of exchange would equal a dialogic . . . and exchange would be a dialogism of multiple voices in collaboration,

not in a utopian sense but in a sense of mutual cultural dynamics . . .” (17).

The importance of Moore’s work is that seeing American Indian texts (as well as political responses and identity as a whole) as the result of dialogic interaction with the dominant culture rather than as the limited response of dualism offers us a much more useful understanding of the dynamics of exchange we find in the texts themselves, as well as in the broader cultures. Too, just as Clifford and others such as Kenneth Gergen suggest, it places the proper emphasis on the ongoing and shifting cultural relations rather than on rigid definition and synthesis. What this means in practical terms is the recognition that American Indians and American Indian authors are engaged in a “third way,” something beyond simple *resistance to* or *absorption by* the dominant culture, that they can use the dynamics of exchange to define themselves and ultimately insure their cultures’ survival. Understanding the dialogic nature of cultural exchange, Moore suggests, is the key to understanding these texts. As long as we see Native American fiction through the lens of dualism or dialectics, we will ignore its dialogic context and ignore the cultural dynamics it helps to illuminate.

But as helpful as Bakhtin or Clifford can be in understanding these issues and as important and timely as Moore’s call for a new critical approach may be, there is something not quite satisfying in a strict Bakhtinian reading of Native American texts. Perhaps Arnold Krupat is right when he suggests in his essay “The Dialogic Nature of Silko’s *Storyteller*” that even though the storyteller is “open to a plurality of voices. . . . What keeps it from entering the poststructuralist, postmodernist or schizophrenic heteroglossic domain is its commitment to the equivalent of a normative voice. . . . For all the polyvocal openness of Silko’s work, there is always the unabashed commitment to Pueblo ways as a referent point” (65). The issue is further complicated, from Moore’s standpoint at least, by the realization that this commitment to a collective normative voice is often strongly linked to American Indian resistance—whether political, social, or spiritual.

What this suggests is that the collective normative voice that Krupat hears is often (at least in practice if not in theory) a dualistic instead of a dialogic voice. The “nexus of exchange” that Moore describes so well often becomes, in the hands of American Indians authors, yet another means of resistance. Rather than insisting on understanding the dialogic process as evolutionary and inclusive, as the ongoing dynamic of cultural exchange that affects all parties involved equally, it might be more appropriate to recognize the ways in which American Indian authors

acknowledge this open process, yet ultimately see it as yet another tool (or weapon) at their disposal. The dialogic process that Moore describes is certainly there, but the stance of resistance remains firmly there as well.

The Ghost Dance as a “Nexus of Resistance” As Well As Exchange

One way to illustrate the simultaneous nature of this cultural interaction is to take a recurring idea in the cultures—preferably one that resonates in the literature with some frequency—and examine how that idea functions within the dynamics of exchange. The Ghost Dance as a concept, and as a recurring image in many texts, is an ideal choice because much has already been said about its inherent dialogic structure. Michael Shermer, in his essay “God and the Ghost Dance,” and even James Mooney himself in his turn of the century work, *The Ghost Dance*, speaks of the historical ceremony as a curious blending of American Indian beliefs and Christianity, of a peaceful, religious premonition that became a fierce expression of apocalyptic defiance. The Ghost Dance phenomenon itself is a wonderful example of a point of dialogic exchange between the religions of a variety of cultures, and it clearly functioned as a nexus, or conduit, between these shifting and differing contexts. The Ghost Dance, as a phenomenon, as a philosophy, as a religious movement, was not wholly “Native” nor was it wholly “Christian,” but became a new dialogic expression of a third context, a polyvocal context within which these cultures could redefine themselves and attempt to survive in a dangerously shifting world. We can see this new context in the term Ghost Dance itself, which is a strained translation of the Lakota phrase *wanagi waipi*. The word ghost, or spirit, takes on new shades of meaning in cultures with radically differing views concerning the importance of ancestors.

But, at the same time that the cultural exchange that resulted in the Ghost Dance was occurring, there was also no question that the purpose of the ritual, despite Wovoka’s understanding of it (if we are to believe Mooney), became one of defiance and resistance. It became a potent symbol for Plains Indians in the late 19th century, and it has become an image used again and again by contemporary American Indian authors from Power to Alexie to Silko, and it has always meant the same thing: a continuation of the struggle on whatever level in whatever context is possible. As Silko’s character Angelita La Escapía in *Almanac of the Dead* points out, ideologies do not matter, theories do not matter—the

people will use whatever they have to, whatever is at hand (*Almanac* 310).

To see more clearly how this “nexus of resistance” works, let’s examine four occurrences of it in recent fiction. The dialogic nature of images of resistance, including but not limited to the Ghost Dance, can be seen, for instance, in Susan Power’s *The Grass Dancer*. We see evidence of the dialogic exchange that Moore speaks of in a variety of places in the novel. When Red Dress appears to Calvin Wind Soldier in a vision, she speaks in two voices, one Dakota and one English. She carries a war shield in one hand and three lassos in her other and tells Calvin that these things are “evidence of [her] success” (188). She then uses the lassos in order to snare him to get his “complete attention” (189). Herod Small War tells Jeanette McVay that despite her mixed-blood baby’s appearance, she needs to “tell her two stories,” otherwise she’ll “stand off-balance . . . and talk out of both sides of her mouth” (284). Even in characters such as Pumpkin, who has mixed blood and yet is also extremely spiritual, a healer, a woman with “plenty of soul to spare,” (45) we find evidence of Moore’s “nexus of exchange,” that “dialogism of multiple voices in collaboration” that constitutes a revised, heteroglotic context in which American Indian characters redefine themselves and what it means to be American Indians.

And yet, we are also reminded that despite these many voices, despite the redefinition, the goal of resistance remains unaltered. Harley sees his grandmother Margaret Many Wounds on television dancing on the moon during the first Apollo moonwalk in order to remind him that despite such technological advances, “there is still magic in the world” (114). Not surprisingly, we find the strongest mention of resistance in Power’s evocation of the Ghost Dance where we are reminded of the same message of hope—Red Dress speaks directly of her desire for hope and how she “blew a refreshing wind” in the faces of the Ghost Dancers (255). And, in her final message to Harley, she reminds him that he, too, “is dancing a rebellion” (299).

That message of rebellion is even more explicitly born out in Sherman Alexie’s *Indian Killer*. On one level, one could say that the novel is principally about what constitutes Indian identity. And that identity is clearly not about bloodlines, since the protagonist John Smith is a full blood without a trace of “Indianness,” while mixed blood characters like Reggie Polatkin presumably epitomize it. But more importantly, the very images to which Native peoples respond in Alexie’s work are mixed images coming from various contexts that coalesce into distinct dialogic points of connection, the way his paintings, with their

mixed images of traditional Spokane and Christian symbols, function for Father Duncan or the way the stained glass image of the dying Jesuits ultimately functions for John.

And again, we find at the center of the book the Ghost Dance as an image, with an Indian Killer who is the direct result of the Dance's spiritual energy, if we are to believe the theory Marie Polatkin suggests to Professor Mather. Marie tells him that although he admires the Ghost Dance as a symbol, and although he thinks of it as uniting Christian and American Indian beliefs into one vision of beauty and peace, he is very much mistaken. If the Ghost Dance ever works, she says, ". . . there would be no exceptions. . . . All you white people would disappear. All of you" (314). The chilling end of the novel, with the Killer leading a modern day Ghost Dance, inviting more and more Indians to dance, promising never to stop, is an explicit reminder that even though the Dance may be the result of dialogic cultural exchange, an even though each culture's input can be seen, there is no mistaking what the Dance ultimately signifies.

When we look at Silko's work, evidence for the dynamics of resistance can be seen everywhere and often in its clearest form. For instance, we see from the start in Silko's work that the process of dialogic exchange that Moore describes is, for her, a matter of course. In *Almanac of the Dead*, for example, we see a whole world that has become completely entangled, European and Native. We have characters like Angelita la Escapía and El Feo and their extensive discussions of Marxism, which for them is intertwined with Native beliefs and forms an ideal example of a political and spiritual "nexus of exchange." But it is made clear to us that for them, Marxist ideas are, in the end, not important. They are simply a tool, one more means to regain the land, which is the only goal that really matters. If that aim requires embracing communism or taking money from Cuba, if it means incorporating Marx's voice into the heteroglotic mix, so be it. But it does not in the slightest change the nature of the struggle. We may see a great deal of evidence in the novel for an ongoing dialogic and polyvocal "nexus of exchange," but by the end of *Almanac*, we have an indigenous spirit army sweeping up from the south and Lecha's dream of a future in which she sees American Indians "crowding the streets of Amsterdam" (756).

In Silko's more recent *Gardens in the Dunes*, we see this pattern again. In this work as in *Almanac*, one of the central images of resistance is the Ghost Dance, and its essential dialogic nature is one of its principle features. She introduces the image by describing in some detail Wovoka's vision, explaining how he saw Jesus and that "Jesus was

very angry with white people,” asking the Paiutes and all Native people to dance and bring on the “great storm clouds” that would “gather over the entire world” (25). Too, the nature of the dialogic exchange is seen to go both ways between the two cultures—Jesus is seen by the Paiutes as a means to speak to the dead and as a conduit to the ancestors, and Wovoka is seen as a new Messiah by the white Mormons who also come to dance. We are told that the Messiah, when he appears, speaks in many languages at once, using many voices (33).

And yet, we see again that the ultimate purpose is the retaking and restoring of the land. As Vedna reads from the Bible, for instance, Sister Salt hears Wovoka’s message of a spirit army rising up (362). When the dancers are dispersed in the final scene, we see Sister Salt and Vedna react with fury and defiance, and Hattie as well, whose defiance culminates with her setting an apocalyptic fire that sweeps through the town of Needles (475). And afterwards, with the help of Hattie’s money, the people survive and the struggle continues. “Something terrible had struck there,” Silko says, “but . . . it was gone. . . . Sister Salt could feel the change” (479).

It is significant that the scene at the old gardens at the end of the novel is positive and hopeful about the future, especially since that future involves many aspects of the world outside the gardens. The place is teeming with an array of outside influences. Linnaeus, the monkey, and Rainbow, the parrot, are, of course, not indigenous creatures. Many of the plants are from distant places, including the gladiolus spuds and the orchids. The little grandfather, who seems to have such spiritual energy, is, of course, part African-American. But despite all the new, the old gardens are slowly being restored. By the end, even the rattlesnake has returned (479).

The process Moore describes is clearly at work in these novels. They do often depict a new context, a dialogic “nexus of exchange.” But, this dialogic context often exists simultaneous to, and even becomes an extension of, the ongoing and deeply rooted pattern of Native resistance. As Gerald Vizenor made clear in his essay “Native American Indian Literature: Critical Metaphors of the Ghost Dance,” Native American works themselves can be seen as the literary equivalent of a Ghost Dance, both in terms of their inclusion of things non-Indian (such as the English language, and European literary forms, for instance) *and* in terms of their decidedly Indian purpose, which is to create, primarily, “a literature of liberation that enlivens tribal survivance” (Vizenor, *Ghost Dance* 227).

To fully understand this “literature of liberation,” however, we need to more fully understand the nature of the spirituality that gives rise to it

—and at its core, it is spirituality that both defines and drives the struggle (which is yet another reason the image of the Ghost Dance is so apropos). To better understand this relationship, we should turn to a particular work, a work that would best illustrate the connections between Native religious traditions and “the 500-year struggle.” That work, with all of its controversies, is Leslie Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*.

Spirit Armies on the Move: Silko’s Particular Blend of Spirituality and Resistance

In Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*, we have a world where dialogical, polyvocal exchanges between cultures are the norm, a landscape where many voices are heard with equal clarity. And yet, the spirituality that permeates the book—and its political message of resistance—is particularly consistent and unmistakable. But, because the Indian nature of the spirituality is not fully understood by many readers and because some postmodern critics would have us ignore its significance in any case, the novel has suffered some rather curious criticism.

Leslie Silko, despite the theoretical discourse surrounding her work and despite the praise that many critics have for her novels, has actively rejected any sort of postmodern label, as such critics as Daria Donnelly, Arnold Krupat, and Susan Perez Castillo have all pointed out, because in her view, postmodernism severs the connection between “language and community, history and cosmology,” a condition Silko would find essentially untenable (Donnelly 249). In fact, in her review of Louise Erdrich’s *The Beet Queen*, Silko condemns Erdrich for writing just such “postmodern” prose, using a stylistic, ethereal language that nevertheless manages to ignore the reality it is meant to depict (Silko, Review 10).

In her work, this reality is not ignored; it is the central issue. At the heart of the political message in *Almanac*, of course, are the ancient prophecies (which are found virtually everywhere—in the Mayan codices, in the sacred stone snake, in the various visions of shaman, including Wovoka’s vision of the Ghost Dance) that foretell the end of European dominance in the Americas. How we understand or misunderstand these prophecies determines in large part how we understand or misunderstand Silko’s novel.

Is the premise of indigenous peoples taking over the Americas simply “naïve to the point of silliness,” as Sven Birkerts suggested in his initial review (41), a statement we all hope he by now regrets? Or is Silko a literary genius writing the ultimate postmodern novel, complete with a *virtual* revolution? Or perhaps she is consciously aligning herself

with a wide range of Marxists and post-Marxists, most of whom argue in one form or another similar notions of historical inevitability? Whether we see these prophecies as naïve or as marginalized messages from increasingly irrelevant subcultures struggling to make themselves heard over the din of postmodernism, it seems clear that because of this varied discourse few take Silko at her word and believe what she spends the entire novel trying so hard to tell us. At stake in this discussion is the very authenticity of Silko's vision, of Native American fiction in general, and perhaps even—on some level—of Indian sensibility itself, a sensibility that remains, despite the postmodern forces that sometimes overshadow the critical discourse, deeply spiritual and tenaciously rooted in the land itself.

In her collection of essays, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, Silko says it this way: "The prophecies foretelling the arrival of the Europeans to the Americas also say that over this long time, all things European will eventually disappear. The prophecies do not say the European people themselves will disappear, only their customs" (125). It's this idea that Birkerts found contrary to "what we know both of the structures of power and the psychology of the oppressed" (41).

But the prophecies that foretell the end of European domination in Silko's novel, and the belief systems that support those prophecies, are not merely a manageable context from which to create a new political discourse, not merely a clever means to offer some new American Indian argument for historical inevitability. No, these prophetic elements in the novel, these religious proclamations, are radically political in nature, but are also deeply spiritual, whether they come from the ancient codices themselves, or the visions of people like the Barefoot Hopi or the twins Tacho and El Feo, or the stone snake on the Laguna reservation, or the nineteenth-century vision of the Ghost Dance. As Silko reminds us in *Yellow Woman*, the process of European removal that these prophecies foretell has "already begun to happen, and . . . it is a *spiritual* process that no armies will be able to stop" (*Yellow Woman* 125).

There is European influence everywhere in her novel, and there are many examples of attempts to adopt and assimilate European ideas into American Indian contexts. But ultimately these attempts are limited and destined to fail. And Silko makes it clear that the main problem with the Europeans in the Americas, despite their obvious influence on American Indian cultures, is their lack of spirituality and their inability to recognize the sacred, especially the sacredness associated with the land, with the earth, itself. As Calabazas tells Root, whites cannot appreciate differences, and those "who can't learn to appreciate the world's differences

won't make it" (*Almanac* 203). The ancestors and elders say that the most dangerous quality of the Europeans is that they suffer "a sort of blindness to the world" (*Almanac* 224). They cannot recognize differences in ordinary rocks, differences in land formations, differences in Indian peoples themselves. And since, from an American Indian perspective, all these things are sacred, this "blindness to the world" amounts to a spiritual blindness.

Menardo's Indian grandfather called Europeans "the orphan people" because their God had created them, but had soon become furious with them, driving them from their birthplace, their sacred land. Consequently, they were no longer able to "recognize [that] the earth was their mother. Europeans were like their first parents, Adam and Eve, wandering aimlessly because the insane God who had sired them had abandoned them" (*Almanac* 258). Clinton, in his radio broadcasts, argues that "the Europeans [have] been without a god since their arrival in the Americas," despite all the praying and the trappings of their religion. He points out the irony that the white man's God died, in philosophical terms, about the same time that white men started sailing around the world in the sixteenth century (*Almanac* 417). The Barefoot Hopi says that "Europeans [do] not listen to the souls of their dead. That [is] the root of all trouble for Europeans" (*Almanac* 604). And this spiritual blankness, this disregard for the sacred, is at the heart of the duplicitous web of conspiracies in and around Tucson, the corruption that we see on all social levels, a kind of spiritual sickness, cruel and voyeuristic, that permeates all of white society.

Even Marxism, which is seen in the novel as an genuine attempt by white society to better re-establish itself and re-connect to something communal, even tribal, to get away from the destructive social hierarchies that fragment and divide western culture, the same Marxism/post-Marxism which provides a backdrop against which Jameson paints his theories of the realities of late capitalism, even these ideas can only take us so far and no further. Why? Because the concepts that constitute Marxism aren't grounded in the sacred. As Angelita, La Escapia, points out, Marx was European, and "he and those following after him had understood the possibilities of communal consciousness only imperfectly" (*Almanac* 291). Without the spirituality which underpins them, these concepts become abstract and meaningless. Also, as Angelita later points out, the lack of spirituality allows them to commit heinous crimes against the land and the people, crimes that have soiled the hands of communists in the Americas, crimes for which the tribal peoples can never forgive them. She tells us over and over that though she admires Marx's ideas

in many ways, all she and other tribal people really care about is the land. All that really matters is the land, "that was their secret and the only 'truth' tribes could agree upon" (*Almanac* 310).

To the indigenous people, Marxism's lack of spirituality and lack of connection to the sacred land means ultimately that it will fail in the Americas. Angelita describes how she imagines Marx and Engels must have waited for revolution to come and how they must have been disappointed when it had not. She says they failed because they misunderstood two very important things. "They had not understood that the earth was mother to all beings," meaning that although it might have been appropriate to dismiss European Christianity, it was not appropriate to ignore indigenous beliefs in the sacredness of the land because to do that is to disconnect themselves from that which gives them life and to disconnect themselves from history—the very conditions that postmodernists like Paul Virilio bemoan. The other point that Angelita says Marx and Engels misunderstood was the importance of the spirit beings, meaning that they dismissed any notion of the spiritual continuity between the ancestors and the communal principles they were trying to reestablish, between the ancestors and the history they were trying to analyze (*Almanac* 749).

