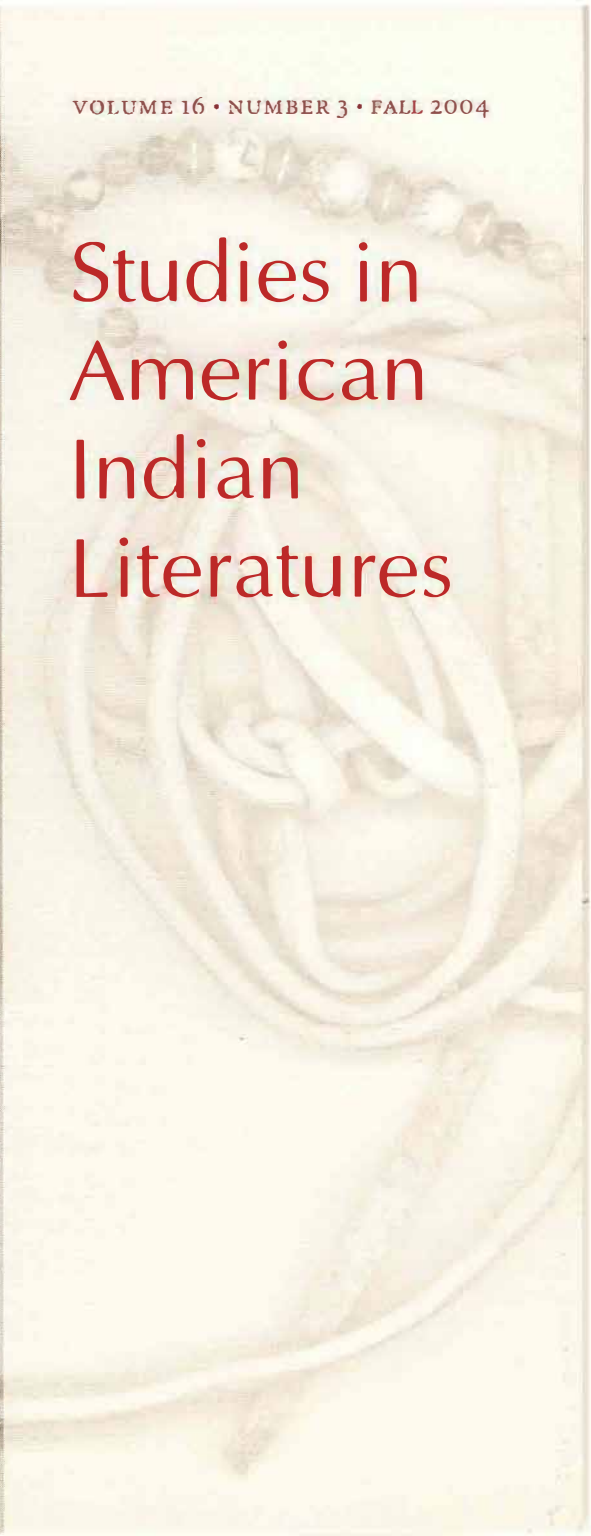


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# Studies in American Indian Literatures



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# Zitkala-Ša and Bicultural Subjectivity

RON CARPENTER

## TYPING THE INDIAN

Zitkala-Ša, or Gertrude Simmons Bonnin (Yankton), thwarts most attempts to categorize her autobiographical subjectivity.<sup>1</sup> Her narrative of her youth originally appears in the January, February, and March issues of the *Atlantic Monthly* (1900), as “Impressions of an Indian Childhood,” “The School Days of an Indian Girl,” and “An Indian Teacher Among Indians.” These memoirs were reprinted in *American Indian Stories*, published in 1921 and reissued in 1985 and 2003. Throughout the autobiography, Zitkala-Ša’s narrator avoids defining herself prescriptively according to either Yankton or Anglo culture. As Dexter Fisher rightly notes “she [Zitkala-Ša] is not reaffirming the role of the woman in tribal life . . . Nor is her purpose to praise the educational opportunities afforded her through governmental policies” (206). Although popular images, then and now, often posit them as a dichotomy, Euroamerican and Native American cultures are neither mutually exclusive nor antithetical categories.<sup>2</sup> I seek to argue that Zitkala-Ša’s persona is *bicultural*, and that she produces a bicultural context in order to reconfigure the representation of Native Americans and their cultural status. By bicultural, I mean that she signs in a context that is inseparably Anglo and Yankton; a context in which she is irreducible to either culture and alienated from each. While Euroamerican and Yankton resources coexist and operate simultaneously, generic dimensions of her bicultural context cannot be stipulated beforehand since Zitkala-Ša’s narrator does not privilege Anglo or Yankton unilaterally, nor balance them equally in situating herself among

and against her shared cultures. Instead, she combines her bicultural resources to produce a new type of Indian, one that exceeds the prescriptive roles offered Native American women by either culture.

This biculturality differs from Homi Bhabha's postcolonial notion of hybridity, or the "open-space in-between," because his Third Space is defined by an absence (112–13). He argues that subjects cannot be located within a single culture and its signifying discourses since all cultures are themselves always alienated from within.<sup>3</sup> For Bhabha, subjects possess agency in between cultures where the inside/outside dialectic is absent: "It is in this hybrid gap, which produces no relief, that the colonial subject *takes place*" (58). While I do want to retain Bhabha's contention that hybridity "resists the binary opposition of racial and cultural groups," my category of the bicultural does not vacate the cultural resources that subjects such as Zitkala-Ša employ to constitute their identity (207).

Zitkala-Ša's textual hybridity is thus more closely aligned to those generated by her African American and American Indian contemporaries. Malea Powell (Indiana Miami), for example, has recently delineated how the late-nineteenth-century intellectuals Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins (Northern Paiute) and Charles Alexander Eastman (Dakota) use "the language of survivance (survival + resistance) [...] to reimagine and literally, refigure 'the Indian'" (400). Similar to Zitkala-Ša, these authors utilize self-representation to transform "their object-status within colonial discourse into a subject status, a presence instead of an absence" (Powell 400). Ross Posnock has outlined what he terms the W. E. B. Du Boisian "distinction," as a practice of "anarchy [that] manifests itself as strategic difficulty, which he used to escape from the bondage of racist classification, from stereotypes that reigned supremely as Nature" (507). Du Bois's "double consciousness"

staged the clash [between races] rather than defusing or muffling it [...] because the reality that confronted them [his audience] was unsettled, he unsettles, keeping debate alive in his audience so that their perplexity might be clarified, if not

dissolved. This dissonant perspective is not to be the end point but rather the tool of a more nuanced kind of political conduct, one supple enough to make distinctions and double moves rather than relying on a single “frontal attack.” (507–08)

Similarly, Zitkala-Ša stages her autobiography by foregrounding stereotypes, framing the Indian/white binary as faulty; she thus keeps the dialogue between cultures present, rather than reconciling their cultural differences. Zitkala-Ša strategically reforms her subjectivity according to her bicultural resources; her autobiographical persona is a practice and a product of this biculturality in which she formulates a new account of agency. This biculturalism, which refines representations of Native Americans, provides the criteria by which we must assess Zitkala-Ša’s self-representation.

This bicultural context rejects not only stereotypical constructions of Indians, but also the philosophical tenets of a racial hierarchy, and Anglos’ continuous attempts to impose it upon Native American peoples. Dorothea Susag, for instance, has argued how Zitkala-Ša relies on her Native heritage, specifically the Iktomi tales, to “reveal a powerful feminine and ethnic voice when read against her two cultural influences [. . . and] to overcome forces that would suppress the feminine Indian voice” (3). Zitkala-Ša’s narrator selects personal incidents that allow her to display an Indian stereotype as well as iterate how Natives, such as herself, disrupt the Anglo trope of racial typing. Furthermore, for readers to be able to acknowledge her biculturalism or comprehend how she alters the Indian type, Zitkala-Ša’s autobiographical narrator, or her persona, must teach her Euro-American audiences to recognize the bicultural Indian, a “civil” woman, who does not fit a crude stereotype. She defines the civil Indian as one who uses silence to monitor herself and to respect others, especially storytellers. Her Yankton education, dependent upon oral stories and interactions with storytellers, inculcates this civility. She describes how her tribal elders taught her a self-monitoring civility and, through deploying similar rhetorical strategies, reproduces this mentoring relationship with her Anglo readers. Her narrative thus reconfigures the

Yankton oral tradition of listening respectfully to the speaker/storyteller. Zitkala-Ša prompts readers to hear her type of Indian.

#### BICULTURAL RESERVATION: TRANSFORMING THE INDIAN

Zitkala-Ša's persona produces a bicultural context to redress Indian stereotypes. Her text clearly draws from both Yankton and Euroamerican cultural resources. She begins by describing her childhood on the Yankton Reservation, while she is living with her mother:

I was a wild little girl of seven. Loosely clad in a slip of brown buckskin, and light-footed with a pair of soft moccasins on my feet, I was as free as the wind that blew my hair, and no less spirited than a bounding deer. These were my mother's pride,—my wild freedom and overflowing spirits. (8)

She aligns herself with a simple construction of the Indian type: she is "wild," wearing buckskin and moccasins. Her youthful exuberance resonates with the nineteenth-century scientific typing of the Indian where "savages were presumed to be closest to the animal stage, they were also presumed to be creatures of instinct who reacted simply, almost automatically, to environmental stimuli" (Berkhofer 60). The narrator presents the child's mind as limited in perception and disembodied: "I was not wholly conscious of myself, but was more keenly alive to the fire within. It was as if I were the activity, and my hands and feet were only experiments for my spirit to work upon" (8). With this figure, Zitkala-Ša's persona initially reconfirms Indian stereotypes.

These stereotypes and their implicit cultural assumptions, however are disrupted by the persona's description of her childhood. While her formative years living on the reservation might appear to occur exclusively in a Yankton locale, the persona situates her early life within an Anglo context as well. Euroamericans, for example, supply some of the economic goods that sustain Zitkala-Ša's family. She makes coffee in a coffeepot (27). Instead of buffalo hide, the wigwam is made from "weather-stained canvas" (7). Later her mother will move into a log cabin; by the time Zitkala-Ša is finished with her Anglo education, her mother decorates the cabin with curtained win-



dows and checkered tablecloths (40, 89). Missionaries give the young girl a bag of colored marbles (37).

Euroamericans provide some of the literary economies in which Zitkala-Ša signs, especially the Bible. The missionaries, for instance, are associated intimately with “red apples,” the symbolic fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. When the missionaries arrive, for example, her friend Judewin informs her of “a great tree where grew red, red apples; and how we could reach out our hands and pick all the red apples we could eat” (41–42). When the missionaries enter her mother’s house, Zitkala-Ša asks questions about the red apples, which the interpreter confirms (42). The final chapter of the first section, “The Red Apples,” asserts the biblical overtones, and the second section reiterates that connection with the first chapter entitled “The Land of Red Apples.” Moreover, the persona places herself in an Indian setting using structural elements found in Eden: a fertile land with a river, an innocent state, and a single dictum from a creator figure—her mother commands that “my little daughter must never talk about my tears” (7). Similar to Adam and Eve, Zitkala-Ša appears after the landscape, and an authorizing agent (her mother) has been introduced. This landscape is labeled according to the United States’ designations; rather than the Yankton’s *Mni’so’sé*, the narrator identifies the river as the Missouri.

In short, Zitkala-Ša’s life story is framed as an interfusion of cultural practices. In her persona’s account, Native peoples live in a canvas wigwam or a log cabin, sharing the land with Anglos. Historically, as Robert Berkhofer Jr. suggests, “change toward what Whites were made him [the Indian] ipso facto less Indian” (29). That perception, however, is clearly inappropriate in Zitkala-Ša’s case and, generally speaking, all Native peoples, since from her earliest memory, she experiences life within a bicultural context. While the tribe previously might have depended on buffalo for its economic and material sustenance, Zitkala-Ša never does. Her reservation life is therefore decidedly different from that practiced by her Yankton ancestors. She might wear a buckskin dress with moccasins, but she also plays with Anglo-made marbles. Her narrator identifies with an Indian stereotype, but also dispels its restrictive definitions. She prevents readers

from keeping the Indian trapped in a state of timelessness where “Indians are fierce, they wear feathers and grunt” (Deloria 10). Indians are thus allowed to change, and still remain real Indians. By not personally lamenting or declaiming such changes to Yankton culture, Zitkala-Ša avoids directly castigating Euroamericans for their extermination policy. Her presentation removes the taint of assimilation for Indians since adapting to whites and their goods is an essential component for Zitkala-Ša’s type of Indian. Her autobiographical text avoids reproducing the myth of the vanishing Indian, as most prominently exemplified in James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans* and Zane Grey’s *The Vanishing American*. These published stories demonstrate that Indians are not disappearing due to the encroachment of Anglos; they are adapting.

Zitkala-Ša’s bicultural Indian negates the stereotype of the exotic other whose culture is antithetical to Anglos. She accepts that Anglos influence her lifestyle, and her narrator incorporates elements from her Christian education in her representation of reservation life. The beginning that precludes a genealogy resembles the opening verses of Genesis (2:1–3:8) more than most autobiographers, Indian and Anglo, who typically begin with a detailed genealogy. Zitkala-Ša’s Yankton ancestors are not as significant as the bicultural landscape in which she lives. Her familiarity with the Bible and its proclaimed American principles allows her to establish a common ground with her white Christian audience as she positions herself in her story of genesis. By demonstrating her affinity with a modern culture, this bicultural practice establishes her difference from stereotypical Indians while still appealing to audiences familiar with the Bible.

This bicultural landscape, however, does not simply placate her audiences through incorporating Euroamerican resources. While recognizing the need to illustrate their influence upon her life as well as to communicate with Anglo audiences, Zitkala-Ša’s persona rewrites the Anglo Christian mythology. By altering elements in the myth of Genesis, she offers a calculated response to popular Christian notions of women and Indians. The two alternatives she repeatedly stresses are the maternal nature of the tribe and the Yankton matriar-

chal practices of civility. For example, the paternal biblical hierarchy is erased as women occupy the core of the neo-Edenic myth. Her mother, Táte I Yóhin Win (Reaches For the Wind), is a maternal authority, but there is no God or other masculine authority in this place. This maternal presence contradicts the male's preeminence in Western definitions of the Christian family, as well as the prevalence of male Indians in the print-media. Furthermore, in Zitkala-Ša's Eden, woman is not responsible for the "fall"; her brother David's boarding school education happens first: "my big brother Dawee had returned from a three years' education in the East, and his coming back had influenced my mother to take a farther step from her native way of living" (40). While she might represent Eve symbolically, Zitkala-Ša is not accountable for the Yankton's or even her mother's "step from" Native traditions. Her narrator rejuvenates the misogynistic image of Eve as the source of original sin, and hence as the "weaker" sex, through substituting a male figure. She alters fundamental Christian concepts to combat the perceived inferiority of woman and the absence of Indian women in American society.

Zitkala-Ša's persona locates Indians in the Garden of Eden, displacing the old Puritanical image of the Indian as agent of Satan. As Berkhofer writes, the new Americans "saw themselves as the chosen of the Lord for the special purpose of bringing forth a New Zion [...] when he [the Indian] fought or frightened the Puritans, he assumed the aspect of his master Satan and became one of his agents" (81). Using her mother's indirect speech, the persona reverses the Indian/white binary commonly deployed by fundamental Christianity. Zitkala-Ša queries her mother about the Anglo whom Táte I Yóhin Win labels "a sham,— a sickly sham! The bronzed Dakota is the only real man" (8). Her mother continues: "There is what the paleface has done! Since then your father too has been buried in a hill nearer the rising sun. We were once very happy. But the paleface has stolen our lands and driven us hither. Having defrauded us of our land, the paleface forced us away" (10). Táte I Yóhin Win's reconfiguration of American history questions the religious underpinnings of Manifest Destiny. Her mother's tale is a version of the Christian fall from grace modernized in an American

context: tricked by the serpent-like Anglo through an unspoken event, the tribe was expelled from the land by which they defined themselves. Their relocation is forced, differentiated from her mother's own childhood they march "not in the grand, happy way that we moved camp when I was a little girl, but we were driven, my child, driven like a herd of buffalo" (10). The reservation is reshaped from a living garden to the familial grave site. In her mother's account, Indians are the innocent in America, the true inhabitants of the land, wronged by the shameful deceptions of "palefaces."

Recasting Anglos as Satan, Táte I Yóhin Win's argument links the Indian's subject position in Anglo culture to her conception of Anglos according to Yankton culture. Zitkala-Ša's mother's story connects Indians to Anglos because depending on one's bias, either culture can be made to be "fallen" and/or made to be the cause of the fall. The relativism of the situation negates the potential for either culture to claim an Edenic relationship; either Anglos are the serpent and the Indians are the inhabitants of the garden, or vice versa depending on whose construction governs. Zitkala-Ša's veiled implication is that all Americans are already fallen since neither Indians nor Anglos can claim a "chosen" or innocent status due to the perceptions of the other. Each culture loses a central tenet of its respective self-identification in the expansion west. Yanktons lose more than just land; they lose their symbiotic connection to the land as well as the perception that they are privileged inhabitants. Euroamericans lose their "innocent" status as they become imperialists who commit genocide in order to occupy the land. As a consequence, no group can view America as a sacred garden or themselves as the chosen people.

Táte I Yóhin Win's alternative interpretation complicates the racial hierarchy Anglos commonly asserted to further their social, political, and religious goals. Her claim that the Indians are the rightful sovereigns of the land, for instance, refutes the myth of Manifest Destiny. The federal government devalued Indians to rhetorically legitimize the appropriation of the continent, popularly known as Manifest Destiny. As Roy Harvey Pearce documents in *Savagism and Civilization*, many stereotypes of the Indian as "savages" developed from the American need to justify colonizing the continent: "The good society could sus-

tain and prove itself only by destroying the remnant of the savage past” (168). More recently, in *Demon of the Continent*, Joshua David Bellin has demonstrated a similar pattern in which dominant America demonizes Indians in order to exonerate the government’s “extermination or assimilation” policies. Those rationalizations, however, pale when confronted with Táte I Yóhin Win’s assertions of removal, disease, and murder. Her familial history reminds Zitkala-Ša’s white readers that their recent expansion west, which provides her the opportunity to record her mother’s and her own story, is predicated on the displacement, confinement, and genocide of Native Americans.

Aware that Anglos would evaluate her, Zitkala-Ša’s persona initially relies on the character of her mother to relocate the Indian’s position in dominant racial and religious myths. Her mother’s speech implies that Native American cultures are not static or exclusive, and that such fictions of anthropological stagnancy are inconsistent with Yankton women’s self-representations. The story specifically challenges the narrator’s previous identification as a wild Indian child. Zitkala-Ša is born after the relocation, so her persona cannot pretend Anglos did not influence her until her eighth year. This fact complicates the simple Indian lifestyle the child sought to imagine. Her mother’s story balances the primitivist aspect registered by Zitkala-Ša the child, and undermines the child’s illusion of freedom. Since Euroamericans appear before Zitkala-Ša’s birth, Anglo conceptions that stereotype the Indian as antithetical or bestial are inadequate and inaccurate for framing modern Indians such as herself.

This upheaval of the childhood order of things as told by another’s perspective denotes precisely how Zitkala-Ša’s text transforms readers’ expectations of Indian types. The persona retells her mother’s brief autobiography, which propagates a bicultural context, to contradict her own initial subject position; similarly, Zitkala-Ša’s entire autobiography redresses the public’s crude, childish notions of the other as an inferior—stoic, savage, and so forth—by asserting a bicultural context. It is crucial that we hear Táte I Yóhin Win’s self-referential story explaining the transition to the tribal reservation in order to see that Indians are neither static, nor exterminated, but rather surviving alongside whites. Zitkala-Ša’s narrator re-presents a tribal account of history that

undermines Indian stereotypes, while her autobiography dramatically illustrates the Indians' survival. This remembered event foreshadows what Zitkala-Ša is personally going to experience and then represent in an autobiography that chronicles not just her fall into assimilation, but her resiliency in a bicultural world.

Táte IYóhin Win's speech constitutes the persona's embedded appeal to Anglo audiences. It would be prudent for Zitkala-Ša not to stress the American government's responsibility for the absent male Indians. Besides noting her elder brother Dawee, cousin Thowin, and an unnamed aunt, for instance, she does not identify her tiyospaye—members of the extended family to which she belongs. Her mother's narrative clarifies why the narrator avoids her genealogy: some of her male relatives have been killed, and her readers tacitly consented to their deaths. Using her mother's speech, however, the persona differentiates herself from those Indians who do castigate Anglos for the destruction of her family and tribe. While her mother laments the changes brought about by Anglos and blames them for the tribe's predicament, Zitkala-Ša's textual character never does. Her narrator assumes responsibility for choosing to attend White's Manual Institute. While the child might express indignation at the "paleface that makes my mother cry," this outburst is due to Anglos causing her mother to cry, not their expansionist policy (9). When she recalls how Anglos stare rudely at her on the train, the narrator does not lecture Anglos, instead she describes how she felt; "this embarrassed me, and kept me constantly on the verge of tears" (48). Rather than alienating her reading audiences through direct criticism, the persona relies on the indirect speech of her mother to assert the critical position.

If Zitkala-Ša were to document in first person the unfortunate history of conquest, her Euroamerican readers might be outraged by the first chapter and discontinue reading. In "My Mother," however, the narrator lures her readers into the serialized autobiography by initially presenting herself as a simple Indian, consistent with primitivist stereotypes. Her readers would be amenable to reading about an authentic Indian who conforms to their expectations. She presents her mother as the vengeful Indian, keeping herself above the fray.

The persona strategically draws the reader into her text with simple stereotypes that reinforce the Indian/white binary, yet she sidesteps those initial constructions and avoids positioning herself within the debate. She can then alter our conception of the Indian through presenting herself as a non-hostile Yankton who cultivates a gentele civility. She learns this civility at the Yankton reservation, and her reluctance to admonish Anglos here exemplifies this characteristic. Zitkala-Ša thus appeals to Anglos in a dual manner: she relies on the voices of others to reprove their extermination practices; simultaneously, this reliance on others highlights her civility since she avoids the dirty work of making painful accusations. At this point, having gained the reader's trust, Zitkala-Ša can present herself as a different type of Indian. An Indian, that is, who accepts Anglo influences, rather than condemning them, and who, without alienating her audience, is able to make Anglos conscious of their oppression of Native peoples. This rhetorical strategy successfully alters the stereotypical Indian.

