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FROM THE EDITOR

aya aya niihkaania!

This issue marks our one-year anniversary with the University of Nebraska Press, and I hope that you are all as happy with that partnership as I am. As *SAIL* continues to move forward and be the main outlet for scholarly work on American Indian literatures, it is important to recognize all that we have been and all the people who have made that existence possible. For those of you who have been keeping track, *SAIL* has an important anniversary coming up: In 2007 *SAIL* as a quarterly journal will be thirty years old. Over the coming year, you'll start to hear folks talking about ways in which we might want to mark that anniversary—with a special issue; with a series of articles articulating the trajectory of *SAIL* and its parent organization, ASAIL; with conference presentations; and, of course, with celebration. As always, I encourage you to put your own two cents forward about the best ways to mark this moment, both for those of us who have the privilege of being American Indian literature scholars today and for those who came before us and laid a foundation upon which we could reliably build. So let me know what you would like to see, how you would like to mark the past thirty years, and how you would like to set the stage for the next thirty years of scholarship in our field.

Newii,
Malea Powell

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Food for Thought

A Postcolonial Study of Food Imagery in Louise Erdrich's
Antelope Wife

SHIRLEY BROZZO

Whereas Ojibwa author Louise Erdrich's first five novels chronicle the lives of the Kashpaws, Lamartines, Morrisseys, and Pillagers, her sixth novel, *Antelope Wife*, begins the tale of different families: the Roys, the Whiteheart Beads, and the Shawanos.¹ Her new characters face many of the same challenges that the earlier characters did, but this novel integrates an innovative twist to colonialism; almost every page of this intriguing narrative includes mention of food or food imagery. If food is not directly being discussed, then people or objects are described using images of food.

The colonizer's arrival changes everything about life for Native Americans.² Not only were the people on the eastern coast affected, but so too were those further inland, like the Ojibwa, as European settlers forced them further and further west. This encroachment leads not only to the physical movement of people, but also to changes in dietary habits of the displaced natives. Not only does Erdrich illustrate actual instances of physical hunger caused by the European invasion, but she makes additional references to other varieties of hunger, such as deprivation and longing. For example, Blue Prairie Woman, who loses her child in the opening scene, yearns for her. Blue Prairie Woman is driven nearly crazy during her search to reunite with her first-born daughter. Klaus Shawano and Richard Whiteheart Beads, two Ojibwa men who have lost their way and succumbed to alcohol (originally brought to the people by early colonizers), crave their next bottle of booze. Cally Whiteheart Beads, one of Richard's twin daughters, longs for the information that will reveal the

identity of her grandmother. Knowing her true identity will ground her, making her feel complete.

Food imagery even provides some comic relief, as evidenced by Erdrich's inclusion of the Windigo Dog, a personification of death, and Almost Soup, the storytelling dog. Almost Soup, a pure white dog who gathers up all his "puppiness," his way of tail wagging, sloppy puppy kissing, and false growling that illicit help from the little girl (Cally) who saves him from a grandmother's stew pot, is a kind, helpful creature unlike the Windigo Dog. Although this Windigo Dog provides comic relief in parts of the novel by telling off-color Anishnaabe jokes, a Windigo is generally described as a malevolent spirit likened to greed. Windigo spirits possess an insatiable hunger which can never be satisfied. Icy coldness and strange compulsions are traveling companions of this hunger. The Ojibwa's constant search for food and the European's need to devour land, vegetation, and original inhabitants of this land are prevalent themes in Erdrich's novels. Differing types of hunger, as couched in food imagery, make yet another political statement about the continuation of Ojibwa life despite colonization.

IN THE BEGINNING

Traditionally, the Ojibwa people, like many others, did not have a written history. There was no need for written words because stories would be told that recounted important historical events or battles.³ Storytellers would roam from village to village reciting tales of important deeds, helping the whole community to remember. Writing in vignettes, or short pieces of story or history, is Erdrich's way of staying true to her oral tradition by providing easily digestible snippets of information. Linking these vignettes together to form a novel is consistent with the circular pattern that pervades most Native American works. Laguna Pueblo author and critic Paula Gunn Allen says,

The structure of the stories out of the oral tradition, when left to themselves and not recast by Indian or white collectors, tend

to meander gracefully from event to event; the major unifying device, besides the presence of certain characters in a series of tales, is the relationship of the tale to the ritual life of the tribe. (*Sacred Hoop* 153)

Erdrich combines all of her stories and characters while letting them roam freely throughout the present, past, and future. An ambiguous portion of the story may reach a subsequent resolution, but not necessarily within the same time period. Time frames are irrelevant within native culture, a concept which runs contrary to the linear model of time used by the conquerors.

Chronological time structuring is useful in promoting and supporting an industrial time sense. The idea that everything has a starting and an ending point reflects accurately the process by which industry produces. (*Sacred Hoop* 149)

Writing contrary to the European linear fashion, Erdrich obviously arranges her words from a native consciousness using very few historical references, but some of the events can be pieced together, based on what is known about colonial history from the European perspective. In a native retelling of the westward expansion that satisfied the European's hunger for more land, Erdrich's saga opens with a scene in which a cavalry soldier, unable to tolerate the senseless killings of old women and children, follows a dog with a cradleboard strapped to its back. This soldier, Scranton Roy, rescues the infant and tries to keep her alive. This female infant, too young to eat solid foods, wails in hunger until in one desperate move Roy cradles her to his breast where she suckles until she miraculously receives nourishment from him. Roy, the son of Quakers who ironically is sent to annihilate the Sioux, now finds himself the savior of this Ojibwa woman, the first-born daughter of Blue Prairie Woman. Employing typical colonial practices, Roy renames this baby Matilda, after his own mother. Whenever Europeans could not pronounce a name or thought it too long or awkward, they Anglicized it. Changing a person's name is one way in which the dominant culture enforces assimilation.

Scranton Roy's nursing of Matilda mocks Christianity, poking fun at the Madonna, in that males (like virgins) are not traditionally thought of as life givers. Paradoxically, Scranton Roy's ability to nurse a child happens not only once, but twice within this novel. When his wife Peace McKnight dies in childbirth, Roy is once again left with an infant, this time his son Augustus, to nurse and raise. Without hesitation he lifts the newborn boy to his breast, giving him nourishment and life. Roy, who is originally sent to slaughter the natives, instead ends up providing them with first food. These Roys are the ancestors of twins Aurora and Rozina Roy and twins Deanna and Cally Whiteheart Beads.

FOOD AND GRIEF

Death, a common element in most Native American stories, is inevitable given the collective history of the people and the destructive and oppressive practices of the colonizers. Drowning in bereavement, Rozina Whiteheart Beads turns to food to comfort herself when she loses first her daughter Deanna and then her ex-husband Richard. Both are alcohol-related deaths. When Richard gets drunk and tries to asphyxiate himself because Rozina is leaving him for Frank Shawano, the baker and nephew to Richard's business partner Klaus Shawano, he fails miserably in his attempt. Young Deanna is not as fortunate. She hides in the back seat of the yellow truck that her father attempts to use as a means to kill himself, but it is she who falls asleep and dies from carbon monoxide poisoning, while her father lives. Although Rozina chooses bread over wine (booze) by selecting Frank over Richard, Deanna becomes another statistic; an innocent child killed by alcohol, a disease spread by the colonizers.

After Deanna's death, Rozina turns to food to help ease her sorrow. She swam in the grief, she cooked with it, she bagged it up and froze it. She made a stew, burned it out the back yard, dug a hole and threw it in, sacked it for garbage, put it up on a shelf, brought it to the trees she loved, and set it free out on the leaves.

(84)

Following Ojibwa traditions she prepares food which sends Deanna on her journey to the spirit world. After conducting proper ceremonies, a feast would have been held, but all of that changes with the coming of the colonizers who outlaw ceremonies and traditional practices.

Rozina, caught between the traditional world and the colonizer's world, as many other natives people are, leaves Richard because she falls in love with Frank Shawano, an urban Indian. Richard cannot accept this, even after Deanna dies and Rozina divorces him. In fact, he tries several more times to win Rozina back, but she is ready to move on with her life. Eventually Richard ruins her wedding night with Frank when he shows up at their hotel and commits suicide in front of them by shooting himself in the head. His death sends Rozina spiraling into another depression in which she is again surrounded by food and food imagery. In her depressed state she cannot fathom feeding her sexual hungers and become Frank's wife until she can accept the tragedies in her life. After seven days of fasting, Rozina tries to fill her grief-laden emptiness with food.

On the table, at the western end because that is the death direction, she sets two places carefully. Spirit plates, with tobacco [...] She fills the plates with the wild rice in a heap beside the turkey, the milky, buttery corn, a bit of fruit salad containing strawberries, and beside them, a large bowl of vanilla pudding. Eat it, eat it all up, now, she thinks vehemently, heartsick, setting another smaller plate for her daughter at the head of the stair, then go to sleep. (188)

Rozina uses food and prepares new meals to help her cope with her losses. Her return to traditional ways reveals a tribal memory that runs counter to colonial ways of simply grieving and moving on. In an earlier time period, after losing a husband, Rozina would have gone through a year or more of mourning and self-sacrifice before recovering sufficiently to rejoin the day-to-day activities of her tribal community. She might have gone through a similar experience when Deanna died. Her assimilated family and friends around her in Minneapolis probably expect her to go through only a short grieving pe-

riod, but she needs to experience a more traditional closure, a feast of mourning. In this respect, Rozina refuses to be colonized.

FOOD AND FEAR

Along with colonization comes change, but change also breeds fear. Apprehension permeates this novel and the life (hi)stories that Erdrich tells. In addition to the deaths of Rozina's loved ones, another memorable event in *Antelope Wife* is the World War II story wherein the first Klaus is mentioned. Some Ojibwa men liberate Klaus, a young German soldier with no last name, from a detention camp near Minneapolis. In an offer he hopes will spare his life, he proposes to bake a cake for his captors. Unable to speak each other's language, these Ojibwa ogitchida and this German warrior communicate via drawings of a common bond, food. Once the foodstuffs are gathered, the cake is baked. Will Klaus pass the taste-test to earn his freedom? According to Erdrich, these Ojibwa warriors are more accustomed to eating plain food, straight from Mother Earth, things like manomin, weyass, and baloney. But it is Frank Shawano's lifelong ambition to recreate the blitzkuchen that he first tasted there; however, he can never get the recipe right until he stumbles upon the secret ingredient that made that particular cake taste so special . . . fear.

Asinigwesance, or Old Asin, the elder who has Klaus taken as a prisoner, is the one who creates the fear in the first place. Like a hand grenade with a loose pin, Old Asin could explode at any minute. Unknowingly, Asin becomes a colonial mimic. Critic Dee Horne says "the mimic strives to resemble that which is being imitated, but in imitating the other, the mimic reveals—either knowingly or unknowingly—his/her difference" (5). In this instance Asin becomes like the colonizers who use revenge as a reason for taking actions that would not normally be taken. Taking Klaus captive as a slave to replace a cousin killed in World War II is not a traditional Ojibwa action, yet after years of forced assimilation Asin begins to act like those who have colonized him.

Another example of colonial mimicry occurs around the Christmas dinner table. Christmas, a Christian holiday, was not observed by

natives prior to European arrival, since native people did not worship Christ. After colonization many native people convert to or are forced to accept Christianity. A promise of a food delivery to a starving community often serves as the payment for this spiritual adoption. Throughout Erdrich's Christmas feast scene, various food imagery appears in addition to ample discussion of the actual meal being served. The table itself is "wheat-grained and butter smooth," some of Elder Mary Shawano's conversation centers on her eventual death and her desire not to have a "commodity funeral," and the salad bowl that cousin Chook holds and passes around the table is constructed of honey-colored wood (202, 203). Grandmothers Mary (Shawano) and Zosie Roy are described as looking like cookie sheets, one newer looking and one well-used and broken in.

Traditional American Christmas feast foods materialize, and include turkey with stuffing, potatoes and gravy, cranberries, and a variety of pies and cakes, most of which are indigenous to the Americas. Cally Whiteheart Beads, Deanna's surviving twin recalls,

My Grandmothers would prefer the burnt-heart of the turkey to the white breast meat and will accept cranberry sauce made from fresh berries only. Mincemeat pie gives Zosie the runs. Pumpkin stops Mary's bowels. Wild rice must be prepared with no salt, and garlic gives both an instant cramp. Otherwise, they are to me the perfect Christmas guests. (194)

Although many Native American families celebrate Christmas holidays today, others have returned to previous traditional ways of celebrating (or not celebrating) holidays or feast days. While some have become fully acculturated, or become colonial mimics, others revive traditional practices.

FOOD AND ASSIMILATION

Before contact by Europeans, early medicine men and/or shaman could find herb, roots, barks, and plants to create concoctions or lotions to cure most ailments. After contact new diseases arrived that could be cured by medicines of either world. One of these new dis-

eases was diabetes, an affliction that makes it difficult to keep a person's natural insulin levels regulated. Changes in diets due to increased consumption of refined sugars and commodity foods have caused this illness in natives, and about one in eight Native Americans contracts diabetes (Diabetes 1). Mary Shawano suffers from this affliction. At the Christmas dinner Zosie tells Cally that "Mary's got the sugar in her blood. She craves it, though. Try not to tempt her. She'll make a pig of herself behind your back and then she'll lapse into a coma" (199).

In yet another example of the effects that settler foods and practices have on the Ojibwa, Zosie herself appears to be watching her cholesterol since she comments that she "eat(s) the whites of eggs only, yolks will kill me" (195). These forced changes in the grandmothers' eating habits can be directly attributed to forced assimilation and colonial mimicry.

Cally's cousin Cecille succumbs to colonial mimicry by assimilating into white culture, perhaps to her own detriment. Through her actions, she starts to look and behave like the dominant culture, even though she will never be fully accepted by them. Erdrich writes,

She runs her kung fu studio right next to the bakery shop. Through this, and peroxide, she has made herself a bicep blond Indian with tiny hips and sculptured legs that she shows off by wearing the shortest shorts. (110)

Cecille's eating habits define who she is. She salts everything before she tastes it as if she knows that her food, like her life, is not spicy enough. She eats mainly health food and swallows vitamin supplements and ginkgo while consuming gallons of bottled water when Cally first meets her. All of these actions point to modern diet fads undertaken by dominant society women in their attempts to stay young, thin, blond, and beautiful. But by the time Christmas comes and the family is feasting together, she "fills her plate three or four times, and devours her food with the slow assurance of a woman of bottomless depth" (204). Just like mainstream women who have harder times sticking to their diets over the holidays, Cecille's dieting days are over. She is a prime example of colonial mimicry in this

book. As Horne states, "While the mimic may desire to become like another, the mimic can never be the other" (4). As much as Cecille tries to change her appearance through hair dye and exercising herself into a size two body, she cannot really become a white woman and will not be accepted as such by the dominant culture.

Cally's search for her identity leads her to the city where she moves in with her mother's boyfriend, Frank, who has moved to Minneapolis from the reservation to start his bakery as a part of the relocation program. Their living quarters are above the bakery. In operating this bakery, Frank has become assimilated into the dominant culture, concocting sweets which are not a traditional part of an Ojibwa diet. Traditional sweetening is done with maple sap collected in the spring, boiled until usable, and then utilized sparingly throughout the year. The influx of refined sugar into the daily diets of natives not used to such foods contributes to the rising number of Native Americans with diabetes.

In spite of this setback to native health in general, Frank's bakery allows him the freedom to continue searching for the secret recipe for the blitzkuchen. Even though running the bakery is not a traditional Native American occupation, Frank persists. Horne posits, "As part of their civilizing mission, settlers encourage colonial mimicry in their efforts to facilitate the process of assimilation" (6). Frank Shawano's actions reveal his assimilation. He has a Puritan work ethic, such as rising before dawn to create his confections, and cleaning and re-cleaning the glass in his display cases. He keeps his recipes a secret and becomes professionally jealous. Frank, in business to make money, obsesses with recreating the blitzkuchen, and does not talk about the old ways or the traditions he is using for the recreation of the blitzkuchen and does not stay connected to his family, even those members who live with him.

Although Frank stays firmly ensconced in his Minneapolis bakery, Mary and Zosie vacillate between their reservation and Minneapolis, keeping their migratory traditions alive. Mary and Zosie are defined as being "off the reservation," a term that Laguna Pueblo activist Paula Gunn Allen defines as "someone who does not conform to the limits and boundaries of officialdom, [one] who is unpredictable and

thus uncontrollable" (*Off the Reservation* 6). Mary and Zosie continue to fit this rebel description by their non-conformity and ambiguity. They are neither reservation nor urban Indians, but simply come and go as they please. The idea of adhering to boundaries is a European concept. Boundaries exist only on paper and are not sufficient barriers to keep someone confined. When Cally searches for her grandmothers in order to find out more about her own heritage, she hears various stories about where the women are sighted, including playing at several bingo games, attending funerals, living in an apartment just down the street from the bakery, and conducting traditional workshops both on and off the reservation. These ladies refuse to be restricted to the reservation that once bound their ancestors. They hunger for a different kind of life, a simpler life, a non-colonized life.

HUNGER

Nearly every page within the novel has a reference to food or descriptions of other objects with food-related qualifiers. Erdrich's stories "turn upon meals, because the Ojibwa and Cree worried enough about food to create a spirit of starvation, the Windigo" (*Antelope Wife* 1). The Windigo Dog is a prime example of this hunger throughout the book. Early in the novel, Erdrich describes one Windigo Dog as the puppy, Sorrow, who nurses at the breast of Ozhawashikwamashokaodeykwe, Blue Prairie Woman, and helps ease the pain in her milk-engorged teats. Sorrow (literally and figuratively) follows Blue Prairie Woman westward, but even when her name gets changed to Other Side of the Earth, it does not lessen her hunger for her lost child who is raised as Matilda Roy. Now the dog and the woman, as well as their descendants, are bonded together forever through this first food, breast milk.