And this becomes a key criticism of Marxism in the novel because as Silko reminds us again and again, the people's revolution itself is the wishes of the ancestors, the spirit beings, and by extension, the land itself. We are told, for instance by El Feo, that the revolutionaries were not listening to leaders because they could be corrupted. Instead, they were listening to the voices in their heads, which were "the voices out of the past, the . . . voices of the ancestors" (*Almanac* 513). El Feo also reminds Angelita that the retaking of the Americas by tribal people is "what earth's spirits wanted" (*Almanac* 712). It is the same message that Wilson Weasel Tail writes poetry about, the connection between the spirit beings' desires and the goal of retaking the land. It is also the basis of the Ghost Dance that he evokes in his poetry (*Almanac* 724).

In Silko's novel, and in Native American cultures themselves, these connections with the ancestor spirits and with the land are not merely casual expressions of some earlier Native belief system, nor are they the marginalized constructs that people such as Jameson would simply stack onto the growing postmodern monolith of contrasting and varying ideas. For Silko, identity itself is dependent on these connections, identity as a collective people, as a tribe, as human beings. And, as Silko has said in almost everything she has ever written, these connections to the sacred

are made and kept strong via the stories that describe them and celebrate them.

To illustrate this collective consciousness, Silko tells an anecdote in *Yellow Woman* about witnessing people in a Yaqui village coming out of their houses at the same moment to attend a funeral of one of their neighbors. The sight stuck with her and served to remind her that “to be a people . . . is the dimension of human identity that anthropology understands least . . . this is where [the Yaqui’s] power as a culture lies: with this shared consciousness of being part of a living community that continues on and on, beyond the death of one or even of many . . .” (*Yellow Woman* 90). She goes on to discuss the nature of storytelling in her own Pueblo culture and how it functions to establish these communal bonds that reach beyond death and connect individual identity to something larger, something historic. She says, “. . . storytelling had the effect of placing an incident in the wider context of Pueblo history so that individual loss or failure was less personalized and became part of the village’s eternal narratives about loss and failure, narratives that identify the village and that tell the people who they are” (*Yellow Woman* 91).

Daria Donnelly, in her essay “Old and New Notebooks: *Almanac of the Dead* as Revolutionary Entertainment,” discusses the link between storytelling and Silko’s political purpose in *Almanac*, pointing out first that there has been a shift in the social sciences in general toward re-conceiving “history as the struggle for domination between competing stories” (Donnelly 245). She then argues that critics who hail Silko as a postmodernist because of her attention to marginal stories, her willingness to include “everyone’s testimony,” as Donnelly says, “misapprehend the almanac, which is not meant to be a site of social commentary, but rather of proliferating storytelling” . . . and that in *Almanac of the Dead*, Silko had become even more interested in “the power of stories to create and account for reality” (Donnelly 254).

But we need to always bear in mind—and it is something we invariably tend to forget, which is why Silko spends so much time reminding us—that this power stories have is a sacred power, serving religious as well as a political purposes and involving the spirit beings that inhabit the land. Angelita points out to the indigenous crowds that “the stories of the people or their history [have] always been sacred, the source of their entire existence . . . the ancestors’ spirits [are] summoned by the stories . . . that within history reside relentless forces, powerful spirits, vengeful, relentlessly seeking justice” (*Almanac* 316). Angelita tells them later that “in the stories, the people [live] on in the imaginations and hearts of their descendants. Wherever their stories [are] told,

the spirits of the ancestors [are] present and their power [is] alive" (*Almanac* 520). And the trouble with Marx, the reason Marxism will ultimately fail in the Americas, she tells her audience, is that Marx "did not understand the power of the stories [belongs] to the spirits of the dead" (*Almanac* 521).

The continuity between the ancestor spirits and the living community, between the living community and the land itself, between the land and the spirits that inhabit it form the very fabric of the what Silko calls the 500-year resistance, the 500-year war of indigenous peoples, and all those characters in the novel who help create that fabric understand its spiritual nature. Wilson Weasel Tail, we are told, abandoned the study of law to pursue poetry because "poetry would speak to the spirits" and "set the people free" (*Almanac* 713). In his performance poetry itself, he calls forth the ancestor spirits, especially his Lakota ancestors who once danced the Ghost Dance.

Furthermore, Silko's Weasel Tail also tells us that this spiritual connection to the Ghost Dance has always been misunderstood. That anthropologists and others had assumed that the tribal peoples had become disillusioned when the ghost shirts did not stop bullets and the Europeans had not vanished overnight. But this was not true. The people knew all along that the shirts "belonged to the realm of the spirits" and offered spiritual protection, not physical protection, and that this kind of protection was, in the end, far more important (*Almanac* 722). Just like Menardo, who misunderstands the true nature of power and seeks physical protection with his bulletproof vest rather than the spiritual protection offered by Tacho and his visions against the corrupting influence of power and money, Europeans (and those like Menardo who would be European) have difficulty seeing past their own noses. They are blind to the world, as Silko says, disconnected to the land and the people and history itself. The true purpose of the Ghost Dance, Weasel Tail reminds us, was not to help them repel the soldiers' bullets, but was rather an elaborate attempt to "reunite living people with the spirits of beloved ancestors lost in the five-hundred-year war" (*Almanac* 722).

It seems ironic that it is precisely this spirituality, with its curious mixture of images—these connections to the land and to the community and to the ancestors—that causes Silko to be so often misunderstood. If Sven Birkerts had understood this spiritual power, he might not have found Silko's premise so far-fetched. If postmodern critics truly understood this spiritual significance, perhaps they would not be as inclined to categorically dismiss it as irrelevant. But then, as old Yoeme

tells us in the novel, white people have always hated to hear anything about spirits because spirits are immune to bribes and threats, spirits cannot be dealt with in the way the whites have always dealt with the world, through argument and violence. “Against the spirits,” she says, “the white man [is] impotent” (*Almanac* 581).

There is no question that the cultural elements and images available to Silko and other American Indian authors are dialogic in nature and that understanding the interaction of exchange in everything from religion to politics and beyond is necessary in order to track the full scope of the polyvocal dynamics at work here. But in the final analysis, the purpose remains primarily an “Indian” purpose—one of resistance and a political struggle to survive, but a struggle that also remains thoroughly and completely spiritual.

Joy Harjo, in her review, “The World is Round: Some Notes on Leslie Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*,” tells an anecdote to illustrate—in Indian fashion—the problem for many postmodern critics who so often fail to understand the spiritual and political complexity of Silko’s (or, for that matter, any other American Indian author’s) achievement. She tells a story about the time two tricksters, arrogant academics who thought they represented the last word in American literature, active postmodern poets who had received many rewards from the literary community, came to the University of New Mexico and delivered their cutting-edge ideas before a packed audience. She tells us that their “trickster downfall will be similar to that of others in this country who believe there was nothing in this land until they arrived. They will find nothing. The world is still flat for them. There are no curves, no horizon. But the world is round. That is the trick. Everything turns back on them” (Harjo 210). In spiritual terms, critics will find in these stories only those truths they bring to them. And unless those who study these novels—whether they represent a flawed, fragmented collection of marginal voices or radical, new experiments in postmodern fiction—finally understand the roundness of their full spiritual, as well as political, dimensions, then the criticism surrounding them will often sound hollow and flat.

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Pomo Basketweaving, Poison, and the Politics of Restoration in Greg Sarris's *Grand Avenue*

Michelle Burnham

In the first story of Greg Sarris's *Grand Avenue: A Novel in Stories*, fourteen-year-old Jasmine describes the mural that her Aunt Faye has painted on the front wall of her home: a "big green forest" with "dark trunks and thick green leaves" to which Faye over time has added a series of crosses in pink fingernail polish (*GA* 9).¹ Each cross represents an incident of poisoning in the family's past, poison which, she explains, "can circle around and get someone in your family. It's everywhere" (4). When Faye's sister steals her new boyfriend, for example, the theft marks the return of the "man poison" (20) that first infected Faye when, as a young girl, she stole a lover from her cousin Anna (21). The poison's return leads Faye to modify further the painting on her wall, by drawing "circles around many of the crosses and connect[ing] them with lines from one to another. . . . [in] what looked like a black crayon" (20). As Faye's fear and anger grow, she eventually covers the entire painting with the crayon, leaving it entirely "Black, except for the edges here and there where you could see a bit of green from the trees underneath" (23). Faye's painting is a history, a narrative, a genealogy; it depicts the pattern that poison has woven over and through time in her family. The interconnected lines that bind family members to each other have become buried within the blackness of an oblivion brought on by the fear of poison and the separation and silence caused by it.

Grand Avenue is itself a complex genealogical narrative that weaves together eleven separate stories told in ten different narrative voices. While one of these is an omniscient, third-person narrative (a significant detail to which I will return later in this essay), the others are first-person accounts by various members of the large and fragmented family of Sam Toms, the universally disliked patriarch and eldest surviving descendant of Juana Maria, a Pomo bear person.² It is Sam Toms who is one of the central sources of poison in the family and the book, and the individual tales of disease, poverty, conflict, and dispossession that make up *Grand Avenue* might be said—very much like Faye's painting—to track and record the routes and returns of this poison. But the novel ultimately suggests—in both its structure and its content—that healing depends on the messy interconnectedness of these stories and the characters who people them. The ceremonial release of poison and the restoration of an interracial community require the recognition that stories, family and

cultural histories, are marked as much by disruption and mixture as they are by uniformity and continuity.

The final story/chapter of the book is narrated by Nellie, the Pomo elder, healer and basketweaver whose power to cure poisonings and disease arrived to her through the songs of a green frog. Through the course of this last account Nellie watches her young relative Alice weave “a medium-sized coiled holding basket” in which the design of “a large sunflower radiat[es] up from the bottom of the basket” (224). Nellie’s earlier attempts to instruct her granddaughter Darlene in the rituals and techniques of Pomo basketweaving have all failed, but as she watches Alice’s basket and its sunflower grow, she suddenly recognizes that “it happened. It came around in a full circle, a picture I could understand, flowers and two people holding hands. This basket has power” (229), she realizes. In the book’s final paragraph, a small green frog appears and delivers sacred songs to Alice. Thus the dark binding lines drawn by the power of poison in *Grand Avenue* are met and counteracted by the coils of willow, sedge and song that restore Pomo healing traditions in and through the practice of basketweaving.

Faye’s painting and Alice’s basket—the opening and closing images in *Grand Avenue*—represent the intertwined powers and practices of storytelling and basketweaving. Despite being classified and marketed as a novel, the form of *Grand Avenue*—like so many other Native American novels by writers as different as Louise Erdrich, Gerald Vizenor, and Susan Power—exposes Western literary categories like “novel,” “chapter,” or “short story” as insufficient, inaccurate, and inappropriate to describe either the parts or the whole of this book. In many ways, the covers of the paperback edition of *Grand Avenue* already instigate a kind of categorical mischief. The publisher’s description of the book on the back cover, for instance, describes it as Sarris’s “unforgettable first novel,” while the blurb from Sherman Alexie printed immediately below this paragraph praises “Greg Sarris’s *stories*” (emphases added). The book’s two-part title—*Grand Avenue: A Novel in Stories*—seems at once to cause and to resolve such confusion, since it simultaneously adopts and resists an alliance with these genres. Prompted by such cues, my students often question and debate whether *Grand Avenue* is a novel, a collection of short stories, or something else altogether.

The book’s deliberately complex engagement with such generic categories might suggest that Sarris—like many native writers before him—is exploiting the novel’s heteroglossic elements to engage in a form of what James Ruppert calls cultural mediation, or the process of

bringing both Native and Western cultural traditions into a mutually enriching dialogue aimed at recreating communities and selves (3). Jace Weaver has more recently argued, however, that critical interest in cultural mediation must be balanced with an attention to what he calls “communitism,” or the activist production within Native literatures of a healing Native community (36, xiii). In fact, if we look at *Grand Avenue* less in the context of novel theory and more in the tribally-specific context of Pomo basketmaking, then the communitist shape, meaning, and function of the text come into greater relief.³

Indeed, Sarris’s own reflections on Native American literature and the dynamics of storytelling suggest that his interest may not be in mediation so much as in the kind of healing political remainder produced out of the dialogic dimensions of storytelling. Although surprisingly little critical attention has as yet been given to his own works of fiction,⁴ once we put his fiction and non-fiction into dialogue with each other, *Grand Avenue* takes shape as itself a kind of literary Pomo basket whose intersubjective weave functions not only to hold the stories together, but to ceremonially restore and heal Native community. As its subtitle indicates, *Grand Avenue* occupies a space both inside and outside such categories as novel and story, where not only the intersubjective elements of oral storytelling can be reclaimed, but where the political possibilities of that intersubjectivity might be imagined and achieved. In an article written just after the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria (formerly the Federated Coast Miwok) regained federal recognition in December 2000, five-term tribal chairman Greg Sarris outlines the more explicitly political and spiritual functions of interconnectivity when he asks

isn’t a ceremony, in the best sense of the word, that which reconnects us to one another and the world around us and thus revives well-being and strength? And isn’t the recognition of our relation to one another the first, and undoubtedly the most important, prerequisite ‘to put back into existence’ a tribe and all that that means, its health, its courage, its hope once again for a home? (“First” 13).

Osage scholar Robert Warrior has argued that “the struggle for sovereignty is not a struggle to be free from the influence of anything outside ourselves, but a process of asserting the power we possess as communities and individuals to make decisions that affect our lives” (124).⁵ If we see *Grand Avenue* in the context of this struggle for sovereignty, the book emerges as a textual version of a Pomo basket whose weaving recounts

and performs a healing ceremony of restoration that re-members the bonds weakened by colonialism and its poisonous legacies of separation and fear.

* * *

In his critical study *Keeping Slug Woman Alive: A Holistic Approach to American Indian Texts*, Sarris theorizes storytelling by weaving together reflections on the work of contemporary literary and cultural theorists with reflections on his own interactions with his aunt, the Pomo healer and basketweaver Mabel McKay. Sarris notes as a fundamental dimension of storytelling what Bakhtin in his theory of the novel calls heteroglossia or the diversity of intersecting voices and languages. Sarris further observes that Bakhtin aligns novelistic storytelling not only with polyvocality but with an intersubjectivity that, as David Bleich observes, is contained within novels but is also elicited by the practice of reading them (KS 4-5). Storytelling, in this sense, brings us into intimate contact with the languages and worlds of other people and communities. Sarris repeatedly practices the very theory he describes in *Keeping Slug Woman Alive*: among the voices of literary theorists, ethnographers, and philosophers appear the voices of Mabel McKay and of Sarris himself, who meditates on the difficulties of recording her voice. Sarris charts his own and others' dialogues and interactions with McKay in order to locate elements of those exchanges that escape dominant understandings of storytelling. While some of the stories she tells, for example, include narrative properties that one might expect of traditional Western stories (like a beginning, middle, and end), other kinds of what Sarris simply calls her "talk" work to prompt the kind of "dialogue within and between people that can expose boundaries that shape and constitute different cultural and personal worlds" (4). According to Sarris, it is the fundamental work of storytelling, of the linguistic and cultural exchange that it prompts, to bring into view such world-defining boundaries and to call into question the categories that such boundaries appear to define.

At one point, Sarris recounts the moment when Mabel McKay interrupts his unsuccessful attempts to pry information about the Pomo from her, on behalf of his anthropology professor, to suddenly tell "me this story about the man who poisoned the beautiful woman doctor" (26). His account of her story puts the words of his aunt and those of the philosopher Paul Ricoeur together in order to explain how the dialogic elements of storytelling work to disrupt preconceived assumptions.

Suspicious that the intersubjective dynamic of storytelling (or what, building on Ricoeur, Sarris calls the “dialogical ‘we’” [27]) collapses in writing, he aims to re-present the intersubjectivity of his exchange with McKay as a way to recover the powerfully challenging effect of her talk, which “interrupt[s] and simultaneously expose[s] the interlocutor’s presuppositions at any point” (28). Her story about poisoning, moreover, continues to take shape and unfold over time, as repeated exchanges with and interruptions by his aunt prompt Sarris to forge a series of personal and historical connections. The complex narrative weaving eventually leads him, for example, not only to reframe his perceptions of another family, but to interrogate the limits of ethnography and academic scholarship, and to recognize the pressures that the history of European imperialism continues to exert on American Indian families and communities in the present, including his own. Such linguistic exchanges therefore enable “a simultaneous opening of two worlds” (30) that can generate a powerful site for cultural critique and for cultural change, including the process of building family and community. As Mary Slowik aptly describes it, in these exchanges “The frames fall bluntly, cryptically against each other so that what might seem like an instance of indirection may actually be a form of narrative and cultural investigation precluding the discursive interpretive modes we are familiar with” (62). Sarris recognizes that the political possibilities of such interrogation become especially critical in the liminal, dialogic space between two cultures that is created and so often exploited by anthropology (KS 32-33).

Mabel McKay’s interactions with others further reveal to Sarris the openness of oral storytelling that can become foreclosed through writing. Any story contains elements that exist beyond and outside the story itself. Essie Parrish, the Kashaya Pomo Dreamer and cousin of Sarris’s grandmother, describes the practice of an anthropologist who came to interview her: “I tell him things, stories. He picks them up like leaves in his machine and carries them back to his place. Then he listens and looks. Like at each leaf. Beauty is the whole tree. That’s the secret. That’s a story. Can this white man know that?” (“Encountering” 126). No story is ever complete or finished, and all stories are part of a limitless and mutable “context of orality” (127). To treat a story as a leaf, as a category, as a self-contained entity separate from its larger interwoven context, is to violate its connection to the larger tree that surrounds and sustains it. *Grand Avenue* suggests that the political achievement of a community’s sovereignty can be reached only by restoring and remembering these poisoned and forgotten connections.