Her narrator's intermingling of cultural traditions, and willingness to alternate between them to suit her purposes, suggests that Zitkala-Ša does not experience them as distinct. Thus far, I have focused primarily on how her literary persona interacts with Euroamerican resources to create a bicultural context. Her biculturalism, however, does not entirely preclude Anglo culture and adhere to a Yankton worldview, nor does it only court Anglos and reject Yankton traditions. Zitkala-Ša is not exclusively committed to tribal practices. She revises the Indian type that circulates in each of her shared cultures. Publishing her life in an Anglo literary journal, for instance, indicates dramatically that occupying an "Indian" subject position does not always mean being traditional. Zitkala-Ša's choice to go to the Eastern schools demonstrates her desire for two sets of cultural resources.

Her persona does, at times, resist Yankton culture. The first speech by her mother, for example, is punctuated by an imperative, an imperative rejected by the autobiographical exposition: "Hush, my little daughter must never discuss my tears" (7). In telling her mother's story, however, the narrator transgresses the very valediction that for-

bids discussing Táte I Yóhin Win's tearful sadness. She commits this transgression not in Dakota, but English; not to the tribe members *per se*, but to readers. Publishing the story in a New York magazine, Zitkala-Ša reaches a wider audience than if she had merely repeated the story to her friends. The fact that Zitkala-Ša's words are still read a century later clearly frustrates Táte I Yóhin Win's intentions that her daughter not reveal her sadness. The narrator's transgression places her in a similar relationship to her authority figure as Adam and Eve to God. Zitkala-Ša's ability to transcend cultural conventions is a defining characteristic of her subjectivity. This transgressive act implies how the narrator will transform her initial identification as a wild Indian into her conclusive self-representation as a bicultural teacher, writing in Euroamerican contexts despite her mother's wishes. Zitkala-Ša appropriates literary conventions, while stamping her difference from both cultural heritages. She does not simply follow the traditions of either culture, whether the textual model of the Bible or the oral Yankton lessons.

Doreen Rappaport writes that Zitkala-Ša "knew her life story mirrored what had happened to thousands of other Indians forced to renounce their culture" (84). Zitkala-Ša's narrator generalizes her experiences, presenting her Indian childhood as the norm not simply for other Yanktons, but for all Indians. She avoids many biographical details that would make the text too subjective. Rather, the writings show only incidents that most Indians who lived on reservations and attended boarding schools would have experienced. She can reconfigure the image of the Indian as bicultural through her generic experiences.

When Zitkala-Ša's persona sketches common events to demonstrate how popular representations of Native Americans are insufficient for categorizing the emerging generations of indigenous people, she also disturbs the inherent egotism of most self-representational texts. While North American autobiography often focuses on individuals as a representative type of American, such as Chief Luther Standing Bear (Lakota), Ben Franklin, or Frederick Douglass, these texts delineate the specific idiosyncrasies of the individual, such as genealogy, occupation, philosophy, or religion. Zitkala-Ša, however, does not center the text on her personal differences, nor proffer many declara-



tions of her individuality. For her, the tradition of telling the self was embedded in letting others speak about the self: a person, or witness, was required to testify about what had happened to others, or what others had done. By explicating the general experiences of Indian children, the narrator helps expand conceptions of autobiography beyond the egocentric. She thus uses personal omissions to iterate her similarities with other Indians, while suggesting a different type of self-representational discourse.

#### RESERVATION EDUCATION: LEARNING TO BE YANKTON

Zitkala-Ša's education in tribal custom and knowledge forms the basis of her autobiographical subjectivity, and defines her new type of civil Indian. Her Yankton education parallels her Anglo education since each depends on her intellectual development and manual industry. In the narrator's account, however, Euroamericans and Yanktons employ quite different instructional methods. Yanktons require silence to nurture the child's analytical skills and arrange the sequence of instructional activities arbitrarily; Anglos use bells to structure an "iron routine" of activities—learning, eating, and even sleeping—and require children to vocalize in English to demonstrate their knowledge. In the tribe, Zitkala-Ša learns about the ohunkakans, analysis, civility, and beadworking.

Zitkala-Ša's familial relationships foster her education in the oral legends, an education that will ultimately result in her first book, *Old Indian Legends* (1901). She acquires reliable versions of the ohunkakans, for instance, due to her deceased uncle's reputation (12–13). Her Yankton education revolves around learning to behave appropriately in order to encourage the elders to tell the ohunkakans. The plot or specific narrative details of the ohunkakans are neither the basis for the narrator's retelling nor what she gleans from them. For example, her persona never transmits the plots of the legends. Instead the narrator's method of encouraging storytellers cultivates her analytical skills and civility. Her mother instructs her to "wait a moment before you invite any one. If other plans are being discussed, do not interfere, but go elsewhere" (13). This lesson instructs her how to be-

have appropriately in relation to other family units. Her mother's advice prods Zitkala-Ša to a silent self-evaluation:

Sometimes I stood long moments without saying a word. It was not any fear that made me so dumb [...] nor was it that I wished to withhold the invitation, for it was all I could do to observe this very proper silence. But it was a sensing of the atmosphere, to assure myself that I should not hinder other plans. (13)

The tribal elders recognize her quiet repose: "the old folks knew the meaning of my pauses" and would ask the purpose of her visit (14).

This self-monitoring, or attentiveness to the privacy of others, means developing her observational skills. Zitkala-Ša's education is based on observing others and repeating those insights to her mother: "while in the neighboring wigwams sometimes an old Indian woman asked me, 'What is your mother doing?' Unless my mother had cautioned me not to tell, I generally answered her questions without reserve" (14). She becomes adept at conversing with adults and judging what information is appropriate to tell others. Upon returning to her mother she quotes the response (14). Zitkala-Ša improves her analytic perception by remembering the questions her mother usually asks, anticipating other's needs: "Frequently she [mother] asked 'what were they doing when you entered their teepee?' This taught me to remember all I saw at a single glance" (14). Zitkala-Ša is trained to remember in detail nearly every word uttered and every action unfolding. These skills bolster her ability to remember events as well as determine what stories about others are acceptable to repeat to her mother, and what stories about her mother are acceptable to repeat to others.

Listening to the ohunkakans, Zitkala-Ša acquires social skills. While listening to one storyteller, she scrutinizes his appearance, noting his body language, as the fire shines on his tattoo. The story itself is insignificant. Rather, the ink lines are a puzzle, something to decipher; Zitkala-Ša changes from a silent witness to an interrogative detective. She asks an old woman an impertinent question about her tattoos, which denote her place in a restricted society. Similar to Táte I Yóhin Win's self-deferral when questioned about her tears, the old

woman's response deflects attention from herself to the world of the child, correcting a child who behaves contrary to cultural values:

Here the old woman began: "Why, my grandchild, they are signs,—secret signs I dare not tell you. I shall, however, tell you a wonderful story about a woman who had a cross tattooed upon each of her cheeks." It was a long story of a woman whose magic power lay hidden behind the marks upon her face. I fell asleep before the story was completed. (16–17)

When Zitkala-Ša rudely questions others, the elders gently steer her to appropriate behavior.

Systematically, the process of garnering legends develops her persona's analytical skills and a civil behavior towards others. Civility is both the method of acquiring knowledge and a tribal goal of knowledge acquisition. Gathering the legends teaches children about Yankton conventions because they must develop an understanding of civility in a tightly knit community in order to be rewarded with stories. Children are required to monitor their behavior depending on their audience, or on whom is asking them questions. Never mind that the stories themselves also represent the tribe's accumulated body of knowledge and abetted the tribe's social and spiritual relationships. Zitkala-Ša's persona suggests that the significance of the stories is the manner by which these stories functioned to cement tribal relationships and foster Yankton civility.

The young girl's attempt to mimic adult behavior through serving cold coffee bears further scrutiny because it serves as an early lesson in Yankton civility for Euroamerican readers. While her mother is out, a friend drops in:

at once I began to play the part of a generous hostess. I turned to my mother's coffee pot. Lifting the lid, I found nothing but coffee grounds in the bottom. I set the pot on a heap of cold ashes in the center, and filled it half full of warm Missouri River water. During this performance I felt conscious of being watched. Then breaking off a small piece of unleavened bread, I placed it in a bowl. Turning soon to the coffeepot, which would

never have boiled on a dead fire had I waited forever, I poured out a cup of worse than muddy warm water. Carrying the bowl in one hand and cup in the other, I handed the light luncheon to the old warrior. I offered them to him with the air of bestowing generous hospitality. (27–28)

Being an adult means being generous to others in the circle of life; here the spiritual duty coincides with *tirole*, or feeding relatives looking for a home. Specifically this tradition means that Zitkala-Ša “play the part of a generous hostess.” The narrator claims that she does feel like an actress on stage “conscious of being watched.” This pretense, where cold, muddy water is coffee, is not identified with deliberate deception. Rather practicing *tirole* shows that Zitkala-Ša has learned what appropriate role is required and adapts accordingly. Her mother and the old warrior validate her behavior since “neither she nor the warrior, whom the law of our custom had compelled to partake of my insipid hospitality, said anything to embarrass me” (28). Each adult thus cultivates the child’s civil generosity. The retrospective narrator distances herself from the foolishness of her childhood interpretation of hospitality, but does not criticize the desire to be a good hostess. Indeed the retrospective persona intrudes to demonstrate precisely that she has learned the adult set of roles demanded by social context.

Zitkala-Ša’s social and analytical skills are ingrained further when she learns how to bead. The narrator describes her mother’s movements:

From a skein of finely twisted threads of silvery sinews my mother pulled out a single one. With an awl she pierced the buckskin, and skillfully threaded it with the white sinew. Picking up the tiny beads one by one, she strung them with the point of her thread, always twisting it carefully after every stitch. (19)

Building upon her previous skills of perception and observation, the girl is instructed indirectly through watching her mother. In the narrator’s account, her Yankton education in beadworking continues

to inculcate the self-monitoring principle. She learns to knot the sinew thread, for example, through trial and error:

It took many trials before I learned how to knot my sinew thread on the point of my finger, as I saw her do. Then the next difficulty was in keeping my thread stiffly twisted, so that I could easily string my beads upon it. My mother required of me original designs for my lessons in beading. At first I frequently ensnared many a sunny hour into working a long design. Soon I learned from self-inflicted punishment to refrain from drawing complex patterns, for I had to finish whatever I began. (19)

Táte I Yóhin Win sets the parameters, but not the individual forms. Zitkala-Ša learns diligence, but is free to decide colors and patterns. Due to her mother's insistence on originality, the narrator admits her tendency is to weave simple patterns in order to refrain from "self-inflicted punishment." She learns her artistic limits of design. Her mother's constructive criticism culminates in a self-policing behavior. When Zitkala-Ša's beadwork is neither non-symmetrical "nor sufficiently characteristic," her mother rebukes her (20). Using her particular childhood and parental figure, the persona presents generic features of how Yanktons instruct their children: mothers administer general guidelines and demonstrations, but not specific instructions. This method forces children to monitor their actions and to be responsible (and is duplicated in how the persona guides readers). Her mother's silence prompts the self-monitoring: "the quietness of her oversight made me feel strongly responsible and dependent upon my own judgment" (20). The narrator internalizes the critical influence of her mother using it as the basis for her development as she learns to bead original simple patterns.

Ultimately, this education informs the persona's literary rhetorics since she adheres to its civil principles when writing to her Euro-american audience. She displays her analytical ability, for instance, when she includes literary forms her Anglo readers are likely to recognize, or when she relies on her mother to declaim the Anglo's expansionist policies. Her subscription to these social conventions guides

what material appears in her autobiography. She does not reveal the inner secrets of the tribe, or the purpose of the woman's facial tattoos. Zitkala-Ša displays the Yankton limits of civility, obeying them as she simultaneously describes them, even when she uses her child character as the "uncivilized" prop. The beadworking techniques influence her editing style as well: she writes in "a simple pattern"—brief chapters with a very narrow narrative focus and subject. She writes symmetrically since she parallels her Indian education with her Anglo education. Finally, she is original, revising autobiographical conventions, depicting Yankton civility, and creating a new type of Indian. Zitkala-Ša's writing and editing style thus evolves according to her reservation education, which cultivates her memory and self-analysis as well as a civil respect for privacy, elders, and storytellers. By describing her Indian childhood, her persona can establish why Native Americans, children and adults, are already civilized.

#### ATTENDING TO THE STORYTELLER

Zitkala-Ša's new Indian depends precariously on our ability to recognize her difference. Her opportunity to define this civil Indian results from her continuing education in Anglo culture. Against her mother's wishes, she attends a school in Wabash, Indiana; yet in "The School Days of an Indian Girl," her persona continues to disrupt the racial hierarchies that sought to quell Indian voices, using the Anglo language to expose the hypocrisy of assimilation policies. Significantly, she contrasts the Yankton silence with the harsh noise of the Institute: "the constant clash of harsh noises, with an undercurrent of many voices murmuring an unknown tongue, made a bedlam within which I was securely tied" (52). The school revolves around bells, which indicate when to pray, sit, or eat at the dinner table, and when to sleep or awake (53, 65). The noise envelops the children:

It was next to impossible to leave the iron routine after the civilizing machine had once begun its day's buzzing; and as it was inbred in me to suffer in silence rather than to appeal to the ears of one whose open eyes could not see my pain, I have many

times trudged in the day's harness heavy-footed, like a dumb sick brute. (66)

Rather than educating the children, attending to their needs or instilling them with a sense of agency, the iron routine is a dehumanizing process that numbs the Indian children's spirits. Constructing Euroamericans as those unable to hear Indians (their civility and their suffering), the narrator suggests her readers need to become bicultural and listen like tribal peoples do.

She, therefore, instructs Anglos how to attend differently to her text in order to change their apprehension and oppression of indigenous peoples. Zitkala-Ša's persona enables her readers to hear her civil Indian as she augments the oral and literate traditions of her tribe, recording stories in print while preserving verbal and aural strategies. Based on the ohunkakans and tribal storytellers, this aural component depends on the audiences' ability to observe contextual details as well as hear both what is said in "a low voice of a curiously colored seashell" and what is not (68). She directs us to monitor our speech and behavior according to the speaker's needs, as she was taught to do by both her tribal and non-tribal teachers. For example, she displays her Yankton-based education in which silences provoke critical self-examinations. She also shows how Anglos misinterpret Indians at the school, such as the snow incident when her friend Thowin is beaten for responding incorrectly to the matron's questions. Her persona does more, however, than expose the mistaken readings of herself at the Anglo schools she attends, to reflect poorly on the ignorant Anglos. *Post de facto*, she contextualizes those unfortunate incidents with her tribal-based preconceptions. Her persona focuses on people's ears, voices, body language, and other contextual features that allow us to identify with her and understand her actions in a particular scene. She establishes how cruel the Anglo behavior should be perceived by compassionate readers who can hear why she is silent during those incidents, or why she omits elements of her life. It is essential for the narrator to provide hints on how to attend to her silences because if her audiences did not hear her bicultural difference, then Anglos and scholars would continue to misread her—her

difference, desire, suffering—as well as consent to federal policies that dispossess Indians of family, land, property, civic rights, and tradition. While her ignorant mentors can be forgiven for mistreating her, her informed audiences cannot.

Zitkala-Ša's polyvocal silences are varied but context-specific: they might signify her civility, respect, inquiry, control, loss, misery, or resistance. If we attend to how her persona presents the Yankton act of silence, for example, then her reluctance to condemn Anglos for their rude behavior indicates her extraordinary civility. Rather than denote a lack of activity, silence means action, whether by the silent individual, the witness to the silence, or both. The polyvocal silence might register in the Anglo tradition stereotypes as the stoic Indian. Yet her silences mean infinitely more in the bicultural context where Yankton traditions influence interpretation. The action and emotion contained in and expressed by these silences dispel the myth of the stoic Indian. Indians are never unemotional stoics; they merely appear that way to people who are unable to evaluate their silence.

The social conventions imposed upon Zitkala-Ša as a child are duplicated in her exposition of the author/audience relationship. Similar to the Indian storytellers she describes, Zitkala-Ša's persona is a pedagogue who, through a methodical practice of silent reproach, provides readers with the means for them to monitor themselves appropriately. In telling the incident with the tattooed woman, for example, the narrator clarifies the limits of appropriate Yankton behavior. Her subject position as an Indian child is shared by Anglo readers in relationship to the Indian storyteller. As readers, we interrogate the print, the lines on one's face as a metaphor for her memoirs. The persona deflects what she assumes will be blunt questions about her marked identity, by telling a story about storytelling Indians, in which she was an uncivil audience member. The Indian storyteller's solution of self-deferral mirrors Zitkala-Ša's authorial position. The chapter "The Legends," for instance, does not contain a single legend, and the young Zitkala-Ša is a witness to the action. Her persona's choice to omit the supposedly fearful tale means that readers are required to decipher the personal "lines" and examine the role of audiences in tribal contexts. Meanwhile this narrator has deflected the autobiography's



supposed narrative focus from herself to a story that is never told, a story that is itself a deflection by a female Yankton storyteller. Her persona thus deflects attention from her marked self to her impertinent Anglo audience, just as she has been taught to do by her Yankton role models. If we look for a personal identification of her Indian self, Zitkala-Ša is, like her mother and the tattooed woman, going to avoid the interrogation. Speaking generally about the Sioux tribes of this time, Chief Standing Bear (Lakota) reveals:

Excessive manners were put down as insincere and the constant talker was considered rude and unthinking [...] Only one voice was heard at a time. No one was quick to ask a question, and no one was pressed for an answer. (qtd. in LaPointe 71)

Zitkala-Ša's persona, however, does delineate the proper hermeneutic framework through repeating the story. The story does more than illuminate how the girl acted improperly; it shows how we should listen. The old grandmother serves as an example of what the storyteller's obligations and methods are: to deflect the critical gaze from the self, to others resembling either themselves or the audience, in order to elicit the listener's self-evaluation. The old woman does confess that the lines are secret signs and that it is impolite to discuss; she then continues her response by telling a story about the magic contained in other people's tattoos. In doing so, the old woman steers the child to appropriate listening practices while conforming to storytelling principles. In retelling the storytelling incident and emphasizing the listening audience, not the story, Zitkala-Ša's persona likewise indicates how Anglos should attend to her autobiography. Like the young, impertinent Zitkala-Ša, the reader cannot simply ask for the key to her identity and expect the storyteller to decipher the textual sign. Rather than voice questions, we are supposed to listen and use the silence wisely for self-reflection.

Zitkala-Ša presents her own transgressions so that the reader can learn from her mistakes and, perhaps, change what now must be considered uncivilized behavior towards Indians, particularly female storytellers like herself. Similar to young Zitkala-Ša, the reader has no time to be dissatisfied with the female authority that dodges childish

questions by telling horror stories. Instead her text confronts us with the role of the interrogator, our role as a critical audience. When Zitkala-Ša acts as an interrogator, she repeatedly encounters a fearful tale—the tribal relocation, the tattooed woman, the dead man’s plum bush, and the snow incident. For Zitkala-Ša, what remains from these events is an acute impression that imprints a mental picture: “Its impression was so acute that the picture still remains vividly clear and pronounced” (17). The tribal legend told about the dead man’s plum bush expresses a similar relationship of childhood limits and the persona’s literary practices. This legend reinforces the connection between memory and the impression of fear. “The Dead Man’s Plum Bush” is told by her mother, who explains that the game he played was central to his identity. When buried with a seed, his grave site grows a tree, the fruit of which she is forbidden to pick. The narrator deploys similar language to describe the bush as she did the old woman’s story: “the lasting impression of that day, as I recall it now, is what my mother told me about the dead man’s plum bush” (33). In each circumstance, her rude curiosity is restrained by a story that causes enough fear to prevent Zitkala-Ša from forgetting the instructional words or repeating the uncivil behavior.

She offers these impressions as the *par exemplar* guidelines to her representations of Indians. As readers querying her Indian marks, we encounter her fearful tale of assimilation. Zitkala-Ša’s self-representation appeals to American readers as a horror story, complete with detectives, witnesses, deferrals, and indirect reported speech. In this sense, her autobiographical memoirs constitute a gothic narrative that requires fear to be remembered. If we take our cue from her Yankton learning process and biographical omissions, then we too should reflect on our responses to be more respectful of others. We might also remember her story and seek to change the boarding school policies she will declaim in the second section. Those painful moments are acute impressions designed to trigger our memory. The reader thus learns to listen for those textual moments where the autobiographical subject is silent because the autobiographical persona has indicated that silence is constitutive of a bicultural identity. Teaching her Anglo audiences to hear as Yanktons do, Zitkala-Ša’s

persona thus reimagines the Dakota tradition of *ohunkakans*. She has not only translated the oral practices into written English, but also compelled readers to engage with the text in ways that are consistent with Yankton storytelling traditions.

Generally speaking, the persona's silences constitute her bicultural identification. An episode late in section two, for instance, shows how non-Anglo-educated Indians are capable of misinterpreting silence. After three years at the Institute, Zitkala-Ša, for the first time, is read incompletely by her mother. She attempts to mask her anger towards whites through silence and rejects the Bible her mother proffers (73). Initially, Táte I Yóhin Win thinks her daughter is sad because sadness is what her silences often denote. Táte I Yóhin Win is unable to decipher the meaning of her daughter's silence (resistance to Anglo epistemology), because she has not experienced an Anglo education. As readers, we know because the narrator has told us, and because most of us are familiar with educational institutions in the United States. Therefore Zitkala-Ša's type of silence, while initiated by a Yankton understanding of others, requires an exposure to Anglo culture if we are to understand her difference. Neither culture, by itself, can adequately account for her self-expression. Zitkala-Ša's narrator, that is, must reconstruct her Yankton tradition to include Anglo resources in order that we might hear her idiosyncratic personality. To hear her bicultural difference, we must negotiate both Anglo and Yankton resources.