The second Windigo Dog, Almost Soup, nearly becomes a meal himself because of his white coloring. Erdrich employs a stereotype perpetuated by the colonizers that all Indians eat dogs. Although tribes like the Lakotas did eat dog, often as part of a ceremony, most did not. In one episode, Cally begs her grandmother to spare Almost Soup, and in gratitude, Almost Soup stays by her side to protect her.

Both Cally and Almost Soup are descendants of the original woman and dog.

Klaus Shawano is visited by yet another Windigo Dog. His description continues the hunger motif. He is a

bad spirit of hunger and not just normal hunger but out-of-control hunger. Hunger of impossible devouring. Utter animal hunger that did not care whether you were sober or brave or had your hard-won GED certificate let alone degree. No matter. Just food. Klaus was just food to the Windigo. And the Windigo laughed. (127)

Klaus cannot control his hunger for alcohol, and whenever he drinks to excess, he encounters the Windigo Dog. Klaus succumbs to the bottle when he feels that things are not going his way, but the European traders initially created this dependency on alcohol when they began to barter whiskey for furs. Once touted as a source of nutrition, alcohol is really nothing more than a numbing agent, a way to take control over a person by creating dependency and controlling his or her thoughts and actions. Chippewa novelist Gerald Vizenor posits,

Native American Indians bear the burdens of a nation cursed with the manifest manners of alcoholism. Once thought to be nutritious, alcohol has been the earnest measure of temperance, and the sources of enormous excise revenues from the sale of beverage alcohol. (29)

Once the colonizers find out that alcohol can be bartered, they take advantage of native peoples. As the natives become hooked on this addicting beverage, the colonizers then have another means to enforce assimilation. By threatening to withhold shipments, they control the natives. By keeping natives addicted, the colonizers perpetuate the stereotypes of the “drunken Indian,” and further manipulate them. Vizenor also notes that “Indians are the wild alcoholics in the literature of dominance” (29). Natives have so often been stereotyped and portrayed as “drunken savages,” that they have surrendered to the self-fulfilling prophecy for hundreds of years. Only recently

have native peoples, as a whole, taken a serious look at what alcoholism has done to them and made prudent strides to get and stay sober.

Klaus, one of these alcoholics, has been out of balance in his life ever since he captures his “Sweetheart Calico.” He doesn’t realize that by enticing her away from the Plains, he has upset the balance of not only his world, but the entire world. At one point he comes very close to knowing the secret of being in balance, but then falls into alcoholism. He battles the bottle spirits when he sees the Blue Fairy in the bottom of the Mississippi River. She is a “trembling beauty alive with Jell-O, surrounded by a radiance of filtered sun and nuclear dust and splintered fish scales” (98). When he feels he can sink no lower, he knows what he has to do to survive: he must set his Sweetheart Calico free. She must be returned to the deer people in the western direction from which she was stolen.

Also out of balance is fellow alcoholic, Richard Whiteheart Beads. After downing a bottle of Listerine with Klaus, the men are begging for change outside the art museum. Once they collect enough for more booze, they head for the liquor store on Hennepin to shop. Richard places his order:

I opt for a subtle white [wine]. Something with volume. I don’t get too hung up on the bouquet. My circumstances won’t permit it. I can tell the difference between a dollar ninety-nine and a two fifty-nine bottle of white port wine, though, you can’t fool me. Don’t try. (96)

His dependence forces him further down than Klaus and he suffers torturous withdrawals. He weeps uncontrollably and cannot keep down anything except milk.

Not always drunk, Klaus and Richard once shared a prosperous garbage business. While feasting from a buffet Klaus comments,

Used to be us Indians had nothing to throw away—we used it all up to the last scrap. Now we have a lot of casino trash, of course, and used diapers, disposable and yet eternal like the rest of the country. Keep this up and we’ll all one day be a landfill of diapers, living as adults right on top of our own baby shit. (43–44)

They celebrate the successes of their garbage business, the end of the consumption process, by feasting, the beginning of the consumption process. Here is yet another example of the wastefulness of the colonizers and a practice learned by colonized natives.

Alcohol does not directly affect all natives, though. Richard's surviving twin daughter Cally has a hunger that is not physical, but intellectual in nature. She searches for her grandmother's true identity. Who is her mother Rozina's mother: Mary or Zosie? In the colonized world, children are only allowed one birth mother and one birth father. Yet within the tribal kinship system a child, who obviously has only one "real" set of parents, would still call all of her aunts "mother" and her uncles "father." Erdrich continues her confusion about the grandmothers until the Christmas dinner when Zosie finally admits to being Cally's grandmother. Zosie says to Cally after consuming a piece of twelve layer chocolate raspberry cake, "during my motherhood, when I was rocking or nursing my baby, I had a lot of time to think"(215). Finally Cally receives the information she yearns for. Good food and good stories seem to go together.

FOOD AND COMMUNITY

Paula Gunn Allen believes that "besides food, which may be the single most definitive aspect of a sense of place, stories provide a deep sense of continuity within a psyche space" (*Off the Reservation* 234). All of the stories Erdrich tells in *Antelope Wife* revolve around strong women figures, including surviving twins Cally (Cally/Deanna) and Rozina (Rozina/Aurora) and grandmothers Mary and Zosie. Food surrounds these women who are a part of an oral tradition which portrays women and men in complementary positions. Men and women's roles are separate, but interdependent. As Allen also states,

The women's traditions are largely about continuity, and men's traditions are largely about transitoriness and change. Thus women's rituals and lore center on birth, death, food, house holding, and medicine—that is all that goes into the maintenance of life over long term. Men's rituals are concerned with

risk, death and transformation—that is all that helps regulate and control change. (*Sacred Hoop* 82)

Cooking and eating at the Christmas feast is a natural segue to the return of balance in the world. Once again the women are holding the world together with what they know and the stories they hold and share. Susan Bordo says,

That is, indeed the prevailing gender reality. For women, the emotional comfort of self-feeding is rarely turned to in a state of pleasure and independence, but in despair, emptiness, loneliness, and desperation. Food is, as one woman put it “the only thing that will take care of me. (28)

Rozina and Frank start their second year of marriage after a rocky start. Cally reconnects with her grandparental heritage, and Sweetheart Calico is on her way home. Some of the hunger has been abated and the world is back in balance for this Ojibwa community in Minneapolis.

Journalist and food critic Judyth Hills says, “And we get it. We understand. This is the food that unites us, that tells the story of who we have been, and whom we have met and what we may together become” (39). The native community endures. The colonizers have not won.

NOTES

1. Ojibwa and Ojibwe are simply different spellings of the same word.
2. The terms native and Native American will be used interchangeably throughout.
3. The terms Ojibwa/Ojibwe, Chippewa, and Anishnaabe all refer to the same people.

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Representing Cherokee Dispossession

ARNOLD KRUPAT

On February 21, 1828, the Cherokees published the first issue of the first newspaper in America to contain writing in an indigenous native language. The paper was called *Cherokee Phoenix-Tsalagi Tsu-le-hi-sa-nu-hi*, or something like “I will arise” in the Cherokee language.

Wilkins, *Cherokee Tragedy*, 196

On August 1, 1838, Chief John Ross “assembled his Cherokee followers and led them in a pledge that, despite the loss of their homeland, the Cherokee Nation would never die.”

Hoig, *The Cherokees and Their Chiefs*, 171

It is useless to attempt to describe the long, wearisome passage of those exiled Indians.

Wahnenauhi (Mrs. Lucy L. Keys), “The Wahnenauhi Manuscript,” 207

Granma and Granpa wanted me to know of the past, for “If ye don’t know where your people have been then ye won’t know where your people are going.” And so they told me most of it.

Carter, *The Education of Little Tree*, 40

“Grandpa,” I said, suddenly excited. “Grandpa, I can hear them. They’re singing.”

Conley, *Mountain Windsong*, 218

I regarded this new birth as not just the end of our suffering but also as the dawn of a new day—the first day of our new life in the promised land.

Twist, “The Promised Land,” in *Boston Mountain Tales*, 143

“Full Circle: The Connecticut Casino”

... all the gold stolen from the Cherokees in Georgia
seeming to return now to the Pequots in Connecticut, ...

Smith, *The Cherokee Lottery*

Maritole:

“The baby who had been born was crying.

“Luthy took my arm. ‘It’s a new voice that won’t grieve for our old land in North Carolina.’”

Quaty Lewis:

“Some night I’d listen to the wind in the pines. Only there weren’t pines here. I looked around. They were oaks, a different kind of oak than we’d had in North Carolina, but they would sound the old truth of the pines.”

Luthy:

“As for the trail—it’s over—Tanner and my boys are alive.”

Maritole:

“Maybe someday love would come.”

Glancy, *Pushing the Bear*, 228, 229, 233

How to represent in writing the dispossession of the Cherokees—in particular, the experience of “*Nunna daul Tsunyi* . . . ‘the trail where we cried,’” the Trail of Tears, on which, from the summer of 1838 until March 1839, of some thirteen thousand people (black slaves and intermarried whites among them), more than a third, perhaps four thousand people, died (Mankiller and Wallis 46)?

Difficult as it surely is to represent this climactic event of Cherokee dispossession, it is not very difficult to say how it came about. Even in an age wary of “facts,” the facts in this instance are very little contestable. Set out as a “Chronology of the Cherokee Removal,” they can be

listed, as Theda Purdue and Michael Green have done, in little more than two pages of text. Except as noted, what follows is based on Purdue and Green (176–79):

Around 1700 the Cherokees first encountered Europeans in the persons of British traders.

In 1776 the American Colonists invaded Cherokee towns.

After the American Revolution, the Treaty of Hopewell (1785) pledged peaceful relations between the new United States and the Cherokee Nation.

In 1800 Moravian Fathers from Germany established a mission among the Cherokees to further their Christianization.

In 1802 in exchange for a land cession from the state of Georgia, the U.S. government promised to extinguish Creek and Cherokee title to lands in the state of Georgia.

From 1808 through 1810, one of the first major migrations of Cherokee people west of the Mississippi occurred.

In the Creek War of 1813–14, the Cherokees fought on the side of Andrew Jackson and the United States against hostile Creeks.

In 1821 Sequoyah invented a syllabary by which the Cherokee language could be written, and in 1828 the *Cherokee Phoenix* began publication in English and in Cherokee.

Also in 1828, Andrew Jackson was elected President, and in 1828 and 1829, the state of Georgia refused to acknowledge Cherokee sovereignty within the state, extending its laws over the Cherokees in 1830.

In 1830 the Indian Removal Act, granting the president the authority to enter into treaties with the Eastern Indians that would provide for their “removal” west of the Mississippi, was passed by Congress and signed into law by Jackson.

In 1832 the Supreme Court, in *Worcester v. Georgia*, upheld Cherokee

sovereignty in the state, but Jackson did not act to protect the Cherokees from individual Georgians and from officers of the state.

In 1832 Georgia organized a lottery to assign Cherokee lands and property to “fortunate drawers” (Wilkins 225).

In 1835 a small number of Cherokees led by the Ridge family, believing further resistance to Georgia and Jackson was futile, signed the Treaty of New Echota, pledging the Cherokees to remove west of the Mississippi by May of 1838.

In 1836 the Senate ratified the Treaty of New Echota.

In 1837 a party of 466 wealthy Cherokees, with considerable property including African slaves, emigrated west of the Mississippi to Indian Territory (Foreman, *Five Civilized Tribes* 273). Others, but not the vast majority of the Nation, would follow.

On May 23, 1838, federal troops, under the command of General Winfield Scott, began forcibly to round up the Cherokees, driving them into what Grant Foreman, writing in 1932 (i.e., before Hitler’s implementation of the “final solution” to the “Jewish question”), called “concentration camps” (Foreman, *Indian Removal* 290, 300).

In June General Scott sent the first contingent of resisting Cherokees west, but as the summer progressed, heat and drought took such a toll on the travelers that Principal Chief John Ross persuaded Scott to allow the Cherokees themselves to oversee the removal once the worst of the summer had passed.

The first party under Cherokee direction left on October 1, 1838; eight more left later in October and another four in November.

By March 1839, all those who managed to survive had reached Indian Territory, present-day Oklahoma. For more than a century the figure of four thousand deaths in a population of some thirteen thousand, as I have noted, has been generally accepted as a more or less accurate statement of the mortality of the Trail. Rus-

sell Thornton estimates that between 1835 and 1839, the overall death toll was probably as high as eight to ten thousand persons.

How to represent such horror? The question has been asked again and again in Holocaust studies examining the fiction and autobiographical production of Jews and others who found themselves swept into the Nazi death camps, as it has also been examined by Armenians reflecting on the Turkish genocide of 1915, and, more recently, by Cambodians reflecting on the mass killings between 1975 and 1979, and by Rwandans confronting the murder of 800,000 people, mostly Tutsis, in 1994. This essay focuses on the work of four contemporary Cherokee writers—Robert J. Conley, Glenn J. Twist, Wilma Mankiller, and Diane Glancy—each of whom, in the last quarter of the twentieth century, attempted to represent their ancestors' dispossession in writing. I also briefly consider work by two non-Cherokee writers, William Jay Smith, who is part Choctaw, and Forrest Carter, a pretend-Cherokee, and not even the particular white man he claims to be (see below). They, too, write of Cherokee Removal, and I include them to provide some further context for the work of Conley, Twist, Mankiller, and Glancy.

Wahnenauhi, Mrs. Lucy L. Keys, granddaughter of the eminent Cherokee leader and statesman, Major George Lowrey, wrote "Historical Sketches of the Cherokees, Together with Some of their Customs, Traditions, and Superstitions" in 1889. Wahnehauhi was, as the contemporary Cherokee scholar Jack Kilpatrick notes, a member of the "planter class of mixbloods. [. . .] English was its first language, evangelical Christianity its religion, and acculturation its code" (181). But that "planter class of mixbloods," as Kilpatrick makes clear, was "indissolubly bound" to more conservative, traditional, fullblood people "by the only ties that Cherokees ever understood or still understand—a fierce loyalty to common ancestry" (182). Nonetheless, as she looked back, Wahnehauhi seems to have thought it "useless" to attempt to convey the pain and suffering, the *trauma* of the forcible dispossession of the Cherokees. Perhaps it had also seemed useless or, more likely, impossible to those Cherokees who endured and sur-

vived it to convey the day-to-day experience of the Trail, at least in writing. Although many of them were literate in English and/or in the Sequoyah syllabary, not one seems to have left a detailed account of the terrible ordeal. Cherokee letters and brief remembrances from before and after the Trail exist, but the “only daily record of the Trail of Tears yet found” is that of the Reverend Daniel Butrick, a white minister who accompanied the Cherokee detachment led by Richard Taylor (Hoig 171).

We must set beside this observation, however, James Mooney’s testimony that even near the end of the nineteenth century, there were Cherokee people who not only vividly recalled, but harrowingly could relate some of the worst moments of the winter of 1839. Mooney writes,

In talking with old men and women at Tahlequah [still Indian Territory, not yet Oklahoma] the author [Mooney] found that the lapse of over half a century had not sufficed to wipe out the memory of the miseries of that halt beside the frozen river [the Mississippi], with hundreds of sick and dying penned up in wagons or stretched upon the ground, with only a blanket overhead to keep out the January blast. (*Myths of the Cherokee* 132–33)

And the contemporary Cherokee writer, Marilou Awiakta tells of meeting “Maggie Wachacha, an eighty-eight-year old member of the Eastern Band [of Cherokees]” in 1984; Maggie Wachacha’s grandson informs Awiakta that his grandmother remembers hearing “her elders tell how they walked the Trail of Tears” (33). But very few of these people, as I have said, *wrote* of these experiences, and the distinction between the spoken and the written word continues to be important for Cherokee—as, indeed, for a great many Native American—thinkers today.

At the end of the nineteenth century, James Mooney observed that “Unlike most Indians the Cherokee are not conservative [. . .] the Cherokee mind [. . .] is accustomed to look forward to new things rather than to dwell on the past” (*Myths of the Cherokee* 229, 232). A more nuanced generalization comes from Jack and Anna Kilpatrick,

who, just past the middle of the twentieth century, write of “the amazing ability of the Cherokees to maintain an equilibrium between two opposing worlds of thought” (v). The Kilpatricks offer as an illustration the image of a “Cherokee businessman, on the way to his country club, while ‘wrapped in deep speculation as to the exact height of the slant-eyed giant, Tsuhl’gul,’” or “the television set in the cabin of his fellow tribesman,” behind which “lurk the Little People” (v). Both “the Bible *and* Thunder share Cherokee reverence,” the Kilpatricks assert (v, my emphasis). I would amend this only to suggest that “the amazing ability of the Cherokees” to which the Kilpatricks refer is perhaps better described as the capacity to maintain two *different* rather than “two *opposing* worlds of thought” (my emphasis). This seems to be the case with Conley, Twist, and Glancy, three of the four contemporary Cherokee writers under consideration. Their representation of the trauma of dispossession references Christian and classical images and concepts of rebirth, return, and renewal, but it also sets these non-Cherokee materials in relation to very *different*, traditional Cherokee images and concepts.

Robert Conley is the author of some thirty books, at least ten of which comprise “The Real People” series, novels documenting virtually every aspect of Cherokee life and history. In *Mountain Windsong: A Novel of the Trail of Tears* (1992), Conley tries to represent at least some of “the long, wearisome passage of these exiled Indians,” from Georgia and North Carolina to Indian Territory, by telling the story of an invented Cherokee conservative, named Waguli or Whippoorwill, and his love, Oconeechee (Wahnenauhi 207). Resisting removal from the first, Waguli is beaten and manacled, yet he repeatedly tries to escape as his detachment wends its way overland, and by paddle-wheeler down the Tennessee and Ohio rivers to Mississippi, before trekking into Indian Territory. A broken man, Waguli succumbs to alcoholism and despair before being rescued by an aged white man, Titus Hooker or Gun Rod, someone who had fought with the Cherokees beside Andrew Jackson at Horseshoe Bend in the Creek War. Hooker, after a lengthy series of adventures that threaten to obscure the main lines of the narrative, is successful in bringing Waguli back, largely detoxified, to his ever-loyal beloved, Oconeechee. Conley’s

unabashedly sentimental account regularly fills itself out with long quotations from C. C. Royce's 1887 *The Cherokee Nation of Indians*, the Fifth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, and from James Mooney's "Historical Sketch of the Cherokee People," the first section of Mooney's *Myths of the Cherokee*, also a Bureau of American Ethnology Report, published in 1900. Other documents of interest, for example, almost twenty pages of the Treaty of New Echota (1835), and Ralph Waldo Emerson's 1836 letter to President Van Buren protesting Cherokee removal, are dropped in as efficient if esthetically jarring means of conveying the facts and feel of the period. (But of course there is a real problem in trying to write about these matters for an audience who can be expected to know little or nothing about them—a problem this essay has faced by providing a list of "facts.")