The very way we tell our stories, and the way we understand genre and literary categories, therefore have political effects.⁶

The essays collected in *Keeping Slug Woman Alive* work both independently and together to perform the theories of storytelling that they present, in an effort to press writing more fully to acknowledge and accommodate the transformative possibilities of oral exchange, including its “tendencies to engage the larger world in which the spoken word lies so that it is seen for what it might or might not be beyond the page” (45-46). As Sarris explains, his book “interweaves a myriad of voices with autobiography and theoretical discourse to create a document representing exchanges that open the world people share with each other” (6). Woven together in this description are the influences of Mabel McKay’s remarkable orality and of Bakhtinian theories of novelistic language. Those influences also appear at work in the interweaving of voices and genres within *Grand Avenue*.

While it is certainly possible to read each “chapter” of *Grand Avenue* on its own, as a separate and distinct “short story,” to do so would be to miss the way in which each story also alters, reshapes, and furthers the others. Although each story is connected to the others, the relationship between them obeys neither the principles of a progressive teleology nor of a coherent unity. In “The Magic Pony,” for instance, Jasmine describes her cousin Ruby, with whom she lives when she decides to move into the home of her Auntie Faye. Jasmine’s Ruby is frustratingly distant, silent, and peculiar. A bookworm, Ruby “talked to extraterrestrials who landed on the street outside. She’d read books in the library and come out acting like some character in the book” (4). When Ruby develops an attachment to a foundered pony slated for slaughter, she unsuccessfully schemes to save it, and finally, Jasmine tells us, gets arrested after setting the slaughterhouse barn on fire in an effort to save the animal to which she has become so attached.

Two stories later, Frankie tells of his youthful attraction to and affection for Ruby. In contrast to the complex portrait of Ruby’s mother offered by Jasmine, Faye appears in Frankie’s account as a bodiless face that resembled a “mask, painted orange lips the same color as the nails on the door, pencil brows, and false eyelashes, one of the lashes drooping over her eye like on a busted doll” (63). Readers’ prior portrait of Faye gets disrupted, challenged, and opened up by this new description, told from a new perspective. Like Jasmine’s Ruby, Frankie’s Ruby is also interested in constructing and inhabiting fantasy worlds. But after being rejected by her after kissing her, Frankie unexpectedly discovers Ruby, in a red dress and “with lipstick and done-up hair” (71), on display

among a group of apparent prostitutes in the slaughterhouse barn. These two accounts of Ruby—a character who, significantly, never narrates her own story in the book—expose each other’s necessary incompleteness and interdependence. By doing so, they expose the boundaries of each narrator’s personal and cultural world, just as Mabel McKay’s verbal exchanges do. Over and over again throughout *Grand Avenue*, each narrator’s perspective complicates and extends previous perceptions of particular characters or events. Each story subtly interrupts and reshapes the others, compelling readers continuously to rethink their assumptions and to rebuild the narrative world of this book and the family it describes. Each story adds leaves to the family’s narrative tree, which emerges as inescapably dialogic and intersubjective, and as a process that always remains unfinished. And the experience of telling such connecting and competing stories slowly begins to assume a communitist shape necessary to the process of sovereignty. Consider, for example, Sarris’s description of the storytelling origins of the struggle of the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria to regain their illegally terminated federal recognition:

About a dozen families, at least seventy people, crowded Rita’s home [a tribal elder], and someone from each of the families brought a photo album. None of this had been planned. Each family simply wanted to share a family album. Immediately everyone began trading albums and finding relatives—aunts and uncles, grandmothers and grandfathers, a great-great grandfather—in another family’s album. The photos generated stories and memory—yes, we are all related, connected in some way. (“First” 13)

As Sarris tells it, the Graton Rancheria Indians’ profound 2000 legal victory began by sharing photos and stories and by weaving together the connections that many did not realize already bound them together.

It is not only the interconnections between people that are critical to this process of Native community-building. In his often self-reflective biography of his aunt, *Mabel McKay: Weaving the Dream*, Sarris describes her as the “World-renowned Pomo basketmaker with permanent collections in the Smithsonian and countless other museums. The last Dreamer and sucking doctor among the Pomo peoples. The last living member of the Long Valley Cache Creek Pomo tribe. The astute interlocutor famous for her uncanny talk that left people’s minds spinning” (MM 3). In this list as in his numerous accounts of Mabel McKay, Sarris significantly intertwines her “uncanny talk” with her

basketweaving skills and powers to cure poisoning. As she and other Pomo basketweavers have insisted, it is impossible to separate such traditions from each other. The basketweaver Susan Billy, for instance, explains that “as I began to learn about the basket weaving I realized that I couldn’t separate it from learning the traditions and the customs, the religion, all their way of living, their whole life-style. And I realized that all these things went together, that you couldn’t just learn one part, that they overlapped” (Coe 48). Likewise, Sarris explains that “Mabel cannot separate a discussion about the material aspect of her basketry from a discussion about Dreams, doctoring, prophecy, and the ancient basketweaving rules, since for Mabel these things cannot be talked about or understood separately” (51). Displaying a basket in a museum showcase makes it categorizable as an “autonomous piece of art” (55)—much like treating a story as a leaf does—but at the price of severing its crucial connectedness to the very context that gives it both cultural meaning and political power.⁷

In his work, Sarris continuously foregrounds the difficulty of maintaining this complex oral contextuality in written form. At one point while trying to record her autobiography, Sarris complains to McKay that her “stories go all over the place. I can’t write them like that. It’s too hard for people to follow” (4). He asks her to provide more narrative continuity, something like a “theme . . . that connects all the dots, ties up all the stories.” Mabel replies with both amusement and defiance. “That’s funny,” she remarks. “Tying up all the stories. Why somebody want to do that?” before instructing him to forget about “somebody else’s rule. You just do the best way you know how. What you know from me” (5). This exchange between Sarris and McKay, in which she verbally resists compliance with the terms of his request for more recognizable and separable categories, resembles those between McKay and the students, anthropologists, and scholars who ask her to explain how she learned to make baskets or to doctor the sick. When asked by a student at an interview on native healing techniques how to treat poison oak, for example, she replies “Calamine lotion” (KS 17). A doctoral student studying Shakespeare listens to her story about a black snake that suddenly appears in a vase in the home of a woman whose husband repeatedly threatens to kill it. When the student asks whether the snake was killed, Mabel explains that “There’s laws against killing people” (37). Perplexed, the student asks “was it man or snake? I mean when you were looking at it?” Mabel’s reply—“You got funny ideas. Aren’t I sitting here?” (37)—effectively exposes and challenges her interrogator’s most basic categories and the assumptions that depend on

them. A Stanford showing of a documentary film about Essie Parrish and the Bole Maru attended by members of Sarris's family generated similar effects.⁸ During the question and answer period about Parrish and the film, a woman in the audience tells Violet Chappell, Parrish's daughter, and Anita Silva, a Kashaya Pomo politician, that "I don't know anything about the Indians. I was hoping to know something after today. Like where to start." Silva responds by asking the woman "do you know who you are? Why are you interested? Ask yourself that" (74).

Exchanges such as these confuse listeners precisely because they befuddle the categories of experience, culture, and response that their questioners presume and expect. When Sarris informs Mabel McKay that in order to complete her biography he will still need to get from her "the exact dates and figures that go with the stories" (135), so that "I can get things right. I mean with your life, the story" (136), she announces that "It has nothing to do with dates and that. I don't know about dates. It's everlasting what I'm talking about" (136). It is precisely the unexpected interruptions, disruptions, and withholdings in Mabel's verbal exchanges that expose for Sarris the most important and dynamic elements of storytelling's dialogic character: its intersubjectivity, its open and unfinished quality, its self-reflexive capacity to reveal cultural boundaries and the powerful political possibilities that reside in the often murky connections between categories and people. *Grand Avenue* is in many ways a textual performance of the kinds of verbal strategies employed by a speaker like Mabel McKay. And the central figure in this "novel in stories" for such a dynamics is the basket, which represents the power and the limits both of stories and of family.

* * *

Pomo Indian baskets, acknowledged by many to be the most famous baskets in the world, are made from willow rods, around which are twined or coiled strands that come from three different sources: sedge root, bullrush root, and redbud shoots.⁹ These three materials yield the three different colors that make up traditional Pomo basketry: white sedge, black bullrush, and reddish-brown redbud.¹⁰ These materials must be located, gathered, and prepared, before their strands are ready to be woven together into a variety of traditional, and sometimes more original, designs. Pomo baskets vary widely in size and shape as well, depending largely on whether their function is carrying and gathering, storage, winnowing and leaching acorn meal, trapping animals, or cooking food. When they are used as gifts or prayer baskets, they can be

as small as a thimble and are often adorned with colorful feathers and shell beads.¹¹ As Sarris explains in his biography of Mabel McKay, baskets served a crucial role in her doctoring. The spirit explains to her that “You make a basket to spit out the sickness you suck with your mouth” (*MM* 73), and when Mabel sucks the “tiny spotted fish” from an ill Colusa woman she “cough[s] it out into the basket” (94). The spirit furthermore informs her that “Each of your baskets has a purpose. Each has a rule. But a lot of people won’t understand that. You must explain, show the people that the baskets are living, not just pretty things to look at” (74). Each basket therefore marks a node within a complex web of personal, familial, and communal interconnections, just as each basket is constructed out of a complex and interconnected weave. Like a story, a basket takes on its shape, meaning and function only within this category-defying contextuality. But the basket’s weave is itself often interrupted and disrupted, just as stories and genealogies are. *Grand Avenue* suggests that those interruptions within traditions, patterns, and structures are themselves spiritual sites for renewal and communitist healing.

“Sam Toms’s Last Song,” the only story in *Grand Avenue* that is not a first-person narrative, seems itself a kind of interruption within the book’s pattern or structure. In the story, Nellie is at home finishing two baskets, “a small canoe-shaped basket” (*GA* 153) that has been commissioned of her by the mayor and a “half-finished beaded basket” (154) that has been ordered from her by a local woman. As she weaves the final loops of sedge on the canoe basket, Sam Toms arrives at her door, determined on his 100th birthday to escape his dependence on other family members by moving in with her, perhaps even marrying her. Nellie asks him what he has to offer in return, and when his money is not enough he determines to convince her by singing his own powerful songs to her. But as he does so, Nellie “hold[s] her basket toward him” (158), capturing his songs and his power within it; she exclaims afterwards that “in the right hands your songs can be used as medicine. Antidotes” (158). Baskets, like storytelling, have the power to extract poison, to contain it, and to transform its function from disease to cure.¹² *Grand Avenue* works like a basket to the extent that it, too, seeks to extract the poisons of fear and anger that separate the members of this family and community from each other, and to transform those poisons through an interwoven story into a medicine with the political and spiritual power of restoration.

This story is clearly a significant one in the collection, since Nellie’s capture of Sam Toms’s songs marks a turning point in the harmful

effects of poison on the family. But it is also an anomalous story, the only story told by an omniscient narrator, the only story not owned and spoken in the first person, by a particular voice. If we understand *Grand Avenue* as a Pomo basket, however, what might appear anomalous or even erroneous becomes deliberate and crucial. In the book and catalog for a 1986 exhibition on Native American art, organized by the American Federation of Arts, the photograph of a basket woven by Ukiah Pomo Susan Billy appears. The basket consists of sedge and redbud woven around willow rod, in a pattern of staggered dark rectangles that spiral within a light-colored weave. But within one of those dark rectangles appear three or four small coils of light sedge that form a very small square. The catalog obliquely explains that "The lighter accents inserted into the dark oblong designs (the meanings of which are now lost) allow a weaver to continue work despite a menstrual taboo" (Coe 231-32). In another catalog, a design band that runs through one Pomo basket suddenly breaks into a different design motif before returning to its original pattern, an anomaly described as a "dau" or "a break in the pattern," which, although "not entirely understood, . . . often has been interpreted as a place where the spirit could come and go, to enter and inspect the basket or escape when the basket is destroyed" (Bibby 45).¹³ An account of "The Myth of the Dau," collected by S.A. Barrett in *Pomo Myths*, suggests another kind of significance to this sudden discrepancy within the pattern.

When the world-maker, the coyote spirit, had concluded his work of creating the world and man, he seated himself to rest, congratulating himself upon the many good works he had done. At this juncture the Pika Namo, or basket spirits, came before him and petitioned him to give them a village or home to be theirs always. The coyote spirit graciously acceded, and said to them, that there, on the surface of baskets, they might have a home which should be theirs always, and then addressing the basket spirits, said, "You basket spirits, young men and young women, old men and old women, children all, here is a good home for you all, to be yours always. If you die, you will lie in the ground four days here, then you will ascend to the upper sky to live forever, where there is no sickness, where it is always day, where all are happy.

"The door (dau) of the basket will always keep swinging for you to escape through when you die." (Barrett 380)

Paula Giese explains further that Billy's basket reveals a "*dau* (weaver's choice of deliberate apparent error), the Spirit Door that lets good spirits in, and lets bad ones out, of the basket" ("California").¹⁴ What might appear therefore as an inadvertent mistake in the basket's weave is instead a home for the basket spirits, and an opening through which the basket spirits can move. The story "Sam Toms's Last Song," I suggest, might also be understood as a *dau*, a kind of spirit door within the basket-text of *Grand Avenue*. While it seems a discrepancy in the pattern of the narrative, it subtly marks a site within it where spirits transport themselves, from their residence in Sam Toms to a new "home" in Nellie's canoe-shaped basket. Likewise, it is repeatedly and only through the transfer or sharing of song and story—across what appear to be discontinuities—that it becomes possible to imagine or create a communitist sense of "home" for the collection of largely disconnected Native individuals who make up *Grand Avenue*.

Later, for example, when Nellie watches in amazement as the young girl Alice weaves a perfect knot from sedge on her first try, she insists that Alice speak to her as she learns to make baskets. Storytelling and weaving are integrated functions, as Nellie realizes when she asks Alice to "Talk. It's important to talk. Us Indians here are all family. That's the trouble, no one talks. Stories, the true stories, that's what we need to hear. We got to get it out. The true stories can help us. Old-time people, they told stories, Alice. They talked. Talk, Alice, don't be like the rest" (219). Alice grasps rods of willow for her basket as she begins to tell Nellie the story of the strands that make up her family and of the many races and ethnicities that tie them together. Alice explains that her sister Justine's father, for example, "is a Filipino and mine is Mexican. My brother Sheldon's is white. And my other brother, Jeffrey, is a Indian from Stewart Point. Justine gets in lots of trouble. Her and Mom fight. Justine likes black boys. Mom hates black people" (220). Only when discontinuity, disruption, and mixture are recognized as a viable part of the pattern can family and tribal history be remembered. Moreover, discrepancy and difference themselves make up part of the "home" of this Native community.

Just as basketweaving, storytelling, and family are tightly and inseparably interwoven in this exchange between Nellie and Alice, so are they throughout *Grand Avenue*. Just as multiple willow rods make up the shape and foundation of a Pomo basket, so do the multiple but separate stories of individuals mark the contours of the family's larger story. Just as white sedge, black bullrush, and reddish-brown redbud weave patterns in and around the willow to give the basket its design, so do the

intermixed races of Indian, African, Mexican, Filipino, and European give design to the extended family of Sam Toms. Races and ethnicities form a complex pattern here, just as the red, black, and white strands do in a Pomo basket, and as the multiple stories do in the book *Grand Avenue*. These interdependent stories function as roots and rods that—like the sedge and willow that Nellie collects—intertwine narratively to weave a book that resembles a textual version of the Pomo baskets that are the subject of so much of Sarris's work, and that emerge here at the end of *Grand Avenue* as a powerful figure for the intercultural polyvocality that defines family, tradition, and story. That basket and its interconnected weave only take shape, however, as the family members—by opening the door or *dau*—overcome the shame that prevents them from talking, from telling stories, from healing, and from creating a sovereign home.

When Anna falls in love as a young girl with Joaquin Jones, she is warned by her mother that "That boy's your third cousin." Anna complains in response that "We're tangled up with everybody" (38), an observation that her mother confirms. Through its own entangled stories, *Grand Avenue* slowly exposes this interwovenness, and ceremonially transforms it from a form of shame to one of strength. Frankie, who falls for Ruby Jones in the subsequent story, also finally figures that "me and Ruby was related somehow too. Hell, all of us is related" (61). If Sam Toms is "grandpa of half the neighborhood" (61), as Frankie remarks, then his "offspring," notes Toms himself, consist of "Mexicans, Filipinos, whites" (144). The community living at Grand Avenue is bound together by these ties that have been hidden or silenced as a result of a historical and ongoing colonialism. As Sarris remarks in his reflections on the ancestors of the present-day Graton Rancheria Indians, "Fear, then, no doubt, was ubiquitous. For fear is a by-product of separation and estrangement; and colonization deliberately works to separate the subjugated from everything they know: culture, land, one another. . . . Imagine not knowing your own family, or fearing your own home" (13).

Albert fearfully reflects on the pattern of his family when, upon learning that his mother was black, he insists in response that he is Portuguese. He later questions such categories altogether when he realizes that "a Portuguese could be a black person: you know, mixing with the Moors and all. Or how a black person could be a Portuguese, mixing with a Portuguese. It could happen either way or both. I'd never know in our case, since there was no one to ask" (111). This leaf or strand of his family's story represents a kind of *dau* or confusion in the

pattern, one that changes the meaning of many other stories for Albert, who now comes to see his own attraction to a sixteen-year-old girl he has picked up from the street as “my particular version of what plagued everyone in my family, my shame” (112). As he drives by his own house, he imagines “A bunch of Indians in there. In my house, yes. Not just my wife and children and my wife’s mother. It doesn’t stop there. It goes on” (115). Indeed, it goes on, Albert realizes, to include the young woman with whom he is driving, who calls him “Unky” and who is probably a “relative of some kind” who “knew who I was” (116).

The effect of imposing bounded and separated racial categories onto the family—like the effect of distinct categories on the process of storytelling or basketweaving—is to shame into silence the complex weave of seemingly disorderly connections that bind people, stories, and baskets together and give them meaning. As a young man, Steven is instructed not to marry his pregnant girlfriend, Pauline, when he is informed with great “embarrassment” that “Pauline’s your sister” (191). Steven is again “ashamed” (196) when, much later in life, he unexpectedly encounters Pauline at an Indian festival, and it is this same shame that leads him to keep silent to his wife, Reyna, about Pauline and her boy, Tony, whom Steven knows is his son. Only by telling the story of Pauline and Tony to Reyna are these strands of the story integrated into the family basket, and only then can that basket reclaim its power to heal and its potential to rebuild a sense of home. As Sarris remarks elsewhere, “Fear and separation, the ghosts of colonialism, haunt us and we must forever be on the lookout for them. But we have the antidote. We carry that with us too: hope. And the good medicine that empowers hope, enables us to succeed: the family that is a tribe, and the good stories that remind us of that” (“First” 14).