Zitkala-Ša's concluding remarks about the boarding school emphasize the ability of the audience to listen compassionately in order to comprehend her bicultural subjectivity:

The melancholy of those black days has left so long a shadow that it darkens the path of years that have since gone by. These sad memories rise above those of smoothly grinding school days. Perhaps my Indian nature is the moaning wind which stirs them now for their present record. But however tempestuous this is within me, it comes out as the low voice of a curiously colored seashell. (67–68)

She implies that the worst things remain unspoken as are the particular damages the Anglo school has caused. Her civility prevents further discussion. Her difference is signaled in the metaphor of a curiously colored seashell, a coastal item distant from the Plains, and the Institute. This metaphor confirms her bicultural identity, and the auditory nature of her autobiography. If Zitkala-Ša wants to tell her horror story while still appealing to her Anglo audiences and obeying the outlined conventions of civility, she needs to be indirect; by identifying with a seashell that does not, by itself, produce sound, the persona requires the audience to work to hear her “low voice.” Equating her Indian nature with the moaning wind implies a fundamental source of her identity since her mother’s name is Reaches for the Wind (though the text never identifies her name), but this tempestuous wind is diminished “within me” since the narrator controls her sadness to speak in quiet tones for her Anglo audience. Her Indian nature must be coupled with her Anglo experiences to generate her autobiographical voice, similar to how the listener must couple with the seashell and Zitkala-Ša’s textual identity (each a subject removed from its native environment) and use their imagination to hear any sound. Readers must perceive the difference of her Indian nature and bend their ears with compassion in order to hear the “low voice,” the quiet bicultural subjectivity she carefully delineates. Zitkala-Ša’s persona and her elucidation of the Yankton pedagogy challenges the Institute’s routine that depends on noise to educate. In this manner, her narrator erects an auditory scale, centered on silence, by which we might hear her representation, rather than merely reading her type of Indian.

Zitkala-Ša never permits cultural conflicts to defeat her overflowing spirit. Instead she is galvanized as her bicultural educations culminate in her focusing her energies on behalf of Indians: the final section of the autobiography, “An Indian Teacher Among Indians,” sketches her pedagogical career and burgeoning political activism as she spends a year at the Carlisle Indian Institute. Although she acknowledges her mother’s pessimistic analysis of Anglos, she retains the necessity of understanding their language and negotiating their systems to benefit the subsequent generations of Native Americans. Her commitment to Natives and Anglos, their practices and traditions, is explicitly confirmed

in her narrative identity, her teaching career, and her life. Unsurprisingly, after only a short year, Zitkala-Ša disagrees with Col. R. H. Pratt's educational policies, resigns, enrolls in the New England Conservatory, and starts writing. Her self-representational stories produce a subjectivity formed through multiple silences about the self as she discovers how to manipulate her biculturality to her advantage in Anglo culture. She integrates her bicultural resources in a text that stitches red and white together.

#### NOTES

1. Building on Arnold Krupat's theories, in "Zitkala-Ša's Autobiographical Writings: The Problems of a Canonical Search for Language and Identity," Martha Cutter argues that the stories examined here should register as autobiography. If we do not allow Native texts like Zitkala-Ša's, which may be unconventional by Euroamerican standards, to stand as autobiography (and so become part of the American canon), we risk implying that Native peoples are incapable of self-representation, or we invalidate their indigenous methods for speaking about the individual. Or worse, that their texts do not merit our critical attention unless they conform to the well-established Euroamerican modes of self-representational discourse labeled "autobiography." Making the case for expanding definitions of autobiography to "include nonwritten forms of personal narrative and non-Western concepts of self," Hertha Wong claims "it is Eurocentric theory, not Native American autobiography, that is lacking" (4-5). Like other scholars, I am worried that without this label, we justify relegating the important stories that Natives tell non-Natives to the trivial halls of juvenile literature, memoir, or myth. Several scholars writing about Zitkala-Ša in the past decade seem reluctant to view these writings straightforwardly as an autobiography; instead they tend to refer to the three sections as "autobiographical narratives" (Bernadin) or "autobiographical essays" (Carden, Okker). However, prominent Bonnin scholar P. Jane Hafen (Taos) identifies them as autobiography (xiii). I view these writings as autobiography because that term signals the biculturality I want to argue pervades the text, and because the self-referential stories attend to Yankton resources, in the narrator's account, of telling stories about the self. Generally speaking, H. David Brumble III has referred to self-referential stories such as counting coup, acquisitions of power, self-vindications, and educational narratives as "preliterate traditions of American Indian au-

tobiography" (vii). I am uncomfortable with the notion of these traditions as "preliterate" because it suggests that these cultures and oral traditions lack rhetorical and literary conventions. Nevertheless, as the section titles indicate, Zitkala-Ša's stories are selective, self-referential impressions of her dual educations. These educational stories serve as the foundation for what is, in turn, a pedagogical lesson in reading Yankton literature, as well as in respecting Native peoples.

2. See Robert Berkhofer Jr., *White Man's Indian*; Raymond William Steadman, *Shadows of the Indian*; Arlene B. Hirschfelder, *American Indian Stereotypes in the World of Children*; and C. Richard King, *Colonial Discourses, Collective Memories and the Exhibition of Native American Cultures and Histories in the Contemporary United States*.

3. In cultural texts and other "systems of meaning," this disjunction is caused by the "differ<sup>ance</sup> of writing" that Jacques Derrida has demonstrated; on the grander scale, Bhabha views cultural hybridization, the moment at which the "culture" is alienated from itself, as an inescapable condition because it happens incessantly when/where the hegemony discourses to and through the Other (38, 58).

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# Tools of Self Definition

Nora Marks Dauenhauer's "How To Make Good Baked Salmon"

CASKEY RUSSELL

My title, "Tools of Self Definition," is taken from the Kenyan scholar Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Decolonising the Mind*, and is a phrase I find applicable for the literary endeavors of the Tlingit poet Nora Marks Dauenhauer, since her poems and essays are often very personal and familial. Her poems are also powerful expressions of Tlingit culture and sense of place, and thus can be read as tools of Tlingit tribal self definition. As I will show, Dauenhauer's poem "How To Make Good Baked Salmon from the River," from her book *The Droning Shaman*, can be understood as a tool of tribal self definition, an understanding which situates it within the larger debate as to whether or not traditional Indian worldviews can be translated into non-traditional forms such as English and poetry. It is my premise in this essay that such translation of worldviews is not only possible but has been actualized by Dauenhauer. Throughout my analysis, to aid in discerning the Tlingit worldviews as expressed by her poetry, I will utilize a list of key Tlingit values as presented by the respected Tlingit elder Dr. Walter Soboleff.<sup>1</sup> An examination of the debate surrounding the use of non-traditional forms and languages in American Indian literature will follow to give some context to the poem's analysis in order to show that Dauenhauer has indeed created a useful tool of self definition, and tribal definition, in "How To Make Good Baked Salmon from the River."

Though I could have picked any number of Dauenhauer's poems to address these concerns as most of her poems exhibit key Tlingit concepts, and many of her haiku-like poems are reminiscent of tradi-

tional Tlingit songs, I picked this particular poem because it describes a “tradition” I participate in as frequently as I can: the preparing, cooking, and eating of salmon. In reading the poem I feel as though I am being instructed in person, perhaps over the phone, on how to prepare salmon in a contemporary setting while at the same time being told of how Tlingits used to prepare salmon in traditional fish camps. In fact, I am often reminded, when reading this poem, of my own Tlingit grandmother telling stories of her childhood in the village of Klawock, Alaska, while she was engaged in a contemporary extension of that tradition in the city of Bellingham, Washington, where we lived. For example, whenever she smoked her salmon in a Little Chief aluminum smoker, she often told of Klawock’s old, wooden smokehouse and how her elders used it to smoke salmon. “Though they don’t use it anymore, that old smokehouse is still standing,” she told me numerous times. I doubt she cared whether her smoker was made of aluminum or wood, what was important was that the salmon was still being smoked, and that the younger generation was observing the ritual of smoking salmon while learning, via the stories, respect for the older generation(s) and being made aware of how the culture has transformed and adapted. I believe we find the same sentiments in Dauenhauer’s poem.

Dedicated to American Indian writer Simon Ortiz, Dauenhauer begins her poem by creating a tension between traditional and contemporary modes of preparing salmon.<sup>2</sup>

It’s best made in dryfish camp  
 on a beach by a fish stream  
 on sticks over an open fire,  
 or during fishing  
 or during canning season  
 In this case, we’ll make it in the city,  
 baked in an electric oven on a black  
 fry pan. (1–7)

The repetition of “in this case” throughout the entire poem echoes similar patterns in the oral tradition. It serves to illuminate the ten-

sion between the traditional and the contemporary, yet instead of overtly passing judgment against what is “contemporary,” it acknowledges difference of context, the necessity of adaptation and transformation, and of making do with what is readily available in contemporary situations. In a sense, the poem is intended for Tlingits living in areas and contexts different from that of an Alaskan Tlingit village, and calls to mind the pattern of elders teaching younger generations how things were done in the past even as those elders participated in contemporary adaptations of tribal traditions. This is in harmony with many of the Tlingit values on Dr. Soboleff’s list, such as the parents’ responsibility in teaching children, the idea that when one speaks one’s listeners can imagine seeing the speaker’s lineage, and, according to Soboleff, “Pride in family, clan and traditions is found in love, loyalty, and generosity.”

Throughout the poem Dauenhauer utilizes this traditional-versus-contemporary tension familiar to American Indian texts, though it should be noted that upon closer examination this dichotomy is, at times, irrelevant. The symbols of traditional Tlingit life: dryfish camp, hooligan and seal oils, skunk cabbage leaves, and even the alder bar-b-q sticks hung on racks over the fire do not necessarily depict a romanticized, unreal past. Although they function partly as traditional symbols, in many instances they accurately describe how salmon is still enjoyed by a clan or family *putting up* fish during salmon season. Thus, in the context of many Tlingits living in Southeast Alaskan villages who still put up fish, the dichotomy of traditional versus contemporary as it pertains to salmon preparation is not relevant because the traditional is still, in this sense, contemporary. To experience the entirety of the event in the right frame of mind is what is important here, more so than any preparatory process:

Bar-b-q sticks of alder wood.  
 In this case the oven will do.  
 Salmon: River Salmon,  
 current supermarket cost  
 4.99\$ a pound.

In this case, salmon poached from river.

Seal oil or hooligan oil.

In this case, butter or Wesson oil,  
if available. (9–17)

The narrator, who in this case I equate with the author, is letting it be known she is familiar with cooking salmon beside a stream in a dry-fish camp and also with cooking salmon in the city in an oven. We get the feeling she is writing as she cooks, jotting down directions and orders as she herself prepares salmon in what might be considered a non-traditional method, and substituting modern products like Wesson Oil for the traditional seal or hooligan oils.<sup>3</sup>

It is interesting that the narrator's salmon is poached from a river, which has a nice double meaning, but it can be read as a purposeful flouting of American law. To any serious salmon fisher, poaching is considered the eighth deadly sin, therefore the word carries a negative connotation. As such, it appears to go against a key value on Soboleff's list, "Take not the property of others; an error reflects on the family and clan." Yet, it may be that the narrator is appealing to a higher law than American, a tribal law in which it is understood that the salmon is not stolen. Or perhaps the narrator doesn't believe that salmon, the center of Tlingit physical and spiritual life, should be bought and sold, even at 4.99\$ a pound:

Mash some fresh berries to go along for dessert.

Pour seal oil in with a little water. Set aside.

[.....]

In this case, think about how nice the berries  
would have been after the salmon,  
but open a can  
of fruit cocktail instead. (39–40, 50–53)

Many different types of berries were and still are staples of the Tlingit diet: blackberries, blueberries, huckleberries, salmon berries, and low- and high-bush cranberries to name just a few. In particular, the soapberry is considered to be a delicacy. In raw form it is very

bitter, but when whipped with sugar it becomes a relished dessert. Unfortunately, soapberries are hard to come by, so the narrator suggests fruit cocktail as a replacement, just as the oven and frying pan replace the fire and alder stakes.

Then go out by the cool stream  
 and get some skunk cabbage,  
 because it's biodegradable,  
 to serve the salmon from.  
 Before you take back the skunk cabbage,  
 you can make a cup out of one  
 to drink from the cool stream.  
 In this case, plastic forks,  
 paper plates and cups will do,  
 and drink cool water from the faucet. (54–63)

Skunk cabbage (*Lysichiton Americanum*) served many purposes in Tlingit cooking, as Dauenhauer illustrates. Readers familiar with Tlingit oral tradition will also recall that a similar plant, blue hellebore, was used as a safety precaution by Tlingits who first made contact with Europeans. When the Tlingits near Sitka first saw a European ship, they believed the ship to be Raven, and in order to look upon Raven without being turned to stone, it was necessary to look through rolled up hellebore leaves. In essence, the hellebore leaves became the binoculars through which one could view in safety the arrival of Raven.

Several passages in the poem relate directly to respectful treatment of the animal world, an important concept in Tlingit tradition. High on Soboleff's list is the message, "Respect elders, parents, property, and the world of nature. Also, respect yourself so that others may respect you." Respect for the natural world is stressed throughout the poem. For instance, not only are there directions on how to disembowel the salmon, there are also directions on what to do with the salmon innards:

Gut, but make sure you toss all to the seagulls  
 and the ravens, because they're you're kin,

and make sure you speak to them  
while you're feeding them (21–24)

While not the supreme creator of the world, Raven did, in Tlingit mythology, unlock the sun and the moon and bring human souls to dry land. Thus, in a mythological sense, Raven is kin. However, the Tlingit tribe is divided into two exogamous moieties, Raven and Eagle, and traditionally a Tlingit had to marry outside his or her own moiety, so, in this sense, ravens and eagles are indeed a Tlingit's kin. Moreover, since Tlingit totems represented animals that, through oral tradition, were recorded to be the progenitors of those clans, one's ancestors were animals and therefore animals are kin as well. Through oral tradition, cultural practice, and totemism, the idea of animal and human kinship is prevalent and is paralleled in Dauenhauer's poem; moreover, we find the allusion to the well-known Tlingit oral narrative *Mosquitoes and the Cannibal Giant*.<sup>4</sup> Such allusion reinforces the immediacy of the oral tradition:

Shoo mosquitoes off the salmon,  
and shoo the ravens away,  
but don't insult them, because mosquitoes  
are known to be the ashes of the cannibal giant,  
and Raven is known to take off  
with just about anything (74–79)

Also on Soboleff's list we find this Tlingit value, "Good conduct is encouraged to please the spirit we believe is near." Dauenhauer is expressing the same sentiment in her statement on how to properly dispose of the carcass when finished:

When done, toss the bones to  
the ravens  
and seagulls, and mosquitoes  
but don't throw them in the salmon  
stream  
because salmon have spirits

and don't like to see the remains  
of their kin thrown in by us  
among them in the stream. (118–24)

The passage entitled *To Eat* illustrates a definite yet subtle cultural difference between Tlingit culture and American:

Everyone knows that you can eat  
just about every part of the salmon,  
so I don't have to tell you  
that you start from the head,  
because it's everyone's favorite.  
You take it apart,  
bone by bone,  
but be sure you don't miss  
the eyes,  
the cheeks,  
the nose,  
and the very best part—  
the jawbone. (88–100)

Indeed, in Tlingit society, the salmon's head is considered a delicacy (Dauenhauer here is letting her audience in on a little secret) while salmon flesh is the “meat and potatoes,” so to speak, of the Tlingit diet. This is quite different from the American perception of salmon. In fact, many Americans value salmon heads as not for eating, but for use as crab bait.

Even the physical act of eating is rendered in terms of Tlingit sensibility. The passage *To Eat* states:

You start on the mandible with a glottalized alveolar  
fricative  
action as expressed in the Tlingit verb *als'óos'*.  
Chew on the tasty, crispy skins  
before you start on the bones.  
Eiiiiiiii!!!!!!  
How delicious. (101–07)

The phrase “glottalized alveolar fricative” stands out and will be examined in further detail later on. What is of interest here is the passage “as expressed in the Tlingit verb als’óos.” Als’óos’ means “to suck” and the sound of the word, and the motion made by saying it, simulate the sound and action of sucking on a salmon jawbone. It is noteworthy that Dauenhauer uses a Tlingit word to intimately tie language into the life-sustaining process of eating. Besides being a tonal language, the Tlingit language is aurally more expressive than English, containing all the English phonemes plus more than twenty-four sounds not produced in English. Thus, the *l* and *s*’ better approximate the physical act. Dauenhauer also uses two other Tlingit expressions that further entwine language into the experience: Eiiiiiii, in the context of the poem, is an expression of gustatory delight (“ei haaw” is an expression used when Tlingit fishermen see a king salmon jump); and gunalchéesh, which comes at the end of the poem, is the Tlingit equivalent of thank you, and is a mellifluous word with the unique Tlingit *l* sound.

Another passage with cultural significance comes near the end of the poem in the phrase “while someone feeds the fire.” The idea of feeding the fire has two possible meanings: keeping the fire well stoked with wood, and honoring Tlingit ancestors. In his fine text *Symbolic Immortality*, Sergei Kan has discussed the importance of fire in Traditional Tlingit culture. According to Kan, “the fireplace was the house’s link with the outside, and especially with the immaterial land of the dead.”<sup>5</sup> In the Tlingit ritual of Koo.eex, or memorial potlatch, food and precious oils were burned so that Tlingit ancestors would be well tended to. Far from an ostentatious display of wealth, as some early missionaries viewed this burning of food and oil, feeding the fire has far deeper cultural and religious implications.

Much of the poem is written in the imperative mood, but the imperatives are essentially sensual in nature: Enjoy how nice it looks (27); Notice how red the flesh is (34); watch and listen how the grease crackles (36–37); smell how good it smells (42); think how good it is (84); chew on the tasty crispy skins (104); enjoy how the water tastes sweeter with salmon (117). Again, what is important is the proper frame of mind during the experience. Dauenhauer is imploring the



reader, and the younger generations of Tlingits, to appreciate the value of the experience and to understand that they are participating in a ritual that connects them to past generations.

Perhaps the most important passage in the poem comes in the *To Serve* section. “Think how good it is that we have good spirits that still bring salmon and oil,” Dauenhauer writes (84–86). This is the crux of the poem: a reevaluation of experience through sensory and mental awareness, leading to the understanding that the individual is connected to something larger than him or herself. The individual is connected in myriad ways (social, physical, spiritual, and cultural) to the surrounding environment, both flora and fauna, and therefore cannot shirk responsibility for the maintenance and well being of environment.

In protecting the well being of the outside world, one protects his or her inside world. The poem, then, can be seen as both a cause for celebration (we have good spirits) and a warning (*still* bring salmon and oil) that there may come a time when we won’t have salmon and oil. The word *still* is slightly ominous and warns that temperance is needed when taking from nature, and Dauenhauer is aptly expressing a Tlingit value as found on Soboleff’s list, “Your food comes from the land and sea. To abuse either may diminish its generosity. Use what is needed.” A reader familiar with Tlingit oral tradition will be reminded of the story *Fog Woman and Raven*, and how Raven’s bad attitude and abusive behavior nearly destroyed salmon forever. At a time when current salmon runs in the Pacific Northwest have been vastly depleted and, in some instances, have vanished altogether, this is a particularly worthy value to inculcate in people of all generations and ages.

An interesting part of Dauenhauer’s poem, as briefly mentioned earlier, is the phrase “glottalized alveolar fricative.” In a poem that is without academese, this phrase seems out of place. In fact, the phrase is nearly inscrutable for those of us without an advanced degree in linguistics, and a long glance at the dictionary will merely clue us in on where our tongue should be when we attempt to vocalize the Tlingit word *als’óos*. I understand this phrase as an instance of hybridity wherein Dauenhauer is, humorously I believe, showing her

background in mainstream academia and familiarity with linguistic jargon—indeed she has done much linguistic work for the Tlingit tribe—as well as purposely disrupting the tone of the poem. The reader is forced to reevaluate any preconceptions of who this poet may be, and is jolted out of any notion that this may be nothing more than a quaint example of the oral tradition expressed in written form. We find these hybrid moments throughout the poem (the soy sauce, fruit cocktail, and Wesson Oil are other examples), and Dauenhauer uses them to emphasize the nature of cultural transformation and adaptation. In a sense, the linguistic terms, and the contemporary methods for preparing salmon described in the poem, illustrate a mediation between traditional and contemporary culture, as does the use of English and the poetic form.

To give this concept of mediation further context, one can turn to James Ruppert's *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction*, wherein he states that since Indian writers are bicultural, (whether by blood or by the fact of living within the larger American culture) they can utilize the best of both cultures in an act of mediation, and present a positive image of American Indians even though they may deal with tragic subject matter. Mediation, according to Ruppert, is “an artistic and conceptual standpoint, constantly flexible, which uses the epistemological frameworks of American Indian and Western cultural traditions to illuminate and enrich each other.”<sup>6</sup>

Taking Ruppert's notion one step further, it can be said that American Indian writers play a crucial role in reinventing the metanarratives that America holds sacred. For example, Manifest Destiny, Western cultural superiority, and Man's superiority over the animals and environment are all called into question by American Indian writers. Dauenhauer's poem provides us with a fine example of this last point about the need to interrogate the Western understanding of Man's relationship to the animal world. More importantly, mediation acts as a form of redefining Indian identity. As Ruppert notes,

They [American Indian writers] dismantle European American stereotypes, create cultural criticism of the dominant society, and make manifest the crimes of the past, but their mediational

goals direct them more toward Native concerns such as nurturing survival, continuance, and the continual reemergence of cultural identity.<sup>7</sup>

American Indian writers, it seems, are called on to do double duty: they must help the dominant society reexamine and critique its own metanarratives, while at the same time aid in liberating American Indians from destructive epistemologies. In regard to the latter point, Jace Weaver has written, “American Indian writers help Native readers to imagine and reimagine themselves as Indian from the inside rather than being defined by the dominant society.”<sup>8</sup> One might wonder whether or not this smacks too much of academia removed from activism, too much of the pen and not enough of the sword, so to speak. Yet, to return to Ngugi:

The most important area of [colonial] domination was the mental universe of the colonized, the control through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world. Economic and political control can never be complete or effective without mental control. To control a people’s culture is to control their tools of self definition in relationship to others.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, for Ngugi, the effects of mental colonization, rather than physical colonization, had a longer lasting impact on the colonized. And it is within this realm of mental colonization that American Indian writers can begin to take back the tools self definition, and hopefully liberate the imaginations of American Indians.