Conley's novel is narrated in the present by a young man whose name is LeRoy or Sonny, although he is referred to by his folksy, mountain grandpa as chooj, or boy. At the beginning of the novel, the boy and his grandfather take a walk in the hills, and the boy hears a "*windsong*," which, his grandfather explains, is "*a lovesong*" (6). To explain the lovesong, Grandpa commences the story of the love between Waguli and Oconeechee, as this is set against the background of Removal. As already noted, that story ends happily for the two nineteenth-century lovers, and, in an epilogue to the novel, Conley has chooj ask his Grandpa, "*What happened . . . after that?*" Grandpa says that the couple lived and had children and '*By and by, they died. That was all a long time ago*'" (218). This observation causes chooj to recognize, in a fairly standard trope of the "coming of age" novel, that his grandpa and grandma will also one day die. But the sadness of this realization is lessened when the boy looks up into a tree, hearing a sound on the wind. The "wind picked up some more, and [chooj] heard that sound again. '*Grandpa*,' he says, suddenly excited. '*Grandpa, I can hear them. They're singing*'" (218).

So Whippoorwill and his beloved live on in a sound, a song in the wind through the trees. And, doubtless, when Grandma and Grandpa also pass away, they too will live on. It will return, it will survive, it will rise again—not as bird or God, but as a "*windsong*" in the trees. Con-

ley here risks perpetuating the dominant society's stereotype of the intimate connection between the native and nature; nonetheless, the ongoing presence of Waguli and Oconeechee is entirely a matter of Cherokee history and culture. This particular "windsong" is a Cherokee song for Cherokee ears.

Curiously, Conley's chooj and his situation—he is spending the summer with his traditional grandfather and grandmother in the North Carolina hills—strongly echo the by-now notorious *Education of Little Tree: A True Story* by an author who called himself Forrest Carter. Forrest Carter's real name was Asa Earl Carter, and we know for certain that Asa Carter grew up in Alabama (not Tennessee), that he was not Cherokee, and that he was not orphaned. Thus, *Little Tree*, although it is subtitled "A True Story," must be considered a novel. Its narrator, Little Tree, is a five-year-old orphan. "Ma lasted a year after Pa was gone," the novel begins, "That's how I came to live with Granpa and Granma" up in the Tennessee hills (1). Granma is a full-blood Cherokee but Granpa is mixed-blood, the child of a marriage between his full-blood Cherokee father, whose family took to the "mountains" in order to escape Removal, and the daughter of white mountain men/outlaws (42). Contrary to historical fact, Carter insists upon an alliance between these two peoples based upon their strong opposition to "guvmint" as a cornerstone of his racial mythologization of the past (Carter had been a Ku Klux Klan member and speech-writer for the segregationist Governor of Georgia, George Wallace) (44, 46). Granpa's father will later join "the Confederate raider, John Hunt Morgan, to fight the faraway, faceless monster of 'guvmint,' that threatened his people and his cabin" (44). Before developing these matters, however, Carter first has Granpa offer an account of the Trail of Tears, for all that his people did not themselves walk the Trail. This account, too, seeks to create an odd and quite inaccurate mythology of the Trail.

The great villains of Cherokee dispossession for Carter are "the government soldiers" a phrase repeated some five times in the first two pages of the chapter called "To Know the Past" (40, 41). The soldiers bring "wagons and mules" for the Cherokees to ride in, but the Cherokees refuse as a matter of pride (41). Then, when the Cherokees

begin to die in greater numbers than can be buried, the soldiers tell the Cherokees to put their dead in the wagon. The Cherokees refuse, and we get a picture of people walking the Trail with the bodies of their dead in their arms. Carter insists that “the Cherokee did not cry” (42). The migration route to Indian Territory was called the Trail of Tears because “it sounds romantic and [it] *speaks of the sorrow of those who stood by the Trail*” (42, my emphasis). Thus, the Cherokees who submitted to the “government soldiers” are not even the originators of history’s name for their dispossession! The Trail of Tears commemorates the sorrow of the whites who watched the Cherokees pass. Granpa’s Pa’s greatest loyalty, in the end, is *not* to his fellow Cherokees removed to Indian Territory but to the slaveholding rebels with whom he shares a hatred of “guvmint.”

Glenn J. Twist, a Cherokee writer (d. 1995) whose name will likely be unfamiliar to most readers, tried to give some sense of the pain of the removal period in two texts called “The Dispossession (1837)” and “The Promised Land (1837),” the second and the ninth (and final) story in a collection called *Boston Mountain Tales: Stories from a Cherokee Family* (1997). Twist’s name derives from his nineteenth-century ancestor, Ganu’teyo’hi, which translates as twist or twister, and describes the man’s ability to braid fine rope from animal hair or vegetable fibers. Ganu’teyo’hi, his white wife, Rachel, and other members of his family are “thought to have traveled to the West with the B. B. Cannon wagon train” (Twist xiii). The party reached “the base of [a then-] unnamed mountain, Cherokee Nation, Indian Territory side, on 27 December 1837” (xii).

In “The Dispossession (1837)” Twist offers the only contemporary text I know to represent and re-imagine in detail the humiliation of Cherokee “dispossession” as first occasioned by the Georgia lottery which granted to lucky white Georgians specific tracts of Cherokee lands with all buildings, livestock, and improvements upon it. (There is, of course, reference to all this in Smith’s *The Cherokee Lottery*.) It is after Ganu’teyo’hi and his family are driven off their land that they eventually make the journey to Indian Territory, the journey that is chronicled in “The Promised Land (1837).” After a long and difficult journey, during which many members of the party perish, “The Can-

non train arrived in Indian Territory approximately one year prior to the so-called *Trail of Tears*" (xii). (Twist regularly precedes reference to the Trail of Tears with "so-called." Is this because the Trail of Tears is not literally called that in Cherokee?)

Traveling, as we have noted, a year earlier than the first detachments forcibly sent upon the Trail, and traveling voluntarily as it were, Twist's ancestors were free to proceed at whatever pace they could, to stop where they chose, and so on. But the story does give a strong sense of the extraordinary difficulties involved in removing west to Indian Territory. Twist assigns the narration to the only white woman in the Cherokee family, Rachel, Ganu'teyo'hi's wife, and her way of making sense of the dispossession and the pain of the journey—Glenn J. Twist's way, very likely—also involves the concept of renewal.

As the party finally enters Indian Territory, somewhat ironically but also hopefully referred to as "the promised land," Little Flower, wife of Ganu'teyo'hi's cousin, Smokehouse, dies, as do the last children of an unfortunate white family named Timberlake. But, says Rachel, "Still we were blessed." Balancing, as it were, the deaths, Jess Half Breed's wife, Sally, gives birth to a "big healthy-looking boy" who "came into this world hungry"; Rachel concludes,

If the others were like me they would see the birth of Half Breed's son in much the same light as I did, a good omen. I regarded this new birth as not just the end of our suffering, but also as the dawn of a new day—the first day of our new life in the promised land. (143)

Here, any irony associated with the phrase "promised land" drops away; much has been lost, but quite literally a new day dawns and brings new birth.

William Jay Smith, part Choctaw and a prolific poet, published *The Cherokee Lottery: a sequence of poems* in 2000. The book is constructed around meditations on the 1832 Georgia lottery to determine by chance which whites were to appropriate which lands of the Cherokees. In the final poem of his "sequence," Smith sees history—if that is the appropriate word—coming "Full Circle" as the roulette

wheels go round and round at the Pequots' multimillion dollar casino, Foxwoods, in Mashantucket, Connecticut. Smith's sense of "return" is rather different from that of Conley and Twist, and it seems worth a moment of attention. Smith writes,

high above that table where the spinning ball comes to rest
on the red and black numbers of the roulette wheel,
I hear the faint ghostly creaking of the clumsy wooden wheel,
designed more than a century and a half ago
for the Cherokee Lottery in Georgia. (87)

This eighteenth and final poem of the sequence, perhaps the very best thing in Smith's slim volume, gathers past and present, myth and history, stereotypes and their ironic re-emergences.

At one point in the poem, the speaker thinks he is having a vision of a herd of *buffalo*, only to see not buffalo but

steaming *buses* queuing up to deliver
their anxious occupants
to the gambling tables of the great Foxwoods Resort Casino (85)

The recent success of that casino and of the Pequots who own it will be referenced further, as we shall see. The last part of the poem introduces the Native American trickster, Coyote, here, *Ms. Coyote*, fully and brilliantly described:

From the thin lascivious full-reddened lips drawn back
under the black round rubbery tip of her nose
in a wry sinister smile over the pointed teeth
emerges a voice neither male nor female
but one having a somewhat unsettling sexless and timeless
quality
and the cold compact clarity of a computer chip. (89)

The voice announces,

All those who are willing and eager to relinquish territory
obtained illegally from Indian tribes at any time in the past will
kindly

record their property identification numbers on their Wampum Cards and leave them at the Cherokee Lottery Roulette table. When their numbers are called, they are requested to proceed to the Holding Area in front of the Casino. There the Native American Escort Service will help facilitate their departure on fully-monitored Buffalo Buses by providing each one with a TRAIL OF TEARS Passport printed in Cherokee that will insure their safe passage on the Tall Ships that await them at the principal ports of the Eastern Seaboard. (90)

The past is not past; the past lives—in transformed and also in transformative fashion—at least in the poet's imagination. Postmodern trickster ironies here rewrite the past, and some justice, ironic justice to be sure, is done, "all the gold stolen from the Cherokees in Georgia / seeming to return now to the Pequots in Connecticut" (89). It returns, at least in some fashion. (We will consider Diane Glancy's use of a similar but also different irony in *Pushing the Bear*, conveyed by the phrase, "It comes back" [237]).

Wilma Mankiller, Principal Chief of the Cherokee from 1985/87 to 1994, in her autobiography, *Mankiller: A Chief and Her People* (1994), discusses the removal period but she doesn't at all comprehend it in terms of the figures of renewal, rebirth, and return that the Cherokee novelists use. On one hand, this may be because Mankiller does not offer her book primarily as a work of art, but rather as the testimony of a public person. That is to say, her autobiography consistently portrays her life in terms of Chief Mankiller's growth in her will and ability to serve her people. She presents herself foremost as a woman of action, and, much as she values words and language, it seems clear that, for her, "actions speak louder than words." On the other hand, it may be that Mankiller is not drawn to *figurative* images of return because she *literally* returned to Oklahoma in time, as her ancestors did not return to Georgia or North Carolina. In any case, for her the Trail is not perceived in terms of rebirth, return, and renewal as it seems to be for the Cherokee fiction writers we are considering, but in terms only of

loss. For Mankiller the Trail was nothing other than a “tragedy” for the Cherokees. In a chapter called “Genesis of Removal,” Mankiller speaks of the “sesquicentennial” commemoration of the journey west by the eastern Cherokees. “There were no festivities,” she writes,

Nobody smiled. There was absolutely nothing to be happy about. It was a solemn observance, a very emotional time. We regarded the removal as something that happened to our family—something very bad that happened to our family. It was a tragedy. It brought us pain that never seemed to leave. (47)

When Mankiller thinks about Removal today, it is *not* because some good came from it (the lovers still sing, after much pain Indian Territory became a kind of promised land, and so on), but because it is a benchmark against which to measure subsequent federal assaults upon the Cherokees—in her own case, the termination and relocation programs of the ’50s that led her family from Mankiller Flats in Oklahoma to innercity San Francisco.

Mankiller begins the chapter “The Trail Where They Cried” with a version of a traditional story about trickster Rabbit’s escape from the wolves, noting that, “After my family relocated in San Francisco,” she felt like a rabbit surrounded by wolves only without Rabbit’s power to escape. This is how she introduces her account of the Trail:

I experienced my own Trail of Tears when I was a young girl [. . .] the United States government, through the Bureau of Indian Affairs, was again trying to settle the “Indian problem” by removal. I learned through this ordeal about the fear and anguish that occur when you have to give up your home, your community, and [. . .] move far away to a strange place. I cried for days, not unlike the children who had stumbled down the Trail of Tears so many years before. (62)

When, in her discussion of the period, Mankiller speaks of the Cherokee *Phoenix*, she gives, but does not translate the Cherokee name for “the newspaper, *Tsa la gi Tso lehisnunhi* or the *Cherokee Phoenix*” (83). Many readers will think, of course, that the second part of the phrase quoted, *Tso lehisnunhi*, somehow translates to Phoe-

nix, but as we have seen that is not the case. Rather, the phrase means something like I will arise, or I was down and I will arise. Nonetheless, the Cherokee newspaper *was* called the Cherokee *Phoenix*, and Mankiller is quick to translate the newspaper's name back, as it were, into Cherokee terms. She writes, "The name given to the newspaper was a fitting choice," because "the power of that mythical bird [. . .] reminds us of the *Cherokees' eternal flame*" (83, my emphasis), the Keetowah fire. With no traditional Cherokee Phoenix imagery to invoke (and not tempted, it would seem, in the direction of Christian imagery), Chief Mankiller focuses on the Cherokees' "eternal flame," which, "According to *our* legend, as long as that fire burns, our people will survive" (83, my emphasis). Her account of the Trail firmly details its horrors and forthrightly insists on what other accounts either ignore (Conley, Twist) or merely mention in passing (Glancy): "It should be remembered," Chief Mankiller writes,

that hundreds of people of African ancestry also walked the Trail of Tears with the Cherokees during the forced removal of 1838–1839. Although we know about the terrible human suffering of our native people [. . .] during the removal, we rarely hear of those black people who also suffered. (95)

For African people and for the Cherokees, the Trail was a place and a time of suffering that must be remembered and also referenced as an event against which to measure assaults on the people in the present and the future. But Wilma Mankiller does not represent the Trail as having led to a promised land, to birth after death, or to some sort of renewal. As we have seen, its commemoration 160 years later was a time of pain when "Nobody smiled" (47). (Mankiller writes about the 1984 reunion of the Eastern and Oklahoma Cherokee, mentioned above, as a much happier occasion.)

We come at last to *Pushing the Bear*. In fairness it needs to be acknowledged that the account which follows limits itself, for the most part, to the representation of the Trail, even if this inevitably slights significant aspects of the novel. This is to say that just as Robert Conley set the love between Waguli and Oconeechee against the back-

ground of removal, so, too, does Glancy set the deterioration and possible amelioration of the marriage between Maritole and her husband, Knowbowtee, as they endure the northern land route west from North Carolina to Oklahoma against the experience of the Trail. Much could be said about their relationship; for the purposes of this essay, however, I largely restrict commentary to the fact that the novel concludes with Maritole thinking of Knowbowtee and hoping that, "Maybe someday love would come" (233). I chose her words for the last of the epigraphs to this study because Maritole's hopefulness in regard to her relationship with her husband also works in concert with other gestures of renewal and rebirth in the last pages of the novel.

Pushing the Bear consists of eight chapters, each marked by a date and a place, along with a map for stages of the journey to the west. Glancy will attempt the formidable task of re-imagining the Trail in its entirety. The novel begins in "Late September, 1838," in North Carolina and concludes on "February 27, 1839," in Indian Territory. Each of the chapters is made up of a number of separate sections, for the most part headed by an individual's name (Maritole, Knowbowtee, Tanner, Quaty Lewis, etc.). There is a section headed "James Mooney"—although, as Glancy surely knows, Mooney did not travel the Trail with the Cherokees, nor was he yet born in 1838. The "James Mooney" section is a very slightly altered version of the account Mooney gives in his "Historical Sketch of the Cherokee Nation" of the stockades into which the Cherokee were driven before being sent off on their journey. Other sections are called "Voices as they Walked" and "The Soldiers." There is no section given to an African voice or voices.

Glancy also has sections that are titled, "A government teamster's journal," or "The Baptist," as well as "A White Traveler from Maine." There is a section that consists of a tally of the expenses incurred by Principal Chief John Ross and a list of Ross's lost personal property; a list of items the Reverend Jesse Bushyhead had submitted of requirements for the journey is also printed. These sections offer writing of one sort or another rather than speech or thought.

The words printed under the names of individuals historically present at the time of the story may be, as I have suggested above,

spoken words or, perhaps, thoughts—interior monologues. Meanwhile, Maritole's words in English, whether thought or spoken, must be a translation from the Cherokee, because Maritole knows little or no English. (This is surely true for others who have their names at the head of one or another section.) There are also words and phrases in the Sequoyah syllabary, which Glancy sometimes translates and sometimes leaves untranslated. Although she prints the syllabary among the materials appended to the novel, I have not always been able to figure out some of the words in the text that are in the syllabary.

Use of the syllabary would seem to be Glancy's way of conveying some specific Cherokee-ness or *difference* to her text, a kind of resistance to any transparency of thought and experience. But the syllabary was for *writing* Cherokee, and where it appears in the novel, it is usually conveying what seems to be speech or thought, oral narrative or song. This latter issue, the difference (in function, in value) between spoken and written words, is frequently important in contemporary Native American fiction, as noted earlier, and this is the case as well in *Pushing the Bear*—although there is no space to pursue the matter here.