In the process of collecting stories in order to write his biography of Mabel McKay, Greg Sarris discovered that “Things came together. It wasn’t just her story she had wanted me to know. While trying to help her, while trying to trace her story, I traced my own” (164). He unexpectedly learns that he is related to many of the Pomo Indians among whom he had been living for years, and finally reflects on the shape that these intertwined stories have taken: “Her story, the story, our story. Like the tiny basket in my shirt pocket, different threads, sedge and redbud, woven over one willow rod into a design that went round and round, endless” (164-65).

The stories told in *Grand Avenue* repeatedly reveal not only the intermixing but the interwovenness that members of the family have tried to conceal. As Albert astutely remarks, “Everybody’s connected to

everybody” (115). And it is those connections and patterns that the seemingly separate and disparate stories of *Grand Avenue* weave together into a family basket. As the Ukiah Pomo basketweaver Susan Billy remarks, “Among our people, both men and women were basketmakers. Everything in our lifestyle was connected to those baskets. Our lives were bound the way baskets were bound together” (Giese, *Pomo*). At the novel’s end, Alice is still telling her stories to Nellie and is still weaving the basket with the sunflower pattern. *Grand Avenue*, too, is a story and a basket that is finally left open, unfinished, as Mabel McKay insists all stories are, and as perhaps all categories should be if they are to achieve the political goal of transforming colonialist poisons into the healing space of home.

NOTES

For their enormously helpful comments and suggestions on earlier versions of this article, I wish to thank Juan Velasco, Malea Powell and the anonymous readers for *SAIL*.

¹In the parenthetical citations in this article, I use the following abbreviations to refer to Sarris’s books: *Grand Avenue* (GA), *Keeping Slug Woman Alive* (KS), *Mabel McKay: Weaving the Dream* (MM).

²Pomo bear people were doctors who “possessed a special set of magical religious paraphernalia (a bear costume being the prime object) with which they were able to acquire special and extraordinary powers of movement, poisoning, and curing” (Bean and Theodoratus 294). For a more specific account of Juana Maria, see “Juana Maria.”

³Rainwater considers Native novels by Linda Hogan, M. Scott Momaday, and others outside of Western generic terms and instead as “medicine bundles” or “tribal twins.”

⁴In fact, the only scholarly treatment of Sarris’s fiction is Hardin’s very brief and limited analysis of *Grand Avenue*, which suggests that the book “repeat[s] some of García Márquez’s motifs and themes” (5). Hardin’s narrowly-focused treatment of *Grand Avenue* unfortunately neglects altogether the Native American contexts and traditions that inform Sarris’s work.

⁵ Warrior has criticized Sarris for neglecting to include Native critics in *Keeping Slug Woman Alive* (xix), although in doing so Warrior overlooks the powerful critical and theoretical presence of Mabel McKay. Despite the fact that his writings are less explicit on such matters, Sarris's writing and political activity indicate that he shares both Warrior's concern for Native self-determination and sovereignty, and his belief that the struggle to achieve them involves recognizing that "the presence of traditions does not in and of itself make the future. Rather, those traditions make the future a possibility, just as they did for the people with whom the tradition originated" (Warrior 106).

⁶ See Craig Womack for a powerful argument about the consequences of neglecting the politics of Native literary aesthetics (esp. 52-67), including his critique of oral story collections that violate tribal and political contexts by privileging the thematic or "factual" or "traditional" content of native stories. Sarris's own writing, including his accounts of the dialogues between Mabel McKay and others, likewise highlights the often-obscured politics of verbal exchange, and Sarris's own integrative structure and style often work to recover the political dimensions of native storytelling so often eliminated by the imposition of Western literary categories.

⁷ In her poem-appeal, Linda Yamane represents the problem of museums and basketweaving:

We've got this problem of
conflicting
cultural perspective-
one that feels protective measures
preserve these basket treasures.
The other believes that separation
from the people has been
too long
and like a song no longer sung
a basket un-touched
and un-used
will die-
its spirit will be gone. (7)

⁸ For more on the Bole Maru, a syncretic religious system that integrated indigenous and Christian forms, see Bean and Vane.

⁹ See Allen 17-21.

¹⁰ Bullrush is a brownish root that is dyed black by soaking it in a mixture of black walnuts, rusty metal, ash, and rainwater. See Allen 20. For more on the incredibly complex and laborious process of gathering, preparing, designing and weaving basket materials, see Newman 7-22, McLendon and Holland 118-125, and Bibby.

¹¹ See Elgasser and Barrett "Basket."

¹² Poison is a political, cultural, and medical source of worry of another kind for contemporary Native California basketweavers, who find that their traditional sources for basket materials are very often contaminated by the use of herbicides by the Forest Service and pesticides by farmers. The California Indian Basketweavers Association (CIBA), formed in 1992 to help preserve and promote basketweaving traditions, has been very active in challenging the use of such poisons, as well as in challenging access to traditional sources on private property. For more on these issues, as well as profiles of individual basketweavers, see *Roots and Shoots*, the newsletter of CIBA, and the Ortiz and "Western" articles in *News from Native California*.

¹³ See also McLendon and Holland, who, citing the work of J.W. Hudson and Carl Purdy, likewise suggest that the "*dau*" or "door" either "allows a spirit to enter the basket and inspect the work" or allows the spirit to escape in the event of the basket's destruction (115).

¹⁴ I take this quotation from one of Giese's carefully documented and informative web pages linked through "Native American Indian: Art, Culture, Education, History, Science." The detailed information Giese provides on Pomo basketry and the Pomo basketweavers Elsie Allen and Susan Billy are especially useful.

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***Son of Two Bloods.* Vincent L. Mendoza. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1999. ISBN: 0803282575. 200 pages.**

***A Hundred Miles of Bad Road: An Armored Cavalryman in Vietnam, 1967-68.* Dwight W. Birdwell and Keith William Nolan. Novato, Calif: Presidio Press, 2000. ISBN: 0891417125. 256 pages.**

***Year in NAM: A Native American Soldier's Story.* Leroy TeCube. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2000. ISBN: 0803294433. 268 pages.**

Indians in Indian Country

Scott Andrews

While putting together a course on literature of the Vietnam War, I wanted my reading list to reflect the variety of experiences that made up that intriguing and troubling war. That is, I wanted my students to see the war from a variety of perspectives that were shaped by the ethnicity, nationality, class, and gender of those who lived through the war and its aftermath. With that in mind, I wanted to include an autobiography of an American Indian veteran, and I hoped the autobiography would illustrate some of the general conclusions of Tom Holm's book on the American Indian experience in Vietnam, *Strong Hearts, Wounded Souls: Native American Veterans of the Vietnam War*.

Among the observations Holm makes is that American Indians often joined the U.S. military for reasons other than those commonly assumed by federal and military officials. U.S. officials commonly assumed that American Indians joined the military out of a desire for assimilation with the American mainstream. Certainly this was true for some, perhaps even many, American Indian veterans. Others joined not necessarily for assimilation itself but for the improved economic and social status that mainstream participation could make possible. However, most of the veterans discussed in Holm's book "listed tribal and/or family traditions as having a significant impact to enlist or accept conscription in the armed forces. They seemed to be taking their cues not from the larger society but from their own social and cultural environments" (19).

In other words, the U.S. military, which had long been part of the larger U.S. effort to either stamp out or dilute Indian cultures, had become a method by which those cultures could continue themselves. Service in the U.S. military did not mean a rejection of tribal culture and values; ritual and communal qualities of tribal warfare—personal bravery, sacrifice for the group, etc.—had been taken from tribal cultures

with the end of inter-tribal warfare and military resistance to the U.S. government, so tribal cultures replaced old forms of war with new forms: service in the U.S. military. Such motivations, Holm states, led American Indian men to participate in the Vietnam War (and other wars) at rates greater than their portion of the national population.

Holm also suggests tribal and family traditions led the American Indian veterans he surveyed to seek combat action rather than simple service in the military. Many of the veterans he discusses volunteered for combat units and dangerous assignments, and nearly a third of his subjects were wounded in action (20). Many of these veterans sought combat assignments in order to be “a warrior in a tribal sense, with all the responsibilities, relationships, and rituals that go along with that status” (21). These veterans often returned home to tribal communities with a new status, one of honor and respect, an experience very different from the receptions of many non-Indian Americans and of those Indians who did not have a tribal community to call home.

So, as I looked for autobiographies of American Indian veterans of the Vietnam War, I was looking for descriptions of a life that was at least partially shaped by tribal cultures and traditions. I was looking for a life that could be readily distinguished from the lives of other veterans—white, black, Latino, etc. I found three recent autobiographies, which, fortunately, have been reissued in paperback, but I found two of them much better suited for my purposes than the third. Although *Son of Two Bloods* by Vincent Mendoza includes his experiences in Vietnam during the war, his discussion of the war is limited to two chapters. I will discuss Mendoza’s book briefly, but I will concentrate my comments on two books that most closely support Holm’s: *A Hundred Miles of Bad Road: An Armored Cavalryman in Vietnam, 1967-68* by Dwight Birdwell and *Year in NAM: A Native American Soldier’s Story* by Leroy TeCubé. I hope my comments here will bring some attention to these books, which were little reviewed, especially in the academic press. I also hope my comments will prove useful for those who are interested in the American Indian experience in the Vietnam War, a topic that is getting increasing attention, as books by Holm and others indicate. These are exemplary American stories, exemplary in that they are diverse and in that they are stories of amalgamation, of mixed bloods and cultures. They are stories of resistance and patriotism, of pride and ambivalence.

The jacket art of *Son of Two Bloods* is a picture of Mendoza in his Marine uniform, but the book tells the story of his life, not just his military life—only two chapters are devoted to his time in the military. In a chapter titled “Special Delivery Marine” Mendoza recounts his

enlistment, his basic training, and his first year in the service, which is spent on Okinawa with the Marine's mail services. Although he discusses some encounters with racial prejudice in the military, his Creek/Mexican identity seems to have little impact on his time in the service. In a chapter titled "The Warrior Within" Mendoza describes his time in Vietnam; he volunteers to serve there after his first year in Okinawa. He is still delivering mail, but he sees some combat during the Tet Offensive by the North Vietnamese. Despite the chapter's title, Mendoza does not refer to a particular warrior tradition among the Creek. Instead, he seems to refer to a warrior instinct: "When I did get shot at and saw my buddies fall, I grew angry, the warrior within erupted" (101). He does not describe firefights in detail, but he does say "the acrid smell of gunpowder invigorat[ed] my adrenalin" (101). One irony of his Vietnam War experience is that Mendoza does not refer to a particular American Indian warrior tradition as informing his battle experience or morale, but a white comrade does. A fellow soldier gives Mendoza the nickname of Mangus, "short for Mangus Coloradas, the famed Apache warrior" (101).

Revenge is Mendoza's stated motivation for joining the Marines, not fulfilling the role of Indian warrior. It is possible that his sense of revenge comes from Creek traditions, but Mendoza does not explain it in this way, though he does refer to carrying "the blood of warriors and 'La Raza'" (94). So as the plane carrying him home rises above the Vietnamese landscape, he recalls his high school buddy who died there: "I got 'em Wayne . . . it's done. Now it's my life, Wayne, but I won't ever forget you" (105).

The combat action missing from Mendoza's memoir can be found in abundance in Birdwell's *A Hundred Miles of Bad Road*. Not far into his book the reader encounters an ambush by North Vietnamese troops. The ambush wipes out the lead platoon of the armored column, and Birdwell holds off the attacking forces almost single-handedly, directing the fire of his tank's large cannon while firing the machine gun atop the turret-exposed the entire time to enemy fire. Birdwell, who received two Silver Crosses for his bravery and a Purple Heart, describes each major encounter with the North Vietnamese, and his descriptions are supplemented by his co-author, Keith William Nolan, who has written several books on the Vietnam War.

Birdwell's memoir is devoted to the combat action he saw in Vietnam, but race, class and politics are frequently discussed. He discusses the ways American mistreated the Vietnamese; the tension among draftees, volunteers, and career soldiers; the tension between

white soldiers and soldiers of color; the assumed allegiance between black soldiers and Indian soldiers; and the similarities between the Vietnamese and American Indians, who both were targets of U.S. oppression, prejudice, and military force.

While Mendoza goes to Vietnam to seek revenge for his friend who died there, Birdwell joins the Army to escape the poverty of his childhood and the prejudice of his hometown that would have kept him confined to his lower-class status. He was the son of a mixed-blood Cherokee father and a white mother, but he spent little of his youth with his father. Instead, he spent more time with his mother and white step-father, but they lived among the Cherokees in eastern Oklahoma. Birdwell and his mother made much-needed money by joining “the poorest of the Cherokee—who were their closest friends—picking strawberries in the spring and beans in the summer and fall” (xvii). His parents were resigned to their poverty, but Birdwell sought to escape it, and the Army presented his best opportunity. He also wanted to escape the prejudice he had encountered in the small community. He was less than half Cherokee, but he resembled a full-blood. He suggests racial prejudice convinced his high school counselors to push him toward jobs in manual labor despite his high scores in class. The prejudice he faced from others was more blunt; he was told by “some of the rednecks” in town that he would end up “drunk, dead, or in prison like the rest” of the Cherokees (xix).

Birdwell internalized some of this subtle and not-so-subtle belittling, as he started drinking heavily in high school, hanging out with a group of “badass” Cherokee boys and drinking in taverns with fake IDs. This led to trouble in the family, fights with his step-father and accusations from his mother that he was acting like his natural father, whom Birdwell describes as a notorious drunk. His father was frequently jailed for his misbehavior and was seen by many when he had passed out on the side of the road. Birdwell says, “It was a constant fear of mine that I would end up an alcoholic like my natural father” (xx). These internalized fears and doubts influence his military service. His high scores on aptitude tests in the Army led to his selection for U.S. Military Academy prep school, but he turned down the chance to attend West Point “partly out of self-doubt” (6).

Birdwell volunteers for duty in Vietnam, and his desire for combat is motivated in part by his Cherokee heritage. He goes to Vietnam because he “wanted to do my ancestors proud” (3), but he does not elaborate on this motivation. If he had a particularly Cherokee warrior tradition in mind, he does not describe it. However, Birdwell does

elaborate on his other motivations for going to Vietnam, and he illustrates the intriguing synthesis of American patriotism and native resistance that so often defines the twentieth century American Indian experience. When he first arrives in Vietnam, he is a believer in the American cause: saving the world from communist aggression. He says, "I was there because in my mind America was right. . . . I wanted to nail that coonskin to the wall for LBJ" (3). Birdwell calls himself a "Superhawk" at one point, but despite his gung-ho nature for the war he does not demonize the enemy. He says, "They didn't have horns; they didn't have tails. . . . I imagined them to be energetic and dedicated to their cause just like me, and I felt sorry for them more than anything else." The North Vietnamese soldiers were "poor misguided souls . . . fighting for the wrong banner" (14).

Birdwell believes in American exceptionalism, which constructs his nation as the leader of the free world, an example and a guardian for others; but this exceptionalism has led to the arrogance that fueled the oppression of American Indians. The belief in the moral superiority of Euro-Americans allowed them to rationalize their mistreatment of other human beings. Birdwell believes in an American superiority, but he does not use it to dismiss others as unworthy of respect or dignity. He believes in the superiority of the American cause, but he also is aware of his nation's past sins against his Indian ancestors, and he is determined to avoid repeating them. He recalls the mistreatment of Vietnamese civilians by American soldiers, including at least one incident when he draws a pistol on a U.S. soldier to stop his abuse of civilians. Birdwell writes of his internal conflicts as the war progressed, as he struggles to maintain a belief in the original goal of the war while being disgusted at what the war had become:

I still wanted to believe in the war—these so-called gooks were the people we were fighting for!—and blended in with all that was the thought of old cruelties inflicted upon the American Indians at the hands of the U.S. Army. Being of Cherokee heritage, I didn't want to turn around three or four generations later and perpetuate the same sort of abuse myself, especially with people who were poor farmers just like my people were poor farmers, and who in some cases looked almost exactly like the Indians I knew back in Oklahoma. (139)

Birdwell is sensitive also to how race relations influence life within the Army. He notes that tension existed between whites and blacks in uniform, but that for the black soldiers there was “strength in numbers.” Black men served in large enough numbers to make harassment by white soldiers unwise or unhealthy; therefore, “the white guys tended to walk softly around the sensibilities of the black guys” (124). Indians, however, were not there in enough numbers to provide protection and they “had to put up with a certain amount of grief about our Indian blood” (124). Most of it was fairly innocent, he writes, but he does tell of one sergeant who rode him with constant remarks about “firewater” and “redskins.” (125).

Birdwell’s experiences illustrate the white/non-white polarization in society at the time—in the military overseas and in the United States. Birdwell apparently got along well with the black soldiers, and he tells of interrupting a “Black Power meeting” in Korea before he arrived in Vietnam. Hunting for a warm tent in the winter, he enters a large tent and stumbled upon a group of thirty black soldiers from his tank unit. “They were in the middle of animated discussion, but they stopped as soon as they saw me and stared with stony faces.” Finally the leader speaks, to Birdwell’s relief: “Aw, hell, that’s Dwight Birdwell. He’s a fuckin’ Indian. He’s one of us” (126).

Of these three autobiographies, the most traditional Indian perspective on the war is provided by Leroy TeCube’s *Year in NAM: A Native American Soldier’s Story*. While Birdwell’s pre-war identity as a Cherokee seems to be derived from a sense of poverty and the prejudice experienced by the Cherokee, Leroy TeCube’s Jicarilla Apache identity is derived from shared religious and cultural practices. That is, for Birdwell, race seems to be defined largely by class; for TeCube it is defined primarily by culture.