There is, however, a fundamental difference between Dauenhauer and Ngugi. For Ngugi, the English language is not a tool of self definition, it is rather a colonizing tool. Indeed, Ngugi declared that *Decolonising the Mind* was to be a final text of sorts, a farewell to critical writing in English, the language of the colonizer. He had given up writing fiction in English some years earlier. By writing in his native language, he feels he can begin to take back the tools of self definition, thereby allowing himself, and by extension the Kenyan people, to assert some control over the future. Ngugi does not, however, declare a farewell to the publishing business, and his texts will continue to be

translated, published and distributed throughout the world. Thus, it is a specific language, more so than the instruments which make languages available to the consumer, that Ngugi sees as being tainted with the colonizer's ideology.

This concern over English as a colonizing tool has resonance with larger concerns regarding the continued loss of American Indian languages. Like Ngugi, the Spokane Indian writer Gloria Bird believes the ultimate goal of Native literature should be to produce works in a native tongue for native-speaking peoples. "Along the way," Bird writes, "there is hope that in reinventing the English language we will turn the process of colonization around;" yet, Bird admits that English can only "incorporate a native perception of the world in limited ways," and, as such may not complete processes of mental decolonization or, more ominously, may lead to American Indians being further defined and dominated by Euroamerican critical discourses.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, according to Bird, what Indians need to complete the decolonization process is a body of Native literature written in Native languages. For most American Indian writers, however, it is not so easy to denounce English and begin writing in their native languages, which in many cases no longer exist.

A body of Native literature in Native languages would require a revival of many languages, and though I am working on learning my own tribal language (Tlingit), I am not convinced that such a revival could occur in my tribe, especially the type of revival needed to begin producing a body of written literature. This may be the case for many other tribes as well, because although there are still over two hundred indigenous languages extant in the United States, according to an April 9, 1998, *New York Times* article, only a handful, around twenty, are not in danger of becoming extinct within the next fifty years. For many American Indians, especially of the younger generation, English is their first language, so well has the United States succeeded in suppressing Native languages. In a relatively short period of time most Indian languages have become, or are nearly, extinct. Linguists have termed this process *language obsolescence*. For most American Indian writers, their Native languages are, for all literary intents and purposes, obsolete. I am not in any way suggesting we should forego

learning and reviving Indian languages, far from it. My argument is focusing strictly on literary output, and I am suggesting that it may be almost impossible for the younger generation of American Indian writers to produce their masterpieces in their own tribal languages. Accessible literature will by necessity continue to be written and read in English.

One might think that the “literary separatist” Craig Womack, who has called for creating a new, tribally-based theoretical framework for understanding American Indian literature (I’d like to think that my use of Dr. Soboleff’s list is a step in that direction), is in accord with Bird over dispensing with English as the vehicle for American Indian literary expression, but such is not the case. Regarding Creek Indian writers, Womack has said,

That these men and women have imagined a Creek literary language, importantly, a recognizably Muskogean literary conceit in English, has profound implications for Muskogee Creek literary nationalism, as well as for the literatures of other tribal nations. It argues that Indian worldviews are possible in English. It corroborates the arguments for the validity of modern day Native Studies, and contemporary Indian authorship, both of which, after all, are undertaken in the English language with the assumption in mind that Indian viewpoints and philosophies will still be meaningful in translation. [...] It reminds us that all this talk regarding the “language of the colonizer” has missed a key point: English ceased to be the language of the colonizer the minute it landed in the New World where it acquired vocabulary from Indian tribes, creole words from the Caribbean, African words from slaves, and many other features unique to the Americas. The colonizer lost control of his mother tongue. It may be that Indians, and other groups, colonized English rather than the other way around.<sup>11</sup>

Dauenhauer makes an interesting study in light of these concerns. Her first language was Tlingit and she remains fluent in it. Furthermore, she has worked tirelessly transcribing oral narratives and, with her husband, creating the language tools necessary so that younger

generations of Tlingits may learn their tribal language. Yet, her poetry is predominantly in English. She has not denounced English for her literary output. There is a lot of code-switching and literal translation in her poetry, which I see as part of the mediation process, but Dauenhauer could, if she so desired, create her own body of Tlingit literature in the Tlingit language. For Dauenhauer, the language one chooses for literary endeavors is not as problematic as it is for Ngugi and Bird, and perhaps she believes, in accord with Womack, that Indian worldviews can exist in Western languages and forms.

The question remains as to how American Indians can go about endowing their work in English and Western forms with perspectives, worldviews, and metaphors that are uniquely American Indian, or, more importantly, tribally specific. To begin, the American Indian writer has to be aware of the nature of language and its relation to cultural power and oppression. As Louis Owens states, "The writer is appropriating an essentially 'other' language and thus entering into dialogue with the language itself."<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the writer must create through language and form a hybrid that resists and subverts dominant discourses and paradigms as it attempts to define and redefine the writer's particular indigenous culture not in terms of difference from the mainstream, or a fabricated other that stands as a flawed reflection of Euroamerica, but in terms of that culture's own uniqueness, as Dauenhauer has done with "How to Make Good Baked Salmon." These endeavors lend credence to Womack's call for a different theoretical framework when interpreting American Indian literature, one that is not wholly dependent on mainstream academic evaluative models for its livelihood and legitimacy.

Another way American Indian authors can project tribal worldviews is through form, or rather the subversion of form. According to Eric Anderson, American Indian authors should, and have, become less concerned about genre and more concerned with writing that is "first and foremost a way of giving back to a particular Native community and to larger, cross tribal communities."<sup>13</sup> An overview of Dauenhauer's oeuvre reveals a body of work that resists easy genre classifications. Only in the loosest sense is "How To Make Good Baked Salmon" a formal poem. It is also part recipe, part reminis-

cence, part autobiography, and part oral directions from an elder to her younger relatives. In her latest book, *Life Woven With Song*, Dauenhauer includes prose, poetry, and plays, all of which blur any easily-defined edges of those categories. Her opening prose essay in *Life Woven With Song*, entitled "Slices of Salmon," is reminiscent of the pattern set out by N. Scott Momaday in *Way to Rainy Mountain*, though without the distinct divisions, it is part historical essay, part autobiography, and part anthropological discussion of the Tlingit tribe.

This genre-crossing is important as forms often come weighted with preconceived notions, or definitions, that are Western in origin, and the more American Indian authors tamper with literary forms, the more the foundations of those forms crumble and give way to mediated tribal discourses. What Louis Owens has said about the novel form holds true for poetry as well:

The privileging of the individual necessary for the conception of the modern novel is a more radical departure for American Indian cultures than for the Western world as a whole [. . .] the American Indian novelist works in a medium for which no close Indian prototype exists. The novelist must therefore rely upon story and myth but graft the thematic and structural principles found therein upon the "foreign" (though infinitely flexible) and intensely egocentric genre of the written prose narrative, or novel.<sup>14</sup>

The use of the word *graft*, in its botanical meaning, is appropriate in that it connotes a constructive, not destructive, process. Krupat's notion of anti-imperial translation is relevant here and can illuminate this sense of grafting American Indian worldviews onto foreign forms. Krupat believes that American Indian authors are involved in a form of translation when they write in English. This is not the physical act of reading in one language and writing it down in another, but a mental translation of sorts that translates patterns and pulses of one language onto another. As Krupat states:

My claim is that American Indian writers today are engaged in some version of the translation project[. . .] Even though con-

temporary Native writers write in English and configure their texts in apparent consonance with Western or Euroamerican literary forms [...] the language they offer [...] derives at least in part from other forms of practice, and to comprehend it might just require, however briefly, that we attempt to imagine living other forms of life.<sup>15</sup>

By the adroit presentation of Indian worldviews in ruptured Western forms, Indian writers make their audiences imagine being *other*, if only for a brief time. I am aware that this view is somewhat romantic, and that there is a thin line between imagining being other and actual empathy and understanding for the other, but if, as Native scholars have told us for years, dehumanizing depictions of American Indians have caused unquestionable harm to the American psyche, this idea of anti-imperialist translation should be a step in the opposite direction.

To enter the world of Dauenhauer's poetry is to imagine living another form of life, one that is imbued with Tlingit worldviews that are not lost through translation and time, and the understanding that cultures are never static but ever-changing and transforming, and her work can be read as both tribal and self defining. Dauenhauer has described her writing as an attempt "to help others gain a better sense of self in confusing and adverse time."<sup>16</sup> "How To Make A Good Baked Salmon from the River" is one of the most delightful expressions of making sense of self amidst the chaotic times of culturally transformative moments. It is a poem deserving of more critical attention, as it functions in interesting ways: part pragmatic recipe for preparing salmon, and part exhortation to sensual enjoyment and spiritual wholeness. And it displays a hybridity that is multilayered and tension-filled, becoming more complex with each reading. As such, it encapsulates who the Tlingit are now: a diverse people of differing backgrounds and locales, who often hold contradictory notions of tradition, (and how to reconcile those traditions with the necessities of postmodern America), but also a people of a shared tribal heritage who are working to take back their tools of self, and tribal, definition; more importantly, as Dauenhauer suggests, Tlingits are a people who "have good spirits that still bring salmon."



## NOTES

1. For Dr. Soboleff's complete list of Tlingit Values, please see <http://www.sealaska.com/PDFs/NATIVE%20VALUES.pdf>. Dauenhauer has two books of poetry, *The Droning Shaman* and *Life Woven With Song*.

2. Ortiz has written a poem entitled "How To Make Good Chili Stew" in his *A Good Journey* collection, to which the title of Dauenhauer's poem playfully alludes. Though a discussion of Ortiz's poem, and Acoma poetics, is beyond my scope for this essay, the two do make good companion pieces in the classroom.

3. Hooligan oil is a staple of the Tlingit diet. An oil rendered from the candlefish (of the smelt family), it can be considered the Tlingit equivalent of butter; it was ubiquitous and used on everything. An interesting side note: it has been proposed by David Lewis and Scott Byram in "Ourigan: Wealth of the Northwest Coast," that the word Oregon is derived from hooligan (or ooligan) oil. The ooligan "Grease Trails" that checkered the Pacific Northwest denoted the old trading route of this oil. A linguistic shift in the Iroquois tongue changed the *l* to *r* and thus "ooligan" became "ourigan."

4. For a version of the Cannibal Giant story, see Zuboff, "Mosquito," in *Haa Shuka, Our Ancestors*.

5. Kan, *Symbolic Immortality*, 112–13.

6. Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction*, 3.

7. Ruppert, *Meditation in Contemporary Native American Fiction*, 3–4.

8. Weaver, *That the People Might Live*, 4.

9. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind*, 16.

10. Bird, Introduction, in *Reinventing the Enemy's Language*, 25.

11. Womack, "Alexander Posey's Nature Journals," 49–50. For an in-depth articulation of the need for tribally-based aesthetics, see Womack's *Red on Red*.

12. Owens, *Other Destinies*, 15.

13. Anderson, "Situating American Indian Poetry," 42.

14. Owens, *Other Destinies*, 11.

15. Krupat, *The Turn to the Native*, 36.

16. Bird, "Introduction," in *Reinventing the Enemy's Language*, 202.

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# Myth Launchings and Moon Landings

Parallel Realities in Susan Power's *The Grass Dancer*

LEE SCHWENINGER

In her novel *The Grass Dancer* (1994), Dakota writer Susan Power describes the United States' scientific and technological advances in the context of the lives of the members of several families on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in North Dakota. She juxtaposes the 1969 moon landing reported on television, for example, with the traditional preparation of corn soup as Margaret Many Wounds lies on her deathbed. Through such juxtapositions, Power reexamines and questions the significance of the technological revolution, showing that her characters derive their worldviews as much (or perhaps more) from ancestral histories and ideologies, from non-mainstream beliefs, as from post-World War II technologies such as lunar modules and televisions. Power offers the reader new ways of understanding the place of mainstream Western technology and Western epistemologies, and her characters also suggest alternative ways of perceiving reality. The author thus calls into question Western or mainstream conceptions and understandings of what constitutes reality, and she thereby problematizes the typical boundaries of realistic fiction. Like the character Pumpkin, the mainstream reader may well "have to put aside one worldview—perhaps only temporarily—to take up another."<sup>1</sup> Although Pumpkin identifies one worldview with what she calls "the Indian community," I intend no such generalization. Mainstream readers in my context here may well be Native American just as some non-Native readers may be fully enculturated into the specific Dakotan culture Power describes. In this particular context, I argue that the author's challenge is to demonstrate to an uninitiated or mainstream reader the power and presence

of an alternative reality. This essay suggests the ways Power does indeed make evident the possibility of such realities.

William Cronon epitomizes the typically-privileged, mainstream view of what constitutes realism when he argues that “stories cannot contravene known facts about the past;” he maintains that “the biological and geological processes of the earth set fundamental limits to what constitutes a plausible narrative.”<sup>2</sup> Arnold Krupat has challenged Cronon’s ethnocentric worldview, writing in *Red Matters*, for instance, that “both mythical and historical stories are true. [...] History is public knowledge of the past [...] public in the sense of being culturally shared;” Krupat also writes that we need to “abandon the ethnocentric insistence that there can be no history without fact, accuracy, and scientific rationality.”<sup>3</sup> In his essay “The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality,” Hayden White concludes that historians have “a desire to have real events display the coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is and can be only imaginary.”<sup>4</sup> White argues that story or narrative actually shapes reality and that, therefore, one cannot attain any objective truth through narrative. Whereas Cronon and White are writing about history and historical narrative specifically, Catherine Rainwater suggests that considerations of historical narrative are equally applicable to literature. Both are forms of storytelling. In one specific context, for example, Rainwater suggests that the “Pueblo-Navajo cosmological material may be judged ‘true’ or ‘mythical-imaginary’ depending on the reader’s epistemological screen.”<sup>5</sup>

There are, to be sure, significant differences between history and literature, but it remains important to examine the ways in which both forms of storytelling manipulate or organize the facts. In order to maintain the illusion of reality and the verifiable, realistic fiction must observe Cronon’s “known facts” of the physical world typically accepted by the reading community. Like history, realistic fiction presumably must deliver a faithful representation of life; it must adhere to what its readers deem the actual and verifiable. In the nineteenth century this notion of realism was expressed by such writers as William Dean Howells, for example, who maintained that fiction should be “true to the motives, the impulses, the principles that shape the life

of actual men and women”<sup>6</sup> In a brief introduction to theory, Hoffman and Murphy paraphrase Frank Kermode, writing that as fiction “has moved away from the realistic presentation of the nineteenth century, it has attempted more and more radically to represent how reality is perceived and experienced.”<sup>7</sup> In the introduction to *Magical Realism*, Lois Zamora and Wendy Feris write that “realism intends its version of the world as a singular version, as an objective (hence universal) representation of natural and social realities—in short [. . .] realism functions ideologically and hegemonically.”<sup>8</sup>

Native American literature, in contrast, some argue, should be exempt from such categories of realistic fiction. According to Richard Fleck, for example, the mode of magical realism applies to much Native American literature in that the magical and the real worlds are so often juxtaposed: “these two worlds are often so thoroughly fused together that we get a new perspective on what is real or unreal. [. . .] Eternal mythological presences constantly intrude into modern life.”<sup>9</sup> Like Fleck, Arnold Krupat notes this melding of worlds while at the same time acknowledging and maintaining a dichotomy between “real” and “mythic” phenomena. Krupat argues that some Native American texts “present themselves in an essentially realistic mode of representation” and that “to insist on the ‘reality’ of the ‘mythic’ is part of the ideological function of these novels.”<sup>10</sup> In *Red Matters* Krupat further develops this point, arguing that “Native history does not need to insist upon the factuality or literal accuracy [. . .] of [particular] incidents as a condition for their historicity.”<sup>11</sup>

Writing about *The Grass Dancer*, in particular, Neil Wright also distinguishes between the real and the magical, submitting that the novel’s “real literary home is in the realm of magical realism.”<sup>12</sup> But he does not specify or clarify how a concept of magical realism helps the reader better understand the text. In his essay “Pan-American (Re)visions,” Roland Walter also investigates some of the elements of magical realism in Power’s novel, suggesting that magic “is an integral part of reality in that the natural and supernatural categories of reality are harmoniously intertwined.”<sup>13</sup> He maintains on some level the distinction between the real and the magical; by his model, the different versions (natural and supernatural) are braided rather than melded or fused. In

maintaining the distinction between braided and parallel, Walter writes that “Magic signifies the dynamic harmonious relationship between (wo)man and nature, different times and spaces, a cyclical perception of reality;” and as such, understanding the magic in the novel, or understanding the book as a magical realism novel, allows us to see how Susan Power “uses the dual character of magical realism [...] as a means of resistance” to colonization.<sup>14</sup> Like Walter, who ultimately maintains a distinction between the natural and the supernatural, Amaryll Chanady, in *Magical Realism and the Fantastic*, argues that the literary mode of magical realism “offers the reader two completely different perceptions of reality, or a world with which the author is familiar, while expressing the myths and superstitions of the American Indians.”<sup>15</sup> In an effort to meld these two perceptions, she writes that the mode is based “on the acceptance of the supernatural as part of everyday reality;” and the magical realist, according to Chanady presents “a world view that is radically different from ours as equally valid.”<sup>16</sup> Magical realism might be most helpful as a means of understanding the text such as a novel in a manner suggested by Zamora and Feris, that is “as a cultural corrective, requiring readers to scrutinize accepted realistic conventions of causality, materiality, motivation.”<sup>17</sup>

The application of magic realism to Power’s fiction, perhaps helpful in one sense, is problematic in others. From a strictly Western perspective the label magical realism tends to devalue what it calls magic. Walter argues that “the texture of the magical realist passages is characterized by a hybrid make-up in which the antinomy between the natural and supernatural categories of reality is dissolved [...] that is, the boundary between ‘real’ and ‘magical’ categories of reality, truth and imagination, is blurred.”<sup>18</sup> As popularly defined, magic realism does offer a means of approaching Power’s novel, but the concept depends on a dichotomy between the “magical” and the “real,” the very dichotomy that I believe Power’s novel challenges. Applying the combination of the words *magic* and *realism* to the novel is thus problematic, because, despite the dissolving of different categories, the underlying semantic principle remains: real versus magical, real versus unreal. The label applied to Susan Power constitutes what Anthony

Lane in a different context calls “second-generation magic realism.” Such a label suggests that the novel “takes a shortcut to the magic without going via the real, and it’s too easy a ride.”<sup>19</sup>

Classifying Power’s novel as falling within the mode of magical realism is perhaps problematic on a subtler level as well. To classify the book with this ever-more widespread, all-inclusive label runs the risk of over-generalizing and thus doing a disservice to its practitioners, such as Gabriel García Márquez, who write out of a particular sociohistorical context. In an essay on Márquez, Salman Rushdie writes that “*el realismo magical*, magic realism, at least as practised by Márquez, is a development out of surrealism that expresses a genuinely ‘Third World’ consciousness.”<sup>20</sup> My contention here is that one should be careful not to co-opt Power’s novel (or Native American literature in general) into a non-Native North American mode of fiction. Though helpful in some senses, such co-opting runs the risk of ultimately devaluing the unique nature of a particular mode of fiction. Despite that risk, however, several readers of particular Native American texts have suggested how recent novels can be seen to be best understood as magical realist texts. Alan Velie, for example, argues that the “fantastic” in the fiction of Louise Erdrich can be labeled magical realism, and Ibis Gómez-Vega presents a case for Thomas King’s *Green Grass, Running Water* as magical realism.<sup>21</sup>

While building on previous discussions of *The Grass Dancer*, I argue here that Power’s novel does constitute realistic fiction (insofar as any fiction can be realistic), and that to take it out of the realm of realist theory is finally to do the novel a disservice.<sup>22</sup> A helpful approach, in this context, might perhaps be gleaned from a discussion of Silko and Young Bear in which David Moore writes that both authors deconstruct “divisions between historical possibilities and impossibilities of Native American experience, reopening doors of cultural identity.”<sup>23</sup> Rainwater’s remarks about Silko’s novel *Ceremony* might well apply to the tension between dichotomies in this fiction: “within one text, one set of rules for accessing meaning is *extensively* violated by, or brought into *significant* opposition with another, a conflict producing an interpretive, potentially instructive crisis in the reader.”<sup>24</sup>

Through her juxtapositions of different realities, Power dissolves

the very divisions implied by the term *magical realism*. At the same time, however, I argue that rather than fused or assimilated worlds of the “real” and the “magical,” the author describes parallel realities, coexisting and equally valid. The distinction, I believe, is significant. In writing a Native American text Power is both using the colonizer’s language and genre and, at the same time, writing in the realist tradition. But at the same time she subverts that tradition through the presentation of parallel, but startlingly different, realities. Through a close reading of several chapters, I wish to demonstrate how Power can be seen to cater to mainstream readers’ expectations of what constitutes a realistic novel and, at the same time, suggest that several chapters, including “Moon Walk” and “Hole in the Sheets” challenge mainstream Western notions of what constitutes a “true” report of phenomena or a “real” record of the actual.

In the “Moonwalk” chapter, the five-year-old Harley watches the television in July 1969, seeing both his grandmother and the astronauts walk on the moon. He watches from the foot of his grandmother’s deathbed; and just after she dies, he actually sees her on the television screen “dancing on the moon. [. . .] The astronaut never ceased digging at the ground, leaving footprints like heavy tank treads, but his oxygen system quivered a little as she passed” (121). The question the reader must ask is this: Can Western readers of this national bestseller acknowledge or accept a reality in which Margaret Many Wounds appears on the television screen as she walks on the moon shortly after her death? The response to such questions determines not only how one reads particular literal moments in Power’s novel, or the novel as a whole, but also how one reads similar Native American literature in general. I argue that Power prepares the reader to see or appreciate a parallel reality (like Margaret’s walking on the moon) by continually and repeatedly juxtaposing the science of the mainstream-West with different epistemologies throughout the novel. Power foregrounds different attitudes and different belief systems, different epistemologies, and ultimately different realities. She juxtaposes mainstream Western and non-mainstream attitudes toward ways of knowing, toward ways of telling stories, and toward history itself. In so doing she refuses to assimilate or to privilege mainstream



epistemologies. As Catherine Rainwater suggests, “we must confront questions about how readers from the dominant culture gain access to the Other’s meanings and, more fundamentally, questions about how those readers learn the Other’s strategies for producing meaning.”<sup>25</sup> As Power herself has said, having grown up between two cultures (her mother is of Dakotan descent and her father of Western, non-Indian), she moves easily between the two, and accepts the validity of both. Power recognizes and details realities that might seem to counter the experiences of uninitiated or unprepared Western readers. In the context of this reader, reference to James Ruppert’s use of Wolfgang Iser’s concept of the implied reader might be helpful. In *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction*, Ruppert writes that “[c]ontemporary Native American writers construct implied readers through the narrative competence required, but also, because they are moving from one world view to another, implied readers require certain epistemological competence at various points in the text.”<sup>26</sup> It is in this sense that I use the idea of the mainstream or Western reader (whether Native American or not), one who—without proper initiation—lacks “the competence required” to appreciate the alternative worldview Power presents in the novel.