Along with meditations on the spoken and written word come speculations about the uses and powers of stories, both traditional stories, which Glancy composes on at least one occasion in the Sequoyah syllabary (194–95, we shall return to this below), and the story as testimony to personal experience that is also quite self-consciously recognized as historical experience (for example, Maritole says: "I would have the tongue of a leaf. I would tell our story I thought" [172–73]). Someone called "The Basket Maker," says: "The baskets hold fish and corn and beans. Just like our stories hold meaning"; baskets "copy our stories" (153). Maritole's mother says or thinks: "*Tell stories. [. . .] Riding on your stories you can walk*" (72). Know-bowtee, Maritole's estranged husband, echoes this when he states, "The stories fueled my walk" (144). He may also echo Maritole when, near the end of the novel, he says, "Could the trees also mean something about words?" (227–28). But his monologue then goes on to speculate further about the differences between spoken and written words in relation to words on documents by which the Cherokees

were betrayed (224, and see also meditations on Sequoyah's syllabary, making it possible to write in Cherokee; words can be used in different ways, to different ends, and that is true for the written as well as the spoken word).

Let me turn now to the metaphor that provides the title of the book and operates from around page 15 to page 233, the very last page of the book: the metaphor of "pushing the bear." The "bear" is Maritole's way of imaging the oppression of the Trail. The bear is the weight, the pain, the violence of the journey; the bear is that which can destroy us by devouring us. It is Maritole who mostly feels the bear or pushes it, suffers from it, is nearly devoured by it, and finally, perhaps, overcomes it. Others, it should be noted, are also aware of the bear and, at one moment at least, "When we stopped at midday," Maritole says she "heard someone telling the story of the bear" (102).

It is only later in the book that Glancy offers a section set in italics, called "The Story of the Bear." This particular story seems to be told by one of the Ani' Tsa' guhi, an ancient Cherokee clan that long ago chose to go into the woods and become bears so that the people, in times of famine, might hunt them and have food to eat. Glancy's version may derive from Mooney's "Origin of the Bear: The Bear Songs" (325–27; see also "The Bear Man," 327–29)—although she gives no references at all to work she has consulted. If her story is based on the one Mooney published (I think it is), it is much abbreviated and impressionistically altered. Here is Glancy's version in its entirety:

THE STORY OF THE BEAR

A long time ago the Cherokee forgot we were a tribe. We thought only of ourselves apart from the others. Without any connections. Our hair grew long on our bodies. We crawled on our hands and knees. We forgot we had a language. We forgot how to speak. That's how the bear was formed. From a part of ourselves when we were in trouble. All we had was fur and meat to give. (176)

This differs considerably from Mooney's version of traditional Cherokee oral stories about bears which begin with a boy who decides life is easier in the woods than at home. He persuades his parents and all the members of their clan to join him, and, although

people of the other towns try to dissuade them from going, they do go into the woods to live. (There are no bear stories of this type in the Kilpatricks' collection from Oklahoma Cherokees in the early 1960s.) Their bodies grow hairy; they become and are henceforth known as *yanu*, bears. They give their fellow Cherokees songs with which to call them, so that they may come and sacrifice themselves for those who are hungry.

Glenn Twist, in "Na'Ci'e and the Ani'-tsa'ghui (1814)," the eighth of his *Boston Mountain Tales*, offers a similar account. Twist has Na'Ci'e (she is Ganu'teyo'hi's mother) begin the story as follows:

Long before the memory of anyone living today, a great famine prevailed among the Ki-to'hwa people. They were starving. The spirit of Selu [the corn-giver . . .] called upon one clan of the Kitu'hwa to go into the forest and become bears. As bears they were to sacrifice themselves by becoming food for the rest of the clans. (113)

In neither Mooney's version nor Twist's is there anything like Glancy's sense of a fall from community (the Cherokees forgetting that they were a tribe), or what appears to be the *punishment* of crawling on hands and knees, a kind of regression, rather than an importantly positive *transformation*. The bears of the traditional story do not *lose* language; although they surely will no longer speak human words, their brother and sister Cherokees can always call them with song. Nor is there the sense that the bears came "From *a part of ourselves* when we were in trouble"—unless that is to mean *some of us* when we were in trouble chose to sacrifice ourselves (in some versions of the story, there is a way for the bears to come back, to regenerate themselves after being killed). And the giving of fur and meat—the traditional versions speak only of the bear as food—as "all we had"—perhaps something less than what we might have had?—is certainly poetically intriguing, although, once more there seems to be nothing like it in the traditional stories. In any case, Glancy's "Story of the Bear" comes fairly late in the novel, and it is not developed further. Glancy's use of the bear image is exclusively as a metaphor for a sense of enormous difficulty and oppression.

About halfway through the novel (but not halfway through the journey; this occurs in Tennessee on the first leg of the journey), Maritole feels herself being eaten by the bear: her toes, her legs, her stomach, her chest, until she “was inside him” (114). But then she feels “the shaman” over her, “Sucking me out of the bear” (114). Although she resists him, apparently the shaman is successful in his doctoring. Maritole wakes and will be well. Other than stating that the shaman sucked her out of the bear, Maritole gives no information about his practice.

Elsewhere in the novel, however, Glancy includes healing formulas from James Mooney’s “Swimmer Manuscript,” published in 1932. The format for the healing formulas in the Swimmer collection is: Cherokee text with an interlinear, literal translation, then a “Free Translation,” followed by an “Explanation.” Although Glancy does not identify Mooney/Swimmer as the source, in *Pushing the Bear*, a section such as the one entitled “A Holy Man,” contains a slightly rewritten version of Swimmer’s formula 21, “This (is) to cure (them) with whenever they have lost their voice” (Mooney 198). Glancy calls it “*This (Is) to Cure (Them) with Whenever They Have Forgotten Their Voice*,” and she gives a slightly rewritten version of the “free translation” in which she also includes a part of the “Explanation” that follows the “free translation” in Mooney (128, my emphasis). That is, Glancy’s text puts the formula itself and Mooney/Swimmer/Olbrecht’s explanation of it together. For reasons that are unclear to me—unless she wants to convey here that someone who speaks in English is really speaking Cherokee—Glancy has put the formula into awkward “Indian” English. Glancy writes, “Some of it rub on neck” (128), where Mooney has (in the “Explanation”), “Some of the liquid is also rubbed on his throat and neck” (199). Or, Glancy: “The bark from east side of tree” (128); Mooney: “The bark, as usual, is from the east side of the tree” (199). Glancy repeats this gesture a few pages later when she has one named “Kakowih” think/speak of Maritole and the bear also in pidgin: Maritole “got eat by bear. She have bear strength”; This has been preceded by “Womens cry and make sad wails” (131). This is odd, inasmuch as Maritole, who also speaks no English, is nonetheless “translated” grammatically. Perhaps

the brief bits of awkward "Indian" are meant to distinguish the traditionalists of that time from the Christians?

On another occasion, "Healing Song," Glancy combines and re-writes Swimmer #79, "This is for the Purpose of (Curing) Children When They Constantly Cry" (Glancy 138; Mooney 284). Here, Swimmer gives two formulas, numbers 59 and 60, for "whenever their feet are frost bitten," both of which might surely have aided the Bushyhead detachment of Cherokees as they marched through the coldest part of winter (257–58). Bear imagery continues in such comments as Maritole's observation that "At times my own body was the bear I pushed on the trail" (191). And it is extended in a manner I will examine further when Lacey Woodard calls Jesus "the man who pushed the bear," the man who was nailed to the cross "with claws" (220). In much the same vein, Tanner (Maritole's older brother) meditates on "the story of Jesus that could hardly be understood," although it is not entirely different from the story of Selu, the corn-giver of the Cherokee (182).

Perhaps it is the Reverend Jesse Bushyhead, leader of the party in which Maritole and her family walk the Trail, who enunciates what I take to be Glancy's own belief in the necessary coexistence of traditional Cherokee and Christian thought and belief. Bushyhead says, "I would not be one of those ministers who tried to rid the Cherokee of their stories. It would take everything we could muster to start again" (186). Bushyhead here echoes what Maritole herself had concluded, that the minister who "preached Christ as the corn god, the giver of life along with Selu," was right because "if any one of us made it to the new land, then it must be true. Both Christ and myth [sic!]. It would take both" (112). Later, Maritole will say, "I heard the conjurers. I heard the Christians. I believed them both" (215). As I have said, I think this is the position Glancy herself strives toward. I'll return to this point by way of conclusion.

As the Bushyhead detachment approaches Indian Territory, and the novel moves to a close, a good deal of material about death and loss being balanced by birth and renewal is introduced. I will cite only some of it. In chapter 6, "Missouri," Reverend Bushyhead's sister,

Nancy, dies and Bushyhead notes, "As Nancy died, my second daughter, Elizah Missouri Bushyhead, was born January 3, 1839, in a clump of trees" (166). In chapter 7, "Arkansas," Knowbowtee says to O-ga-na-ya, "'Everything is broken [. . . Even my wife loved a soldier—She's broken for me, too.' O-ga-na-ya answers, 'We're all torn and hurt. [. . .] But we're nearing a place where we have to start over. Maybe what Maritole did doesn't matter'" (217). In the final chapter, "Indian Territory," in a section given to Maritole—quoted among the epigraphs—we learn that "The baby who had been born was crying," to which Luthy responds, "It's a new voice that won't grieve for our old land in North Carolina" (228). This same section has Maritole also feeling the signs of renewal: "I feel something happen in me as I walk. Something small and strong begins to grow" (228). Affirming that she will "hold the memory of this trail," she turns to the future: "We'll have the new Keetoowah fire to light our hearth. We'll have our stickball games again [. . .] somewhere deep inside me I carry a tiny piece of joy like a ball" (229). Quaty Lewis, who I have also quoted in the epigraphs, affirms that the oaks she sees growing in Indian Territory "would sound out the old truth of the pines" of South Carolina; no new pines does not mean no old truths. Luthy adds, "As for the trail—it's over—Tanner and my boys are alive" (229). The novel concludes as it began—with Maritole: "At night the children slept against us . . . Knowbowtee and I held them between us. Maybe someday he would touch me. Maybe someday love would come" (233). Maybe, for all the pain, for all the loss, maybe something good will come from the suffering of the Trail.

It is by imagining such possibilities of renewal, return, and rebirth that Robert Conley in his *Mountain Windsong* and Glenn J. Twist in two of his *Boston Mountain Tales* also try to understand Cherokee dispossession. Glancy's turn to these images and concepts as a way of understanding the Trail, however, is very specifically a commitment to *both* the "conjurers *and* the Christians" and it is that dual commitment that governs the materials Glancy appends to her novel after the formal narrative has concluded (215, my emphasis).

After the formal close of the story, Glancy prints first an "Author's Note" and then "A Note on the Written Cherokee Language." This

latter gives the eighty-five symbols of the Sequoyah (Glancy spells it Sequoia) syllabary so the reader can go back and decipher some of the untranslated words in the syllabary that appear at various places in the novel. (I have admitted to little success in doing this.) It also reprints, with only the addition of “an English phonetic version [...] the story of the boxturtles and deer that Quaty told on pages 194 and 195” (240).

This story is a version of the familiar tortoise and the hare tale. It appears in Mooney’s *Myths of the Cherokee* as “How the Terrapin beat the Rabbit,” and more recently in Jack and Anna Kilpatrick’s *Friends of Thunder: Folktales of the Oklahoma Cherokees*—versions in which the Terrapin races either the Rabbit, the Deer, or the Fox. I have not been able to find a source that prints this story in the Sequoyah syllabary. Glancy, who, as I have said, gives no references of any kind, seems to have chosen to reprint the story she had already printed in the novel to remind the reader that Maritole has been thinking of it in her final monologue. Maritole:

Sometimes I thought about Quaty’s story of the Trickster Turtle. I had heard Luthy telling it to her boys again. I told it now to the orphans. There was a turtle at the starting line in the old territory. There was a turtle at the finish line in the new. Our Cherokee nation had become two to survive. (233)

Once again, this is a rewriting of the traditional tale in which Terrapin wins out over the speedier animal not by *becoming two*, but, rather, by placing other Terrapins at various points along the trail so that whenever the Rabbit or Deer looks ahead of him to the next stage of the race, he already sees a Terrapin there—and of course yet another Terrapin simply steps to the finish line ahead of the swifter animal. Glancy’s version here, like her version of “The Story of the Bear” earlier, offers traditional material that is filtered through the lens of an artist who is deeply Christian.

Insofar as the emphasis on Quaty’s story was a gesture in the direction of the “conjurers” and their worldview, the “Author’s Note” gestures more nearly in the direction of the Christians and their worldview. (But we have already seen that these presumptively disparate

“views” are not at all incompatible, nor have they been for over a century.) Glancy begins by telling of a trip she and her daughter took “In 1977 or 1978” to see a dramatization of the Trail of Tears. Just before the play begins, Glancy sees “two rainbows in the sky above the amphitheater” (235). “In the summer of 1995,” she “saw the [sic] two rainbows again,” this time on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota; this marks for her “the closure of my work on *Pushing the Bear*, some seventeen or eighteen years after it began” (236). This is followed by thanks and acknowledgements, *after* which Glancy notes that she “knew this wasn’t going to be a good Indian/bad white man story. You know there has to be both sides in each” (237). She informs the reader that the “dried-up land” the Cherokees once sold to some Osages turned out to have oil on it. “It comes back,” Glancy observes in a single sentence paragraph. Similarly, the farms Sherman burned in Georgia during the Civil War were farms taken from the Cherokees. It comes back. Glancy concludes her “Note” by saying, “Maybe, in the end, our acts cause little energy fields that draw their likenesses toward them” (237). I think this is fairly close to a restatement (and a recommendation) of the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Be that as it may, although I have treated the “Note on the Written Cherokee Language” before the “Author’s Note,” it is the former that concludes the book; Quaty’s story in the Sequoyah syllabary gets the last word.

Before I comment on that, let me note that although Wilma Mankiller in her treatment of the Trail was not interested in parceling out blame, she most certainly didn’t see a “both sides” to the story of Cherokee dispossession. Robert Conley and Glenn J. Twist are determined to believe that not only bad but some possible good—in Conley’s case, a kind of continuance, an eternal return; in Twist’s, arrival in the promised land—came to the survivors of the trek to Indian Territory. Nor is either one of them interested in demonizing whites—but no more is either one of them interested in urging a two-sides-to-the-story approach. *Pushing the Bear* is not very much interested in doing this either—although as Glancy in her “Author’s Note” thinks back on how her work on the novel began and concluded under the sign of two rainbows—doubling the sign of God’s covenant

with Noah that the world would not be destroyed by flood again—she most certainly wants to emphasize the message that “Maybe someday love would come,” and not only between Maritole and her husband, Knowbowtee, but between conjurers and Christians, whites and Indians, both sides (223). If our acts draw their likes to them, then do unto others as you would have them do unto you. It seems to have been necessary for Glancy to believe this in order to recreate in detail the long and painful journey of *The Trail Where They Cried*. But it seems to have been necessary as well to believe in clever turtle, a shrewd survivor, from a time far antecedent to Cherokee Removal.

NOTE

An earlier and slightly different version of this essay appeared in French as “Représenter la dépossession des Cherokees,” in *Recherches Amerindiennes à Québec* 23.3 (2003). This is its first appearance in English.

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From Internalized Oppression to Internalized Sovereignty

Ojibwemowin Performance and Political Consciousness

CHAD URAN

THE ARRIVAL AS A DREAM

I entered into that place with my eyes wide open. I was a little scared. But I also knew that I would come out of that place. I may not be the same person after I get out, but I knew I would get out. There were four people waiting in that place for me. For each person waiting, I knew I would have to give a piece of myself.

At that time, the first person spoke to me, telling me that it was necessary to cut myself up into pieces, and that each piece had a purpose for me. Each piece would go to someone, each person in that place would get a piece, and that more pieces would go to everyone else who was waiting for me to get out of that place. Some pieces would be reserved for the people I loved. Others were reserved for my enemies. I was only allowed to take the smallest bit of every piece I had to give up.

He then asked for my heart. He said that he would keep it safe for me. I cut it out, and he told me how to take the piece I would keep. He told me to cut it apart, hand him a piece, then cut my piece into two and hand one to him, then again, and again, and again, until I had only the smallest piece for myself. That was enough, he said, for you to never forget yourself and always know who you are. That was the only way to understand your self.

He led me to the next person in that place. For him I was to give my hand. I cut it up as I had cut up my heart, keeping the smallest piece for myself.

He led me to the next person in that place. For him I was to give my eye. I cut it up as I had cut up my hand, keeping the smallest piece for myself.

He then led me to the next person in that place. For her I was to give my brain lobe. I cut it up as I had cut up my eye, keeping the smallest piece for myself.

After I was finished cutting myself up and giving away the pieces to those people, he spoke to me again. He told me that I was ready, and that I would go out and work, and watch, and learn, and that he would take care of my heart as each of these people would take care of the parts I had given them. I would get them back when we were finished with our work together. The parts would not be the same, each one would be cleaned, and as the weak parts were cleaned away the strong parts would grow to fill their spaces.

We then had a feast.

He led me out of that place and into another. The people I love were waiting for me there, and they were there to help me. What was left of my body was theirs, and by their being with me I did not feel like I was missing any part of myself. They completed me. We all walked out into the dawn together.

That's it.

We ought to include as sovereign states those who have united themselves with another more powerful by an unequal alliance, in which, as Aristotle says, to the more powerful is given more honor, and to the weaker more assistance [. . .] Provided the inferior ally reserved to itself the sovereignty, or the right of governing its own body, it ought to be considered as an independent state that keeps up an intercourse with others under the authority of the law of nations.

Cicero

It is when the social world loses its character as a natural phenomenon that the question of the natural or conventional character of social facts can be raised.

Bourdieu, 168–69

When the language dies, we become descendants of the Ojibwe people, and we are no longer Ojibwe.

Earl Nyholm, in Vollum, preface

Nindanishinaabew. Shaawano nindigo. Gaa-waabaabigaanikaag nin-doonjibaa, idash Miskwaaki-akiing indaamin noongom. Gaawiiin ma-shi ningikenimaasii nindoodem. I began studying the Ojibwe language in 1995 at the University of Minnesota. My dad's grandfather was the last speaker in his patriline. I include these statements to situate myself for the readers of this paper.