Although TeCube does not discuss possible tribal motivations for joining the military—in fact, he was drafted by the Army before he could enlist in the Marines—his Apache identity shapes his experience in Vietnam, and it comes into sharper definition for him there. In a real sense, TeCube’s success (and survival) in Vietnam was due to his Jicarilla Apache childhood: he attributes much of his success in guiding his unit through the Vietnam countryside to the years he spent as a young man playing outdoors with his Apache friends. The games he played outdoors taught him and his young friends many things that became quite valuable in Vietnam: “the art of concealment (day or night), how to encroach without being seen, how to recognize various terrain features (especially at night), and how to follow orders without hesitation” (xiv).

The respect he was taught to have for elders translated easily into a respect for the chain of command: “We grew up full of discipline in our lives and understood the reason for it” (xiv).

TeCube attributes his survival of several close calls with land mines to the prayers he knew were being said for him back home. In letters from friends he was told of special dances and prayers being said for the soldiers in Vietnam, and his appreciation for the ties with his family and community increases:

Perhaps it was the dangerous surroundings that made me understand things I never would have otherwise. At times I could sense what was happening on the other side of the world. I knew my people and other tribes were concerned for our welfare. We were on their minds. Knowing this, I conducted myself with more confidence. (72)

Combat also teaches TeCube an appreciation for his own participation in this community knit together with prayer. He says, “There in the rice paddies of Southeast Asia, I learned to pray.” He had always been aware of prayer, he says, but he had not done it sincerely until he was thrown into combat halfway around the world. On that night, alone and afraid, he prays in his “traditional way.” His prayer concludes with concern for how his experiences can benefit his community: “I pray that whatever comes out of this place becomes a positive one to guide our lives with” (40).

Probably all soldiers feel profoundly alone in combat, but most likely none are alone in spirit—they have family and friends (a whole nation) concerned for them. TeCube often reminds us of the community behind the soldier as he recalls conversations with medicine men and Apache veterans of other wars. Their prayers and advice not only aid him in Vietnam but further imbed him in a community and encourage him to conduct himself in a way that will make his community proud. Unlike Mendoza and Birdwell, TeCube seems aware of a particular warrior tradition that he carries with him in Vietnam. He does not elaborate on that tradition in historical detail, but the reader can see how it shapes his experiences in Vietnam.

For instance, TeCube does not participate with his fellow soldiers in collecting souvenirs from their killed enemies. He cites Apache tradition in avoiding contact with the dead when he refrains from gathering North Vietnamese weapons and paraphernalia: “Once a person is gone from this world he will work against the living” (73).

TeCube recounts combat situations that remind him of particular moments in his Apache upbringing. In one instance, he must run across an exposed bridge as the enemy fires on his unit. As bullets fly past him, he recalls an arduous, annual relay race between two clans back home. The clan elders painted and blessed the runners and the track. TeCube recalls that during the race, which could last several hours, the older men "holding aspen branches [gave] you words of encouragement and [whipped] you on the legs with the branches for added strength" (89). On the bridge, his strength begins to flag beneath the weight of his field pack, but he recalls the encouragement of the elders and he feels renewed, reaching the opposite shore safely.

An interesting difference between TeCube's understanding of his behavior in combat and Mendoza's understanding is their description of instinctive behavior. Mendoza says combat arouses his "warrior instinct," which can be inferred to mean some kind of Indian warrior. TeCube, on the other hand, says the instinct that arises in combat is from "the animal inside." Although combat in the Vietnam War may bring elements of TeCube's Apache identity more into focus for himself, the dangers of combat and the inhumane behaviors it fosters ultimately threaten his status as a human and as an Apache. He says, "Our real selves were dying, being replaced by individuals molded by the dangerous world we lived in" (146). In this, TeCube echoes the sentiments of the veterans discussed in Holm's study: "... their ancestors had been correct in viewing warfare as a mysterious disruption in the natural order and that without proper spiritual preparation, the horrors of war could certainly scar their very souls forever" (139).

TeCube encounters some of the racist attitudes that Holm describes for American Indians in Vietnam, attitudes that simultaneously gave Indian soldiers "a degree of status . . . but also endangered their lives" (Holm 137). Holm calls this the "Indian scout syndrome," and many Indian veterans say they were chosen for dangerous duty, such as walking point, because of the assumption by officers that they possessed keener senses and reactions than members of other races. For instance, one American Indian was assigned "tunnel rat" duties—exploring the narrow tunnels and bunker systems the Viet Cong often dug in the countryside—because his commander "thought that Indians had been born with remarkably keen eyesight" (Holm 150).

In one instance, a fellow soldier asks TeCube how to throw a knife, assuming all Indians can do this well. TeCube reveals that such skills are learned and not bred when he tells the soldier how he was *taught* to throw one and that he never got very good at it. He and the soldier then

build a friendship based partly on the time they spend learning how to throw a knife together. The “Indian skill” of knife-throwing is not Indian at all, but is available to anyone willing to devote the time to learning how. TeCube tears down a stereotype through his simple actions and builds a bridge of friendship in its place.

The skills that TeCube learned in his youth and that he develops in the jungles of Vietnam encourage some assumptions about his “Indian nature.” He frequently walks point for his unit, especially in dangerous situations, because he is the most trusted by his commanding officer. TeCube himself is guilty of blurring the line between skill and nature, when he writes: “By now I had a sixth sense about when danger was imminent, and I was leery of possible ambush sites” (103). Despite this language of intuition, TeCube throughout his account foregrounds the origins of his abilities in learned behavior.

Unlike Birdwell, TeCube does have to live with the nickname “Chief” from many of his fellow soldiers, despite explaining to them, “In my traditional way the title of chief is earned and shown respect” (22). Toward the end of his tour, though, he feels he has earned the title. When he is promoted to sergeant he feels “a great sense of pride and accomplishment” and the men start calling him “Sergeant Chief.” This new nickname does not bother him: “This had more meaning. According to my traditional beliefs, I had now earned the right to be called Chief” (223). The Army’s unofficial method of segregating and controlling TeCube and other Indians through nicknames that mark them as different from other soldiers becomes for him a way of re-affirming his Indian identity.

Like Birdwell, TeCube identifies with the Vietnamese civilians, both in their appearances that are similar to his own, in elements of their culture that feel familiar to him, and in their encounter with U.S. imperialism. Early in his tour, some Vietnamese children approach him and say, “You same-same Vietnam” (32), an encounter that many other Indian veterans have shared. Later, he is befriended by a Vietnamese family and invited to their home for dinner. Although he cannot speak their language, he feels at home there: “There was a great deal of laughter, and somehow I didn’t feel like a stranger. . . . The atmosphere . . . reminded me of my own people back home” (158). TeCube senses that the laughter he sees there is similar to laughter of his own people, and that both the Apache and the Vietnamese have survived their many hardships because of their ability to laugh.

Many Indian veterans have noted the uncanny familiarity of their experiences in Vietnam. Some, including Birdwell, have commented on

the military oppression of Vietnamese civilians and American Indians, citing atrocities such as My Lai and Wounded Knee or the similarly racist attitudes of frontier soldiers of the 19th century and U.S. soldiers in the 20th century. TeCube comments on the military similarities between the Vietnamese and American Indians. He sees a reversal of fortunes, though: in the American West, Indians were greatly outnumbered by the whites, whereas in the Vietnam, the U.S. soldiers were outnumbered: "For every VC or NVA killed it seemed there were many ready to take his place." He notes other similarities, and even has similarities pointed out to him by well-educated Vietnamese familiar with American Indian history, but he does not expect special treatment from his enemy because of this: "I was an Indian, but the enemy couldn't have cared less what color I was. All he knew was that I wore a U.S. military uniform. Charlie wouldn't hesitate to blow me away" (167).

Birdwell and TeCube provide interesting examples of the American Indian experience in Vietnam, and TeCube's book best illustrates some of the elements described by Holm, but their books remain conventional soldier's stories. Birdwell and TeCube discuss the differences in their experiences from the experiences of other soldiers, but they are equally committed to discussing what they had in common with those soldiers—the sensations of combat, the loneliness of the soldier away from home, the friends made and lost, the lessons learned. Their books touch on the dilemmas of being an Indian in Indian Country (the common name given by non-Indian U.S. soldiers to unfriendly territory, recalling games of Cowboys-and-Indians and John Wayne movies from their youth), but they are not meditations on the wide range of implications of this situation. For instance, Birdwell and TeCube each discuss the similarities between U.S. relations to the American Indians in the 1800s and their country's treatment of Vietnamese civilians, but these discussions are rather brief.

An unaddressed implication of Indians in Indian Country is whether the moral ambiguities of the war can undermine or even corrupt the otherwise positive effort to re-affirm tribal identities by fulfilling a warrior's role. Can the native warrior divorce his personal and tribal goals from the war's broader efforts and character? Can a tribal identity be advanced by participating in a war that advances the imperialist notions that sought to erase that tribal identity and that seeks to erase the national identity of others?

Hearing the broader and deeper implications—political, personal, emotional—of the Indian veteran's experiences would be useful; providing these things in detail probably was not the goal of these

writers, and I am not criticizing them for not providing them. However, such a meditation would be most appreciated. Perhaps as more attention is paid to this particular aspect of the American Indian experience in the 20th century, someone will write a more philosophical, personal inquiry into the topic. Until then, TeCube's book will serve as the next best thing.

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Book Reviews

***Wolf and the Winds*. Frank Bird Linderman. USA, 2001. ISBN: 0-8061-3378-3 (paper). ISBN: 0-8061-2007-x (cloth). 215 pages.**

In addition to the evocative quality of the descriptions of the Great Plains before contact, *Wolf and the Winds* is an extraordinarily interesting book for a different, even more important reason: the way the subject matter combines with the narrator's point of view and the author's identity. Written by a white man who had lived with Indian tribes at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, when the problem of appropriation had not yet been raised, the novel tries to depict the feelings and reactions of a traditional Gros Ventre man when faced with the fall of his entire civilization and way of life.

The author's western thought and background are more than evident, especially in the narration devices (a tale with a beginning and an end, a central hero and a central conflict), but what can really move an attentive reader is the evident wish to be true to the Gros Ventre's habits, culture and love for their land. The result is a didactic, careful novel about the time of contact and the fall of the Gros Ventre tribe on the Great Plains. As regards the intention, there is an obvious wish to preserve and make known a whole idea of life which the author considers to be vanished.

From the Preface onwards, Linderman establishes the binary pair—the philosophical structure is clearly western—on which the novel stands: a comparison between the Indian and the white civilizations. In his presentation, the positive signs belong definitely to the first member of the pair and the negative to the second. In the novel itself, this is constantly repeated. It is also the basis of the more prejudiced, flat character in the book, the “half-breed” Left Hand.

The half-breed figure is clearly stereotyped here: he is an evil man, full of tricks, cowardice, the capacity to dominate and deceive people, and an enormous amount of cruelty. The “amoral” characteristics of Left Hand's personality are attributed to his “white blood” and he has no redeeming “Indian” features to compensate for them. He, therefore, brings disaster to the tribe, to Wolf, and to himself. He is related to Wolf by blood, and thus the relationship between the two looks like a kind of Cain and Abel story.

On the contrary, the cultural details of the Gros Ventre's life in the Plains are very carefully described and there are no “positive-negative” comments around them, except in the case of the buffalo hunts, where the apocalyptic results of the white men's slaughter make the Indian ways evidently an asset for the ecology of the Plains themselves. Even

polygamy is presented intelligently and logically explained as a practical solution to the problem of a very unbalanced population, with four women for each man.

There is, of course, a difference between this knowledgeable and clear description of culture and the choice of a hero. Wolf's name is not the original one, as the author states in the Prologue. He changes it because he feels Frozen Water would be too difficult for his white reader, an attitude appropriation theory would no doubt have something to say about forty years later. Yet, it is a very telling name to choose because Linderman is attracted by the man and his story for one reason: his singularity, his lonely life (characteristics which the animal Wolf has come to symbolize in certain cultures), which make him similar to the western hero as defined by Leslie Fiedler in the sixties. Therefore, in spite of the obvious knowledge Linderman had about the Gros Ventre, he develops a very American, western kind of hero: a man separated from his community, who nevertheless manages to help, protect and love his people though he gets no reward, love, nor thanks for his loyalty.

As every western hero, Wolf follows his own law, his "code" (in Fiedler's terms). This "code" is an Indian one: he remains faithful to his vision, the dream he had during his quest in adolescence. Thus, the title: the protagonists are two, Wolf and the Winds, his Helpers, who have told him what to expect from white people.

Wolf is another tragic hero whose final "triumph"—a sad one—is to see History prove his dream to be true: the last chapters, where time is compressed, show Wolf, his woman and his mother (a very important and very Indian character) on the Plains without buffalo, a completely changed place, where Indians starve to death. Linderman uses a very interesting symbol for this terrible change, a symbol Mary Louis Pratt analyzes in *Imperial Eyes*: the wire. The wire, used to divide land which has never been divided, appears here around the body of a buffalo bull, choking it slowly, just as the white culture was choking the Gros Ventre's culture and people.

Wolf and the Winds is not a perfect novel, but it shows the complex network of relationships one can find in any fiction written by whites on any other ethnic group. It is a passionate white man's analysis of the horror white men imposed on the Great Plains tribes during the Nineteenth Century, expressed in a fictionalized text, with all the characteristics a popular novel needs to become a success.

***El Indio Jesús.* Gilberto Chávez Ballejos and Shirley Hill Witt. Volume 35 in the *American Indian Literature and Critical Studies Series*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2000. ISBN 0-18061-3230-2. 257 pages.**

Many authors, such as Rudolfo Anaya, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Ana Castillo, have explored the Spanish and American Indian heritage of Chicanas/os. *El Indio Jesús* is part of this literary tradition; Chicanas/os, the authors write, are detribalized Indians. The novel tells the story of a week in the life of El Indio Jesús. The police arrest El Indio Jesús on Sunday and release him Monday morning. During the week, he serves primarily as an activist and advisor for *la gente*, the people, and then endures again the ritual Sunday incarceration—his sacrifice—for looking “Indian or Chicano or Genizaro or poor or vulnerable” (9). His goals, aesthetic, economic, political, or spiritual, are liberatory: whether contributing to a sanctuary movement that protects refugees who had participated in indigenous revolutions in Mexico or defending the value of the community expression found in graffiti and lowriders, El Indio Jesús protests all forms of institutional domination.

El Indio Jesús recalls Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead* in the geographic scope of the novel, which includes most of North America as well as Vietnam, Korea, and even a brief mention of Kinshasa, the capital of the Republic of Congo, formerly Zaire. Ballejos and Witt populate their novel’s landscape with culturally and ethnically diverse characters: Tony the World Traveler, a Vietnam veteran from Laguna Pueblo; El Chuy Jimenez, a Mexican national and *abodero*, and La Blondi, his wealthy seducer; a Wisconsin prom queen of Swedish descent who abandons her blond-haired and blue-eyed son, Miguel Olson, in an Albuquerque barrio; Miguel Olson’s wife Joanie, poor and white, but raised in the barrio and, therefore, the authors imply, culturally Chicana; Jacobo Beserra, son of a Chicana and a Mexican national, but adopted by a Texas businessman named Luther Jack Spencer, who teaches his son, renamed Luther Jack Spencer, Jr., how to disguise his cultural and ethnic identity to exploit people with less power. The authors weave together the past and present lives of these and many other characters; the novel, in fact, is a series of character sketches with El Indio Jesús as the protagonist who connects them. Perhaps regrettably, in the exposition that dominates the novel, a reader learns much about the material conditions of the characters’ lives but little about their interior landscapes: their personalities, motivations,

and imaginations. On the other hand, the authors might be suggesting that the material conditions dominate their characters' lives.

The novel is of interest both for the history of New Mexico that informs the lives of many of the characters and for the description of complex interactions between multiple Southwestern communities. Additionally, the protagonist's visits to the diverse members of this flock provide a valuable message: a coalition of the disenfranchised is necessary to undermine the destructive forces of capitalism and U.S. nationalism. Within this politically astute context, however, the characters emerge as either saints or villains, and the sharp contrast between "good" and "evil," which produces one-dimensional characters, might disappoint some readers.

The gender politics of the novel will concern, too, some scholars of Chicana and American Indian women's literature. The women characters include an activist nun, Sister Kateri (from Kateri Tekakwitha); a *soldadera*, Angelica; and a young Navajo, Desbah Peshlikai, who takes her religious vows and the name Sister Lupe (from *la Virgen de Guadalupe*), but cannot pronounce "theologian." In contrast to these "angelic" characters, the authors offer Mary Beserra, a Chicana who manages the filling station and second-hand store owned by her husband Luther Jack Spencer, which allows Spencer to continue to cheat poor Chicanos, Navajos, Zunis, and Pueblos; Margarita, "a fourteen-year-old virgin Indian child-woman of surpassing beauty," who makes hand-ground tortillas for her forty-year-old husband, Armando, before going to the university, dating wealthy Anglos, divorcing Armando, and finally returning to Mexico to marry the son of the owner of the hacienda where her mother cooked; and Lucia Valles y Martinez, a young Chicana with a university chemistry degree who works at Los Alamos National Laboratories.

Mary, Margarita, and Lucia are the traitors or *malinchistas* in the *Virgen/Malinche* dichotomy that emerges in the novel. Margarita's character is particularly distressing: she is an unproblematic colonialist fantasy. Of course, her betrayal destroys Armando, whose story ends in heavy drinking and institutionalization at *la casa de los locos*. Many Chicana authors have devoted much of their literary and scholarly work to exposing the severe limitations and danger of this *Virgen/Malinche* understanding of women and their social and cultural roles.

In contrast, the authors expose the inaccurate use of the term *macho*, which United Statesean culture defines as misogyny and then imposes on Mexicanos and Chicanos in order to demean them. In *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Gloria Anzaldúa explains: "The modern meaning of the word

‘machismo,’ as well as the concept, is actually an Anglo invention. For men like my father, being ‘macho’ meant being strong enough to protect and support my mother and us, yet being able to show love” (83). Anzaldúa adds that contemporary *machismo* “is an adaptation to oppression and poverty and low self-esteem. It is the result of hierarchical male dominance” (83). Ballejos and Witt find a different origin of the corruption of the *macho* ideal. They make a general reference to a generation of young women who read mainstream women’s magazines, in which they discover the definition of *macho* as male supremacy. Subsequently, they complain about their men to their priests using this definition of *macho*, thereby betraying Chicanos. The authors have constructed an entire generation of *malinchistas*.