In responding to the question of whether or not Western readers can believe in something as foreign to their own experiences as Margaret Many Wounds’s walking on the moon, I want to look at how the author prepares the reader for that particular chapter—the chapter that Power first wrote and published as a story, a story that convinced her she had begun a novel.<sup>27</sup> Though it was written first, the prologue and three chapters precede this chapter in the finished novel. The implication is that Power’s readers need to be prepared or somehow initiated in order to appreciate this chapter and the chapters to follow. In the early chapters, Power prepares the reader to acknowledge the possibility of a parallel reality, one that a trained or initiated eye can perceive but that an unaccustomed or uninitiated eye cannot.

Set on the Sioux reservation in North Dakota, *The Grass Dancer* is a novel primarily about several reservation families. The novel is about Sioux families, yes, but before the readers can meet the members of these central families, they must enter the saloon set just off

the reservation, aptly named Border Beer. In “Prologue” (set in 1964) readers listen to Patsy Cline sing “Crazy,” and overhear, as it were, two non-Indians talk. Power uses this neutral site, this border site, in order to bring the reader to the reservation. The scene makes the mainstream reader comfortable in a familiar environment before entering another, perhaps less familiar, region, the reservation itself. The reader first encounters non-Indians who are drinking from longneck bottles and listening to Patsy Cline; they are talking about “reviving Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show, enlisting the participation of some of the Natives who regularly passed out beneath Border Beer’s sticky tables” (4). And they are talking about Jeannette McVay, a non-Indian character who years before had come from the East to do anthropological research on a reservation. As a non-Indian, Jeannette can be seen to serve as a sort of liaison between two worlds; her initiation in a sense guides the mainstream reader’s initiation. The reader cannot rely on her yet, however, for like the hero of a drama, she is referred to in this opening scene but kept off stage until later chapters.

In addition to a realistic description of the border bar, Power also juxtaposes what—within the fiction itself—is clearly demarcated as real with what is just as clearly unreal. Driving drunk (upset because he fears Jeannette has been unfaithful to him), too drunk to notice his headlights are not on, Henry Burger hallucinates; he thinks the headlights coming toward him are the eyes of Indian ghosts: “Henry saw eyes coming toward him, the roundest eyes he’d ever seen. Indian ghosts in the Badlands were trying to play with his mind, *he imagined*” (6, my emphasis). Thus deluded, he steers his truck, without headlights, into the oncoming vehicle, killing Calvin Wind Soldier and his young son Duane. In this instance Power draws a very distinct line between the real and unreal, and the reader is not asked to believe in the ghosts that Burger imagines.

The actual deaths of these two characters mentioned in “Prologue” are central to the novel’s plot, and the juxtaposition of two different realities is central to its thematic structure. This structure is suggested early by the juxtaposition of Henry’s hallucination (something the reader is not asked to believe in) brought on by his drunkenness, and the drunk’s childhood memory of “vengeful Indians:

fierce warriors who were always ready to die, and even a beautiful woman wearing a crimson flap of a dress, who lured men to their death" (6). Henry's distorted memory of the "beautiful woman" foreshadows the appearance of Red Dress, the actual woman, who does indeed lure men to their deaths.

In the chapter entitled "Christianity Comes to the Sioux" (jump ahead from 1964 to 1977) the reader sees a much different juxtaposition of modes of understanding the world. Jeannette, whose supposed infidelity triggered Burger's drinking spree described in the prologue, has remained on the reservation to become a schoolteacher. (Evidently, she has remained because Mercury Thunder has anchored her by putting reservation soil in her penny loafers; once the soil is there, she cannot leave.) One of Jeannette's pedagogical innovations is to have her students sit in what she considers a traditional circle and recite stories: "'I'd like to hear from everyone,' she says. 'Each student in this room is the receptacle of ancient wisdom'" (60–61). Power does not share the stories the students tell, rather she relates what they *think* during the telling. Frank Pipe, for example, *tells* about Iktomi: "He took a deep breath and launched into a story about Iktomi, the tricky spider who was both clever and imprudent and whose misadventures served to instruct. Frank thought of it as a baby story. [. . .] As he spoke, he was remembering a different story" (61). In the remembered story, Frank recalls an actual Yuwipi ceremony in which his grandfather Herod had been asked to solve the local mystery concerning a dog and coyote killer. At the climax of the ceremony, Frank remembers, the "largest coyote he had ever seen, tall as a pony" lunges into the room and carries off Leo Mitchell, the man who had been killing the dogs (62).

In describing this schoolroom scene, Power plays two narrative tricks, as it were. First she juxtaposes the unreal, "baby story" about the spider with the "real" story of the coyote from Frank's actual memory. This juxtaposition gives the reader clear signals about what to believe, what is authentic. And second, by sharing the private story that Frank tells, she invites the reader into an inner circle, a circle from which even Jeannette is excluded. As Frank Pipe stands before his classmates, he feels exposed and vulnerable: he "knew his friends

would understand how inappropriate it would be for him to speak publicly of his grandfather's ceremonies or reveal his heart for everyone to see" (61). The reader hears of the grandfather's ceremonies and is thus, in a sense, initiated, invited to acknowledge the truth of Frank's experience. A look at Power's manipulation of this scene demonstrates how it is that the reader sees a story that is patently fantastical next to a story that is, by contrast and in context, real. Out of this specific context a mainstream reader is no more likely to appreciate the veracity of the coyote story than of the spider story. But when juxtaposed with the spider story and presented as from Frank's actual experience, the coyote story assumes its place in history as an actual event. By this means, Power leads the reader into seeing a reality he or she might otherwise be unable to perceive or appreciate.

In a similar manner, Power relates Charlene's narration. Charlene *tells* the class about a Dakota woman who was the second wife of a Sioux chief and who "pouted until she turned to stone. [. . . Charlene] murmured her tale of the punished woman, thinking all the while about her grandmother and how *she* would freeze someone *else* into rock, keeping her own flesh pliable" (63). Again, rather than the details of the story, the reader gets an account of the storyteller's thoughts. Charlene thinks about her grandmother, Mercury Thunder, who cast a spell on a young man in order to get him to climb onto a snow-covered roof to place decorative lights: "After a serving of her delectable corn soup sprinkled with dried parsley from the garden, a young man named Luther Faribault could be cajoled into just about anything" (64). He falls from the roof once, but insists on finishing the job although he must do so with a separated shoulder. Power thus glosses over the stories or myths that the students are obliged to tell as part of a classroom exercise in order to get to the true stories, stories that come from the students' actual, personal experiences. By juxtaposing the two sorts of stories, Power is able to relate the incidents from the students' personal experiences as real, whereas the other stories are acknowledged by student, author, and expected by the reader as well, as clearly fanciful. In Power's carefully constructed context, some stories appear factual or believable even though they too concern events and situations that the uninitiated, mainstream reader

might otherwise find non-historical, contravening mainstream conceptions of what constitutes a true report of phenomena.

This device also enables Power to invite and initiate the mainstream readers. This novel, a national bestseller and winner of the Hemingway Foundation Award for First Fiction, can thus be seen to initiate the masses, as it were, without fetishizing important aspects of Dakota culture and opening that culture up to being essentialized and exploited by those same readers. In “This is Your Book: Marketing America to Itself,” Lori Ween argues that bottom line “concerns are even more urgent when it comes to ethnic American literature, which relies on prescribed authenticity and the importance of telling the ‘real story’ apart from merely selling the commodity of the book.”<sup>28</sup> The look of the paperback edition of *The Grass Dancer* is certainly typical of the authenticated ethnic text Ween describes; it includes blurbs by such well-known “ethnic” writers as Louise Erdrich and Amy Tan and identifies the author as “an enrolled member of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe.” As Ween suggests, it is important that readers “analyze how publishers, reviewers, and marketers, have understood American identities, ethnic and mainstream, and sold them to the American people.”<sup>29</sup> But Power repeatedly subverts the easy essentializing of Dakotan culture by problematizing the very aspects the mainstream readers might expect of Native American fiction. As a careful reading of a few subsequent chapters suggests, Power does not subscribe to any generalized notion of the reality of visions, spirits, or dreams. As the students’ stories demonstrate, when Power does present what a mainstream reader might expect, she presents it in a multilayered context.

In another chapter, “The Medicine Hole” (set in 1976), Power again contrasts the clearly unreal with the real. Taking the two young boys Harley and Frank, the septuagenarians Herod and Archie go in search of a medicine hole. In the vision that prepares the men for their search, Power overlays various versions of reality. Archie tells a *dream* to Herod; Herod performs a ceremony in order to interpret the dream; during the ceremony Herod has a vision; and in this vision he recalls an *historical event*: the spirits “showed me Archie’s dream, spilled images across walls, and I recognized the vision as a moment

in history—events that had taken place in the hot summer of 1877,” says Herod (85). Here again, Power juxtaposes the apparently unreal (a dream and a vision) with the real (an historical event). The historical event, although it could otherwise be thought unreal, seems real when juxtaposed with “real” dreams.

The historical event is this: four young Sioux warriors are pursued by U.S. soldiers, sharp shooters. In the moment before their imminent capture and/or death, the warriors seem to disappear: “The earth pitied those four young warriors, the earth intervened on our behalf by splitting its skin at our feet. The medicine hole gaped open, leading to a deep underground tunnel. [. . .] After the earth saved us, it restored its flesh, sealed the medicine hole so the soldiers couldn’t follow” (86–87). Although perhaps foreign to the experiences of mainstream readers, this event is much like any number of other historical events. Another such history, for example, concerns a group of Cheyennes also fleeing the U.S. Army. In this case a member of the group, Stone Forehead, performed a sacred ritual that turned the warriors into buffalo. They became invisible to the soldiers; or rather, the soldiers were unable to distinguish between the men and their horses and what they took to be buffalo. Krupat concludes his account of this episode by stating that “these ‘accounts,’ although consistent with traditional Cheyenne notions of common sense—and of history—are not consistent with Euroamerican notions of common or historical sense. Cheyenne historical truth does not accord well with Western factual plausibility.”<sup>30</sup> Further along, Krupat writes that “one can both believe in the importance of fact and accuracy for history and also believe [. . .] that there are true histories that may not be factual and accurate.”<sup>31</sup> This comment seems to contradict his earlier assertion: “it is time for the ‘white man’s perspective’ to broaden and for us to learn from it. [. . .] It is time to recognize that [such accounts] are also ‘true history.’”<sup>32</sup> Indeed, Krupat refers to Clifford Geertz among others to argue that common sense is culturally constructed. At issue here, in this context, is not whether the fleeing soldiers became literally invisible, but rather the reader’s ability to appreciate or not appreciate the historical fact is itself a social construct.

Power's novel addresses disparities between a specific Dakotan and a mainstream Western way of understanding and perceiving history, and it thus offers alternatives. What is important is the way in which Power overlays different versions of reality in the context of the search for the medicine hole. Readers can be expected to believe in a literal, historical medicine hole as described by Herod, in part, because Power presents the search on so many levels; dreams, visions, stories, histories, ghosts—all vie for status in Power's narrative. Further complicating the issue of varying versions of reality is that the narrator seems to treat the search for the literal medicine hole lightly but takes Herod's witnessing a ghost earnestly. The light-heartedness of the search is evident in that fact that the characters themselves take the search only half seriously, thinking of it not as a sacred duty but as an adventure (87). As the men are starting out, Herod's wife actually makes a joke of the whole enterprise, telling her husband that rather than searching for a medicine hole, "You'd do better to find your juice" (88). During the search, Archie teases the boys: "Don't let those gopher holes fool you" (90). And the boys themselves are only mildly disappointed when the hole they find is not the spiritual one, but a coyote den (93).

The author contrasts the search for the spiritual (or mythical) medicine hole with the encountering of a ghost, whose verity the narrator presents with little ambiguity. Herod remembers waking up to the warmth of a woman's body pressed next to him: "She pulled away then, drifting from my embrace. I opened my eyes and found myself looking at Clara" (94). The reader has already met the ghost by this time, when in an earlier chapter Harley had seen her at dawn after he and Pumpkin spent the night in the same old house. Harley sees Clara stroking the sleeping Pumpkin's hair and crying: "In a few moments she vanished, and Harley moved to kneel in her place. He brushed his hand across the stained floor, hoping to understand her inky tears" (44). By insisting on the reality of the tears, Power implies the reality of the ghost. In the later chapter, when Herod first sees the ghost of Clara Miller earlier in the day as the group begins its search for the medicine hole, she is evidently a mirage; the reader, at least is

not asked to believe: “A trick of light brought Clara Miller back to life, planted her in the yard” (89). During the night, however, Herod wakes before the others and actually sees her. He reasons this way: “As a Yuwipi man, I had heard spirit voices and encountered dead ancestors, but a white ghost was something different altogether” (95). With this reasoning Herod obviates any doubts the uninitiated reader may have concerning the reality of a ghost in general. The implication is that, as a Sioux healer, Herod can doubtless encounter his own dead Native ancestors, and thus it is logical that he can also encounter a white woman’s ghost. Furthermore, the encounter seems all the more real in that Power contrasts it with the medicine hole, which the characters seem not to take seriously, and Power does not seem to ask the reader necessarily to take seriously.

The narrative technique Power uses in the prologue and these two early chapters, I suggest, prepares the reader for Margaret Many Wounds’s moonwalk, where Power again presents the possibility of two different, parallel realities. To do this, the author presents the landing of the manned Apollo module—the event that is deemed real from a mainstream perspective—as actually miraculous. In contrast, she presents Margaret’s moonwalk—the apparently unreal—as mundane. Several characters refer to the Apollo event as a miracle, as something that appears inexplicable by the laws of nature, in contrast to Margaret who has, quite simply, and in this context quite literally, been to the moon. Power complicates the mainstream reader’s response, that is, by problematizing the very concept of miracle. After every special news report, for instance, Evie’s husband Philbert repeats that the moon landing is “gonna be a miracle” (102). Evie also thinks it miraculous, and like a doubting Thomas, she needs to see it to believe it: “Evie was desperate for the astronauts to leave their vehicle and walk on the moon. She wanted to see it happen and know it was real: a scientific miracle worked out with equations. ‘It will be history,’ she said aloud” (115). “It’s all history,” Margaret, her dying mother, tells her (114–15), and with this statement she articulates the disparity between her own Dakotan and the mainstream conceptions of history and, in a sense, of what constitutes realistic fiction. Margaret is able to acknowledge that both worldviews constitute history, both are valid.



Margaret tells her daughter matter-of-factly that she really was there, “looking back at the spinning earth, bright as a blue eye” (113). Even though the reader might doubt Margaret, Power complicates the issue in reporting Evie’s response: “Years before, she [Evie] would have treasured this anecdote, but it had come too late for her to enjoy or believe” (113). The suggestion is that Evie’s (and hence the reader’s) inability to believe is her own shortcoming, a lack in her power of perception, rather than any inherent unreality of the event. In this context, Evie’s inability to believe says more about the daughter’s mindset than about the fact. The exchange between mother and daughter suggests that Evie has been away from her people too long; she has lost the ability to believe her mother and has lost the ability to perceive this alternate reality. The implication is that the reader too might suffer from a similar failure of perception. The young Harley, in contrast, witnesses the astronaut’s “oxygen system [quiver] a little as she passed” (121).

Power incorporates into the “Moon Walk” chapter a brief mention of the red dress that resembles the one her ancestor Red Dress wore. Though not literally belonging to Red Dress who died childless in 1864, this red dress does refer to the woman who figures prominently in the center of the novel, and who takes care of her ancestors throughout. The first mention of Red Dress comes in “Prologue,” from a non-Indian perspective when Henry Burger remembers “stories from his childhood about vengeful Indians [. . .] a beautiful woman wearing a crimson flap of a dress, who lured men to their death” (6). In “Moon Walk,” in conjunction with the miracle of the moon landing, the dying Margaret Many Wounds refers to the red dress that her grandmother had: “She wore it to only the most sacred ceremonies, and when she danced at the edge of the dancers’ circle, she said she was dancing them back to life” (114). Thus the literal grandmother of Margaret Many Wounds evokes the character Red Dress (Margaret’s great aunt), commemorated as a warrior in a red dress painted on a shield. Margaret has seen the dress only in the Field Museum in Chicago. She remembers trying to figure out how to get the dress back, and she asks her grandson, the five-year-old Harley, to promise to steal it back for his own people.

In the “Snakes” chapter, set in 1864 and narrated by Red Dress herself, it is the minister Pyke who recognizes that Red Dress is the one who casts a spell on the soldiers, forcing them to hang themselves. The implicit suggestion is that this man, who is able to believe in the Christian God and the associated Judeo-Christian miracles, is also able to see into Red Dress’s world. Not surprisingly, he invokes the Judeo-Christian appellation of Satan: “‘You will not work your ways on me,’ he says, feeling that he himself has fostered her ‘demon intelligence’” (276). The note he leaves pinned to her dress after he shoots her suggests that he punishes her as God punished Satan: “Upon thy belly thou shalt go” (278). His belief, implies Power, enables him to see a reality that the soldiers who hanged themselves were unable to see. The difference, of course, is that for Pyke miracles are a thing of the past and are associated only with divinity. Not so for Red Dress who simply goes about her business of revenge.

By this point in the novel, there seems little need for Power to juxtapose stories or episodes to make clear the point that there is a reality not normally perceived by mainstream readers because it is not accounted for by Western epistemologies. But she does offer a playful, implicit comparison of the story she narrates and Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, the play that the soldiers perform. Fittingly, Reverend Pyke plays the part of the three witches, those sorcerers who can read Macbeth’s future in their caldron. For Red Dress, who is assigned the task of prompter, the play becomes fused with another text from Western tradition, the Judeo-Christian Bible: “I began to confuse the two and would quote Shakespeare as readily as passages from Ecclesiastes” (263). Again, the implicit assumption is that from Red Dress’s perspective, there is little difference between the mythical or magical, if you will, of Shakespeare’s witches and fortune-tellings and the prophesies from the Scriptures. Like the book of Ecclesiastes, Red Dress’s narrative is one that recalls past life and looks upon the disorders and calamities of the present. As Red Dress’s friend Fanny informs the reader, the only miracle in this chapter is that Red Dress knows English as well as she does: the others cannot “conceive of it as anything but a miracle, and it is, you know. It is” (260).

In her encounter with Jeannette McVay a century later, Mercury Thunder—whose very name suggests the power of the elements inherent in her person—illustrates the author's narrative technique and the disparity between a mainstream, and, in this case, Mercury Thunder's specific Dakotan viewpoint. In a sense, Jeannette—the young, would-be anthropologist, who has become the reservation schoolteacher—can be said to represent the perspective of the mainstream reader insofar as she brings to the text her mainstream logic and Western preconceptions. In a sense, that is, what happens to Jeannette happens to the reader. After witnessing what Mercury characterizes as a “scientific experiment” in working a love potion, the young woman from Pennsylvania discovers that the love spell Mercury casts on Calvin Wind Soldier results in the pregnancy of his lover, Evelyn (his wife's sister). Jeannette thus experiences a reality different from any she had ever known or perhaps ever honestly expected. Her experience awes and frightens her. Like the reader who comes innocently to the novel, the “girl who came to [the reservation] eager to discover a modern mythology had not really believed in it any more than she trusted that Aphrodite would show up at our next powwow wearing nothing but a dance shawl and her magic girdle” (184). But what Jeannette has witnessed has finally convinced her. Like the reader, she must acknowledge the possibility of a different reality.

In depicting this alternative reality for the reader, Power again juxtaposes what one might call the patently mythological with what turns out to be very real, but would in another context be considered myth itself. Jeannette makes the comparison: “I was told such stories—they were legends really, but alive and moving upon this earth” (163). She compares Mercury Thunder to Aphrodite, Goddess of Desire, a comparison that Mercury denies, saying to herself that she “was no Aphrodite.” Mercury does acknowledge her power, however: “I didn't practice good medicine or bad medicine, or a weak magic summoned by poems; I simply had potent blood inherited from my grandmother's sister, Red Dress” (164). And moreover, Mercury lets Jeannette witness and document her activities, “as if this were all a

scientific experiment performed in a lab” (181). Just as Mercury dismisses the comparison of herself with a mythological goddess, she dismisses the notion that what she does constitutes magic: “Everything that happened in my life could be explained in those bland terms that comfort the faithless” (184). From her perspective, now Jeannette’s perspective and the readers’ as well, what Jeannette calls Mercury’s “modern magic” is real indeed. With her power, Mercury manipulates the affair between Calvin and Evelyn. In contrast, Jeannette’s previous experience—the college or the busses she took to get to the reservation—that “is all legend from the past, and here you are where things happen. It is so real now it is a nightmare” (184). Mercury’s daughter Crystal concurs: “‘Oh, Jeannette,’ she stammered. ‘You aren’t asleep, and this isn’t a story’” (185). Mercury turns on Jeannette (and thus on the reader), confusing the accepted reality by calling the legitimacy of the young woman’s past into question.

A chapter that in a sense parallels “The Hole in the Sheets,” in which Jeannette rides west on the bus and arrives on the reservation in 1961 is “Swallowing the Birds,” in which Charlene rides the bus east, away from the reservation twenty years later, in 1981. This chapter again juxtaposes the patently unreal with an alternate reality. A central event of the chapter is framed by two episodes that are clearly dreams: “Charlene dreamed she was being pressed” at the beginning of the chapter, and at the end she falls asleep on the bus as she leaves the reservation (285). In the first dream she sees Pumpkin who attempts to speak, but instead of words, “tiny black birds tumbled soundlessly from her throat” (285). This sighting of Pumpkin, the grass dancer who dies in the opening chapter of the book, is clearly a dream. The chapter ends with Charlene falling asleep on the bus and (apparently) dreaming that Pumpkin runs beside the bus, finally able to speak: “This dream was different,” offers the narrator (309). The birds are still there, but this time Pumpkin can speak: “*It wasn’t your fault*” (310).