THE ARRIVAL

We were set to attend an Ojibwe language immersion camp on Rainy Lake in the summer of 2001. The camp was hosted by Pebaamimowinini, an Ojibwe language instructor at a large Midwestern university. He was born on the trapline in Ontario, and the camp was his father's land on the Nicickousemenecaning (Nigigoonsiminikaaning) First Nation.¹ The name translates as “the place where the little otter plays” or “where there are little otters everywhere.” Because of his standing in the Ojibwe language movement, and because his brother and mother are both language teachers, this Reserve is (half?) jokingly referred to as “The Heart of the Ojibwe Nation.” Most of the

participants were teachers and students of Ojibwemowin at tribal colleges and other universities in Wisconsin and Minnesota. Ojibwemowin, a member of the Algonquin language family, is spoken in an area spanning from Quebec to Saskatchewan, and from Michigan to Montana. Ojibwemowin ranks as the fourth largest spoken indigenous language in North America, with 50,000 speakers as of 1992 (Baraga vi).

My family drove up, grateful for the small language study grant from the University of Iowa's Department of Anthropology. We brought with us my nephew, Chris (age 14), and both daughters (ages 3 and 1). We also brought several quilts and other gifts in case we needed them. We had no intention of telling the border guard that we would be leaving anything in Canada.

The drive up was pleasant; the weather was clear and sunny and not too hot. We had some trepidation at crossing the border with our undocumented children, one not our son. We had gotten a note from his grandmother giving him permission to come with us, but the note made no mention of Canada. At the crossing in Fort Frances, the guard was aware of a caravan of people going to Nigigoonsimiinaaning because others who had preceded us were unable to pronounce it clearly (which may mean in a manner not Anglicized enough for the non-Indian guard). We were granted entry.

The reserve is located about twenty-four miles east of Fort Frances. We were supposed to meet at the community center for a potluck feast, but we were early. We took the opportunity to drive around a bit. The Reserves up there are small, more like central towns with their lands surrounding them. The housing was Rez standard: small frame houses with composite siding, most of which had been built onto over the years. Many had replacement windows. No paved driveways, the lucky ones had rock. No lawn, so the distinction between yard and driveway was rather fluid. Some had carports, and I saw only one garage. The roads were unpaved, full of ruts and holes. It was all familiar.

The community center was up a short hill and around a bend from the tribal center. It was a rather new structure, built in the manner of a newer rural grocery store—like a pole building with a con-

crete façade. There were no windows, a common building style that avoids the necessity of replacement after vandalism, and is also more secure and energy efficient. There was a small concrete slab near the outside staircase with a picnic table chained onto it. Further up the road was an outside maintenance storage area, partially fenced off.

We decided to try to find a phone to find out where we were supposed to go first. We found an old convenience store, closed for an unknown number of months or even years, and with no phone. We saw Pebaamimowinini and his wife pass by, so we followed them back to the community center. We were eager to feast after a long drive.

AND NOW INTRODUCING OJIBWENESS

After everyone has filled a plate for the welcoming feast, someone is selected to begin the introductory speeches. A language teacher makes this choice. The basic performance is a scripted introductory speech (see figure 1).² Protocol dictates a minimum of stating one's name, home, and clan. It is the speaker's option whether to use his or her English name, Ojibwe name, or both. "Home" is usually one's reservation or community name. Off-reservation Ojibwes usually name the reservation at which they are enrolled or tied to by descent. Most append their present home, usually by the Ojibwe place name, if known.

Clan identification is important; it situates the speaker within a kin-based social and political system. Ojibwes may state that they do not know their clan, but may be reminded to include the particle *mashi*, or "not yet." *Gaawiin mashi ningikenimaasii nindoodem*, "I do not yet know who my clan is." Elders and language teachers who host these gatherings will help Ojibwe Ojibwemowin learners with questions about their clan. Participants' introductions in Ojibwemowin at the welcoming feast serve as an initiation into the larger project of Ojibwe revitalization, situating themselves for everyone in terms of their national orientation, kinship ties, and level of cultural and linguistic competence.

The concept of shared linguistic competence is made problematic by the extremely uneven distribution of the ability to speak or even

Figure 1. Ahaw, Ojibwemodaa: An Introductory Speech

Boozhoo . . . / Aaniin . . . nindinawemaaganidog. nijii-gikinoo'amaaganidog. nijii-bimaadiziig. nij-anishinaabedog.	Hello . . . / Hi . . . my relatives. my classmates. my fellow human beings. my fellow Indians.
Bangii eta go ninitaa-ojibwem. Gaawiin aapiji ninitaa-ojibwemosii.	I only know how to talk Ojibwe a little. I don't know how to talk Ojibwe very much.
Ninga-gagwejitoon ji ojibwemoyaan.	I will try talking Ojibwe.
_____ niin nindizhinikaaz zhaaganaashiimong. _____ nindigoo ojibwemong. Niin nindoodem _____. Gaawiin niin nindoodemesiin. Gaawiin ningikenimaasiin nindoodem.	My name is _____ in English. I am called _____ in Ojibwe. My clan is _____. I don't have a clan. I don't know my clan.
_____ niin nindoonjibaa. _____ nindaa. _____ nindananokii. Nimino-ayaa gaye niminwedam omaa ayaayaan noongom.	I come from _____. I live in _____. I work at _____. I'm glad to be here today.
_____ izhinikaazo ninaabem/niwiiw/niinimoshe. Gaawiin mashi niwiidigesii. Bezhigo ninijjaanis. Niizhiwag ninijjaanisag. _____ izhinikaazo nindaanis. _____ izhinikaazo ningozis.	_____ is the name of my husband/wife/sweetheart. I'm not married yet. I have one child. I have two children. My daughter's name is _____. My son's name is _____.
_____ o'apii ningii-tibshkaa. _____ ningii-ondaadiz. _____ nindaso-biboonagiz. Ni _____ biboonagiz. Niminwedam gikinoo'amaagooyaan ji nitaa-ojibwemoyaan. Niminwendam _____ miinawaa _____.	My birthday was _____ (month). I was born in _____ (month). I am _____ years old. I am _____ years old. I'm glad to be learning to talk Ojibwe. I like _____ and _____.
Mii o'o minik waa-ikidoyaan noongoom. Miigwech bizindawiyeg.	That is all I'm going to say now. Thank you for listening to me.

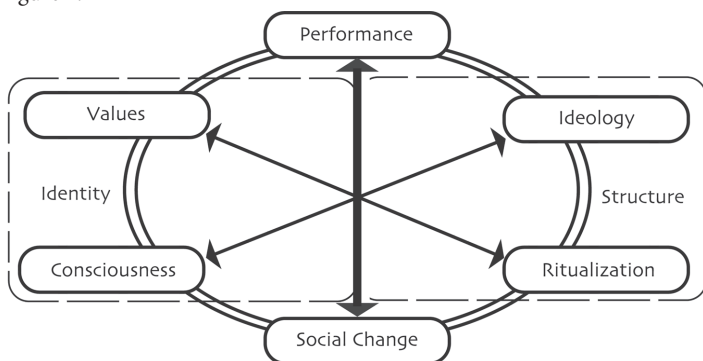
Source: Created by Chad Uran.

understand Ojibwemowin. The participants violate the usual definition of a speech community by the lack of regular or frequent contact, the lack of a shared linguistic competence, and what could be a total lack of clear linguistic distinction from other groups (Gumperz 43). The Ojibwemowin camp is a community based upon a more or less shared understanding of what should constitute linguistic and social competence for Ojibwemowin and Ojibwe people; they are brought together by a common desire to reinforce these understandings for themselves, their families, and their people.

I argue that the Ojibwemowin immersion camp welcoming feast was an arena for negotiating individual and collective identities. For individuals, the performance of Ojibwemowin is a strategy to reformulate their worlds and recast their perspectives within their worlds. Attention to the verbal exchanges between leaders and followers, as facilitated and officialized through ritualization, uncovers different levels of agency within the subjects (Bourdieu 40). In this paper I refer to ritualization as those practices responding to and reworking social structure. I am applying Bell's approach to understanding how ritualization negotiates power, creating various forms of domination and resistance at the level of ethnic differentiation and cultural political action (Bell 211). The sharing of introductory speeches creates a conceptual, emotional, and physical place for participants to learn and grow through language and social interaction. Through this activity, which is viewed as "caring" for the language, participants are empowered by both connecting to a relevant history and working towards a vibrant future.

The individuals who participate in this activity often append, in English or Ojibwemowin, remarks on the importance of learning and speaking the language for their personal, spiritual, and political identity.³ Ojibwemowin becomes symbolic communication between the participants and an Ojibwe worldview. The language is both instructive and constructive of an alternative social system and way of living, and in this way is subversive of mainstream educational and social systems.⁴ The introductory circle is a supportive space, a place to receive guidance for behavior, and a place to bring participants into consensus by reenergizing a fundamentally Ojibwe framework that

Figure 2.



Source: Created by Chad Uran.

informs personal and collective action. It is a ritualized activity aimed at cultural revitalization and (re)creation of social unity (Bowie 151; Bell 216).

The focus of my paper is on how ritualized Ojibwemowin performance is directly engaged with social change. This creative marriage of verbal action and societal manipulation through words is the essence of Bauman's definition of performance (Bauman 5). The use of Ojibwemowin in the introductory speechmaking keys a performance, as well as changes the social structure surrounding the performance. This social change is aimed at several levels. First, it is a change in the manner of relations among Ojibwe people. Second, it is a change in the relationship between Ojibwe people and their history and culture—emically defined. Third, it is a particular relationship to mainstream society—a distinctiveness and celebration of difference. Fourth, emerging from the previous levels, there is an emotional, even spiritual, engagement with self-perception and perception of place in the world. Ojibwemowin performance responds to the historical situations of the Ojibwe, as well as creates critical alternatives to these situations through both a perceptual reframing through Ojibwemowin speech acts and the more practical efficacy of a counter hegemonic embodiment of critical thought through politically informed action. Such ritualized performance emerges between the

ideological, ritual structure and the values and consciousness(es) constituting individual and collective identities.⁵

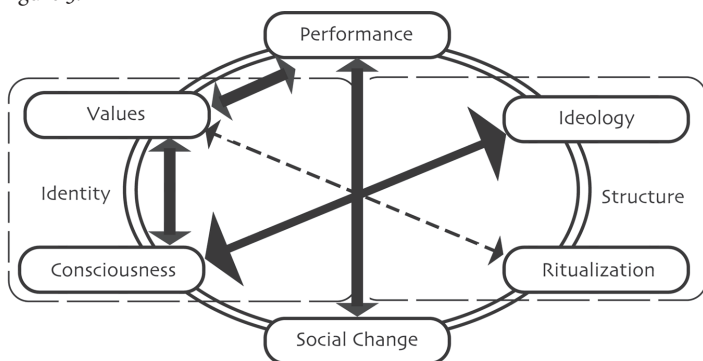
I see the ideological structure as mutually (though not equally) generative of consciousness. Language ideologies are those generally agreed upon notions about the proper use and place of a particular language. These ideas encompass matters of status and prestige, as well as social judgments made about users of a particular language or variety of language. These language ideologies are analogous to other ideologically derived social judgments, meaning that discrimination along many social axes occur along linguistic and other indexical distinctions.

Consciousness can be boiled down to ideological competence. This hints at a connection to the consensual collectivity of the group, conformity of ideological underpinning (accepted, constructed, or co-constructed). Further ideological development emerges from consciousness. I see ritualization as mutually (though not equally) generative of values. Ritualization depends upon the reflection of societal values, and ritualization can create or modify societal values.

By consciousness, I mean a critical awareness of the historical, social, political, and economic position of the Ojibwe, and here especially a critical awareness of the status of Ojibwemowin. With this consciousness comes an ability to manipulate and deploy the ideological underpinnings of ritualized Ojibwemowin performance. I place the ritualized performance of Ojibwemowin into the realm of social act, examine the strategies by which this social act becomes ritualized through privileged distinction, and then look to how this ritualized performance reveals power relationships within that social system and among the actors involved. This ritualization works through adherence to community values, even as the ritualization itself creates these values. Participants immediately judge the efficacy of ritualized practice, and there are no "mere" bystanders. As the values are shared, either *a priori* or co-generated, these values go into creating and receiving the performance itself.

I found Ojibwemowin performance reveals the community norms, strategies, and values that guide the production and interpretation of Ojibwemowin. It is important to acknowledge that this sharing

Figure 3.



Source: Created by Chad Uran.

of values does not imply stasis or an essentialist uniformity of opinion. The running metapragmatic commentary by both teachers and students demonstrates how social values are mediated by the internal community and shows an awareness of how these values are mediated by outside forces. However, the ritualized performance of Ojibwemowin as both constitutive and reflective of the shared values of the Ojibwe reveals a specific concept of being and becoming a leader. The creation of leaders is dependent upon the (re)establishment of shared values, and leaders are necessary to activate these values within the Ojibwe—in this case by spreading competence in Ojibwemowin through ritualized performance.

These individual and collective relationships to history, self, each other, and the world contribute to a creative and shifting worldview that seeks to encompass life through Ojibwemowin. Taken as a developmental cycle, each diagrammed element can become highlighted or submerged according to the immediate goals of performance, as well as the success of the performer as judged by the community.

For example, a speaker could begin with a consciousness of gender and accompanying inequalities of power. The speaker could use the indefinite maleness or femaleness of third person animate verbs to forward an ideology of Ojibwe gender equity. The speaker thus officializes gender consciousness and a value of gender egalitarianism as

evidenced by the structure of Ojibwemowin. This move is strengthened by the symbolic capital of Ojibwemowin itself. This ideology could then be mobilized through ritualized Ojibwemowin performance, whereby the speaker may be able to bring about a social change through an acceptance or engagement with his or her performance by the other participants.

I argue that the completion of this circle is the direct connection between performance and social change; I see the activation of that link as an aspect of the practice of sovereignty—as individual or microlevel autonomy. I take Ojibwemowin as one major vehicle of this activation. It is through Ojibwemowin that Ojibwe people can embody sovereignty at a personal level.

It must be understood that *sovereignty* was a European term applied to the peoples of this hemisphere through treaty making. This served to set into motion a legal status that remains, however modified, to this day for many American Indian nations.⁶ The Ojibwe were never martially conquered, and thus their entire relationship to foreign governments has been in accordance to peaceful agreements—though not always fully voluntary or consensual.

Sovereignty is a part of nationhood, a concept that the Ojibwe clearly satisfy.⁷ The Ojibwe have an identifiable language, culture, and social organization. The geographic extent of their dominion is largely recognized, though by no means uncontested, by their neighbors. They have the capacity to govern themselves and to form alliances with other entities. This application of the term “nation” to Indian tribes is historical, as well.

The very term “nation,” so generally applied to them [Indians] means “a people distinct from others.” The Constitution, by declaring treaties already made, as well as those to be made to be the supreme law of the land, has adopted and sanctioned the previous treaties with the Indian nations, and consequently admits their rank among those powers who are capable of making treaties. The words “treaty” and “nation” are words of our own language, selected in our diplomatic and legislative proceedings by ourselves, and have a definite and well-

understood meaning. We have applied them to the other nations of the earth. They are applied to all in the same sense.⁸

An important consideration, in both its legal aspects and popular conception, is the matter of “distinction.” Sovereignty only has meaning as practiced by individuals who belong to a distinct nation. For the Ojibwe, this means that they must act as Ojibwes (Anderson; Deloria). The idea of sovereignty necessarily becomes practice; it is a matter of continual demonstration of individual and collective identity, here through Ojibwemowin. The “caring” relationship to Ojibwemowin is metaphorically, or metonymically, understood as caring for the Ojibwe culture, history, people, land, and nation.⁹ Thus, the Ojibwe “caring” for the language is an important ingredient of this practice of sovereignty.

This “care” is a variably ritualized use of Ojibwemowin that cuts across levels of linguistic competence and is based on revitalizing a community and demarcating a cultural stance in relation to a larger network of possible, if not altogether available, social identities. It is this context that allows for a performance of a rarified level of linguistic competence by leaders, and an acceptance of the frequent unintelligibility of Ojibwemowin by both leaders and followers.¹⁰ The historical situatedness of the Ojibwe provides strong grounds for ethnic consciousness, and the ritualized performance of Ojibwemowin—even as a second language—becomes a salient feature of both self-regulation to a set of values and a critical consciousness of the larger social frameworks the Ojibwe are in presently.¹¹

INTRODUCTION TO OJIBWEMOWIN PERFORMANCE

“The emergent quality of performance resides in the interplay between communicative resources, individual competence, and the goals of the participants, within the context of particular situations” (Bauman 38). Adding to this, performance creates an emergent social structure that is consented to, created, and maintained through the ritualization of Ojibwemowin. The use of this “special code” establishes the social structure of the performance. The performer, through

embodiment of shared values and conformity to the expectations of audience—even as his speech goes by largely unintelligibly—takes on the position of leader even as he or she denies any social distinction at all.

We can see how the performance is keyed, both by the “special code” of Ojibwemowin as well as the implicit “appeal to tradition” of situating one’s self according to national, kinship, and spiritual identification (Bauman 17). Such an “appeal to tradition” becomes a standard to judge performance by, and smuggles in the assumption of a shared understanding of tradition (Bauman 21). The esoteric nature of much of the performance content disallows, to some extent, competent assessment by the audience.¹² The appeal to tradition, however, may be reinforced by this disparity, given the context of linguistic, historical, and in some sense “cultural” disassociations. Layered onto these disassociations, and perhaps giving these appeals even more power, are the political, economic, and social situations of the audience and performer. Those who are proficient in Ojibwemowin are clearly the leaders, even as they attempt to work against such hierarchy.