Ballejos and Witt appear to have a particular interest in the idea of *malinchismo*. In the following representative example of dialogue, Pilar Valles y Martinez, Lucia’s mother and a woman who devotes her life to “the primacy of cultural integrity” (126), explains:

Are you aware of the concept of *malinchismo*? It comes from Mexico, but we use it, too. It refers to a woman who sides with the powerful, aiding them against her own people. She might even be unwilling, but accedes to the situation anyway. For whatever reason. The term comes from Cortez’s Dona Marina, also known as Malinche. Whatever her rationale—and this we may never know—she facilitated the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs and the loss of native hegemony in the New World. Thus the term *malinchismo*. (138)

Pilar blames Malinche for aiding the Spanish against “her own people,” the Aztecs, but does not mention that “her people” gave her to merchants who sold her to Mayans in southern Mexico. She also ignores the military support that local populations, such as the Totonacs of Cempoala and the people of Tlaxcala and Huejotzingo, gave to Cortés as a result of their disenchantment with Aztec hegemony in the Valley of Mexico. Finally, the passage suggests Malinche had no agency in her decision to translate for Cortés. By focusing on *malinchismo* and accepting the traditional view of Malinche as a traitor and whore, the authors appear to have adopted the position that most women are complicit in their own oppression.

Certainly the exploration of these gender issues within the context of cultural identity and tribal sovereignty is important, and the novel

would serve as a good contrast to other literary works that address the same issues. However, scholars in American Indian and Chicana/o Studies might find the work in Joy Harjo's and Gloria Bird's anthology *Reinventing the Enemy's Language*, as well as the work of Anaya, Anzaldúa, and Castillo, for example, more satisfying.

James H. Cox

***Thunderweavers/Tejedoras de rayos.* Juan Felipe Herrera. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2000. 0-8165-1986-2. 150 pages (bilingual, 75 pages each in English and Spanish).**

In this bilingual poetry cycle, playwright, children's author, photographer, professor, and celebrated poet Juan Felipe Herrera sets himself a difficult task: to tell a tale, through verse (in both Spanish and English), speaking in the voices of four women in a Mayan Indian family who suffered through a paramilitary attack in the winter of 1997 in Chiapas. The purpose is to instruct and sensitize the readers as we learn the perspectives, travails, endurance, and struggles of Xunka, a twelve-year-old; Pascuala, her mother; Maruch, her grandmother; and Makal, a pregnant older sister. Each of the voices gets a section of fourteen or fifteen poems, each of these averaging perhaps half a page in length. The concluding entry for Makal, intended to serve as a conclusion for the entire piece, runs four and a half pages and evokes the cycle's title. The cover illustration by Alma Lopez is compelling and enticing; the text itself may be flipped over and upside down to read the entire work in the alternate language (English or Spanish).

Herrera has indisputably selected a significant topic to address. Certainly the world needs to better comprehend what has been happening to the Mayan Indians of Chiapas for centuries, but more specifically, what occurred since the Indian revolt in 1994, including Zapatista leader Marco's later march on Mexico City and his historic speech to the nation. Part of their message that day was "somos todos zaptistas" (we are all Zapatistas) and as Marcos himself eloquently stated, "What they fear is that there is no more 'you' and 'us' because we are all the color of the earth." With a sensitivity for such solidarity, Herrera has chosen a noble goal: to awaken us to the injustices suffered and the inspiring traditions of these Chiapas Indians.

At times *Thunderweavers* has wonderful poetic moments—masterfully chosen imagery, sonorous syllabification, the extended metaphor of thunderweaving itself—but, ultimately, the task of convincingly and powerfully communicating across genders, generations, languages, and cultures proves to be too much to accomplish in this format, using poems of these brief lengths in the fairly sparse poetic stylings employed here by Herrera. This is not to cast aspersions on his talent for poetry—he has won and deserved praise as a groundbreaking Chicano wordsmith for years. Written in two languages at the same time, no small feat in itself, this work tries to convey the essence of an experience the characters originally comprehended in a third language, their local Indian dialect. To help convey this, the poet uses untranslated terms from time to time in the poems, but unfortunately these terms cannot always be deduced by context. The very action of conveying the “foreignness” of the experience to readers diminishes comprehension. Similarly, a tendency to recite long lists of specific village and location name citations conveys little value to one who does not already know and recognize such references from consultations of maps of the region. Those who know the meanings of all the terms—such as *güipil*, *nixtamal*, *rebozo*—those who know the locations of Pohlo, Xoyep, Mazapa de Mader—are they the intended audience? Surely the poet wants to reach and teach those who know little of Chiapas—but it seems that the exotic difference from our experience and our lack of knowledge of the Mayan culture comes through more vividly than a richer, newfound and profound comprehension of it. As a result, previous political knowledge and a shared perspective of outrage at horrors endured prove greater triggers for reaction here than any crafting of powerful imagery and unforgettable details to let the readers vicariously enter these women’s world. At the very least, glosses or a glossary might have been helpful additions.

The motif of showing the shared strength of women in a family across generations has worked well as a call to empowerment in many works of ethnic literature since the reawakening of feminism in the 1960s. Think of Lorna Dee Cervantes’s wonderful Chicana poem “Beneath the Shadow of the Freeway” or the novels of Chinese-American author Amy Tan. It makes sense, then, that Herrera has us listen to, in turn, a twelve-year-old girl, her mother, her grandmother, and finally her pregnant older sister. However, given the sparsity of dialogue allotted to each individual, and the sparsity of style already mentioned, truly distinctive voices do not emerge. The characters remain representative names rather than memorable and highly specific personalities. Each

should have her own skills, nuances and idiosyncrasies that makes her unique and awakens our empathy. The complexities of interfamilial ties and relationships are very broadly stroked; again, more details here would help us know these women better, and, through knowing them, arouse greater concern for their tribulations. Some characters and many places are named but never returned to later-as the reader progresses through the text, creating a coherent narrative from the cycle should occur naturally, not with interruptive effort.

While there is thus some question of the ultimate success of the work as a whole, taken alone some of the passages are inspiringly resonant. One such beautiful passage occurs as poem XI of Pascuala, Mother of Thunder. Even standing alone it conveys the resilience of the Indians' determination and the strength they draw from their cultural heritage in the face of the suffering of war:

Your father's guitar
still lies next to the drinking well.
There in its silent scar
the drumbeat of the mountain is born.

The guitar tilts toward my sewing colors,
my cottons. Its strings are sewn
to my loom, waiting for your dark fingers.
The soldiers search for your father, they say,
but they do not know he is made of wool
earth and song.

Also, one must acknowledge that, inevitably, poems flow differently in different languages. The Spanish language gives itself over to a musical intensity at some crucial points in this cycle that English cannot convey. For instance, in the powerful, climactic conclusion to the work, hear the tonality of this passage from the Spanish translation, spoken aloud with fervor:

tantos muertos, ¡levántalos!
¡resucítalos! Siémbrales en tu corazón lluvioso,
tantos muertos, ¡levántalos!
¡resucítalos! Siémbrales en tu corazón lluvioso

Even while one enjoys the beauty of hearing recitations of this poetry in both languages, one wonders how it would feel to hear Makal evoke her

family and culture's Mother-Earth-based strength in her own native language. While so few of us have access to that particular knowledge, Herrera has given contemporary readers of either English or Spanish an impetus to learn more about the Mayans of Chiapas in *Thunderweavers*. Such a work in simultaneous translation can also help encourage English/Spanish bilingualism in the United States, which in the long run will truly benefit the entire country.

Scot Guenter

***Native American Representations: First Encounters, Distorted Images, and Literary Appropriations.* Gretchen M. Bataille, ed. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001. 0-8032-6188-8.**

This collection promises to deal with "issues of translation, of European and American perceptions of land and landscape, teaching approaches, and trans-Atlantic encounters over five hundred years" (Bataille 5). The distinguished contributors to this gathering of essays include Kathryn Shanley, Louis Owens, LaVonne Brown Ruoff, Kathleen Sands, Jarold Ramsey, David Moore, David Murray, John Purdy, Bernadette Rigal-Cellard, and Hartwig Isernhagen. *Native American Representations* is the product of conference proceedings at Chateau de la Bretesche, France, and Cornell University in 1997 and 1998, respectively. Other conference participants whose work is not included are Paula Gunn Allen, Kimberly Blaeser, and Simone Pellerin.

In the Introduction to this collection, Gretchen Bataille traces the history of European misrepresentation of Native Americans from the Norse misnomer *Skraelings* to the Wild West circuit. She identifies the following questions as the focus of the essays to come: "Who has represented Native Americans in the past? What images exist in various media on both sides of the Atlantic? Who controls representation? What changes in representation have come about with increasing numbers of Native American writers and critics?" (5)

Louis Owens' piece, "As If an Indian Were Really an Indian: Native American Voices and Postcolonial Theory," takes up the thorny issue of the "complete erasure" of Native American voices in postcolonial debates. From Toni Morrison to Edward Said to Homi Bhabha, the

contributions of writers like Momaday, Welch, Silko, Erdrich, Ortiz, and Vizenor have been silenced by ignorance or indifference (13). Equally important is the fact that the Native American situation is not actually postcolonial: "America never became postcolonial" (14). Supporting his argument with criticism by Frantz Fanon, Leela Gandhi, and others, Owens contends that in order for Native Americans "to be recognized," they must "step into the mask" of the Indian Other and write as "mimic men," as authors who have internalized the tastes of the metropole. Owens cites Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* as a classic example of this phenomenon, yet contends that Momaday's work still has subversive potential.

In "The Indians America Loves to Love and Read," Kathryn Shanley undertakes "to begin defining Indianness," in order to show how popular cultural representations of Indians impact Native American experience in very real ways. She first traces the function of the Noble Savage back to the early Greeks and examines how it benefits the dominant society. She then explores the biography of Jamake Highwater and his claims to Indianness. Shanley criticizes Highwater's romanticization of Native Americans and highlights how his dismissal of the centrality of community to Native life leads to a complete distortion of indigenous experience. Contrasting Highwater to Mary TallMountain, an Alaskan Native who was adopted by non-Indians yet refused to claim a voice as "spokesperson" for her people, Shanley concludes, "There is a difference between claiming an *Oidentity* and seeking to *represent* a people to the larger world" (44).

David Moore's "Return of the Buffalo: Cultural Representation as Cultural Property" takes up the invocation of the Lakota Ghost Dance by contemporary Native writers and suggests its ramifications for constructing a literary sovereignty. Moore observes that "The loss of the buffalo is America's symbol for that genocide of Native Americans. What does it mean when Native Americans begin to deny the finality of that loss?" (54) Moore answers that this affirmation of the Ghost Dance functions as a type of *differend*, an "unspeakable difference," and a claiming of cultural property that is "incomprehensible in the American idiom" (61). Rather than acting as an obstruction, this silence holds the key to survivance twenty-first century style, and Moore illustrates its function in works by McNickle, Hogan, Silko, and Welch.

David Murray's "Representation and Cultural Sovereignty" examines issues of appropriation and authority in representations of Native Americans. Murray takes as his starting point Elizabeth Cook-Lynn's call for sovereignty as the standard for assessing contemporary

Native fiction and contrasts her perspective with that of Linda Hogan's embracing of mixedness and ambivalence. Murray considers the work of a number of early American modernists, such as Marsden Hartley and Mary Austin, and their engagement with concerns around authenticity and origins. Murray is especially attentive to the contradiction addressed by these artists and writers regarding their use of the "Indian" as exotic yet representative of the U.S. Because of their entwinement with the environment in the modernist period, the most acceptable and popular forms of literature for Native Americans to publish were (and perhaps are) those that resonate with "the concerns of Romantic nature poetry and a larger nostalgia for lost origins as expressed in" popular writing of the time (90). Murray concludes that an engagement with mixedness, thus, constitutes a refusal of mainstream conceptions of Nativeness, rather than a rejection of indigeneity.

In "Tricksters of the Trade: 'Remagining' the Filmic Image of Native Americans," John Purdy investigates the power of pop culture tropes, such as mythic images of Pocahontas and John Smith, and their pervasiveness in the American psyche. He isolates the inestimable influence of Walt Disney's film upon the Baby Boomer generation and suggests that truly successful deconstructions of American Indian stereotypes will speak to Disney's "make-believe" agenda and the colonial psyche that operates through it. He coins the term "remagining" as a strategy of "evok[ing] both memory and imagination with the hope of reinscribing meta-images of Hollywood" (108). Purdy then considers three Native American written and/or filmic works by Gerald Vizenor, Victor Masayesva, and Thomas King and their relative success in remagining stereotypes of Indians. In Purdy's assessment, both Vizenor and King succeed in "subjecting the popular myths to the pressure of [their] reversals" and compelling their audiences "to reassess them on a level beyond reason and logic": Vizenor and King are able to engage their non-Indian audience in the sphere of "make-believe" (111). In contrast, Masayesva's film *Imagining Indians* unpacks Hollywood stereotypes without the trickster teases in mythic time of Vizenor and King, although Purdy validates Masayesva's larger project.

In "Telling Stories for Readers: The Interplay of Orality and Literacy in Clara Pearson's *Nehalem Tillamook Tales*," Jarold Ramsey asks us to rethink how we understand "traditional" Native American literatures. He particularly warns against reading recorded oral traditional stories at either of two extremes: as cultural artifacts devoid of artistic expression or as artistic works completely divorced from cultural and socioeconomic realities. Ramsey chooses Clara Pearson, a Tillamook storyteller, as a

case study and analyzes how she glossed her English-language versions of Salish stories for a non-Indian readership, yet remained “true” to the original tribal story. Ramsey suggests that Pearson’s sophisticated stylizing for Euroamerican readers establishes her talents as a narrator of prose, and he concludes that this evidence problematizes Dell Hyme’s work on translating Tillamook texts into verse.

Kathleen Sands’ essay, “Cooperation and Resistance: Native American Collaborative Personal Narrative,” explores the issues surrounding indigenous collaborative autobiographies and argues that Native narrators consistently resist Western conventions in their self-fashionings. Sands is careful to acknowledge the role that colonialism has played in the creation of Native American collaborative autobiographies, but she contends that Native informants are able to assert their own agendas in the face of the colonial encounter. Sands calls for scholars to develop further frameworks of indigenous knowledges for the reading of Native life stories, and she cites Greg Sarris’ work as a prime example of this sort of culturally-sensitive criticism. Finally, she examines how the narrators of *Life Lived Like a Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Elders* resist Euroamerican literary expectations by engaging Native paradigms of time, place, self, and story.

In “Western Literary Models and Their Native American Revisiting: The Hybrid Aesthetics of Owens’s *The Sharpest Sight*,” Bernadette Rigal-Cellard investigates the Euroamerican literary influences in Louis Owens’ 1992 mystery novel. Rigal-Cellard argues that Owens uses Greek mythology and the *roman noir* in combination with his Choctaw agenda around indigenous trauma, healing, and survivance. One of the more original aspects of Rigal-Cellard’s piece is her suggestion that Owens uses Jessard Deal’s bar as a locus of *katharsis* in its classic Greek sense, as a space in which people ingest poisons that spur the cleansing of their very beings (159).

Hartwig Isernhagen concentrates upon struggles in the dominant society over the creation of a “usable past” and Native Americans’ role in it in “Identity and Exchange: The Representation of ‘The Indian’ in the Federal Writers Project and in Contemporary Native American Literature.” Isernhagen selects the example of the Federal Writers’ Project and argues that “they [the texts] occasionally appear to anticipate two basic strategies of writing Native Americans back into (written) history that have dominated the scene since the Native American Renaissance” (170). These two strategies are a discourse of identity, predicated upon cultural change, loss, and reconstruction, and a discourse of exchange, based in survival. In the FWP’s state and local guides,

Isernhagen finds a struggle “to avoid . . . the reinscription of patterns of othering, whether in the form of Indian hating or of primitivism” (180), which he forgives, because “there is reason to believe that the devastations of history are properly unrepresentable” (189).

In “Reversing the Gaze: Early Native American Images of Europeans and Euro-Americans,” LaVonne Brown Ruoff explores Native American perceptions of non-Indians since contact. Utilizing sources from the Jesuit *Relations* to published works by early Native authors, Ruoff traces a progression in indigenous perceptions of non-Indians “from wonder to resistance to the unjust policies affecting their people” (212). Ruoff compares the varied reactions of George Copway, George Henry, and Pauline Johnson to their visits to England and finds anti-consumerism, satire, and nationalism at the core of their texts. Reviewing other nineteenth-century writers, such as Zitkala-Ša and John Rollin Ridge, Ruoff concludes that the predominant perception of Euro-americans in Native American oral and written literature during this time was negative.

The range of topics and the originality of scholarship in this collection are very impressive, whether the contributors speak from post-structuralist, postcolonial, and/or emic perspectives. The authors address a variety of Native American representations and offer up several new paradigms for understanding representational relationships. In a collection of this breadth, however, the conspicuous absence of a number of Native voices, beyond Shanley and Owens, is curious. Despite this omission, however, the criticism presented by Bataille, Owens, Shanley, Moore, Murray, Purdy, Ramsey, Sands, Rigal-Cellard, Isernhagen, and Ruoff contributes significantly to larger debates regarding representations of and by Native Americans, and this collection enjoys its greatest success where the authors historicize their relationship to the materials at hand and/or seek out Native perspectives on compelling issues of representation.

Penelope Kelsey

***Children of the Dragonfly: Native American Voices on Child Custody and Education.* Robert Bensen, ed. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2001. 0816520127 (cloth); 0816520135 (paperback). 280 pp.**

I'm chatting in my office with a student in my survey of African American literature class. He grew up on "the rez," he tells me, in northern Michigan. Then he tells me that he and his younger sister and brother were sent to a boarding school. I tell him, "I've done some research on boarding schools. I had no idea they still existed." He responds with a nervous laugh (perhaps mixed with anger?), "Oh yeah. . . . They exist!" Then he tells me stories that I'm not sure I want to hear, stories that I'm not sure are mine to hear, stories that he needs to tell, stories that I need to hear.

He tells me stories that we all need to hear.