As in the parallel chapter, framed by Jeannette’s arrival and attempted departure, the central action involves a spell. Instead of Mercury, however, this time it is the granddaughter Charlene who works a love potion in the latter chapter. The teenager casts a spell on the

boys in her homeroom at school, boys who have previously not paid her any attention. She bakes brownies, offers them, and is suddenly desired by all those who eat. She shares her grandmother's power if not her mastery of that power. At no point in the narrative does the author or Charlene give the reader any reason to doubt or question the validity, the potency, or the reality of the spell she casts: "there was no calling off the medicine" (295). In addition to the very real and realistically described violence of the rape that results from Charlene's mishandling her power, the sense of the spell's reality is all the stronger in that its telling is sandwiched between two episodes of Charlene's recurring dream about Pumpkin. As is so often the case in this intricate novel, the parallel reality is directly contrasted with what the text presents as clearly or unquestionably unreal, such as—in this case—a literal dream. That is, *Power* draws a distinct line between what is dream and what is real, and it is the juxtaposition of these categories that lends such force to the real.

In the final chapter, "The Vision Pit," *Power* returns to a pow-wow, where the novel begins. Pumpkin has been dead for a year Frank reminds Harley (and the reader); Mercury now lives alone; and Jeannette McVay has a five-month-old girl child. The main action of this chapter records Harley's getting drunk and having the sickness drawn from him. Part of the ritual cleansing involves his spending four days in a vision pit. Harley's visions are exactly what they purport to be, visions. By this point in the novel, the reader, like Harley, is ready to experience these visions. Like the reader, Harley isn't sure he knows how to pray, but he manages. And like Harley, during this vision quest, the readers have paraded before them many of the novel's characters. Along with Harley, the readers meet Duane, the long-dead brother; Calvin, his father; Ghost Horse; Red Dress; and Harley's grandmother, Margaret Many Wounds, who died when he was five years old. These are visions, and as visions they are real: "The touch of Margaret's hand became a bump in the wall of the vision pit, a slight protuberance that dug into his spine" (330). *Power* does not ask her readers to believe otherwise; but she does ask that they believe in the visions themselves.

As Mercury informs Jeannette earlier in the novel, this is not a

story; it is not magic realism. It is history, history powerful enough to shake Western readers out of their complacency as it has shaken Jeannette, who after her awakening can never leave the reservation, can never leave this alternative world with its non-Western perceptions of reality, can never return to her former world and its limited and limiting epistemologies. When Herod Small War sees Jeannette's new baby—who “looked like a full-blood, more Sioux than her Sioux father and without a trace of her mother's lineage”—he gives the mother this advice: “But Jeannette, she needs to know both sides. Otherwise she'll stand off-balance and walk funny and talk out of one side of her mouth. Tell her two stories” (314).

Just as the character Jeannette is caught at the edge of the reservation and needs to show her daughter both sides, so Susan Power writes in a borderland where parallel versions of reality are both common and, if not compatible, certainly coexistent. The earth can open the medicine hole a year after the Custer battle; Herod Small War can invoke a monstrous coyote; and Margaret Many Wounds, along with astronauts Aldrin and Armstrong, can walk on the moon. Susan Power offers her readers the possibility of glimpsing such realities and acknowledging the possibility of such. As Harley stands in his vision pit, he remembers having seen his grandmother walk on the moon. Margaret Many Wounds tells her grandson not to forget the moment: “It can be of great comfort to know that such things are possible” (329). As if acting on Herod's advice herself, Power offers her readers two stories, lest we otherwise stand off-balance or talk out one side of our mouths, lest we otherwise forget the moment or the limitations of any one given epistemology.

#### NOTES

1. Power, *The Grass Dancer*, 17. Subsequent references to this edition of the novel will appear parenthetically within the body of the text.

2. Cronon, “A Place for Stories,” 1372–73.

3. Krupat, *Red Matters*, 49, 69.

4. White, *The Content of the Form*, 24.

5. Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars*, 13.

6. Howells, *Criticism and Fiction* (1891), in *Selected Literary Criticism*, 327.
7. Hoffman and Murphy, *Essentials of the Theory of Fiction*, 218.
8. Zamora and Faris, *Magical Realism*, 3.
9. Fleck, Introduction, *Critical Perspectives on Native American Fiction*, 4.
10. Krupat, *The Turn to the Native*, 42.
11. Krupat, *Red Matters*, 48.
12. Wright, "Visitors from the Spirit Path," 39.
13. Walter, "Pan-American (Re)Visions," 65.
14. Walter, "Pan-American (Re)Visions," 67, 68.
15. Chanady, *Magical Realism and the Fantastic*, 19.
16. Chanady, *Magical Realism and the Fantastic*, 21–22, 30.
17. Zamora, *Magical Realism*, 3.
18. Walter, "Pan-American (Re)Visions," 77.
19. Lane, *Nobody's Perfect*, 365.
20. Rushdie, "Gabriel García Márquez," 301–02.
21. See Velie, "Magical Realism and Ethnicity," 57–67; and Gómez-Vega, "Subverting the 'Mainstream' Paradigm through Magical Realism in Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*."
22. There exists, of course, an ongoing debate concerning realism or representation in literature and whether or not such a thing as objective realism is possible at all. Consider, for example, Northrop Frye's notion of "representational fallacy." In his brief essay on "Representation" W. J. T. Mitchell writes that "the most common and naive intuition about literature is that it is a 'representation of life.'" See Lentricchia and McLaughlin, *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, 11.
23. Moore, "Myth, History, and Identity in Silko and Young Bear," 371.
24. Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars*, 13.
25. Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars*, x.
26. Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction*, 7. See Iser, *The Act of Reading*.
27. Power, National Public Radio Interview, WHQR, Wilmington, North Carolina, 12 November 1996. "Moonwalk" first appeared in *Ploughshares* 18 (Fall 1992): 112–31.
28. Ween, "This is Your Book," 92.
29. Ween, "This is Your Book," 91.
30. Krupat, *Red Matters*, 57.
31. Krupat, *Red Matters*, 72.
32. Krupat, *Red Matters*, 72, 70–71.

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# The Risk of Misunderstanding in Greg Sarris's *Keeping Slug Woman Alive*: *A Holistic Approach to American Indian Texts*

FRANCI WASHBURN

Greg Sarris's book, *Keeping Slug Woman Alive*, is a groundbreaking text in that it is, in part, an attempt to incorporate aspects of oral tradition within the written word, and an attempt to make the tradition and lessons of story-telling understandable for a Eurowestern audience. However, because Sarris does not clearly explain what he is trying to say, there is a risk, perhaps a certainty, that many readers will misunderstand or misinterpret the meaning of the stories that he tells and the points he attempts to make. Instead of explaining what he means, Sarris follows Mabel MacKay's example of enigmatically answering a story with another story, or ignoring the question until a later related event recalls the original story, and even then he allows the second event to stand as an explanation for the first story or event.<sup>1</sup> It would seem that his point is to invite the reader to participate in his narration and storytelling by allowing them to interpret the material through the reader's own reality filter of experience, knowledge, and emotion. This approach might be appropriate and work well for an audience steeped in oral tradition, particularly the oral tradition of the Pomo people, of whom Sarris is a member, but for the more usual Eurowestern reader, Sarris's approach does not explicate but serves only to confuse and complicate. Still, most other writers who have attempted to translate oral tradition into literary form have not done much better in accurately recording, translating, and explaining stories from oral tradition. Is such accuracy important? Why?

Stories—spoken or written—are important for two reasons: they

are the means of transferring information, and/or they are valuable for the aesthetics contained within them that are intended to evoke an emotional response. Both information and aesthetic meaning carry the very essence of any group of people: what is necessary for survival, what they value, what they consider as simply beautiful, or, perhaps, what is necessary for the survival of the soul. Cultural groups, of course, vary widely from those that are strikingly similar to those who have almost no common ground, but all groups share this increasingly smaller world, and some basic level of understanding is necessary for all groups to share the space with some degree of peace and cooperation. The risk of misunderstanding can be catastrophic.

Misunderstood words have been the cause of problems ranging from minor rifts between friends on up the scale to devastating wars. And usually the groups that have been decimated, if not completely eliminated by such misunderstandings, have been the indigenous populations of the world. The indigenous groups that have survived have done so by achieving, either by choice or force, at least a minimal understanding of the dominant culture through that culture's spoken and written words. However, the efforts of dominant cultures to understand colonized peoples have been desultory.

For the most part, their survival has not been in question; they have studied indigenous people primarily for entertainment or curiosity value. Indigenous peoples cannot force dominant cultures into understanding, but writers, both indigenous and non-indigenous, must make every effort to foster cultural understanding in order for indigenous groups to not only survive in the world, but to prosper. Because oral tradition, story, is the basic means of communicating information in traditional societies, it is important that stories be recorded, transmitted, and explained as accurately as possible. While Sarris's text is interesting and thought provoking, he does not explicate clearly, but seems to invite the reader to interpret the information for her/himself. The invitation without guidelines invites misunderstandings. Further, many readers are not motivated to seek any understanding beyond the superficial, particularly when the text is not read by choice but is only part of a required course in Native American literature. While it is difficult to translate the spoken story

into the written text and to explain the material so that it is understandable by a general audience, it is possible. Orality and literacy are not mutually exclusive.

Eric Havelock writes:

The two, orality and literacy, are sharpened and focused against each other, *yet can be seen as still interwoven in our own society. It is a mistake to polarize these as mutually exclusive.* [emphasis added] Their relationship is one of mutual, creative tension, one that has both a historical dimension—as literate societies have emerged out of oralist ones—and a contemporary one—as we seek a deeper understanding of what literacy may mean to us as it is superimposed on an orality.<sup>2</sup>

*Keeping Slug Woman Alive* is a weaving of both oral and literary tradition, but without additional input, the weaving is interesting, but not understandable. It is similar to a Hopi pot or a Navajo rug, either of which can be interesting, admired for the intrinsic beauty of the object, while at the same time, the process of creating these objects and the cultural symbols or colors employed may be unknown to the observer. Without additional information and explication, a great deal is lost in the translation. Readers of oral storytelling that has been converted to literary work do not have the same input as a live audience listening to the story. The reader cannot see the storyteller's body language of facial expressions, hand movements, and body posture, nor can the reader hear nuances of voice such as pitch and volume, word emphasis and silences within the speech act. Further, the physical space within which the story was told—the room where the event took place—can never be duplicated for each reader of a written text; therefore the experienced reality for each reader is necessarily independent of the storytelling act.

Several writers, notably those from the field of anthropology, have addressed the problem of translating oral tradition in various ways. In *The Savage Mind*, Claude Levi-Strauss wrote about the necessity of putting orality on the map. He argued that orality should be considered an important repository of knowledge in its own right and not merely a first evolutionary step towards literacy.<sup>3</sup> Levi-Strauss did not

address the problems of translating or transposing information from this oral repository to the written text of the library. Franz Boas was one of the earliest pioneers in the attempt to translate oral works to literary form preceding the ideas of Levi-Strauss by some seventy years.<sup>4</sup>

Late in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Boas did field work among the Clackamas Indians in Oregon believing that their cultural practices were on the way to extinction unless someone bothered to record them. Prior to Boas most anthropologists simply observed and wrote field notes that they later organized into a narrative description with little attention to exact renditions of ritual, story, and song. Boas went a step further and attempted more precise translations of these cultural productions into literate form. His method was to script the material first in the Clackamas language and then provide an English translation.

Boas's methods were adopted and used by others including his student, Ella Cara Deloria, who used this method in her book, *Dakota Texts*, in which she translated and interpreted stories that she collected from her own people. Better than not attempting to record the material at all, the Boas method still left much to be desired. The flat words on the page give no indication of the speech production itself; that is, no clues as to the cadence, volume, and so on of the storyteller's voice. As Arnold Krupat points out, Boas and those followers who used his method were seeking knowledge and not the aesthetics of the information they collected, or even a deeper understanding of the people who first produced the stories. Krupat writes:

their commitment to science led them to prefer the most literal prose translations—which usually obscured completely the dynamics of Indian performances and made it very difficult for anyone to discover a genuine poetry among Native peoples. The full value of what Boas and his students recorded would only begin to be revealed in the 1950s and after, when developments in anthropological linguistics would permit their translations to be modified for accuracy and to yield new translations of more apparent poetic value.<sup>5</sup>

One of the developments that assisted in accurate translation that Krupat does not mention is technological and mechanical—the invention and use of recording devices. Previously, as Dennis Tedlock points out, the collection and recording of oral materials was limited by the necessity of using handwritten dictation, which precluded smooth, uninterrupted performances. However, for some time after the invention and widespread use of recording equipment, field workers treated recorders as mere dictation machines, which allowed them to postpone the creation of prose texts and translations until a later occasion.<sup>6</sup>

The work of Dell Hymes in the mid-1960s provided the beginning of innovations needed for more complete and accurate translation of oral materials to written texts, and Tedlock expanded upon Hymes' earlier work. Tedlock writes:

Storytelling is a performance art [...] storytellers have at least as much in common with dramatists, actors, orators and poets as they do with writers of prose fiction [...] there is much more to storytelling than assembling vowels and consonants into gray masses of words and sentences. It is not only words that give shape and movement to a story's characters and their actions, but also the ways in which those words are voices.<sup>7</sup>

With this in mind, Hymes began, and Tedlock further developed, a system of transcribing oral works to more accurately reflect the oral performance. For example, different sized type fonts indicate volume of speech with (logically) smaller type indicating a softer, lower volume than normal voice, and capital letters in larger type indicating a louder than normal voice. A vowel followed by a long dash indicates that it is to be held, and split lines indicate chanted words with about three half tones of difference in volume between the top line and bottom line. Audience reaction/participation and the body language of the storyteller are indicated in parentheses—stage directions, if you will. Here is the beginning of the Zuni story, “The Boy and the Deer,” as transcribed by Tedlock:

NOW WE TAKE IT UP.

(audience) Ye—s indeed.

LO—NG A

NOW THE ROAD BEGINS. GO.

(audience) Ye—s indeed.<sup>8</sup>

Once these simple rules are learned, this transcription method provides a much more comprehensive understanding of an oral text than does the simple commitment of words to the page. It works quite well in situations where videotaping is not possible or is inappropriate. However, even these methods—innovative transcription or videotaping—are not a substitute for being present at an oral performance. Both the video camera and the transcription methods of Hymes and Tedlock have a limitation in common with plain text on a printed page. They freeze the material in time and space. The advantage, of course, is that no matter how many times one returns to the material, it *does* remain the same providing that the videotape or the printed material is properly maintained. Passages can be checked and rechecked for accuracy against the memory of the reader/viewer. However, this very accuracy, this fixing of the event, is very much at odds with the impulse and purpose of oral storytelling, where the story is always the same, but the context is always different.

Storytellers rarely tell a story only once. Stories are repeated over and over to different audiences in different settings for different reasons. The storyteller remembers the thread of the original story, but the word choice may vary, the intonation, the parts of the story that are emphasized or diminished, and so on. All of these changes happen for a multitude of reasons. The weather, the number of people in the audience, even what the storyteller (or the audience members) had for dinner can all influence the telling and the eventual perception of the story. Every person experiencing a story takes something different away from the event. The stories are the same, but they are never the same for any two people, or even the same person hearing the “same” story at a different time. Stories are like colors. Some stories may be basically

blue, but under differing circumstance they may be turquoise or cobalt blue or baby blue.

Of course, it can be argued that there are changes in setting, circumstance, and sometimes audience for the fixed, pre-recorded stories as well, so that even these book reading or video storytelling experiences are myriad and varied. However, if the performance is considered as half of the storytelling act and the audience reaction the other half, then the frozen version of a story is still only half of the experience, although it should be realized that assigning equal value to each part of the experience is an arbitrary assessment. It is quite likely that the values are never equal but vary along a continuum for each story, for each storyteller, and for each audience participant/observer. It may be useful to consider the storytelling act and the audience reaction as hail and response, very much as Judith Butler describes:

Positioned as both addressed and addressing, taking its bearing within that crossed vector of power, the subject [audience in oral storytelling] is not only founded by the other, requiring an address in order to be, but its power is derived from the structure of address as both linguistic vulnerability and exercise. If one comes to be through address, can we imagine a subject apart from his or her linguistic bearing?<sup>9</sup>

The hail—the storytelling act—invokes the response—the audience reaction—into being. Perhaps then, the storytelling act should be given a greater weight of importance because without this hail the audience response could not exist. But without the audience response, does the storytelling act exist? If a storyteller speaks to an empty room, or if a text is written but never read by anyone other than the author, is he or she still telling a story? Recall the classic question regarding a tree that falls in the woods with no one to hear it. Does it still make a sound? The answer to both questions is similar. Of course the falling tree makes a sound; of course the storytelling act exists. It is the response that is missing. The falling tree has consequences; it may destroy or damage other vegetation or animal habitats. The storytelling act exists but is no longer a complete storytelling *experience*. For instance, it could be a rehearsal or a first draft. However one assigns the relative importance of



the story telling and the reaction of the audience, it remains that there is much more room for variety of experience within a live performance than within a fixed text.

But it is the lack of any fixity of meaning that may be frustrating and confusing to readers of *Keeping Slug Woman Alive*. Sarris's readers are expected to extrapolate meaning as if they were a live audience hearing, seeing, feeling, and experiencing the stories within the text. The reader is frustrated because they are invited to construct the meanings for themselves, not only without sufficient information, but also without any guideline—any fixed meaning with which to compare their own understanding. Most readers are conditioned in the Eurowestern literary tradition; that is, most readers expect texts to provide at least a modicum of explanation within the educational level for which they were written. What is the reader supposed to get from these stories? Sarris offers few clues.

As the reader, you get what *you* get, and what you get depends on everything else you have ever read and what the people who wrote what you read, read themselves, and so on back to the beginning of the written word. You get what *you* get, depending on all the words you have ever heard and what those speakers heard and what their predecessor heard and so on all the way back to the beginning of the spoken word. Every speaking or reading body is the sum of the reading and speaking experience of all their personal predecessors. Those works or utterances that a person has not read or heard, but that have been read or heard by someone else whom a body *has* read or heard, and all of these texts, oral or literary, whether actually read by the individual or filtered by previous readers, are woven into the body of knowledge that creates understanding and meaning for each individual.

This polyphony of voices—sometimes cacophony of voices—has sound theoretical echoes in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin. Interpreting Bakhtin in relation to Native American literature, Krupat writes: “it is what Bakhtin calls the novel which more fully testified to is own (inevitable) indebtedness to the discourse of others; the novel, for Bakhtin, is the prime literary instance of dialogized speech.”<sup>10</sup> While Bakhtin addresses his theory to the specialized writing form of the novel, Krupat argues that the stories of oral tradition are akin to the

novel sharing many of the same aspects—plot and plot devices such as the flashback, flash forward, description, inner thought of characters, action, and varying points of view, but perhaps most importantly, dialogic construction. That is, the internal “conversation” between the writer and the reader, the hail and response described by Judith Butler, or the interaction between storyteller and audience. It must be pointed out that the dialogue between storyteller and audience is different for every member of the audience because each person has their own personal canon of texts read or heard, and no two person’s canons are likely to be exactly the same; thus a multiplicity of meanings can be constructed from the same storytelling experience. Without guidance and some fixity of meaning, the understanding arrived at by individual readers of Sarris’s work is unlikely to be the meaning intended by Sarris or by Mabel MacKay.

Let’s examine two stories from Sarris’s text: the potato peeling story and Sarris’s story (about Mabel MacKay’s story) of the woman who loved a snake.<sup>11</sup> What is the reader supposed to understand from these stories?

In the potato peeling story Sarris tells the reader that his product—the peeled potatoes are different from the potatoes peeled by the two women in the story. He is embarrassed by the difference, but he doesn’t explain that the difference lies in the different experiences among Sarris and the two women. When Sarris peeled potatoes at MacKay’s kitchen table, thousands of people’s hands—all of the people he had seen or emulated in the same task—contemplated the task, decided how to proceed, and made the cuts. The product of his work could not possibly be the same as that of the two women and their polyphonic experience, nor is it possible that the product of the women’s potato peeling was exactly the same. Surely one of the women peeled deeper or slower, because no matter how much alike these two women may have been in experience, there were almost certainly differences as well. All three batches of peeled potatoes came from differently perceived and interpreted experiences, so the potato peeling experience is as much of a text as the story describing it.

The story of the woman who loved a snake is a verbal example of the potato peeling experience. The main difference is that the story

(of MacKay's story) did not involve an action, but re-actions to the presentations of words that speak of thought, action, dialogue, and description within the story. We have Sarris's re-action, which is that of the privileged insider, and we have the re-action of Sarris's outsider friend, Jenny, but there is also a third response here. That is MacKay's re-re-action to Jenny's re-action. These responses are what might be termed the primary responses, but beneath these there are the uncountable number of internalized responses from the preconceived predecessors within each of the three individual canons of knowledge and experience. It seems that none of the three—Sarris, Jenny, or MacKay—is connecting with any one of the others in understanding the story. Each has their own interpretation, and the understanding of the meaning of the story is likely to have multiple different meanings for those people reading this story in Sarris's text. When this story and the potato peeling story are discussed in a classroom setting, information from all those readers present comes not just from the individuals present, but from the exponentially additive of their total experience. Within this setting the reading of the fixed text approaches, at least within the audience response component, the oral storytelling experience, and the people present may come to some consensus about the meaning of the stories. However, consensus on meaning does not necessarily guarantee that these people have understood the meaning that the storyteller—Sarris or MacKay—meant to impart. It would appear that Sarris is attempting to replicate the methods of Pomo (and most other Native American) storytellers by *not* explaining, by allowing each reader to construct their own meaning.