The relationship between the teachers and learners of the Ojibwemowin immersion camp can be encompassed in the term *persuasive leadership*. As I run through this topic, I see that in many ways I could have used the term *service leadership*. Among the Ojibwe, the term *ogimaa* (usually “chief”) encompasses ritual leaders, village chiefs, clan chiefs, and ceremonial leaders, often overlapping with the term *ogichidaa* (usually “warrior”). This shows that leadership can appear anytime that collective or cooperative action is necessary, and is not limited to the realm usually called *politics*—which is not to rob everyday social activities of political content. By the nature of their activities, their awareness of the status of Ojibwemowin, and their goals for a social movement based on Ojibwemowin, the Ojibwemowin teachers act as persuasive leaders.¹³

A leader’s efficacy is measured according to community values, encompassing everything from economic benefit to virtue to spiritual power. A leader acts in accordance with values as commonly understood by the group, demonstrating Bourdieu’s concept of embodiment (78).¹⁴ By this, speakers conform to an Ojibwe ideal, thus

riding dialectically between individual and collective identities. Bourdieu's concept of officializing strategies, whereby individual concerns are legitimized into collective concerns, captures an additional aspect of persuasive leadership.¹⁵

Through his performance, the performer elicits the participative attention and energy of his audience, and to the extent that they value his performance, they will allow themselves to be caught up in it. When this happens, the performer gains a measure of prestige and control over the audience—prestige because of the demonstrated competence he has displayed, control because the determination of the flow of interaction is in his hands. [...] *When the performer gains control in this way, the potential for transformation of the social structure may become available to him as well.* (Bauman 43–44, emphasis mine)

Further, leadership is demonstrated through ritualized performance. Leach deserves special remark here. As I am looking at situations that exist between and among different social identities, I keep in mind Leach's remark that "the maintenance and insistence upon cultural difference can itself become a ritual action expressive of social relations" (Leach 17). This foreshadows Barth, who writes how the agents of cultural change (leaders), when seeking wider social participation (followers), can use ethnicity for political mobilization (Barth 33–34). However, I am making a claim that focuses more on the small-scale symbolic exchange between leaders and followers, and the exchange between the Ojibwe and Ojibwemowin.

The leaders of the Ojibwe immersion camps are role models. They demonstrate cultural and linguistic competence that all participants can aspire to, as well as enact the values of humility and non-judgment—two important foundations of their conscious egalitarianism—in order to encourage participants to assume the role of caretaker of Ojibwemowin. This is done through the explicit permission granted to enter into a personal relationship with Ojibwemowin. From this personal relationship, each Ojibwe is able to interact with Ojibwemowin in ways that can even modify the language itself. For example, etymologies can be reinterpreted freely, provided the inter-

pretations fulfill other shared community values.¹⁶ As leadership is about the ability to forward a particular understanding of the world—from the linguistic to the sociopolitical—we begin to see how Ojibwe leaders are in the business of creating more leaders. Leaders activate and redistribute the embodied performative practice of sovereignty.

FROM INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION TO INTERNALIZED SOVEREIGNTY

Learning any language involves more than memorizing grammatical cases and amassing a vocabulary, contained in the learning of a language is the learning about a language—its place in the world and what it carries into the world. These are the ideas about the language, the language ideologies, which explain the status of the language, the proper use of the language, and its connections to identity. It is these ideas about a language that enter most readily into discussions of how to protect a language, how to teach a language, and what a language can teach us. These discussions can turn into debates in situations of competing languages, where one language is dominant over another, or when the use of a language is seen as intimately and inextricably connected to a particular identity (Calvet; Blommaert). Since science teaches us that no one is born with a particular language, but with an identical capacity for language (barring injury or other incapacity), and since every language is a complete system for expressing all ideas, then there is little scientific justification for preserving endangered languages beyond the pedantry of salvaging a taxonomy of language variation. Thus we are left on ideological terrain to defend these languages from being replaced or erased. I do not intend to belittle the terms of engagement by applying “ideology.” Rather, I celebrate the human capacity to invest their minds and spirits into language maintenance and revitalization.

On a personal level, Ojibwemowin is seen as valuable for individual identity and comfort with one’s self. Ojibwemowin is learned for use in ceremony and personal prayers. It is learned to gain personal insights into Ojibwe culture and history so that a parent can

pass information on to a child. To learn Ojibwemowin is to undo the pain and shame of being denied the language by school, church, or some other external force—both now and in the past. To learn Ojibwemowin is a matter of comfort in being Ojibwe, and valued as a mark of sincerity. Ojibwe language teachers are aware of the deep emotions surrounding Ojibwemowin, they are concerned with the emotional well-being of their Ojibwe students who have all grown up with a fear and a shame about the language brought on by its history and its place in a hegemonic order. Both students and teachers of Ojibwemowin will point out that they are learning and teaching Ojibwemowin for “future generations.”

The ritualized performance of Ojibwemowin is a critical social act. The strategies through which this social act becomes ritualized involve privileged distinction, marked most heavily through the use of the “special code” of Ojibwemowin. Additionally, this ritualized performance reveals power relationships within this Ojibwe social system and among the actors involved. The ritualized activity of the Ojibwemowin immersion camp welcoming feast does not simply replicate an existing social order within the small scale of the participants, but promises to transform the larger social order through creation of competent speakers as leaders by performing and demanding a higher linguistic competence in Ojibwemowin. Further, the symbolic exchange implied by a relationship of “care” for the language as a living thing overtly decenters as leaders the most linguistically competent participants. However, while this does covertly reinforce their domination as intermediaries, the overarching goal is for each participant to enter into a personal relationship with the living ally of Ojibwe sovereignty and revitalization—Ojibwemowin.

NOTES

1. A trapline is a route of subsistence trapping inherited through the father's line. “Nicickousemenecaning” is the official spelling, as evidenced on their road sign. It is rendered as “Nigigoonsiminikaaning” in the double-vowel orthography established by the missionary linguist Charles Fiero in the 1950s (Ningewance 30).

2. This script is available on the Ojibwemowin Zagaswe'iding, or Ojibwe Language Society at the university of Minnesota, Web site at <http://www.ojibwemowin.com>.

3. Most of the time when a participant adds spoken English to their introductory remarks, she or he apologizes for having to use English. Those who follow such an initial break with Ojibwemowin in their remarks almost invariably express their regrets at having to resort to English as well.

4. Here I add to Ochs by bringing language socialization into a new developmental realm—that of a political act, a critical act, and a conscious resocialization in opposition to mainstream social competence.

5. This is close to the classic dialectic of structure and agency. I distinguish identity from agency in order to highlight the creative social power of agents who consent to group values and group identities. Such identities are negotiated at an idealized level of unanimity among individuals that transcends time and space. It is not anti-individual, but the goal seems to be a de-emphasis of individual distinction in service to the language, culture, land, and people. See Pfister for a discussion of “individualizing Indians” as a goal of the American nation-state.

6. *U.S. v. Kagama*, 118 U.S. 375, 381–382, 30 L.Ed. 228, 6 S. Ct. 1109 (1886). “Many of the treaties with the respective Indian nations served to limit the sovereignty, rights and independence of the respective tribes. However, what is important is that there is a residue of sovereignty which remains inherent in these Indian nations which is exercised, not through powers delegated to Congress, but through the inherent power of the sovereigns. In other words, such treaties are ‘not a grant of rights to the Indians, but a grant of rights from them—a reservation of those not granted’” (Leventhal n.p.).

7. I use the classic Herderian definition of nation. This is the definition most adhered to by scholars in American Indian studies (i.e., Deloria), with a focus on the matter of national distinctiveness as a prerequisite for sovereignty. Alfred supports this necessary distinctiveness as a “self-conscious traditionalism” (Alfred 66), but does not support this concept of sovereignty. For a critique of the concept of “sovereignty” see Alfred 55.

8. 30 U.S. 1, 1831.

9. “Caring” encompassing “caring about” as well as “taking care of” Ojibwemowin. The most obvious demonstration of this “caring” is learning and teaching Ojibwemowin—especially to children.

10. The unintelligibility arises from different sources. Teachers may speak beyond the comprehension of the audience, and students may misspeak. It

is unacceptable behavior to laugh at or otherwise make fun of anyone who is trying to speak Ojibwemowin—especially children.

11. Barth defines ethnic memberships as a process of self-identification and ascribed identity by others (10–11). The use of Ojibwemowin is a clear indication of ethnic self-identification. To hear Ojibwemowin from a speaker fulfills the other side of ethnicity, the recognition of Ojibwe-ness by others. This is true across an ethnic boundary, differentiating Ojibwe from non-Ojibwe, as well as within Ojibwe communities (this becomes complicated when a non-Indian uses Ojibwemowin). Speaking Ojibwe with another Ojibwe, even without full comprehension between speaker and listener, situates the speaker within an ethnic identity while revealing a certain depth of belongingness. The use of Ojibwemowin has become a more important marker of ethnic identity, as evidenced in the increased use of Ojibwemowin in more public spheres from academic conferences, professional banquets, to the speeches of powwow royalty. Thus, the process of ascribed identification is not necessarily input from outside the group.

I am making a distinction between having a community, as a necessary but not sufficient condition for ethnic boundary maintenance, and making communal demands, which is an expression of an ethnic boundary brought on by conflict over rights, resources, and services within an objective social framework (Albers and James 12, 16), loosely the overlying bureaucratic structure of mainstream society's relationship to subaltern groups, mostly as expressed through state-level management of internal diversity.

12. Despite the uneven distribution of linguistic competence, the audience remains in a position of awareness, judgment, and even contribution to the performance through constant feedback and attention to the performer.

13. This is my label. If asked, they would say that they are "only teachers," maybe "advocates," but they would deny a position of leadership. For a discussion of leadership arising from ritual knowledge, see Glowacka.

14. Two characterizations of leadership in the Great Basin serve as examples. "Many Utes pointed to this man's munificence and fairness in allocating tribal resources, in ability to get along with several factions, in success in negotiating with federal and state authorities, and in affirmation of traditional values and customs such as the Sun Dance" (Clemmer 40). "Frank Temoke asserted his role of 'talker' and summarized the reasons for pressing for the return of land rather than accepting monetary compensation for the taking of that land, in terms of Western Shoshone tradition, myth, and religion" (Clemmer 43).

15. "Officialization [...] presupposes the capacity socially recognized in a public authority required in order to manipulate the collective definition of the situation. [...] To possess the capital of authority necessary to impose a definition of the situation, especially in the moments of crisis when the collective judgment falters, is to be able to mobilize the group by solemnizing, officializing, and thus universalizing a private incident" (Bourdieu 40). For aspects of persuasive leadership, again see Clemmer on West Basin leaders: "Their influence seems to have been based more on an ability to link their own personal activities with a past perceived collectively by the group in question that was in turn linked with a destiny which assumed the persistence of the social collectivity based on that perception of the past" (Clemmer 46). Thus we see Bourdieu's conformity of the symbolic capitalist.

16. As an example, for a discussion of the many folk etymologies of the term "Anishinaabe" [usually glossed as the Ojibwe name for the Ojibwe people], see Jones.

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INTERVIEW

“Planting the Seeds of Revolution”

An Interview with Poet Esther Belin (Diné)

JEFF BERGLUND

The landscape of my writing will always focus on our struggles, from my memory, what I witness in my blood coursing through my veins, and stories overheard in bar-talk. The will of my writing rises from shimá, as daily as her morning prayers in the gray hours. The hunger in my writing feeds from my journey homeward.¹

Esther Belin's powerful first book of poetry, From the Belly of My Beauty, has been out in the world for almost five years now and continues to wage a drive for peace, justice, and understanding. For Belin, writing is activism, activism is writing. Raised in Los Angeles by Diné parents who were part of a federal relocation drive in the early 1950s, Belin has forged a powerful contemporary voice, one of endurance, one deeply attached to Diné culture and language. This interview grows out of our continuing long-distance conversations that usually involve our work, writing, politics, and the futures of our children.

JEFF BERGLUND: I know you regularly visited your grandparents during vacations as a child, but since graduation from UC-Berkeley, you have lived and worked nearby the Navajo Nation, in Torreon, in Sante Fe, in Farmington, and in Durango. How have these years reframed your sense of your childhood? How have the last few years given you a different sense of the possibilities and/or limits of reservation culture?

ESTHER BELIN: I hate to admit how we re-live our parents' lives. I rather would like to believe I am still living my childhood in the sense that I am able to play and enjoy the pleasures of family and environment, and that I can still become the hero of my dreams. My current timeline is like a pot of mutton stew. And I, of course, am still simmering.

JB: As a poet with an activist heart, what experiences have recently galvanized your social or political intellect? Are there incidences or trends that alert you to the need for intervention?

EB: It is an everyday event—look at the California governor! [Arnold Schwarzenegger, elected after an unprecedented recall election in Fall 2003.] My gosh, I would have been up in arms rallying against his command. And of course the relationship Durango has with the local tribes, same ol' bordertown mentality. My intervention is at home with my four warrior daughters (ages 10, 8, 4, and 2)—that is how we are choosing to raise them, as warrior women, not aggressive but always aware that war is real and comes in many forms. There are both cultural and institutional wars. Our daughters are decoders and scouts.

Definitely, there is a difference. As original landlords, we're coherently creating change on our own accord and in ways that "American" culture acknowledges as activism. But we have also always protested in our own ways; however, too often, these forms of activism have been misconstrued as witchcraft or forms of savagery.

It is very difficult now to reimagine our ancestral forms of governing. Our world has caused humanity to outgrow our forms of governing, and we are approaching each other with new challenges like loss of language and blood quantum issues. In order for us to grow forward, we need to redefine ourselves as indigenous, because no matter how bad we want to believe we are still like *Dances with Wolves*, we aren't; we are so far removed, like lost teenagers rebelling. People don't like to hear that and they don't want to be responsible for dropping the cultural ball of preservation. Somewhere we were tricked into believing that we are no longer in a state of emergency.

JB: I know you were active as an undergraduate at the University of California, Berkeley, particularly during the efforts to implement

an ethnic studies component in the curriculum. Could you speak a bit about those efforts and the challenges and benefits of working among different constituencies?

EB: There, again, as indigenous students we struggled with identity and that caused a division although we all believed in the same principles universally—strange, I know. No one wanted to pour their hearts out to people, too proud I suppose, but I was taught to educate. I guess that pouring out of our hearts was education since, unfortunately, most people have no idea what Indian people are about. Working with the other student groups was great; they also understood our positions about being original landlord and let us lead or, rather, direct.

JB: Did your sense of activism stem from your own personal experiences or through a combination of your own intellectual enlightenment? In other words, were there any key readings or courses that opened your eyes?

EB: My mother is an activist, so I was raised with it. No one has to beat you over the head to see injustice happening before your eyes. Especially when I learned about Geronimo and Handsome Lake and John Ross and other early leaders, I realized we were always activists. That is the real history of the United States.

JB: Did writing lead you to activism? Or did your activism lead you to voice, then poetry?

EB: Activism to voice and my voice was always poetry—I don't like the limitations of punctuation. Belief is an action, like those Taoist writers that talk about the action of steam in a cup of hot tea, that natural act becoming a form of resistance, yet beauty.

JB: Your personal inscription in my copy of *From the Belly of My Beauty* says "This writing goes beyond the page. I hope you see it walking around someday." How is writing activism for you?

EB: Well, as Diné, to not be participatory would risk laziness which is practically taboo. Writers are scouts since many are privileged to have studied in institutions for higher learning. We are writing not only so that others may follow but also to provide guidance of the territory ahead. Revolution is natural, it is the form that needs to be nurtured.

JB: Do you feel pressure to balance "art" or "poetics" and politics? Did you receive such pressure in writing classes?

EB: No pressure in balancing, just lots of encouragement to voice from the heart or rather from the blood. Our lineage is filled with art and poetry and politics—essential to existence.

JB: Does the publishing industry or the creative writing industry (writing programs, writing workshops, literary events, writing journals, and so forth), condition writers to avoid politics?

EB: Yes and no. I suppose it is all in the approach; you can achieve this with a smooth approach—for me politics is so intertwined in my words I don't think I could not be political. At the same time, I am not an in-your-face writer, that's not my style.

JB: I know you are involved in the arduous process of deepening your knowledge of written and spoken Diné. Is this a political action in your eyes? Could you speak a bit about your long-term aims? How does Diné Bizaad infuse your writing in English? Could you explain your strategies for making use of untranslated Diné in some of your writing?

EB: Yes, you know politics is all about speaking the right language. It is truly a personal goal, and I dream about using the language fluently. Just translating one Navajo word into English is a poem, so complex. I discuss that in the Ruby poems, especially in "Ruby in Me, #2":

From the marrow in my bones
sometimes sucking it dry
tapping mother's milk

Then re-supplying
injecting words found along the spine of my structure
to re-
member from my own vessel
my way home
re-
living words prickly
re-
locating out of my mouth in spit.

Like petting a cat
Ruby meows²

Now I'm using Navajo words as dialogue and most people get the drift and in discussion we talk about it. And beauty also—I enjoy listening to different languages. No one has given me any advice but I've been teased about my “cheap” Navajo accent. I have received some suggestions on spelling but that is up for grabs really. That is what I would like to research—linguistics and creating a syllabary.

JB: How can you make young people interested in reclaiming their language and their culture? How can you make young people interested in poetry? What strategies do you employ in the classroom?

EB: I believe they already are interested. It is the way poetry is taught that makes them lose interest. The power beneath the words, and history, that is what makes it so amazing, and young people love the show aspect—slams. They have it all inside them; it is just as simple as laughter. With my writing students, I like to do physical, interactive movements, goofy things like blocks. I use media and my own poetry to build up a discussion. Sometimes music.

JB: Are there writers you admire for their activist roots and engagement? As a young reader, did you look for your own reflection in “the mirrors” produced by other writers?

EB: Maxine Hong Kingston. Angela Davis. June Jordan. Amiri Baraka. Emily Dickinson—her images, I lost myself in her imagery, very powerful to me in high school.

JB: Any advice for young activist writers, native or otherwise, about bearing the mantle of activist? Sherman Alexie, for example, jokingly speaks about “developing carpal tunnel” bearing the burden of his race—in part, for being expected to do such and such as a native writer, more than anything.

EB: I believe since tribal people have the tendency to remain tribal, especially in thought and lifestyle, they are inherently activists. It is part of our blood: we choose to be caretakers, we choose to notice that our landscape has changed, just as we choose to become addicts of chemicals or media. Not all of us are meant to be warriors, yet again we choose to “warrior-like” ourselves that the media feeds off. Shortly after *Dances with Wolves* was released, it was very cool and, in many ways, safe to be native. Many people fed off of that simulated image for Indians. Sadly, for some, it was their only connection.