In *Children of the Dragonfly*, an anthology focusing on issues of Native American childhood, we hear these stories. This multi-genre, multi-tribal collection includes accounts and testimony about Indian children, custody issues, boarding school experiences, adoption, and forced sterilization. Relayed through fiction and autobiography, poetry and government documents, transcriptions of interviews and traditional tales, accounts of child-rearing practices and of dream songs, the excerpts included in this volume document four centuries of struggle and survival, pain and perseverance in the voices of those who survived efforts to force Indians to vanish and those who have inherited these stories. Rather than provide an academic history of these issues, this anthology fills in the voices that need to be heard.

This invaluable anthology—edited by Robert Bensen, the Director of Writing and Professor of English at Hartwich College in Oneonta, New York—is significant in part because it is the first anthology to collect literature about Indian children from both sides of the U.S.-Canadian border, and Bensen's introduction provides a brief and useful historical overview of both U.S. and Canadian child welfare policies. In broad strokes, the volume's introductory essay (which includes the Zuni story from which the title "Children of the Dragonfly" is taken) briefly details the history of U.S. and Canadian attitudes toward Native peoples and then traces the history of Indian education and child welfare since the first colonial encounters to the present while simultaneously acknowledging the long history of Indian resistance to these policies.

But perhaps the anthology's greatest contribution is the multiplicity of voices represented in a wide array of genres, which include the expected autobiographical and fiction, poetry and prose writings, but also government publications about the education and treatment of Indian children and testimony from U.S. Senate hearings on Indian child -

welfare. This mixture of genres implicitly suggests that there are multiple ways of telling and multiple ways of knowing these experiences without privileging one mode over another. This range of genres suggests that there are many ways of recording the horrors of the assimilative, paternalistic, and destructive treatment of Indian children. And they simultaneously testify to the survival and adaptation, perseverance and endurance of the Native Americans represented here, despite these harmful efforts.

Each of the four sections includes a short overview that provides thematic coherence to the section and brief explanations of the entries. Organized thematically more than chronologically, this volume could be taught by section but would just as well be used in selected parts chosen from different sections or as a whole.

The opening section, "Traditional Stories and Lives," includes tales about the place of children in Native cultures, from traditional explanations about native words for children to Zitkala-Ša's 1902 legend "The Toad and the Boy" to previously unpublished stories by contemporary writers. Beginning before the beginning, in a sense, this opening section provides a useful context for the subsequent sections and resists the expected starting point of boarding school accounts. "Boarding and Residential Schools," the second section, focuses on the painful and long-term effects of early off-reservation and residential schools when Indian children were (often forcibly) removed from their families and sent to schools aimed at assimilating Indians to mainstream Euro-American values. This crucial section begins with excerpts from *Stiya: or, a Carlisle Indian Girl at Home* (1891), a fictional work given to Carlisle graduates when returning home to reservations. A fascinating insight into the indoctrination efforts of assimilation proponents, this work, written by Euro-American boarding school teacher Marianna Burgess and published in 1891, was ostensibly intended to make the transition easier for graduates. Reading this account, we can see the overt efforts to inculcate boarding school graduates with mainstream American values of individualism and capitalism and to denigrate tribal ways and languages. The rest of this section effectively counters this fictive propaganda by providing testimony of the harmful affects of boarding schools, the pain of returning home, and the punishments for speaking tribal languages. As is characteristic of the strengths of this volume, this section also includes resistance against these destructive efforts and stories of creative survival. Joy Harjo's poem "The Woman Who Fell from the Sky" (1994) rounds out this section as if to testify that Indians

have endured in spite of such overtly destructive efforts to force them to assimilate.

“Child Welfare and Health Services,” the third section, focuses on the post-1950s child welfare policies in both the U.S. and Canada, detailing the often ignored transition from education to health and welfare as the institutional site to address Indian issues. These entries again offer a wide array of responses to this change, including U.S. Senate hearing testimonies about the forced sterilization of Indian women in the 1970s, excerpts from Sherman Alexie’s novel *Indian Killer* (1996), and moving personal accounts of many individuals’ searches for their Indian identity. The final section, “Children of the Dragonfly,” concludes the collection with a focus on adoption, its destructiveness as it has often been practiced, and the possibility that it need not be practiced in such a manner. In this section, we hear the pain and celebration of many contemporary voices who use writing to (re)connect with suppressed family histories. The final entry consists of three beautifully rendered dream songs by Bensen’s school-aged daughter, ending the volume with the voice that inspired it and appropriately returning us to its beginning.

In his preface, Bensen, an invited non-Native member of the WordCraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers, honestly and carefully explains his own interest in creating such an anthology, providing touching personal background for his motivations: Months after he and his wife adopted a daughter, they learned through a letter from the county social worker that their daughter was Indian. This news spurred research, which eventually revealed that their daughter had Native American and European ancestry from both birth parents. The book, Bensen explains, grows out of what he has since learned from his daughter, “the need to give something in return for the great gift she is and to learn from the people who helped put it into words.” As noted on the copyright page, a portion of the royalties from *Children of the Dragonfly* are donated to agencies that serve Native American children.

While not intended to provide a detailed history of Indian education and child welfare—indeed, one of this anthology’s many strengths is its effort to let the voices of those affected speak for themselves and be heard—some elements of this history were glossed over. A brief discussion of the birth of the early-twentieth century pan-Indian movement or an entry from one of its instigators would have been worthwhile, particularly when detailing the resistance of Indian peoples to government policies of forced assimilation. One of the grand ironies of the boarding school experiment, as well as the termination policies of the 1950s, was that it

laid the groundwork for the development of the Pan-Indian movement. In turn, many boarding school graduates used the writing skills learned at these schools to rewrite the portrayal of Native Americans, and again, this irony could have been explored.

This beautifully organized and inclusive anthology provides a vital contribution to understanding the harmful policies aimed at destroying Indian cultures and to remembering the often creative resistance to these efforts. In this volume we hear a resounding collective voice of survival that is part of a much larger on-going story: As Leslie Marmon Silko writes in *Storyteller*, “it is together—all of us remembering what we have heard together—/ that creates the whole story/ the long story of the people”. This anthology adds essential voices to “the long story of the people.”

Alicia Kent

***American Pentimento: The Invention of Indians and the Pursuit of Riches.* Patricia Seed. (Public Worlds Vol. 7). Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001. \$29.95 cloth, ISBN 0-8166-3766-0. 344 pages.**

In *American Pentimento*, Patricia Seed develops a comparative analysis of the dominant colonial systems in the Americas, focusing on culturally specific methods for claiming property and acquiring wealth used by English, Spanish, and Portuguese colonists. Using techniques of comparative ethnology and beginning with first-contact and early colonial periods (sixteenth to eighteenth centuries), Seed’s analysis provides a historical, cultural, and economic context for the genesis of political inequities currently facing indigenous Americans. This fascinating text delineates distinct cultural variations underlying current barriers to social and legal rights of indigenous Americans, resulting from variations in the priorities and perspectives among main colonial systems. Seed notes that, while all three colonial powers encountered similar cultural constructions within indigenous people they colonized, the long-term effects of that colonization on the colonized peoples differ markedly. Common to all three, however, was the figuration of indigenous Americans as inferior. Seed writes:

Like most successful colonizers, Europeans wanted to create a morality tale from the facts of success. Rather than seeking to justify their gains as resulting from their own distinction, however, Europeans in the New World reversed the process, claiming that their qualifications stemmed from the inferiority of the “Indians.” (5-6)

Each group of Europeans adapted their existing legal and moral cultures to their New World desires, which in each case meant that “failings” in the indigenous Americans demanded correction by the invading Europeans. In material terms this meant that the Europeans saw themselves as morally and legally bound to force from the natives that which each particular group of Europeans most coveted in the New World, on the basis of the moral and/or legal insufficiency of the Indians. Thus, the colonizers could satisfy their own particular legal and cultural mores, while at the same time actually claiming altruistic motivations for their harsh and self-centered actions.

In British-colonized areas, this meant that indigenous peoples were deprived of ownership and control over their lands because the English hungered for land and for trees. This Anglo craving for land resulted from changes in land ownership and land use laws following the Norman Conquest, which had consolidated land among the titled and very wealthy and had thrown many commoners off the land. In addition, excessive logging was denuding English forests. Finally, the creation of private forested parks for the exclusive use of the upper classes created a status hunger for land in the developing middle class. Thus, the seemingly endless forested expanses of the New World tantalized English colonists.

Yet how to wrest this land from its “owners,” the American Indians? Within the Anglo cultural/legal framework two ready options revealed themselves: Unused land was generally unowned land, and land ownership must vest in males. In particular, British land policy in the Americas hinged on the Common Law concepts of “waste” land and of “labor” and its relationship to land ownership. From this perspective, the English contrived to characterize indigenous Americans as inadequate stewards of the lands which they resided on and used. In English terms, land was most clearly and definitively in use, and thus not “waste,” if it was farmed. To farm land was to “labor” on it, to struggle to produce crops.

Now, the English did meet native farmers in the Americas. These farmers were women who did not harrow the ground with a drawn plow,

as the Anglos did, and so were not seen as “laboring” on the land to the extent that the English saw themselves as doing. Nevertheless, these native American farmers did plant and reap and therefore might be seen as entitled to land they cultivated, even within the English definitions. However, this meant that the English were in competition with women for control of colonized land. This presented a gender dynamic distasteful and unsettling to the English. The Anglo solution to this was a “fixation on the gendered division of labor” through which farming performed by women was invalidated as a means of creating ownership interest in land (Seed 45). This was culturally and economically expedient, since

[u]nder English law, hunters did not necessarily own the land upon which they pursued game. Therefore Englishmen gradually came to characterize all Native Americans according to the male-dominated activity that did not allow its performers the right to own land: hunting . . . fix[ing] natives as “nonowners” in the minds of English colonists, [and] thereby allowing colonists to take over native lands [which were then seen as “waste” land] in the name of “labor” or “farming.” (Seed 47)

Instead of acknowledging female indigenous farmers, Anglos focused their attention on native men, characterizing them as hunters. Operating from their own androcentric world view, the English then applied this gendered characterization to all Native Americans. This cultural projection aimed to trivialize Native American farming and to categorize it as “housework” and “gardening,” terms applied to women’s agricultural activities in England. This classification minimized those efforts and categorized them as powerless to confer ownership of land.

The trivialization of native women and their farming generated repercussions within the Anglos’ own highly gendered culture.

[A]fraid that Englishwomen would be inspired by Native American women to farm the New World lands themselves [and thus develop an ownership interest as a result of their labor], English propagandists set out to make the life of the Indian woman seem so horrifyingly difficult that English female colonists would abhor the prospect of adopting native women’s roles. Englishmen created the highly effective political myth of the “squaw drudge.” (Seed 46)

The false stereotype of the squaw drudge and the myth of the nightmarish conditions of her existence successfully permeated English colonial thought, contributing to the barrier between English and Native American women, while further hemming around the sphere of the colonial women within her own society. The long-term effects of these cultural facets merit further attention.

While the English saw their own (male) behavior as farmers as holy and as investing the land with their own ownership, the Iberians had no such concept. The Iberian tradition placed natural resources, especially minerals, in communal ownership, managed by the crown. Thus, the Iberians did not have a cultural need to take over land and use it themselves, as the English did. Instead, Iberians wanted the value of utilized natural resources to flow to them. As a result, Iberians focused on employing native labor in the extraction of minerals and other natural resources from the land, as well as in the production of goods for the Spanish and Portuguese empires. The goals of the Spanish and Portuguese may seem less invasive and culturally destructive than those of the English. However, the Iberians had a pair of cultural constructs, whose affect on indigenous Americans was equally as pernicious as the English obsession with land.

The first of these was a requirement for social humiliation of conquered groups. This custom developed out of the centuries of inter-religious wars on the Iberian Peninsula prior to colonization of the Americas. In these wars between Muslims, Christians, and Jews, conquered people were allowed to maintain their land, homes and villages, provided they paid both real and cultural homage to the victors. This was accomplished by cultural rituals involving the payment of tributes, in which representatives of the conquered group performed culturally and socially humiliating homage and deference, culminating in the transfer of tribute payments to the ruling authorities. Public humiliation was vital to this tribute-payment process. Personal rights and freedom of the natives were infringed seriously, but their place on the land was not disrupted. In the Iberian colonies, indigenous peoples were required to perform obeisance to their colonial rulers.

Second, Iberians characterized the Native Americans as immoral cannibals, whom the Iberians were morally and religiously bound to correct. The Spanish in particular saw themselves as charged by God to reform the corrupt behavior of the Native Americans. Native American resistance to this attempt at moral guidance was seen as proof of the Native Americans' unchastity. Brutally punishing acts were thus culturally sanctioned, and even required, allowing the unrestrained use

of force by the Iberians in their attempts to make the Native Americans comply with peninsular religion, customs, and laws.

Seed points out a difference between Spanish and Portuguese motivations for colonization, that seems to have potential for significant long-term cultural differences. While the Spanish were interested in converting the Indians to Catholicism and in subjugating Native American labor to Spanish goals, the Portuguese were reluctant colonists, who resorted to colonization of the South American coast to protect their trading outposts from other Europeans (mainly French pirates) and, to a lesser extent, from competing indigenous groups. The Portuguese were interested in converting and dominating indigenous labor as secondary necessities to this primary goal of defense of their trading posts and warehouses. On the other hand, Spaniards saw conversion of the Indians and reforming “immoral” (in Iberian cultural terms) cultural practices as among the primary reasons for conquest and colonization. Thus, “moral indignation and at times fury . . . leap off the pages of Spanish accounts” of New World conquest (Seed 107).

This is not to say that the Portuguese did not feel that conversion to Catholicism and punishment for the perceived iniquitous behavior of the Native Americans were not part of their mission in the New World. While “the Portuguese crown was not interested in how the commodities [for trade] were produced, under what conditions, or who harvested them,” Seed notes that “Christianizing the natives . . . was too important politically to be neglected” (137, 141). This perspective may not have made the Portuguese handling of indigenous peoples any less callous than that of the Spanish. Yet, this Portuguese perspective on conversion as a political necessity is strikingly dissimilar to the “moral indignation” and “fury” that drove Spanish conversion practices. Using Seed’s criteria and theoretical grounding in her discussions of other such contrasts in colonial practice, I wonder what long-term cultural and psychological differences might today be apparent in indigenous peoples subjected to these two colonial systems, resulting from the divergent evangelical motivations of the Spanish and the Portuguese.

American Pentimento looks at European exploration and conquest of the Americas as the brutal cultural collision that it certainly was. Not only was it a violent and bloody confrontation between Europeans intent on conquest and the pre-existing civilizations of the American peoples, it was also a clash between different goals and beliefs among the European invaders. The variety of purposes behind the actions of the English, Spanish, and Portuguese were demonstrated by the behavior of these European groups toward indigenous Americans and in the cultural

and political definitions these varied European cultures ascribed to Americans. These early cultural dynamics continue to shape and inform current issues in rights for indigenous people. This is particularly true in the Americas, where the movements for freedom from colonial authority were led by European settlers and/or their descendants. *American Pentimento* delineates the historiography of these varied concerns. Seed states:

The clearest evidence of nineteenth- and twentieth-century U.S. citizens' ongoing emotional investment in these colonial fictions has appeared in their reactions to natives who have transgressed the moral boundary laid down by colonists. When natives have acted as users of the land, profit seekers, and farmers—the identities that citizens believed were theirs alone—U.S. citizens have traditionally reacted, and continue to respond, with rage and violence. . . . Neither the citizens nor the politicians claimed to be simply pursuing an economic interest. Rather, they maintained that they were merely taking what was theirs—but theirs by virtue of the political identity that *they* ascribed to the natives. The new citizens considered themselves alone as fully human, and therefore alone as fully entitled to exploit the economic advantages the New World had to offer. . . . By considering the natives as less than human, Anglo settlers could act as they wished toward the natives and not violate their own moral codes. (169; emphasis in text)

Anglo settlers believed that the profitability of any New World land was (and is) theirs. If indigenous nineteenth-century farmers, ranchers, or miners, or twentieth-century indigenous petroleum engineers, real estate developers, or commercial investors found ways to extract profits from lands in their possession, not only was that a breach of the indigenous Americans' culturally defined role requiring chastisement (usually meted out in terms of destroying crops, etc.—whatever was the source of the profit), but it also justified Anglos seizure of those profits and, perhaps, the land used to generate them.

This contrasts with nations on the African continent and Indian subcontinent, where indigenous people led the independence movements and are developing post-colonial political and cultural environments:

In Africa and Asia, most decolonization occurred when native peoples led costly fights that forced Europeans to withdraw. In the Americas, however, the descendants of European colonizers led the independence movements. Had a similar anticolonial revolution occurred in India, it would have been the British Raj, not Gandhi, who led the revolt against English rule beginning in the 1920s. (Seed 163)

In the Americas, colonial influence has remained more firmly entrenched in these post-independence nations because the “Americans” who won independence are the European settlers on these continents. Attitudes toward indigenous peoples encoded in colonial law and language thus form the basis for current definitions of indigenous character and rights. Further, these colonial and frontier systems provide unconstrained and uninterrupted cultural precedent for current attitudes and decisions on indigenous people. Seed writes:

[C]ritiques of the distorted images of Indians have not succeeded in changing minds simply because they have not addressed the two crucial considerations that were at stake: the legitimacy of the original (and subsequent) seizure of native resources and the continuing political legitimacy of the state originally authorizing the seizure of those resources. (133)

Both English and Iberian colonists assigned to indigenous Americans definitions of inferior cultural and political status that replicated hierarchical cultural/political systems in place in Europe. In many instances, the individual colonists themselves had inhabited subordinate positions in their home countries. Thus, New World experience for many early colonists provided both a freedom from the strictures of their former positions and an elevation in social status, as a result of European application of definitions of inferiority to indigenous Americans. For the English, the main elements of this inferior status were limited access to land and restrictions on hunting and riding. For Iberians, the main elements were required performances of abeyances in the form of tribute payments accompanied by ritualistic humiliation along with hierarchically defined distinctions in dress, compounded by a hierarchy of moral rectitude based on socially defined consequences of differences in religion. Thus in former Anglo colonies, the issues at stake currently

involve ownership and authority over land, while in former Iberian colonies, issues revolve around humans rights and questions of respect.