Native American storytellers do not usually explain the meaning of the story, particularly when their audience members are also members of their own particular tribe or nation because such an audience would understand the particular cultural information embedded within the story. They would be able to take that information along with the plot of the story and construct meaning that is close to the storyteller's intent. Sarris has not recognized that the majority of his reading audience is not Pomo, not even Native American; therefore, his readers are unlikely to understand the stories in any manner close to what Sarris intends. The story of the woman who loved a snake is

particularly complex and difficult to understand. What is the significance of the snake, for example? For many Eurowestern readers steeped in Judeo-Christian ethics, the snake may be seen as a symbol of evil, an echo of the snake in the biblical Garden of Eden. Using this reference for analysis, it is easy to assume that the snake represents the Devil who tempted Eve, or possibly, the treachery of women. In MacKay's story, because the husband discovers the snake, it could be seen as a messenger of evil, a natural or spiritual tattle-tale that is warning the husband of the wife's infidelity. It is doubtful that any of these interpretations would be applicable from the standpoint of the Pomo people, whose story this is. The story is an old one, predating colonial Christian influence for one thing, and further, it springs from a culture where animals, including snakes, are not considered as apart from, or inferior to humans. Even Native Americans who are Christians have trouble accepting the Christian hierarchy of being that places animals beneath humans. Stan McKay has written about the objection of Native Americans to this aspect of Christian theology. He writes:

The comparisons with the spirituality of indigenous peoples around the world may be centered on the notion of relationship to the whole creation. We may call the earth "our Mother" and the animals "our brothers and sisters." Even what biologists describe as inanimate, we call our relatives [...] This unity as creatures in the creation cannot be expressed exclusively since it is related to the interdependence and the connectedness of all life.<sup>12</sup>

In Pomo thought the snake is not a symbol of anything. The snake is the man that the woman in the story loved. MacKay's listener, Jenny, with her Eurowestern intellect and knowledge, does not understand that concept. She also exhibits a common Eurowestern lack of regard for non-human life (and antipathy for snakes) when she asks why the husband did not simply take the snake out and kill it.

Nor does Mabel MacKay understand Jenny's point of view. MacKay, with her Pomo intellectual understanding, reacts with incredulity. She says, "Well, how could he [take the snake out and kill it]? This is white man days. There's laws against killing people."<sup>13</sup> As

the warden says to Cool Hand Luke in the movie of the same name, when Luke had been recaptured after yet another escape attempt, “What we have here is a failure to communicate.”<sup>14</sup>

The lack of understanding of stories from oral tradition by Euro-westerners is largely because few of them have the voices of oral tradition—Native American or any other—within their personal canons of experience and knowledge. This is due in part, as stated earlier, to the difficulty of translating oral story into literary form, but also partly to the privileging of literacy over orality. Most people are read or told stories only as children, as a matter of convenience until they are taught to read for themselves, and then storytelling, for all practical purposes, is discontinued. Havelock urges a revival of appreciation for orality and a return to teaching orality as a prelude to and in conjunction with literacy. He writes that “The natural human being is not a writer or a reader but a speaker and a listener.”<sup>15</sup> Further, he believes that children should be expected to “relive the conditions of this inheritance [. . .] and that is to be accompanied by continual instruction in these oral arts.”<sup>16</sup>

However, unless and until such “continuous instruction in the oral arts” comes to pass, it is incumbent upon those who attempt to translate and explain oral tradition and that they do so in a manner that is more easily understood by the dominant majority. *Keeping Slug Woman Alive* is an engaging text that is understandable for most people coming from a background steeped in oral tradition, but for the more usual readership it is not. Much more can and must be done before Havelock’s interwoven tapestry of orality and literacy can be seen for more than just the obvious tapestry. Oral tradition must be translated and explicated so that readers see beyond just the tapestry itself to an understanding the cultural impulses that make up the weaving.

#### NOTES

1. The central theme of Sarris’s book is the life and the storytelling of Pomo elder Mabel McKay, a relative of Sarris.

2. Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write*, 11.

3. Levi-Strauss, *Le pensee sauvage*, 245.

4. *Kwakiutl Texts* and *Kathlamet Texts* are two of Boas's books that record oral traditions in literary form, although these and others by Boas have been reprinted, all editions are out of print.
5. Krupat, *The Voice in the Margin*, 109.
6. Tedlock, *Finding the Center*, xiv–xv.
7. Tedlock, *Finding the Center*, xi.
8. Tedlock, *Finding the Center*, 3.
9. Butler, *Excitable Speech*, 30.
10. Krupat, *The Voice in the Margin*, 136. See also Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*.
11. Sarris, *Keeping Slug Woman Alive*, 1–3, 35–57.
12. McKay, "An Aboriginal Christian Perspective on the Integrity of Creation," 53.
13. Sarris, *Keeping Slug Woman Alive*, 37.
14. *Cool Hand Luke*, dir. Stuart Rosenberg, Warner Brothers, 1967.
15. Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write*, 20.
16. Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write*, 21.

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## REVIEW ESSAY

# Legacies of the Ever Beating Heart

Delphine Red Shirt's *Turtle Lung Woman's Granddaughter*

DEBRA K. S. BARKER

In her latest book, *Turtle Lung Woman's Granddaughter*, Lakota writer Delphine Red Shirt presents the kind of unmediated as-told-to life narrative for which we have long awaited. Her book in fact presents two orally related life stories, that of her mother, Lone Woman (Wiya Isnala), and her great-grandmother, Turtle Lung Woman (Kheglezela Chaguwi). Serving as amanuensis and then translator, Red Shirt edited a body of family stories that her mother related to her in the Lakota language over a period of two years. Lone Woman passed on in 1999, shortly after she completed the dictation of her memories and stories, never to see the book's publication in 2002. The book opens with Lone Woman's account of her grandmother's life, followed by her own story. It is not until the book's conclusion that Red Shirt steps in to narrate the moment of her mother's passing, prompting notice of how carefully she has remained in the background throughout the narration of over one hundred years of her family history. What Red Shirt has achieved in terms of its artistic and ethnographic merit is truly remarkable in itself. Moreover, Red Shirt demonstrates to us how a Lakota person's life may be composed of not only her personal story, but also a myriad of other types of narratives which come together to constitute an identity and a life.

Turtle Lung Woman lived from 1851 to 1933, witnessing and surviving one of the most tumultuous periods of political and cultural transformation that the Lakota Oyate or Nation would ever know historically. She was born into a world and a landscape, as yet unconquered by the U.S. military, where her people traversed freely a territory

spanning from Wyoming to Minnesota, and Nebraska to North Dakota. A contemporary of Crazy Horse and Red Cloud, she recalls ongoing warfare with the Crow Nation, bison hunts, descriptions of traditional ceremonies for life passages, horse painting, and songs for the spirits. However, by the time she was twenty-three years old, she and her family would be confined to what is now known as the Pine Ridge Reservation in western South Dakota.

Like Ella Deloria's novel *Waterlily*, Red Shirt's biographies present an insider's look at the domain of Lakota women, offering intimate glimpses of the quiet work of daily life: of Turtle Lung Woman's making bread in a skillet on her outdoor wood stove, hitching her horse and buggy (at the age of eighty years old) to travel the five miles to the trading post, conducting yuwipi ceremonies in which her turtle shells dance, and instructing her children and grandchildren in the myriad, complicated rules governing core values and proper Lakota conduct. Most importantly, she instructs the children in depth and detail in kinship relationships and responsibilities, thereby shaping the construction of their identities as Lakota people. As *Waterlily* does, *Turtle Lung Woman's Granddaughter* provides a wealth of details concerning the interworkings of family relationships, pregnancy, childbirth, and child rearing, offering a behind-the-scenes perspective of a world to which male missionaries and early ethnographers would have been denied access.

Finally, like Deloria's text, Red Shirt's book humanizes a people long romanticized and demonized in mainstream American popular culture, even before the time of Turtle Lung Woman's birth in the mid-nineteenth century. Indeed, Red Shirt's ability to evoke a bygone era and animate the representation of her mother's memories of her relatives long passed is impressive. She includes telling moments and details that enable readers to empathize, even to understand something of the complex lives of people living in a time long removed from the twenty-first century. For instance, the first chapter of her book opens with an account of a young Turtle Lung Woman beading moccasins by moonlight for her beloved husband, Paints His Face with Clay, working all night to complete them before he left for war. Later we learn how she reconciled herself to sharing him with his



other wives, but not before a fit of pique prompted her to abandon their lodge, leading her turtles on leashes like dogs, determined to punish him with her absence.

In another story Wiya Isnala relates Turtle Lung Woman's story of a hunter who chooses to remain behind as his tiospaye moved on to new camping grounds, in effect ignoring the leaders' orders so he might hunt for himself and his wife. This fairly complex narrative encodes themes of comeuppance with the subsequent attack by a Crow war party, along with themes of greed, subversion of authority, and rejection of community standards of behavior. While the hunter found a measure of redemption in escaping to warn his tiospaye of the Crows' impending attack, the reality of life—as the hunter's wife understood—was that their own people would rightly burn their lodge as the consequence of endangering the tiospaye for the sake of one individual's act of self-indulgence.

Red Shirt's book also gives us a sense of how people survived materially and culturally once they were confined to their land allotments. While people had been coerced into a relationship of forced dependency with the advent of the reservation system, they did not sit idle. Lone Woman explains that in the early twentieth century, people traveled far to work long days—year in and year out—as migrant workers for the white Nebraska farmers who hired them to harvest vegetables and crops and allowed them to stay in the campgrounds near the fields. Provident and industrious, families gathered food for their root cellars, cut wood for the long, brutal winters, and saved money for the food and gifts to be shared at Christmas. Lone Woman points out, “[E]veryone had to be self-sufficient, we knew nothing of charity” (153). In terms of cultural survival, Lone Woman explains that the practice of traditional ceremonies went underground, re-emerging as disguised secular gatherings corresponding with Euroamerican holidays, such as the Fourth of July.

In the process of telling her grandmother's life story, Wiya Isnala tells her own, interspersing these family stories with two types of traditional Lakota oral narratives: “ohunkanka woyake,” teaching stories for young people which illustrate appropriate behavior and conduct, and “ehanni woyake,” stories which detail the creation and cosmology

of the Lakota world and feature the supernatural beings whose actions affected the world and all the elements and beings inhabiting it. Ronald Theisz, an English professor with a long personal acquaintance with Lakota culture, notes that in Lakota society nowadays, creation stories, stories of the lesser known sacred beings, and stories featuring Iktomi as culture hero are told infrequently, suggesting that the oral tradition in contemporary life has grown increasingly more secularized (6–9).

Unlike early collaborative biographies and autobiographies, *Turtle Lung Woman's Granddaughter* is remarkable in its uniquely Native conception and execution, crafted for a broad audience, of course, but preserving Lone Woman's point of view and unique voice. Both Lone Woman and her daughter are native speakers of the Lakota language, sensitive to its nuances of diction and expression. In fact, throughout the text, Red Shirt deliberately includes the original Lakota phrasing, preserving her mother's rhetorical style and occasional archaic diction, then juxtaposes the English translation with the original, thereby illuminating the semantics of suffixes and etymologies as she situates them within an interpersonal context. Lone Woman explains,

In all things Lakota, it was not only the word but the thought behind it that mattered. I was taught to listen well. I learned this through my grandmother Turtle Lung Woman. In time I learned that sometimes the spoken word was in conflict with the thought behind it. When this happened I had to respond appropriately. (75)

When a writer aspires to render dimensions of an oral narrative style into a literary textual form to be consumed by readers perhaps unfamiliar with indigenous oral traditions, she risks not meeting some readers' aesthetic expectations of the discourse. If readers have specific, culturally shaped expectations of the format of the biographical and autobiographical genres, they may find Red Shirt's book puzzling. For instance, Red Shirt has not organized or shaped her mother's stories along a narrative trajectory suggesting some linear path of development, progression, or advancement. Neither has Red Shirt violated the

privacy of her relatives' lives. Readers expecting self-reflexive analysis, politicized responses to federal Indian policy, or the mourning of an idealized early-nineteenth-century Plains life will be disappointed. Red Shirt simply presents the stories with which she was entrusted, allowing them—unexplicated—to speak for themselves, much in the same way we receive stories from the Lakota oral tradition.

The style of Lone Woman's narrative evinces other features of the oral tradition, particularly with the reiteration of particular words and phrases for emphasis, along with a recursive temporal structure. For instance, Lone Woman narrates Turtle Lung Woman's death; then in the following chapter, she steps back to an earlier period in her life to recall the occasion of her own first moon or menses. The juxtaposition of these two memories suggests how profoundly they are linked in her consciousness as life-transforming experiences. As she edited and organized the narratives she had collected, Red Shirt chose to include old Lakota songs that serve as thematic epigraphs and/or codas for each chapter. Taken from the Frances Densmore collection, the songs' images, topics, and themes complement the chapter topics, oftentimes echoing a mood or emphasizing a cultural ideal dramatized in the text.

Some readers may find the tone of Red Shirt's text to evince a certain dispassion; and others may deem the book incomplete, wondering why it halts somewhat abruptly with Lone Woman's account of the death of her husband and child when she was only twenty-one years old. Red Shirt explains, however, that although her mother would go on to live another fifty-eight years, she chose to share only stories from her early years. Clearly, Lone Woman preferred to keep the rest of her life private, an option that she certainly had the right to assert. Those of us who spend time with elders know that it is inappropriate to question or to press them to elaborate upon or extend what they have decided to share with us. We wait for stories, listening hard to remember them because they may never be retold; and we respect an elder's silence.

Lone Woman's choice to share her memories with a broader audience than simply her family affords those interested in Lakota culture a rich historical document and a repository of valuable cultural in-

formation, particularly concerning the occasions of various types of ceremonies. For her family, however, the stories Lone Woman entrusted with her daughter, Turtle Lung Woman's great-granddaughter, will stand as an enormous gift to her relatives, those living and those yet to be born. For those of us whose families have come from the Pine Ridge or Rosebud Reservation area, the text provides a contextual framework for stories passed down to us of the hardships and challenges of early reservation life in South Dakota. For those whose parents and grandparents were bereft of their native language and the epistemological systems of the oral tradition, *Turtle Lung Woman's Granddaughter* is a valuable pedagogical text, joining Red Shirt's own memoir, *Bead on an Anthill*, as a cultural and linguistic resource for both a Lakota studies and Lakota women's studies program.

In so many respects *Turtle Lung Woman's Granddaughter* is more than a bricolage of family stories, old songs and myths, and descriptions of ceremonial life. It is an important contribution to the body of witness testimony from survivors of one of the most difficult transitional periods in reservation history. In this regard Red Shirt's text joins other recently published life stories which are tribal histories as much as they are personal ones: *Salt Camp* by Ollie Napesni (2003), *With My Own Eyes: A Lakota Woman Tells Her People's History* by Susan Bordeaux Bettelyoun (1999), and *Completing the Circle* by Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve (1995). Finally, *Turtle Lung Woman's Granddaughter* is simply a beautiful book: imaginatively conceived and almost haunting in its power to bring alive a world lyrical and quietly moving in its power to draw readers back and into a time when people naturally interwove the old ceremonies into the fabric of daily living, when people understood that we are composed of all the stories we live and know.

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## Book Reviews

Buffalo Tiger and Harry A. Kersey Jr. *Buffalo Tiger: A Life in the Everglades*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2002. xvii + 185 pp.

Jeffrey P. Shepard

Autobiographies and life stories are familiar and enigmatic landmarks on the terrain of American Indian studies. Texts by Charles Eastman, John Stands In Timber, Black Elk, Wilma Mankiller, and others have attracted a broad audience. Many of these collaborative projects found their way into mainstream bookstores and undergraduate reading lists where newcomers to Native Studies learn about the struggles of indigenous people. Yet, for all the knowledge they convey, the genre is fraught with contradictions, ambiguity, and—to some extent—intellectual colonialism. *Buffalo Tiger: A Life in the Everglades*, exhibits many of these problems and possibilities, and in doing so, provides an opportunity to address conversations about decolonization occupying scholars today. All those concerned with the past, present, and future of Indian politics should find this contribution informative.

Superficially, the autobiography narrates a Native leader's experiences throughout the twentieth century. Buffalo Tiger begins by discussing Miccosukee culture and history in chapters that read like part memoir and part ethnography. In "A Miccosukee Childhood," he discusses clan identities, the gendered division of labor, hunting and

gathering practices, and the Green Corn Dance at the center of Miccosukee culture. Buffalo Tiger also summarizes Miccosukee origins and their relationship with the fluid landscape of the Everglades. He explains the tribe's conflicted history with the Seminoles, their relatives to the north, who refused to recognize Miccosukee independence throughout most of the twentieth century. Ensuing chapters catalogue Buffalo Tiger's confrontation with and negotiation of "The White Man's Ways" symbolized by the cash economy, tourism, non-Indian education, health care, and state politics. Many of the scenarios echo stories related by elders born in the 1920s, although Buffalo Tiger did not recall painful experiences in boarding schools or with religious discrimination.

Later portions of the book contribute to American Indian history and "Indian-White relations" because we learn how Buffalo Tiger stood at the forefront of national Indian politics. Working as a "culture broker" between conservative Miccosukee elders advocating separatism from Anglo society and a hostile Congress, Buffalo Tiger helped thwart plans to terminate his people's relationship with the land. The Miccosukee even rejected millions of dollars from the Indian Claims Commission and they refused to relocate to a different reservation because, according to Buffalo Tiger, "We just wanted to live our life. We wanted to live on the land the way we had always lived on it—to hunt and find food the way we had always done it" (85). The Miccosukee eventually adopted a modified version of the Indian Reorganization Act and by the 1960s ran several businesses oriented towards tourism. The tribe opened its own school, contracted with the Indian Health Service for medical care, and in 1982 negotiated a deal to protect their land and resources. When Buffalo Tiger retired from politics, his allies recognized his efforts to promote Native sovereignty and self-determination long before Congress passed legislation to that effect in 1975.

We should welcome this addition to the Indians of the Southeast Series of the University of Nebraska Press, edited by Theda Perdue and Michael Green, even if Buffalo Tiger's life story leaves important methodological questions unanswered. Harry Kersey Jr., a professor of history at Florida Atlantic University, maintains a low profile

throughout the initial sections of the book and limits his commentary to a brief introduction and short summaries of Indian policy and history. Kersey moves into the center of the narrative with an appended and highly limited discussion of “as told to” stories published primarily before the 1980s. Moreover, he seems to base this section and his theoretical perspective with analytical work from the 1950s. He briefly notes contributions by Arnold Krupat, Sally McBeth, and Julie Cruikshank, but avoids implementing any of their conclusions. This limited discourse causes one to wonder about the details of their relationship, Kersey’s position as a scholar, and the dynamics of race. Issues of power and gender never arise either. Additionally, this section could have offered more compelling comparisons to contemporaries such as Annie Dodge Wauneka, Wilma Mankiller, or Henry Mihesuah. And finally, his lack of attention to critiques of “life history” offered by Native scholars such as Elizabeth Cook-Lynn seems unusual for a text published in 2002.

Buffalo Tiger sought out a knowledgeable scholar on indigenous communities in Florida, yet other concerns lurk underneath Kersey’s commentary. Before his discussion of autobiography, Kersey offers an extended chapter apparently to “authenticate” Buffalo Tiger’s narrative with “context” and a “scholarly” explanation of events and stories discussed by Buffalo Tiger. This is useful but somewhat repetitive and paternalistic because Buffalo Tiger already explains the important events of his life in a manner with which he feels comfortable. To his credit Kersey quotes anthropologist Sally McBeth, who argues that, “Live histories are stories that people tell about themselves. They provide a point of view on the writers past life. The perspectives are fragmentary, the telling is motivated, and the resulting text is retrospective and reflexive” (164). But Kersey seems to skirt her central point with an authorial primacy that marginalizes Buffalo Tiger’s reflexive retelling of his life: “objectivity” and linearity remap the narrative into an academic model of Native self-representation. Ironically Kersey suggests, “In many ways this book defies the conventional process of creating Indian autobiography in which a historian or anthropologist systematically gathers an informant’s taped accounts and then produces a historical synthesis” (166). While the “Indian voice” re-

ferred to by Kersey does emerge, one wonders why this narrative slides into the popular format it tries to avoid. It could have served as a model for examining the colonial relations between scholars and Native leaders, or it could have remained a series of reflections and thoughts offered by a respected elder.

Yet, these criticisms should not detract from the contributions of a talented indigenous leader and a dedicated scholar. Indeed, this book will make its way onto the shelves of bookstores and into the syllabi of American Indian history courses. It also serves as a wonderful addition to the paucity of literature on Native people in Florida during the twentieth century. Readers will definitely enjoy learning about the life and times of Buffalo Tiger, and hopefully this collaborative effort will broaden our understanding of Native struggles for sovereignty and self-determination in an age of colonialism, ethnic strife, and environmental devastation.

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Arnold Krupat. *Red Matters: Native American Studies*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2002. 167 pp.

M. A. Jaimes \* Guerrero

Under an appealing title, *Red Matters*, Arnold Krupat has put forth an interesting text in Native American studies. His writings are in response to his appropriate perception that, in his own words:

red has not much mattered as yet, not in the aura of the post-colonial, gender and race, borderlands, cultural or subaltern studies. Although there exists at present a bold body of criticism demonstrating the importance of Native American literature in its own right and in relation to ethnic, minority, or



difference literature of a variety of kinds, Native materials still continue to be badly neglected. [preface]

The first section contextualizes three perspectives on Native American literatures under his interpretive concepts of “Nationalism, Indigenism, and Cosmopolitanism,” and in terms of U.S. colonialism and tribal sovereignty issues. In what he describes as a “cross-cultural practice” that formerly focused on “ethnocentrism,” he puts forth these three sociocultural/political perspectives, again in his own words:

The nationalist grounds her criticism in the concept of the nation and uses tribal/national sovereignty, a legal and political category, to guide her examination of Native cultural production. The Indigenist foregrounds what is instantiated as a pan-Indian geocentric epistemology, a knowledge different from that of dispersed Europeans and other wanderer-settlers [. . .] The cosmopolitan [. . . is a]ware that casual eclecticism can lead to critical and political irresponsibility, [. . . therefore] would cobble her criticism out of a variety of perspectival possibilities. Thus the cosmopolitan takes very seriously nationalist and indigenist insights, although her own position is that it is unwise to be bound too rigorously by either the nation or traditional knowledge. [preface]

I do appreciate his sensitive generic term usage of “she” and “her,” even though incongruent with the fact that discourse on Native American studies or American Indian studies has mostly been a male dominated one, and in what I have termed a “trickle down patriarchy” that also reflects an “academic apartheid” (Jaimes \* Guerrero, 1998; 1996) on hierarchical issues of sexism as well as racism and classism in ethnic studies in our higher learning institutions as well as tribal nations. At the same time, I also take issue when he generalizes that all Native scholars and writers operate solely from one perspective or another, and especially considering that Native American studies has always been interdisciplinary, as well as community- and service-oriented, and that this has enabled a cadre of these Native scholars and writers, including the literary arena, to write from a multidimensional perspective instead

of a grounded and myopic cannon. I also take issue that “Indigenism” necessarily means “pan-Indianism,” since there is biodiversity in the broader indigenous worldview, which respects the distinctiveness of indigenous peoples and their unique cultures, and as “ecocultural” bioregional homelands (of which more will be said).