It is easy to yell and cuss and hate and further create chaos, but transforming all that into beauty—that's what writing is intended for. I always get low blows about writing things down and not following oral tradition—oral tradition is great but I am a writer, I enjoy perfecting my words on paper and playing with language, and yes, of course writing is an aspect of the oral tradition, but so is comedy and that is not me either. I have enough burdens of my own to carry. I write for my children mostly these days.

JB: Just as your public persona as a writer affects your activist engagement, so perhaps has your personal life. You and your husband, Don, have four daughters. How has motherhood and family life—dual careers—affected your activist sensibility? How has motherhood affected your writing life?

EB: My activism is geared at their education in the public school system. Parents have the power to change the curriculum and the school board agenda. I think I always wrote with the future generations in mind and now that impulse is constantly stimulated. I don't think I will run out of content.

JB: This may be a corny segue, but you'll forgive me: would you talk about giving poetic birth to your rich, beautiful, and sometimes uncharming, but truth-seeking, character, Ruby?

EB: Ruby is GI Joe for females. The action figure that kids play with and take on adventures and stick in their pockets along with stones and twigs and bubblegum and found pennies. She is part of the small treasure of childhood.

JB: What does Ruby allow you to explore?

EB: She has no limits, as with children's imagination, dirt hills become castles in the sky—that is her point of entry, very straight in her talk, and yes she is aware of her environment, but in order to be a viable member in a community, ownership has to occur. A personal stake often entails stirring things up. Her approach is a type of therapy—directly confronting her ghosts, as in "Ruby's Welfare":

Standing in line
after being told
Indians don't stand in line

'cause a Kiowa woman at window #6
helps the skins

Time passes me
still in line

Man at window #1
tells me welfare is a luxury
and how come I don't have a job
check the time
I smile
place my forms in the box marked
LEAVE FORMS HERE
black black and bold
welfare is a luxury
place your form in our box
play by our rules

I laugh
sit
smoke a Virginia Slim
and talk to the spirits

People talk about luxury
but what they mean is obligation
to remain lower class
for food
\$5.15 an hour
doesn't feed three

Again
I check the time
light another Virginia Slim
not finished with the spirits

Luxury
the U.S. forgot the definition
forgetting who allowed them to create the U.S.

obligation of treaty
 honored through
 HIS and truckloads of commodos
 luxury over extended
 obligation 500 years behind

Ready to light Virginia Slim #3
 I'm called by window #6³

JB: Does Ruby have a back-story beyond that which you've shared in your published works?

EB: Possibly, but I tend to view her as a musical box with a dancing ballerina: there's certain things you can expect when you open the box but you never can tell of her adventures once the box is closed.

JB: What has Ruby been up to lately? In Minneapolis in April 2004 I heard you read a newly composed Ruby poem that revisits the subject matter of "Ruby's Answer."

EB: I saw her son, and I see her every once in awhile riding her bike. Her picture was in the paper. She is going to culinary school at a community college. "Aftermath" is the Ruby poem you heard:

"You were right."

Ruby loved being right
 she'd take on any bet with the remotest chance for righteousness
 vanity often tickled the wild hair up her ass
 justice makes her dance

Ruby slyly replies, "I know," and turns to face a white woman
 with a squirming child

Ruby caught off guard stares at the steel gray eyes
 and politely smiles
 the child has eyes so bright and clear they can
 forecast the weather

crystal clear blue skies hinting of a storm brewing
 children can do that
 they can show weather patterns

just by looking at their eyes

The woman broke Ruby's grin

"It's been a long time."

pause

"I thought I'd never see you again."

the woman gently laughs

"You probably don't remember me . . ."

Ruby cuts her off

"No, no, you're right, I never thought I'd see you again,"

pause

Ruby adds, "time has done you well"

acknowledging the child

and that was all

they understood each other

13 years had done them both good

Ruby's heat boils over

although her stew perfected

the meat tender

the broth nourishing

Ruby knows

the map on her face identified more

mountains and valleys

volcanoes and ocean

asphalt and yellow paint

solid as her stare

and ready

for a change in climate⁴

JB: You mentioned earlier that "ol' bordertown mentality." Every day in bordertown newspapers such as the *Arizona Daily Sun*, the *Gallup Independent*, and the *Durango Herald* there are reports about crime, birth rates, STDs, educational achievement, and so forth. Little attention is ever paid to socioeconomic contexts or more complex federal relationships that are definitely connected to these issues. It's obvious that non-native news sources avert the public from true sol-

utions to real problems. Do indigenous-sponsored news sources provide this contextualization or build the momentum for change?

EB: I was thinking about this today. I so enjoy the luxuries of “American” culture just as I enjoy the luxuries of being Diné. As a tribal person, you have to identify with the negative as well as the positive side. It is interesting that “Americans,” most times, do not identify with the negative part of their history. In that sense, they never learn from their mistakes and circulate only the exaggerated stories about Indian Country. Tribal papers are doing great things but they are viewed almost solely as special-interest.

The generalization of a people happens all the time; look at what is going on in Iraq. It is very simple to suggest character for others, and I always wonder if that is just a side-effect of the English language, you know, to dissect, rather than relate. I suppose it is sometimes easier to fit into molds rather than use my energy to break and rebuild. It seems my writing does that on its own.

JB: This next question comes out of my own disenchantment with the sometimes off-kilter world of academia, particularly within fields related to American Indian peoples. I see the day when Ruby wanders into an academic conference focused on American Indians. What would she have to say to these academics?

EB: I think what a lot of us say, “Why are all those white people still talking about us?” There is revolution in literature, yes, but I have been to a limited number of conferences, and revolution has not been on the agenda so far. I have seen it in the hands that pull the slot machines, the eyes that acknowledge people’s shadows, that instinct mumbled over all-you-can-eat buffets.

JB: I also see the day when she wanders onto a movie set, say, one of the Tony Hillerman adaptations of his “Navajo” mystery novels—did you see *Skinwalkers* where there were palm trees on the rez? What would she say to these folks?

EB: Ruby’s first impulse, of course, would be to ask for a part in the film because she is the most appropriate actor for the role of “mysterious and gorgeous Indian woman of all time,” in fact, she has the tendency to transcend time because that was her grandmother’s legacy. And it is all a ploy, she couldn’t desperately need that \$200 per

day non-union wage that bad. She really wants to get in with Wes Studi and Adam Beach to plant seeds of revolution, to levitate the trailer Tony Hillerman sleeps in, twist into the grotesque monster we choose to become. Yes? Are you still with me?

JB: Still with you [laughing]. What forces or elements in your life gave you inspiration, prevented you from becoming such a “grotesque monster”?

EB: I enjoy honesty, although it is hard to digest and eventually becomes waste. Who is to say what motivates people? All I know is that I was loved as a child, and that is what I recall most. If I try hard enough, I see the bars on the cage. I don’t recall the bars being a hindrance, but I have seen them. That is the same way I write, how my path became a path. I am blessed and for most of my journey in this world, I have walked in blind faith. Of course, we are influenced by environment but we have to be told to be limited by that; perhaps no one ever told me.

NOTES

1. “In the Cycle of the Whirl,” *From the Belly of My Beauty*, 85.
2. *From the Belly of My Beauty*, 41.
3. *From the Belly of My Beauty*, 43–44.
4. This poem is from the forthcoming work, *Home Is Where the Flavor Is*.

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Belin, Esther. *From the Belly of My Beauty*. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 1999.

CREATIVE PIECE

Taku

LORETTO L. JONES

Taku Inlet was a wild place, with cascading ribbons of silver waterfalls, and beautiful, white sandy beaches where deer brought their new fawns down from the forest to lick the salt from the smooth rocks; however, there was another side to this fjord that only those who lived there knew. Tlingit Indian tribes had named the inlet Taku which translated out to “killing cold north wind.” Indian legend also spoke of the water spirit of Taku as a hungry woman bent on revenge for the loss of her son who had been changed from a man into a whale by an angry Shaman who was scorned by the woman during courtship. Local fishermen understood the inlet as a treacherous body of water when strong winds from any compass point raged. They respected the ever-changing weather conditions in the inlet, keeping their marine radios tuned to the weather channel, knowing if the Taku winds did begin to blow, the chance of reaching a safe harbor was remote due to the towering walls of solid rock that surrounded the inlet. Hard life lessons were taught here, and, although the inlet was beautiful, lives had been lost to the greedy, frigid waters of Taku leaving families to mourn.

Radio conversations from commercial fishermen south of Taku fishing in Stephen’s Passage reported a massive school of sockeye salmon headed northward toward the inlet to their home spawning grounds in the silt bedrock of the river. These reports brought the fishing fleet from as far south as Ketchikan and out of the northern inlets to set their nets in hopes of intercepting the high dollar blue-backed sockeye salmon. Area fishermen from Juneau knew from past

experiences that this week, tempers would be short with all Southeast boats converging in the inlet.

Seven McDaniel was the captain of the Small Fry, a small gillnet boat haling out of Douglas Island across the bridge from Juneau, the capitol city of Alaska. She was a dark Cherokee beauty with a thick mane of black hair tied back in a long braid down her curvaceous back. When she packed groceries down the ramp heads turned with many men offering to help her. Ever since the drowning death of her husband, David, she had turned a stone heart to any advances. It was as if she had built a brick wall around herself to keep love out. David was her first and only love and it was the Taku Inlet who had taken from Seven what she had most treasured. Now she was running their boat with a fierce independence, never wanting to lose again.

She had heard the endless radio talk from the boat's radio since she and Sean had pulled out of Douglas Harbor before dawn Sunday morning. Sean Nelsen, the eldest son of a fishing family, had just lost his father in Taku Inlet last winter and Seven had lost David to the sea two winters ago. His mother had pleaded with Seven to take him along this trip hoping the beauty of the inlet would take his mind off of his father's recent death as well as help him gain needed experience at sea. Next opening he would be the captain, responsible for payments toward his family, boat, and permit. Without his help, his mother and he would lose the family boat to the bank.

The weather had started to change for the worse early that spring, with more storms predicted, and with so many vessels competing for space to set their fishing gear, the inlet had become a combat zone of aggressive fisher folk and rough seas. Seven had agreed to take young Sean. Bad weather and hungry fishermen vying for the best spot to fish was no place to fish alone. As they motored up the middle of the inlet early Sunday morning toward Taku, Seven turned to a grim Sean who now was a very reluctant part of the Juneau fleet. She watched as he focused the binoculars on the massive granite rock wall, watching for an open spot for them to claim. In the background, the sound of gunfire echoed as boats jockeyed for the best position along the inlet's favored beach sets. Warning shots were part of the game of bluff and dare, which had become commercial fishing now that salmon per-

mits were worth seventy-five thousand dollars. Seven was not sure Sean had the determination to be an aggressive fisherman or even the desire, yet here he was. She had begun to regret bringing him along, yet he was Nelsen's son and now her responsibility. He looked so much like his father that she had to look away to speak.

"This will be one of the worst openings for bad weather and hungry fishermen. The weather guessers are calling for gale warnings all three days. British Columbia's forests are on fire and as warm as it is now, we're sure to get bad weather. I see the Petersburg fleet is here. Damn, is that the boat, Resource? Make sure the twenty-two is loaded, Sean."

Sean had never talked much even as a small boy; now he just nodded his head and reached for the gun. Taku Inlet had been Seven's home fishing ground ever since she came from Oklahoma. Fishing the boat she owned brought an intense pride and sense of belonging to the Juneau/Douglas fleet. Something she had never had back in Oklahoma. No outside boat from the lower forty-eight or other Alaskan fishing villages were going to come in to this territory without a fight. At noon the fishing started aggressively with the Small Fry tucked tight between Petersburg boats. Sean would set the lengthy gill net back off the stern and Seven would keep a close eye on the radar observing the agreed quarter mile distance as she steered a course. Sets were fast and aggressive for thirty-six hours straight. Sleep was a commodity fisher folk never had enough of in the summer months when the salmon raced back to their fresh water streams to spawn. Seven and Sean took turns setting the net through the night. Dawn found Sean, covered in stinging red jellyfish, pointing at the Washington boat to the direct west that was inching into their territory, using the incoming tide to his advantage. Seven turned the boat hard to starboard sticking the barrel of the rifle out the porthole to let the interloper know they were watching. The Washington boat swung back abruptly without a shot fired.

By morning nothing had changed. Boats were still fighting for net space while the massive school of salmon kept coming. By noon, Seven was worried about a weary Sean.

"You OK? Want me to throw lead awhile? We've got twenty-four hours left. I don't want to kill you off."

Seven smiled thinking how hard it would be to hurt the six foot two hundred pounds of solid muscle. After the net was in the water, she took him a coke and sandwich. They watched the white corks bob as fish smacked into the transparent nylon net which served as a gossamer curtain weighed down by the heavy lead line.

"Think we're going to fill the boat's hole by nightfall? I . . . maybe, can make the first boat payment, ya think? Mom would sure like that," Sean mumbled this hope between mouthfuls of sandwich.

Looking up at the sky, Seven saw dark, building cumulus clouds moving fast down the Taku River Valley.

"Your dad would be proud of how hard you worked this opening. You're just like him," Seven said handing him another sandwich.

Sean smiled for the first time since his father's passing and looked out over the calm water. The last two days of fishing had been phenomenal, with ideal weather conditions. They sat quietly watching the other boats maneuver, resting as they ate. They had twenty-four hours remaining before the fishing opening closed.

Suddenly the wind started to howl out of the north. The sea swelled with six-foot waves within minutes, and Seven was thankful they were still attached to the net. As they started to haul it aboard, she watched boats pick up their nets quickly then head for Taku Harbor, a natural haven to the south. Troller's Cove was a much closer anchorage tucked deep within a crevice of the west wall of the inlet. Her boat, the Small Fry, was underpowered and now, with the heavy burden of salmon in her holds, was sluggish. They couldn't outrun any big weather without the chance of sinking.

Hauling the two-hundred-fathom net aboard with frigid ten-foot walls of seawater crashing over the stern, they were drenched as they pulled the fish from the net. Working quickly with thick seaweed, squirming salmon, slapping stinging jellyfish, and seawater up to their thighs and into their eyes, Sean would grab two fish at a time from under the turning drum to prevent the glut of incoming ocean from stopping the hydraulics and blocking up the scuppers. If the water couldn't flow out the scuppers, they would go down by the sheer volume of seawater that endlessly crashed over the stern. Seven started throwing slimy salmon into the cabin for ballast since they no

longer had room in the fish hole. She knew they were in trouble with still a quarter of a net full of salmon out, but she would not cut the net free. Turning a net loose could foul another boat's propeller, leaving it powerless and at the mercy of the sea. That, and the chance of the phantom net killing sea birds and other mammals in a stormy sea, made cutting the net unacceptable. Seven made a silent plea to Taku.

Finally, with the net securely on the drum, they sloshed their way to the wheelhouse to begin the short run to safety. With a heavy following sea, the small boat was shoved viciously like a rowdy child's toy in a chaotic bathtub. It was pitch black as they wallowed to the cove's narrow opening. Seven could see no other mast or running lights inside and played the bright spotlight over the sheer rock walls as she turned the boat toward the entrance; the boat rolled drunkenly with each four-foot wave hitting hard broadside. Tense, Seven shouted at Sean, "Get out. Ready to throw the anchor on my go. No time once we're there."

Sean nodded his head deliberately, slowly, as if he were in a dream, started gradually to the bow.

"Now!" Seven screamed out to the wind's eye as they were swept violently into the tiny opening of the cove.

Sean's lucky ball cap was whisked off into the darkness as he held on to the boat with one hand. He frantically began untying the stiff, salt-coated rope, which held the anchor in place. As they rounded the point of the cove, the wind abruptly stopped and the boat floated quietly. Seven searched the wall with the spotlight looking for enough space to throw the anchor out. The radar showed they had five feet on all sides. Not much room for error. Seven shouted and Sean threw the anchor over. Relief was written all over his ashen face as he crept, shivering, back to the wheelhouse. Seven slammed the boat in reverse to secure a solid hold so if the wind did shift during the night they would not drag anchor.

They had been without sleep for forty-eight hours, loaded thousands of pounds of salmon onboard the Small Fry, and for the last hour had fought to stay afloat. They would have to take turns at anchor watch in case the storm shifted. Seven was wide-awake living on adrenaline and fear.

"Sean, get some shut-eye. No telling what's going to happen next. Hey, want a whiskey? You look like you need it."

It was then she remembered. Sean's dad had been blown off the bow of the crab boat he was crewing on in Taku Inlet. He had never been found. My God, she had just sent him out without a thought. Seven felt sick.

"Ya, whiskey's good. I was sure scared out der. I never wanted to fish. Dad said I had to, it was in my blood."

He took the mug and sipped the hot toddy quietly. He looked up at the old brass barometer his dad had given Seven at the potlatch after her wedding to David. David was of the whale clan and Sean remembered the dancing and laughter of all of their relatives that day. Everyone was happy over the union. After David's death, Sean's dad had found an angry Seven drunk on the Small Fry, with a forty-four pistol in her mouth. He had stopped her from pulling the trigger and had brought her home that night. Sean remembered the sound of raked sobs as his mother held Seven in the spare bedroom. Because of his dad's death, Sean knew loss and thought he understood the pain David's death had caused Seven. He hadn't wanted to go with Seven this opening, but his mom reminded him of family obligation and that he was a mixed-blood like Seven. It didn't matter what kind of Indian, Norwegian and Haida Indian was something to be proud of, his Nordic father had always said, as he'd lovingly look at his wife of thirty years. Seven, a lower-forty-eight mixture of Indian and Irish, had known her parents only too well and had lit out early away from the abuse. With David gone, the Nelsen clan was her only family.

Seven sipped her drink thoughtfully thinking how young Sean seemed to be contrary to this fishing blood belief then said, "You know . . . your dad and the way he died . . . I'm sorry about tonight . . ." Seven stammered. Sean nodded. "Your dad knew you hated fishing. He was saving up for your college education. He loved you, your mom, and fishing in that order, but he died doing what he wanted, crazy as that sounds tonight. Isn't it funny? He'd tell me I needed to go back to school and get my degree after David died. And Sean, he never got past sixth grade! *A fishing boat ain't no place for a woman,*

he'd say. *They be bad luck on a ship.*" Seven rolled her eyes as she mimicked Nelsen's thick Norwegian accent.