Denise MacNeil

***Outfoxing Coyote.* Carolyn Dunn. That Painted Horse Press. ISBN 928708-08-0. \$12.95**

Early this morning, when I opened a book written by one of my favorite authors, Rainer Maria Rilke, the following statement, highlighted long ago, touched me deeply as always:

For verses are not, as people imagine, simply feelings.... they are experiences. For the sake of a single verse, one must see many cities, many people, and things, one must understand animals, must feel how birds fly, and know the gesture which small flowers make when they open in the morning.

As I thumbed through *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, leaves, rose petals, and tiny flowers fell from the inside. These special memories of daily walks are additions I have always put inside cherished books. Reminders that although I am growing spiritually, I always need to remember how far I have come and what I have survived.

This afternoon, I began reading *Outfoxing Coyote*, a collection of poetry by Creek/Cherokee/Seminole writer Carolyn Dunn, and realized that she has indeed “experienced” life in full. *Outfoxing Coyote* is a treasure of a woman’s desires, disappointments, accomplishments, loves, and survival. Weaving ancestral ideas and stories into modern day vernacular, she has created a magnificent work.

The coyote is considered by many Indian nations to be the trickster, the master magician who uses his/her powers didactically. But sometimes, when we fail to see our own humanness in these teachings, we become the target of coyote’s backward “medicine.” We con ourselves. It takes strong, ancient, feminine power to outfox this trickster.

In the poem “Sleeping Woman,” Carolyn reveals the subtle but amazing feat of outwitting the trickster:

We remember
the silence
in our dreams.
The vast landscape
of trees
shimmering
from the voices
that are carried upon
the wind.
I see the trick of
daylight
and wonder
at the voice
inside
what I won't do for love-
to move beyond the shadow
of myself.
Speaking the enemy's language
as my own
I take back
the things
of my grandmothers.
Her lace curtains,
china cups
and pieces of
clear smoky quartz
from a mountain in
Tennessee
called Sleeping Woman.
She slept beside me
in flower petals
strewn about
in wonder
under a blanket
of Seven Stars.
She moves in darkness
across my life
and knowing
what all women know
I speak his language
that of my conqueror

but in his language
I tell our women stories
Sleeping Woman
she has arisen.

Realizing the mysterious importance of shape shifting, this talented poetess takes us into the worlds of Coyotesse, Turquoise Woman, Deer Woman, Warrior Woman, and Eagle Woman. Through this shifting we realize the importance of finding answers to the following: How can we know our people unless we know as they knew? See as they saw? Become as they were? Simply put, we can't. Carolyn's writings give us clues how to do so, how to outfox the trickster in ourselves, how to see with our eyes closed.

The most enjoyable poem, for me, is "Tahlon of the Bird Clan" which Carolyn composed for her son. The words sing softly from the page to my mind and settle in my heart, never missing an imagery-filled melodic beat, reminding me that we Cherokee are children of the stars, just as we know stars are birds.

Tahlon of the Bird Clan, The One Who Drags It, the singing voice of stars and remembrance and matter and vision, the one of the heart and stones of stars in the sky, the one who returns, the one who stays, the boy who came home and remained, the one who speaks words and sounds and makes sense to the heart, the one of his mother's breath, comes alive in the dawning darkness that has become his life.

I close the book, and stare into the darkness of midnight for a while, contemplating the poem "Deer Hunter," in which Carolyn reveals candidly the mystical mixture of confusion, love, desire, shame, and awakenings.

.....She was trying to warn me-and I looked into her eyes, perhaps now I can save myself.....I look to the ground, and see my feet, hooves covered with dust, and stained with blood, pours from the open wound, of my breasts, where it dries, and forms red stones, shining, and I shape them into a necklace, of deep crimson, nearly black.....

I'll read this book again soon. It will be added to my gathering of favorites. Now, I must sleep before my early morning walk. I want to gather some mountain wild flowers for Coyotesse, Turquoise Woman, Deer Woman, Warrior Woman, Eagle Woman, and Carolyn, because they, as I, "know the gesture which small flowers make when they open in the morning."

MariJo Moore

Contributors

Márgara Averbach, *Doctora en Letras* (PhD in Literature), is a literary translator (from English into Spanish) and teaches American Literature and Literary Translation at *Universidad de Buenos Aires* and *Instituto Lenguas Vivas*, in Buenos Aires. She has published nine books of fiction for children and adults and reviews books for *Clarín*, the main Argentine newspaper. She has translated 49 novels.

James Cox teaches Native American and American literature classes at the University of Texas at Austin. He has published articles on Thomas King and Sherman Alexie and has an article forthcoming on Gertrude Bonnin's editorial work for *American Indian Magazine*.

Scot Guenter is Professor and Coordinator of American Studies at San Jose State University. Author of *The American Flag 1777-1924: Cultural Shifts from Creation to Codification* (1990) and founding editor of *Raven: A Journal of Vexillology*, he has served as a Senior Fulbright Fellow at the National University of Singapore, has published widely in a range of journals, including *American Studies*, *American Political Science Review*, *Multicultural Forum*, *Crux Australis*, and *Washington Book Review*, and has served as the president of the California American Studies Association.

Penelope Kelsey (Seneca) defended her dissertation, "Native American Autoethnography, Sovereignty, and Self: Tribal Knowledges in New Genres," in June 2002 at the University of Minnesota. In August 2002, she joined the faculty of the Rochester Institute of Technology, where she teaches Native American and Women's Literatures.

Alicia Kent is an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Michigan-Flint, specializing in multi-ethnic literatures. Her research focuses on intercultural constructions of modernity and genre choice in early twentieth-century fiction by African Americans, Native Americans, and Jewish Americans.

Denise MacNeil is a Visiting Assistant Professor of English at the University of Redlands. Her recent dissertation, "Roots of the American Frontier Hero in the Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson," analyzes Rowlandson's text as a vehicle for literary migration of Native American wilderness survival techniques into popular Puritan culture, identifying the resultant transgendered and biracial origins of the literary type of the American frontier hero.

MariJo Moore (Cherokee) is the author of *Spirit Voices of Bones, Red Woman with Backward Eyes and Other Stories*, and the forthcoming *Confessions of a Madwoman*, and the novel *The Diamond Doorknob*. She is also editor of *Genocide of the Mind: One Spirit Living in Two Worlds: A Collection of Writings by Urban Indians*. She resides in the mountains of western NC and may be reached at marijomore.com.

Conquistadors

Stephen Graham Jones

The stands are stands salvaged from some abandoned gym, and the arena is a wide oval of school bus hoods, planted topside-in, and in the daytime the packed dirt bakes into a taut, red skin and the tall grass rustles against the inside of the out-facing hoods and the birds they hang in the air like kites, just staying in one place, but in the night with the fry bread thick in the air and the place lit up with twenty pairs of headlights, that's when the buffalo come up out of their cave in the foothills and the Indian men from town pull on the dull armor the Spaniards left behind and step down into the arena with a red table cloth from the pizza place or a maroon headliner from the car their uncle died in and for the crowd they point to the old buffalo bull waiting for them, and the old bull shakes his heavy head back and forth, pawing the ground, and then someone drops a beer bottle from the back of the stands and it's started, the fight, the bull charging the bright cloth, the toreador swiveling his hips, balancing on the soft toes of his beaded moccasins, tufts of the thick brown hair caught in his belt-buckle, his wrist watch, his wedding ring, his teeth, and as the bull passes over and over, huffing steam, pawing the ground, the crowd rains down aluminum cans and smoldering cigarettes and painted porcupine quills, and the man starts blowing the whistle he stole from his seventh-grade basketball coach, and the crowd raises its voice with him, and he finally just throws his bright cloth away, draping it over a headlight, tinting the night air red, and just stands there before the bull in his glinting metal until the bull charges, black horns low, hooves collected under it, pounding, and when the bull hooks the man like he has to, like he always does, the man folds around the shaggy head, still holding his arms out somehow, to the side—*no hands, look*—and then, just when it seems the bull is going to pin the man to one of the hoods of the buses he rode twenty years ago, it stops, flings the man away, up, out of the haze of the arena, back to 1804, or 1743, or even the fifteenth century, all the ships just dots on the horizon, or back to the seventh grade, even, that breakaway lay-up, and the crowd stands, bringing their hands together slowly at first, then louder, and louder, and the one time a white man showed up in his jeep with his fifty-caliber Sharpes with the octagonal barrel and a pair of boys in back to skin the thing out, he looked up from his crude tripod at the denim shins of two hundred Indian people, staring at him, waiting for him to pull the trigger, and he thinned his lips out and backed away, Sharpes held to the side, and said from the

darkness that it didn't make any sense, *it didn't make any sense*, but it did, too, to the man falling from the sky two or three hundred years ago, rolling out of his armor on the way down, trailing it behind him, still blowing his chrome whistle, as if the air from it could soften the impact, allow him to stand from his crater, walk into another world. And maybe it can.

Stephen Graham Jones' first novel, *The Fast Red Road—A Plainsong* (FC2, 2000), won the Independent Publishers Award for Multicultural Fiction. His next novel, *All the Beautiful Sinners*—a thriller—is coming out in April, with *Rugged Land*. After that, it's *The Bird is Gone: A Manifesto* (FC2, Fall 2003).

Announcements and Opportunities

FRANCES C. ALLEN FELLOWSHIPS FOR 2003-04 FOR WOMEN OF AMERICAN INDIAN HERITAGE AT THE NEWBERRY LIBRARY

APPLICATION DEADLINE: **FEBRUARY 20, 2003**

Description: The fellowship is for women of Native American heritage. Candidates for this award may be working in any graduate or pre-professional field on a topic appropriate to the Newberry Library's collections. Financial support varies according to need and may include travel expenses. Allen fellows are expected to spend a significant part of their tenure in residence at Newberry's D'Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian History. The tenure of the fellowship is from one month to one year. Each applicant must submit a vita, description of her research project, and a budget of travel and research expenses. Awards will vary from \$1,200 to \$8,000 of approved expenses.

First awarded in 1983, the fellowships were established in 1980 by the will of Frances Cornelia Wolfe Allen (1894-1980). A strong advocate of education, Allen became interested in The Newberry Library's programs after her 1977 and 1978 visits, while her daughter, Helen Hornbeck Tanner, was director of the Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History Project.

The Newberry Library and The D'Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian History: Founded in 1887, The Newberry Library is an independent research library in the humanities, free and open to the public. Located on Chicago's near north side, Newberry has more than 1.5 million volumes and 5 million manuscript pages. Its collections concern the civilizations of Western Europe and the Americas from the late Middle Ages to the early twentieth century. It has two unequaled collections of print and non-print materials on the histories, cultures, and literatures of American Indian peoples: The Edward E. Ayer Collection and the Everett D. Graff Collection. The Ayer collection, the largest in the library, is not only one of the best collections of general Americana in the United States but also one of the finest collections of American Indian material in the world. The smaller Graff collection of Western Americana focuses on the trans-Mississippi West in the nineteenth century. The McNickle Center was founded in 1972 to improve the quality of what is taught and written about American Indian history

through the use of The Newberry Library's collection in that field. D'Arcy McNickle (Salish-Kootenai) initiated this mission. The McNickle Center serves scholars in such fields as American Indian studies, anthropology, history, linguistics, and literature.

Sample Research Topics of Former Allen Fellows:

- Who Were the Bands that Became the Colville Indians?
- Buffalo Creek: Social History of an Iroquois Community
- Early Christian History of the Blackfeet Tribe
- Threads of Discourse in Oneida Land Rights
- History of the Gros Ventre People of North Central Montana
- History of Minnesota Ojibwes
- The Exclusion of the Indian from American Citizenship, 1808-1880
- The Impact of the Holy Family School on the Blackfeet Reservation
- Betrayal of the Osages: The Reign of Terror, 1921-26
- The Impact of the Rhetoric of Nineteenth-Century Cherokee Women on Their Twentieth-Century Daughters

Committee on Awards
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Visit the website at <http://www.newberry.org>

SUSAN KELLY POWER AND HELEN HORNBECK
TANNER FELLOWSHIP AT THE NEWBERRY
LIBRARY

Description: This fellowship for Ph.D. candidates and postdoctoral scholars of American Indian heritage supports up to two months of residential research in any field in the humanities, using the collections

of the Newberry Library, and provides a stipend of \$1200 per month for periods ranging from one week to two months.

History: This fellowship was established in 2002 by an anonymous donor to encourage research by American Indian scholars and honor two notable advocates for American Indian education. Susan Kelly Power (Yanktonai Dakota) is an historian, activist, and long-time participant in programs of the D'Arcy McNickle Center. She is a founding member and four-time chair of Chicago's American Indian Center. Helen Hornbeck Tanner has served as acting director of the D'Arcy McNickle Center, director the Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History Project, and an expert witness and historical consultant for several tribes. She is now a senior research fellow at the Newberry Library.

The Newberry Library: Founded in 1887, The Newberry Library is an independent research library, free and open to the public. Located on Chicago's near north side, the library has more than 1.5 million volumes and 5 million manuscript pages. The Newberry's collections concern the civilizations of Western Europe and the Americas from the late Middle Ages to the early twentieth century. It has two unequalled collections of print and non-print materials on the histories, cultures, and literatures of American Indian peoples: The Edward E. Ayer Collection and the Everett D. Graff Collection. The Ayer collection, the largest in the library, is not only one of the best collections of general Americana in the United States but also one of the finest collections of American Indian material in the world. The smaller Graff collection of Western Americana focuses on the trans-Mississippi West in the nineteenth century. For further information about specific collections or how one might pursue a particular topic in the collections, contact the Reference Desk via email or phone. Information is also available at our website.

D'Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian History: The McNickle Center was founded in 1972 to improve the quality of teaching and scholarship about American Indian history through the use of the Newberry's collections in that field. D'Arcy McNickle (Salish-Kootenai) initiated this mission. The McNickle Center offers a bi-monthly speaker series; organizes summer institutes; sponsors conferences, seminars, and workshops for teachers and scholars; administers several fellowship programs; and publishes *Meeting Ground*, a biannual national newsletter.

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LONG-TERM ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION FELLOWSHIPS IN AMERICAN INDIAN STUDIES AT THE NEWBERRY LIBRARY

The D'Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian History and the Newberry Library will award one long-term fellowship each year from 2002-2005 to postdoctoral scholars in American Indian studies. The fellowship supports residential research at the Newberry Library. Each fellow will have the opportunity to research in the Newberry Collections related to American Indian history, participate in an active community of scholars, and present research in a D'Arcy McNickle Center Seminar.

We are especially interested in projects that explore the diversity of American Indian communities, various ways of knowing and telling American Indian histories, and/or interdisciplinary issues in American Indian studies. Long-term fellows will have the chance to present their research to the Newberry Library's Fellows' Seminar. The tenure of this fellowship is a minimum of ten months with a stipend of \$40,000.

Founded in 1887, the Newberry Library is an independent research library, free and open to the public. Its holdings center on the societies of Western Europe and the Americas from the late Middle Ages to the early twentieth century, and include two unequalled collections of print and non-print materials on American Indian peoples. The Edward E. Ayer Collection of general Americana has more than 130,000 volumes, plus an extensive collection of manuscripts, maps, atlases, photographs, drawings, and paintings. The Everett D. Graff Collection of Western

Americana focuses on the trans-Mississippi West in the nineteenth century.

For further information about specific collections or how one might pursue a particular topic in the collections, contact the Reference Desk via mail or phone. Information is also available at our web site.

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ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION SHORT-TERM FELLOWSHIPS IN AMERICAN INDIAN STUDIES AT THE NEWBERRY LIBRARY

Rockefeller Short Term fellowships are designed to promote research and teaching in American Indian studies by historians working in reservation-based communities, tribal college faculty, and librarians or curators at American Indian cultural centers or museums. These fellowships foster research in any aspect of American Indian studies supported by the Newberry Library's collections. Each fellow will have the opportunity to research in the extensive library materials related to American Indian history, participate in an active community of scholars, and present research in a D'Arcy McNickle Center Seminar.

Applicants' projects may culminate in a variety of formats, including but not limited to curriculum development projects, artistic works, or publications. The fellowships support 1-3 months of residential research at the Newberry and carry a stipend of \$3,000 per month plus \$1,000 in travel expenses.

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For further information about specific collections or how one might pursue a particular topic in the collections, contact the Reference Desk via email or phone. Information is also available at our website.

Future Application Deadlines: **January 15, April 15, and September 15, 2003-2004.**

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Visit the website at <http://www.newberry.org>

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

The College of Arts and Letters and Social Science

The American Indian Studies Program invites applications for the year 2003-2004 pre-doctoral dissertation fellowship award in American Indian Studies.

The award will be \$36,000 with benefits for one year. The successful applicant is required to teach one course each semester in either the

College of Arts and Letters or the College of Social Science and to be a resident of East Lansing, Michigan. Applicants must be ABD and actively working in American Indian Studies and committed to a career in Native Studies. The fellowship provides office space, access to an outstanding library and computing facilities and to the faculty involved in the American Indian Studies program at MSU.

Applicants may be pursuing the Ph.D. degree in any discipline or area taught by the College of Arts and Letters or the College of social Science at MSU and will be affiliated with a department or program in one of the Colleges. Check the MSU website at msu.edu for a quick reference of departments and schools in each college.

Michigan State University is very interested in attracting American Indian Studies scholars who are serious about teaching, researching, and publishing. It is fully expected that the Fellow will complete their dissertation during the award year.

Application Deadline: March 15, 2003

Award Period: MSU Fiscal Year: July 1, 2003 - June 30, 2004

MSU is an Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity Institution. Persons with disabilities may request and receive reasonable accommodation.

For further information and application guidelines contact: The American Indian Studies Program, ATTN: Patrick LeBeau, 281 Bessey Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824. Telephone: (517) 432-2558 or email: AISP@msu.edu

Conferences

Native American Literature Symposium
March 20-22, 20
Mystic Lake Casino Hotel
Minneapolis, MN

A printable registration form will be available soon. Please register by February 21, 2003. Registration fees are \$75 (\$50 for students). Cancellations must be made by February 21, 2003. A \$10 administrative fee will be assessed on all cancellations. Confirmed registrants who do not attend or who cancel after February 21, 2003, are responsible for the entire registration fee. Hotel and travel arrangements must be made on your own. Be sure to indicate that you are with the Native American Literature Symposium when you contact the hotel for reservations.

MAJOR TRIBAL NATIONS AND BANDS 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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