Among others, he cites the prolific works of the senior Native/Lakota scholar and honorary Native Philosopher, Vine Deloria Jr, who has written on the “Nations Within” and “tribal sovereignty” (Deloria and Lytle, 1984; 1983) and “Red Power movements” (Deloria, 1970; 1969), among other Native American issues. I use Deloria as one who is exemplary in using all three of these perspectives, as a “Native nationalist” who writes from tribal or indigenous perspectives, as well as his more “cosmopolitane” satires on the hypocrisy and duplicitousness of federal Indian law and public policy. One of his more recent treatises is *Red Earth, White Lies* (1995), which Krupat notes, and in which this multidimensional perspective is evident in his scathing criticism of “the myth of scientific fact” put upon Native Americans to rationalize “white superiority.”

Krupat’s second section is “On the Translation of Native American Song and Story,” as his theorized history of historical attempts in translations. He highlights the theme of “Native identity” in its traditional cultural contexts, and in urging more conscientious effort in genuine efforts at “cross-cultural” understanding of difference.

Section three of his text is headed “American Histories,” in which he also urges the need for everyone to be speaking the same “historical language.” However, a discussion in this area needs to acknowledge that the economic canon in U.S. society and other western oriented capitalistic systems is also a legalistic and therefore adversarial one, which lends itself to an a-historicalism that is convenient to the capitalistic western mindset at the expense of marginalized ethnic and tribal cultures. Hence, as long as this “social reality” prevails in our globalizing society, to use a cliché of accumulated wisdom, the twain shall never meet. In this vein, it behooves Native scholars and cultural writers to re-envision a Native America, and from their own distinct indigenous histories for both tribal preservation and restoration.

Section four, “From ‘Half-Blood’ to ‘Mixed-Blood’: *Cogewa* and

the ‘Discourse of Indian Blood,’” discusses the novel, *Cogewa: the Half-Blood* (1927) by Mourning Dove, which continues on the theme of “Native identity” that contributes to the literary legacy. Krupat points out that it is the first novel in the twentieth century written by a Native woman addressing the issue of “mixed Indian blood” in a “race construct.” Krupat’s writings take on a subjective and therefore a qualitative approach to this subject, compared to others, and a more neo-colonialist look at Native and tribal matters, for new “social localities” and “political possibilities.”

The subject of “American Indian identity” is also the focus of my doctoral thesis (Jaimes \* Guerrero, 1990), titled “American Indian Identification—Eligibility Policy in Federal Indian Education Service Programs,” in which I compare the various federal definitions of how the federal government, through the Department of Interior and its Bureau of Indian Affairs, determines who is an “American Indian” as a public policy issue, and contrast this to how the various tribes and representative American Indian organizations determine membership criteria for tribal enrollment. This thesis followed with my treatise on “American Indians, American Racism”; my analysis also deconstructs the “race construct” imposed on Native peoples further as “eugenics and scientific racism.” I have also recently pursued Eva Marie Garrouette’s book titled “*Real Indians: Identity and Survival of America*” (2003), as a collection of her ethnographic essays on the “Indian Identity,” and which I commendably recommend as another important contribution on these Native/tribal issues and perspectives.

Krupat’s critique in the sixth and last section, titled “The ‘Rage Stage’: Contextualizing Sherman Alexie’s *Indian Killer*,” is a post-modernist illustration of a Native urban novel, which I have also read for this review. A critical analysis of this story’s theme of revenge is about past and present wrongdoing to Native peoples in U.S. society. This essay also provides more insight on “Indian identity” in this big city setting, and in this context of “postcolonialist” rage among a younger generation of Native peoples in reaction to their further subjugation by “white oppression.” He also compares this mystery novel to Richard Wright’s 1993 *Native Son* as a voice of “Black rage” for those times into the present. Therefore Alexie’s dark story is in the

genre of this “poetics of violence,” as he astutely points out, to warn the mainstream of marginalized anger among those who continue to feel and be dispossessed and disenfranchised by U. S. imperialism and colonization.

His work does have intensive notes, an impressive bibliography, and an extensive index to support his writings. Even though I do not share his interpretations on some of the thematic concepts and constructs in terms of his language usage to convey to the reader his ideas, issues, and theoretical perspectives, his communicative style is effective. As my final comments in this review, I would like to add my own and published perspective on “Indigenism” that challenges “a case of biocolonialism and biopiracy” by geneticists worldwide today in targeting indigenous peoples for “DNA blueprinting” in genome “diversity” research, and that necessitates a call for environmental ethics in terms of a Native Ecological Worldview (Jaimes \* Guerrero, 2003; 1995). I think the significance of this broader view is remiss in Krupat’s vision of Native American studies, and I find that this is my main concern regarding this text since the author seems to have little understanding of *Indigenism* from a more traditional Native American experience and worldview perspective, and for a more hopeful future to ensure respective tribes their distinct cultural survival for indigenous preservation as well as restoration in these threatening times.

Overall, *Red Matters* is both an academic and “cross-cultural” contribution to the Native American studies discourse and to the literature legacy among scholars, teachers, students, and other readers. I also agree wholeheartedly with Krupat that the Native American and tribal experience, as “Native Nations,” has much to contribute to the comparative studies emerging in comprehending the impact of globalization on cultural diversity and in what is being called “Global Studies” in these “postcolonialist” times; this also includes the unique experiences of Native peoples, as indigenous to the Americas, regarding the impact of western and U.S. colonization on their respective tribal and communal lifeways. It is in this vein, therefore, that Native peoples and their perspectives can be exemplary models for conflict resolution as well as cultural survival, and in terms of the world’s current state of affairs and overt wartime.

Diane Glancy. *American Gypsy: Six Native American Plays*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2002. xi + 224 pp.

Patrice Hollrah

Diane Glancy (Cherokee/English/German) has an impressive record of awards for her prolific publications of fiction, poetry, essays, and plays. To her previously published collection of plays, *War Cries* (1996), she adds *American Gypsy: Six Native American Plays* (2002), which include *The Woman Who Was a Red Deer Dressed for the Deer Dance*, *The Women Who Loved House Trailers*, *American Gypsy*, *Jump Kiss*, *The Lesser Wars*, and *The Toad (Another Name for the Moon) Should Have a Bite*. This collection explores themes of history, myth, Christianity, gender, acculturation, and love in monologues and multi-character pieces of varying lengths.

The title of the collection, *American Gypsy*, resonates on several levels with the history of Native Americans and specifically the Cherokees. First, the descriptor alludes to Native Americans as people who have migrated, much as the nomadic people known as gypsies migrated from the border region between Iran and India to Europe in the fourteenth or fifteenth century. However, Glancy refers to Native Americans who have a history of migrating within the borders of America, referring not only to the traditional migrations but also to the enforced migrations, such as the Trail of Tears and removals to reservations. Second, American theatrical actors are known as “gypsies” because they are on the road, moving from one production to another, often living out of their suitcases, creating their own personal migrations. In the play of the same title, Glancy offers her definition of American Gypsy: “An American Gypsy is a Native American who knows migration and rootlessness” (43). Thus the characterization of Native Americans as “American Gypsy” portrays Native actors as the original theatrical performers on this continent, tied to a political and geographical place, and involved in a communal expression of art.

An epigraph, attributed as “From the Cherokee,” opens the collection of six plays and suggests one of the dominant themes—the im-

portance of words: “A stage is suspended in the air. The earth hangs beneath it on cords. As long as the voices last, the cords will not break. But when the voices fail, the earth will fall into the chaos below” (v). The importance of the dialogue in the theater of life on earth suggests that the survival and continuance of the Cherokees is subject to the script of human interaction that stories, or in this case plays, provide. The voices, or the lines that people speak, carry the breath of life that creates balance and harmony on the earth. Without the nurturing voices, life falls into disorder. As Glancy writes in the preface, “[Script] coalesces the array of arbitrary elements into patterns of images upon which the action rides” (xi). She poetically defines “script,” the dialogue, as the glue that holds together the setting for life’s action, another image of words as the sustenance needed for human relationships. Although the title of the collection lacks tribal specificity, the epigraph connotes the playwright’s Cherokee world-view as informing her creative writing.

In *The Woman Who Was a Red Deer Dressed for the Deer Dance*, Glancy uses Ahw’uste, a Cherokee mythological spirit deer to illustrate the generational challenges to understanding between a grandmother and her granddaughter. Glancy wants to “*combine the overlapping realities of myth, imagination, and memory with spaces for the silences*” (4). The grandmother made a red-deer dress to draw closer to Ahw’uste, but the granddaughter has no time for the traditional spirits when she has no education or money and needs to find work. The grandmother says, “My deer dress is the way I felt, transformed by the power of ceremony;” and “We’re carriers of our stories and histories. We’re nothing without them” (14). By the end of the play, the granddaughter glimpses an understanding of her grandmother’s world and says, “I’m sewing my own red-deer dress. It’s different than my grandma’s. Mine is a dress of words. [...] I’ve learned she told me more without speaking than she did with her words” (18). Again, the silences are the gaps where the reader/audience must create meaning just as the granddaughter does, and one sees the continuance and survival of the granddaughter through the knowledge of myth and her ancestors.

The same as the granddaughter, three women in *The Women Who Loved House Trailers* also face the challenges of unemployment. Oscar, a welder, Jelly, a weaver, and Berta, a collector of stories, are women who cannot pay the rent in their studio. Similar to the granddaughter of the previous play, they also have relationship problems with men. Yet, these women are survivors who imagine how they might live in a trailer, traveling on the road. By the end of the play, Berta concludes, "All we've got are stories. That's where love comes from" (34). Echoing the importance of language that Glancy establishes in the epigraph, the women will continue because words will be the house trailer that carries their art, "the weight of [Oscar's] anger," Jelly's woven canoes, and Berta's stories (34).

As a framework for the collection, the epigraph is balanced by a concluding essay, "Further (Farther): Creating Dialogue to Talk about Native American Plays," in which Glancy offers another poetic discussion of the elements of Native American theater in a dramatic structure of three scenes. The essay does not offer any definitive guidelines for a literary theory for Native American plays but instead approaches the traditional elements of drama in an imaginative, process-oriented, and open-ended manner. The idea of "creating dialogue" resembles a living organism infused with Native aesthetics. For example, Glancy articulates the idea of a play:

A play connects to a power source which is a structure of action. A cord into a socket. Dramatic language is like electricity. Which is hard to explain. It accesses invisibility and all those things going to it. A play is a small town. With an interstate bypassing it. Yet connected to the power plant by the river. A new oral tradition with breath that is the condition of performance. A planet of being. A location. A vectoring that is a conflation of crossroads in different perspectives. (200)

Glancy repeats the imagery of the epigraph, the stage's cord connected to the earth, which is now the play's electrical cord that holds all possibilities of being and meaning, energy connected to place, much like the universe's umbilical cord that transmits a lifeline to the people. How-

ever, she admits that “Dramatic language [. . .] is hard to explain,” and that difficulty is perhaps why seeing these plays performed would bring them to life in ways that reading them can never equal.

The collection includes performance notes and acknowledgments that list when and where the plays have been performed and descriptions of script changes or events that occurred during rehearsals, such as the Native cast discussion of traditional and Christian ways after rehearsal for *Jump Kiss* (208). Still, this reader misses the added understanding that the energy of live performance delivers. Although Glancy provides introductory discussions of her objectives for each play, the almost experimental nature of the dialogue in her goal of wanting “something that kicked apart yet was *bagged*, having to stay together at least on the bound level” creates more poetic gaps than answers, which the reader must then fill in with her own meaning (xi). Perhaps this aspect of Glancy’s style is in line with her literary theory, “an expanding theory with various centers of the universe, taking in more than one view, more than one multiplicity” (204). In this way, she decolonizes the usually neat and tidy denouement of Euroamerican plays, insisting instead on Native perspectives that offer complex answers from various cultural points of view.

Vicki Rozema. *Cherokee Voices: Early Accounts of Cherokee Life in the East*. Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, 2002. 180 pp.

Ginny Carney

Although the book, *Cherokee Voices*, by author and photographer Vicki Rozema, purports to “use the participants’ own words to tell the story of early Cherokee life,” the title is somewhat misleading. Moreover, the book’s preface contends, “Of the many books about the Cherokees, the vast majority have been written in the third person by authors who lived years after the events occurred [. . .] No one can speak more eloquently of their lives, trials, and customs than the people who actually lived the experiences.” Yet, less than one-fourth of the book—including three as-told-to stories recorded by the



famed ethnologist James Mooney—is devoted to the actual words of Cherokee people.

In fairness to the author, however, it should be noted that many of the passages she selected, though written by men of European descent, were included because “they include speeches by Cherokees or provide unusual insight into the daily lives and customs of the Cherokees” (x). Also, unlike many writers, Rozema includes the words of Cherokee *women* in her work.

Her arrangement of these accounts provides a succinct and informative overview of some two centuries of Cherokee history, and the work contains several rarely-published documents that should prove of interest to her readers. For example, rather than moralize on the unfair practices of many eighteenth-century British and American traders, Rozema provides a “List of the Prices of Goods” sent to Governor James Glen on November 1, 1751, by a group of “poor Distressed Traders,” who were attempting to counter the Cherokees’ protest against what Indian traders viewed as inflated prices (17–19). A sampling of items the Cherokees needed to purchase, along with the number of deer hides exacted of them as payment, is listed below:

A Blanket	3 Bucks or 6 Does
Paint, 1 Ounce	1 Doe Skin
1 Riding Sadel	8 Bucks or 16 Does
2 yards stript Flannen [flannel]	2 Bucks or 4 Does
1 Gun	7 Bucks or 14 Does

Another intriguing document is an “Excerpt from Governor Glen’s talks with Little Carpenter, Skiagunsta, and others on July 5, 1753, in Charleston” (19–22). When the governor launches a lengthy defense of white traders, Cherokee leader Little Carpenter responds: “Do what we can, the white people will cheat us in our weights and measures, and make them less. What is it a trader cannot do?” (22).

Rozema’s use of letters and military reports to describe a 1793 attack on Cherokee leader Hanging Maw is especially powerful (86–100). When William Blount, governor of the Southwest Territory, arranged for a meeting of white men and Cherokee leaders at the home of Hanging Maw, he promised military protection for the Indians;

Blount, however, had to travel to Philadelphia on business, leaving Daniel Smith, secretary of the Southwest Territory, in charge. Meanwhile, a man Blount trusted, Captain John Beard, defied the governor's orders and waged an attack on the Cherokees, killing several of them (including Hanging Maw's wife) and wounding Hanging Maw. When Beard was not punished as promised, Hanging Maw responded with a series of angry letters, including one to President George Washington, and one to Secretary Smith, in which he repeatedly accuses the secretary of cowardice and ridicules him for his inability to maintain order in the absence of Governor Blount. Although I have read numerous accounts of this attack on Hanging Maw and his people, none has been quite as intriguing as the one presented here—much of it in Hanging Maw's own words.

Although not a history book per se, *Cherokee Voices* is a concise collection of letters, speeches, newspaper articles, and military reports that should prove useful to anyone interested in studying and/or teaching Cherokee history.

Vicki Rozema. *Voices from the Trail of Tears*. Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, 2003. 240 pp.

Ginny Carney

This work, like *Cherokee Voices*, is a compilation of letters, newspaper editorials, journal excerpts, church records, and military documents, written by a diverse group of Cherokees and Euroamericans. As the title suggests, *Voices from the Trail of Tears* is a moving account of the forced removal of thousands of Cherokees in the 1830s; Rozema does a remarkable job of “re-creating this tragic period in American history by letting eyewitnesses speak for themselves.”

The author's introduction is a comprehensive synopsis of historical events leading up to Removal, her notes at the beginning of each chapter provide readers with a concise context for the documents that are to follow, and a number of appendices and several pages of bibliographic references serve as useful tools for researchers, teachers, and so on.

Many of the letters and documents included in Rozema's work shed light not only on the tribulations of Cherokees who were removed from their ancient homeland, but also on the sufferings of missionaries and other white sympathizers who dared protest the injustice being waged against Indians. In an "Excerpt from the Reverend Samuel Worcester's account of his second arrest by the Georgia Guard," for example, Worcester (a missionary serving with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions) dispels any notion that pro-Cherokee religious leaders may have been given preferential treatment during the months just preceding Removal (54–55). In his account, Worcester suggests that the two men responsible for his arrest, Sergeant Brooks and Colonel Nelson, are especially hostile to ministers and missionaries. Worcester describes how a Methodist circuit rider is compelled by Nelson to dismount from his horse and walk, and by Brooks, to "keep the center of the road through mire & water threatening to thrust him through with the bayonette if he turned aside" (56). Worcester adds:

In the meantime [Brooks] was heaping upon all our heads a load of tremendous curses & reviling missionaries and all ministers of the Gospel in language which for profanity and obscenity could not be exceeded. The words of our Savior he turned into ridicule—Fear not—said he tauntingly, Fear not, "little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (56)

Rozema uses an array of documents to illustrate personality differences among the military officers in charge of various detachments of Cherokees during the long march from Tennessee to Oklahoma. The records of one military physician (Dr. Morrow), for instance, portray him as emotionally and physically detached from the Cherokees; Captain B. B. Cannon's journal entries, on the other hand, reveal a compassionate man who seems to know the name and age of every Cherokee in his detachment who succumbs to death during this arduous journey (143, 81–82). The powerful words of several Cherokees are recorded here, too, and for those readers who may have believed the myth that most Cherokees just "went along to get along" when the Removal Act was passed, *Voices from the Trail of Tears* is sure to hold some surprises.



## Contributor Biographies

DEBRA K. S. BARKER, an enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Nation, is an associate professor of English and American Indian studies at the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire, where she teaches introductory and advanced courses in American Indian literatures. She has served as Chair of the American Indian Studies Committee and Co-Director of the American Indian Studies Program. Her publications include articles on the boarding school system, American Indian biographies, American Indian grave desecration and the commodification of native art, as well as articles on Louise Erdrich and John Steinbeck.

GINNY CARNEY (Cherokee), a native of East Tennessee, holds a PhD in English from the University of Kentucky. She is a past president of ASAIL, an Executive of MLA's Division of American Indian Literatures, and a member of MLA's Committee on Community Colleges. She is currently chair of the Arts and Humanities Division of Leech Lake Tribal College in Northern Minnesota. She has published essays and short stories in several anthologies and journals. Her book, *A Testament to Tenacity: Cultural Persistence in the Letters and Speeches of Eastern Cherokee Women*, is forthcoming from the University of Tennessee Press.

RON CARPENTER received his BA in English from the University of California–Riverside, and his MA in American studies from the University of Utah. He holds a PhD in British and American literature, having recently defended his dissertation on Native American women's autobiography. He currently teaches, fishes, and dreams in Salt Lake City.

PATRICE HOLLRAH is the director of the Writing Center at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and teaches for the Department of English. She is the author of *"The Old Lady Trill, the Victory Yell": The Power of Women in Native American Literature* (2003).

M. A. JAIMES \* GUERRERO is a tenured associate professor in the College of Humanities, Women's Studies Department, at San Francisco State University. She has also taught American Indian studies in the College of Ethnic Studies. Before coming to San Francisco, she was at her alma mater, Arizona State University, as a visiting professor in the School of Justice Studies, and teaching on "Indigenism and environmental ethics for justice." Prior to that, she was at the University of Colorado at Boulder, contributing to the development of and teaching in American Indian Studies, under the umbrella of the Center for Studies of Race and Ethnicity in America (CSREA; now an ethnic studies department). She is well published, with Humanities fellowships (Cornell University, 1991–92; ANU, Canberra, Australia, summer 1996) on women and feminism and ethnic studies and "multicultural" journals, anthologies, and so on. Her best-known work is as editor of *The State of Native America* (South End Press, 1992), in which she also contributed two chapter essays on "federal Indian identification policy" and on American Indian women.

CASKEY RUSSELL is an enrolled member of the Tlingit Tribe of Alaska. He received his BA and MA from Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington, and earned his PhD from the University of Oregon in 2001. He is currently a lecturer in the American Indian Studies Program at Iowa State University.

LEE SCHWENINGER is a professor of English at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington where he teaches Native American and early American literatures and coordinates the Native American Studies minor program. In addition to a book-length study of N. Scott Momaday, he has recently published essays on Louis Owens, John Joseph Mathews, and a study of Native American literary responses to the Old World. In summer 2003 he participated in an NEH Summer Institute in Native American art and literature.

JEFFREY P. SHEPARD is an assistant professor of American Indian history at the University of El Paso, where he teaches classes in American Indian, Western, and public history. He received his doctorate from Arizona State University and studied under Peter Iverson. He has published work on American Indian education, political economy and culture, and indigenous uses of history in struggles for sovereignty. Presently he is working on a monograph investigating issues of indigenous nationalism, community building, and historical memory. Future work will include a comparative discussion of indigenous identity along the international borders separating Canada, the United States, and Mexico.

FRANCI WASHBURN is of Lakota/Anishinaabe/Scots/Irish ancestry. She holds a PhD from the University of New Mexico and will begin teaching in the fall of 2004 at the University of Arizona with a dual appointment in English and the American Indian Studies Program.





## 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 and 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 United States, Canada, or Mexico, while others are not currently recognized 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 an e-mail to [sail2@msu.edu](mailto:sail2@msu.edu).

Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Nations of Alaska  
320 W. Willoughby, Suite 300  
Juneau, AK 99801  
1-800-344-1432  
1-907-586-1432

Hopland Band of Pomo Indians  
3000 Shanel Rd.  
P.O. Box 610  
Hopland, CA 95449  
707-744-1647

Pinoleville Band of Pomo Indians  
367 North State Street, Suite 204  
Ukiah, CA 95482  
Chairperson: Leona Williams

Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, A Coast Miwok Tribe  
P.O. Box 14428  
Santa Rosa, CA 95402  
Tribal Chairman: Greg Sarris

Oglala Lakota Sioux  
Oglala Sioux Tribal Council  
P.O. Box H  
Pine Ridge, SD 57770  
John Yellow Bird Steele, President

Yankton Sioux Reservation  
Yankton Sioux Tribal Business Committee  
P.O. Box 248  
Marty, SD 57361  
Darrell Drapeau, Chairperson