They both laughed until they're they were out of breath. She poured whiskey into her coffee cup then hoisted herself to the pilot seat to begin anchor watch. After a clumsy bear hug, Sean went below to sleep. Seven settled in to watch the storm.

The night was jet black with the wind howling through the boat rigging. Beyond, white caps of spray were blown horizontal to the mountainous ocean surface. Out in the inlet, Seven could barely make out a lone red light, which meant a fishing boat still had a net in the water. No one should be out in this weather she thought as she watched the boat's red mast light pitch erratically back and forth. The tide was ebbing fast. Soon the boat would be out past Taku in very heavy seas. She watched the storm build in intensity and entreated to old Taku for that boat as well as for her safe passage. The anchor held and both were able to rest.

The aroma of coffee filled the fo'c'sle as dawn broke. Fog shrouded the inlet, making visibility zero. Setting the net was going to be tricky. They puttered out of the cove with Seven's eyes alternating between the radar screen and the calm gray sea, a sharp contrast from the night before. As Sean set the net, they watched the corks bob on the silt-colored mirror looking for fish sign. While Sean cleaned salmon out from the living quarters from last night's episode, Seven returned a call on the marine radio from Bobbi, another lady skipper. They were talking about the storm when Bobbi unexpectedly asked, "Have you heard about the Humpback whale caught in a gillnet last night during the storm? The Coast Guard is monitoring its location. Seven, can't you cut the poor creature out of the net?"

Seven envisioned herself jumping into the glacier fed inlet next to a thirty-foot drowning whale and told Bobbi no, firmly. They talked about the inevitable fate of the whale then signed off. The net had been soaking for an hour. Seven pulled on her raingear then went to the back deck to begin hauling it aboard. The gear came in as a water haul, empty. The salmon run had stopped. The mental picture of the whale haunted her. Sean watched her unsmiling face and knew, with-

out words, why. Such a magnificent swimmer wild and free now wrapped in a shroud of death. Then it occurred to Seven, the fishing boat that had tossed so wildly in the storm last night surely had left the net out to act as a sea anchor then once around the point to safety, had cut it loose. Out in the whale-road, during the storm, the whale must have swam into it.

She tied the orange buoy ball that marked the end of the net to the stern rollers and headed the Small Fry toward Pt. Arden where the whale had last been sighted. Sean didn't have to ask where they were going. He understood Seven and the connection to the whale clan. The fog was impenetrable. She steered cautiously, looking at the image of the shoreline on the green radar screen as Sean took his position on the bow looking for the whale. Then came the silent appeal from across the water. It was as if the whale was calling her. They steamed past other boats, still fishing, until they saw a floating mass of net balled up. Moments later they came upon the exhausted whale encased in a tight, nylon coffin. They could not bear to watch her feeble efforts to breathe. Sean helped Seven into her dry suit as they both watched her struggle to stay afloat. The Coast Guard hailed the Small Fry on the marine radio's channel 16. As the fog swirled, they could make out the dim outline of the patrol boat a quarter of a mile to the south. Seven was informed the Humpback was federal property and the responsibility of the United States government. During the radio conversation with the Coast Guard, other fishermen would cut in saying that the whale belonged to no one and if they, the Coast Guard, were unable to help, then they should give assistance to a fisherman who would. Seven and Sean watched her exhausted attempts to maneuver with her graceful flippers, useless now because of the web shroud, which surrounded her enormous body. The patrol boat pulled alongside, but they were unable to communicate due to the wind. Seven motioned for them to come aboard. The spokesperson of the raft informed Seven the government would not be responsible for her safety. She glared at the young man telling him time was running out because the weather could change at any moment, further delaying efforts to save the whale.

Sean, who had been sharpening knives stood then and said quietly

holding the sharpened six-inch blade high, "The whale can't breathe. We need to cut her loose, now."

He then zipped up Seven's dry suit. The young biologist smiled and nodded as he reached for Seven's hand helping her onto the Zodiac. He turned to Sean and said, "We'll get the whale out. Thanks for the knives."

As they motored on, Seven slid up to the bow of the Zodiac, so when they got close, she could grab the cork line. The Zodiac operator killed the outboard motor as the raft gently bumped into the whale's broad back. Leaning over the side, Seven began to saw the cork line apart. As the cork line parted, freeing the whale to breathe, a huge gush of air mixed with saltwater and whale breath drenched the crew of four bringing a joyful cheer.

Now came the difficult task of cutting away the nylon web that held the whale captive. On next contact, Seven lay on the whale's warm, smooth, gray back. She was able to look into her large, infinite eye as she cut each nylon mesh apart. The intelligence and warmth there assured her the whale knew their intentions were to help. Just as she had called Seven in the fog, she would let her know when she had to submerge. The biologist and Seven would barely clear the web away from the Zodiac before the whale would sink slowly below the surface. Moments later she surfaced again, about fifty fathoms away. Catching up to her, they continued the slow meticulous effort to clear the web away from her head, being careful not to cut her delicate skin. Working together, they made considerable progress on the tenth try draping a tangled mess of net they had cleared over the Zodiac side. As she sank again, the web clung to the oarlock causing the Zodiac's side to be pulled under. The cameraman and skiff operator became frantic, climbing to the elevated side of the raft. They, unlike the divers, had no dry suits to protect them from the frigid water. They scrambled, as the cold water seeped into the struggling, sinking raft as the biologist and Seven desperately tried to pile the net overboard.

"Make her come up!" he yelled.

Incredulously, Seven looked at him. "I can't MAKE her do anything," then readied to jump for the swim to the beach.

As if the whale knew their peril, she rose again briefly, slowly giv-

ing them time to free themselves. Again she sank, this time accidentally taking the hand held VHF marine radio with her in the entangled trailing web. That radio was their only link to the patrol boat and Sean in the ever-present drifting fog. They had no way of letting them know of their location. Occasionally Seven would see Small Fry appear from the fog then disappear. It was a new comfort knowing Sean was there. Seven was now very glad he had made this fishing trip with her. The tiny crew briefly discussed their communication predicament and voted unanimously to follow the whale deeper into Taku Inlet. Seven knew Sean would follow.

Free from the net, the whale was much stronger and appeared bent on a purpose, occasionally surfacing, which made staying close to her difficult. She was heading straight for Greely Pt., a notorious reef that at low tide showed ruined nets of the many foolish fishermen who had set too close. They were in their eighth hour attempting to free the net from the Humpback whale. Being in and out of the icy water, both Seven and the biologist were beginning to feel the effects of hypothermia. Swiftly the whale sounded. Seven was shaking so hard she could barely retrieve the radio before the whale submerged again. She handed it to the cold, blue-lipped biologist. They sat numbly for an hour watching until a numb Seven realized they were close to the reef that juts out from Greely Pt.

"I need to get back to my boat. The whale is headed to the reef to finish pulling the remaining lead line and web off her flukes."

The biologist grinned as he put his arm around her for mutual warmth and said, "Yeah, and you're not talking to the whale or anything..."

They both laughed, as they motored back to the Coast Guard boat with Seven promising to call the handsome biologist when she got back into port. For the first time in two years, Seven thought she probably would make the call, go to dinner, maybe even... she blushed deep when he blew her a kiss. Back aboard the Small Fry, she trembled into dry clothes. Sean handed her a cup of soup and told her the Coast Guard boat had radioed him saying they were staying behind awhile longer to see if the whale would surface again. She sipped the steam-

ing cup as Sean Nelsen steered toward Juneau. Something was different. Was it his permanent smile or the way he watched the sea?

"We did good. I know that, ya? This fishing is good, not always bad. We filled the boat. Big pay day!" Then quietly, Sean asked, "Seven, did you talk to whale?"

"Geez, Sean, I don't know how to describe that. Sure there's a connection, but how I don't know. It was strange, like a silver thread of the past linked to the present that told me without words what to do. I remember your dad, David, and I would sit for hours talking about a divine link between the Haida and Tlinget clans to the sea mammals. They studied the many legends and spiritual beliefs of your mom's people. Your dad was big on Vikings, Valhalla, and the ancient Nordic myths, too. He's the one who told me the story of crazy old Taku. I never go into that inlet without asking her for permission, though. Talk about superstitious, and I'm not even Haida! Your grandparents probably know all that stuff."

Then, without warning the whale breached in front of the boat. Sean pulled the control full astern so as not to ram into the colossal mammal. The tail came up and they could see fresh ribs oozing blood, but no web remained. The whale was headed for the freedom of the open ocean. They stood stunned, silent as the boat drifted, then it was gone. Sean looked at Seven in open-eyed wonder as she stood looking where the whale had slid effortlessly back under the sea.

There was the change in Sean. All the way into Juneau he was animated. Excited with ideas of where to fish next week, what net he should drag down from the loft, and would he ever see the whale again.

"Dad would know the right color to use and you, Seven, what size mesh and will ya go glacier gray next week? I'll work the code out tonight so's we can keep track of how many fish we're catching, just like you and Dad did. OK with you?" He smiled broadly and sat erect in the Captain chair. Seven dared not ask him to move from her seat as they entered the harbor.

She walked out on deck as the boat backed into the stall where the Small Fry tied next to the Raven, the Nelsen's boat. There stood Sean's

mother, waving happily as they slid in. Sean killed the engine then walked out on to the deck. His mother was amazed. He was running the boat. Seven leaped down to tie off to the cleat. She watched Sean approach his mother with a new confidence that only comes from within. As for Seven, she knew there was more than one reason why Sean went fishing with her. His company and laughter had made the trip more than a commercial business venture. Chunks of her brick wall had started to crumble as she watched Sean enter manhood leaving the past behind. He had enough to make the bank note, and Seven knew she'd let go of David for good.

Seven thought of the legend of Taku, the hungry old woman and her son the whale. How strange this week had been, so filled with risk and the fear of loss. Yet she and Sean had come away from the inlet with more. And there was the whale. Had Taku heard her pleas? Had she sent her son to help? Boy, Seven said to herself, I am slipping into the crazy supernatural stuff, then ran to catch up with the Nelsens who were walking up the steep ramp. Sean was telling his mother the whale story when unexpectedly old Mrs. Nelsen turned around to face Seven. Her weather-lined brown face crinkled into a face of joy as she took Seven's hands into hers.

"You see now what my man Nelsen keep telling you about Taku was real! You must believe. Did you ask her? Look what she gave you! She smiled on you and Sean today. I am so proud of both of you! You bring that biologist over for dinner tonight. We'll have halibut cheeks to celebrate!"

She patted Seven's hands and turned to step over the ramp's edge onto land. Seven was dumbfounded. How had she known about the biologist? She hadn't said a word to Sean.

As Sean helped his old mother into their old truck, Seven walked toward Louise's, a favorite neighborhood bar where fishermen had a habit of going to wait their turn to sell their fish at the local cannery. First, though, she would get on the cannery's waiting list. It was then she saw the hated light-green government truck of Fish and Game pull into the harbor lot. Thinking it was a boarding or a fish cop out to bust someone, she turned to go back down to the boat to get her

paperwork in order in case it was she who was about to be boarded. The truck drove past her, kicking up dust and parked next to the ramp. Out jumped a good-looking man dressed in jeans and a red flannel shirt. He looked directly at Seven then started to stride toward her. Seven stopped. It was the biologist. He had crossed the bridge between Douglas Island and Juneau and had found out where she was tied up. How did he know that? Seven wondered as she watched the now familiar face break into a smile.

"Hello! I didn't give you my phone number." He was next to her in the next moment extending his hand then, almost shyly, he said, "I don't even know your name . . . I had to see you again."

They shook hands and Seven said, "I'm Seven McDaniel and you are?"

"Robert. Robert Jackson. Can I buy you dinner?" He kept holding her hand.

"Robert, I . . . ah . . . sure, but I've, we've, already been invited to the Nelsen's for dinner. How did you find out where my boat was tied up?"

Changes were happening fast and Seven was confused.

"When we got back into port, I borrowed a friend's truck who works for Fish and Game to try and find you. When I was pulling out of the parking lot an old Indian woman walked up to the truck. She told me a lady fisherman was tying up over in Douglas Harbor and needed to get hold of me, but didn't know my name. She told me how to get here. She was really old. Do you know her?" He looked puzzled.

For a moment Seven was confused then remembered Mrs. Nelsen's gentle scolding. "Yes. Yes, I do. That's Taku. You're right. She's very old. You hungry?" Seven did not let go of Robert's hand.

"Sure! After all that work, man, I'm still cold! Where you want to go?" Then as an after thought, "You're something. The whole experience of the whale. I'm really glad I met you." He smiled. Nervously, Seven looked down to her boot's toes.

"Me too. I'm eating with my family tonight and your invited." Seven looked up then, shy at first then into Robert's green eyes.

"Then let's go. I got the truck for the night."

Seven let go of his hand and recoiled. "Me, ride in a Fish and Game

truck? I'd be run out of the fleet for tyranny!" Seven laughed, as Robert scooped her into his arms and said, "Hey, I'm one of the good guys, remember?"

Standing in the parking lot, Seven felt as though her life was jump-starting all over and hugged Robert tightly then let go.

"OK, just kidding. I'll get in. It's the yellow house up on the hill," she said pointing. They walked to the truck, laughing and he opened the door.

"I'm glad to know you Seven McDaniel." He looked at her closely. "I'm normally not so forward, I just . . ."

"Hey, let's eat and celebrate the whale's freedom. You like halibut cheeks?" Seven said with a gentle smile.

"Never had that," he said as he walked around the truck, climbed in, and started the engine. "I'm glad I found you." Robert looked serious.

"You need to thank Taku." Seven believed the legends and myths of Taku now and knew how the old woman mingled lives together like the colors of a tide rip merge together. Seven looked toward the steel gray inlet as they drove up the hill to the Nelsen's home and quietly whispered a thanks to the drifting mist for her good fortune.

Book Reviews

Mark St. Pierre. *Of Uncommon Birth: Dakota Sons in Vietnam*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2003. 320 pp.

D. L. Hirschfield. *Field of Honor*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2004. 224 pp.

Scott Andrews

Of Uncommon Birth by Mark St. Pierre, the author of *Madonna Swan: A Lakota Woman's Story* and *Walking in the Sacred Manner*, depicts the lives of two young men—one white, one Lakota—from South Dakota who lead very different lives before enlisting in the military during the Vietnam War and who enlisted for very different reasons. Once in Vietnam, their experiences are very similar, marked by close friendships, doubt, bravery, and suffering. The biggest difference in their experiences: The young white man, Dale, survives; the young Lakota man, Frank, does not. Frank dies in Vietnam, earning a posthumous Silver Star for his efforts to save fellow soldiers in combat. (The book concludes with a list of all the American Indian soldiers who were killed or listed as missing in action.)

One might read such a book to look for the differences that race, class, or community made in the lives of the soldiers depicted. Dale and Frank clearly have different backgrounds and different reasons for joining the military. Dale lives a middle-class life of relative privilege, and he drops out of Iowa State University to join the military

from a sense of duty to country. Also, he does not feel strong conviction about plans to become a veterinarian, and without that sense of purpose, the only reason for staying in college is to avoid the draft, which strikes him as cowardly. Dale's dilemma highlights the fact that he has so many options, whereas Frank joins in order to escape an unhappy home life and what he perceives to be a dead-end existence on the reservation—despite being the handsome lead singer of an Indian rock-and-roll band, being chased by all of the pretty girls, and performing his music on a local TV station. (The attention to detail with which both their lives is drawn is appreciated, as we see each as being influenced by and the product of various forces within society but neither conforming neatly to stereotypes.)

Dale and Frank meet at basic training and become instant rivals and friends, becoming tandem leaders of their unit. When they take the military's placement tests, though, they are treated differently. From their performance in basic training, one assumes they would have scored equally well, but Dale is encouraged to become an officer while Frank is not: "Said I scored real high, said I should think about being a helicopter mechanic or going to jump school" (72). Dale declines officer's training, but he is selected for advanced infantry training and he becomes a sergeant before arriving in Vietnam; meanwhile, Frank goes as a "grunt," a regular foot soldier. One wonders how much race influenced Dale's selection over minority soldiers such as Frank.

However, despite the different routes by which they arrived in Vietnam, their experiences there are similar. If Dale is treated preferentially stateside, he does not escape any combat in Vietnam. He and Frank serve in different units, but they see equal amounts of action, suffer the loss of friends, become leaders of their units, and serve with equal valor. One difference in their experiences that results from their different backgrounds is the source of their disillusionment. Dale is weary of the death that surrounds him and the guilt he feels for surviving. Frank feels those things, too, but his Lakota identity adds a dimension missing from Dale. He identifies with the Vietnamese as fellow natives fighting colonizing forces. He also realizes he is fighting for a country that does not treat men equally once they are out of uniform.

Frank tells a soldier, "You white boys got a world to go back to. If I make it back home it will be to poverty and racial bullshit" (190).

This last point raises one of the dilemmas of St. Pierre's chosen format. Novelizing the events he has researched leaves readers wondering when they are reading the actual thoughts or words of Frank and when they are reading St. Pierre's. Frank's conversation with that soldier was not recorded, so is it reconstructed from letters and interviews, or is it wholly or in part speculation from St. Pierre? The book is neither entirely fact nor entirely fiction, though St. Pierre says it tells "a true story" (274).

An interesting aspect of St. Pierre's book is the role of women. Much attention is given to the relationships Dale and Frank have with mothers, sisters, and lovers. The women are sometimes the cause of stress but also inspirations for good conduct and for returning home. Much of the literature of the Vietnam War is marked by its misogyny, and it is refreshing to read of men who seem just as concerned about honorable conduct toward women as their conduct in combat. (This is not to say they always make the right choices, or that they are as innocent as choir boys.)

The only thing *Of Uncommon Birth* has in common with *Field of Honor* by D. L. Hirschfield is that their central characters serve in the Vietnam War. And that is not saying much, as the Vietnam War is only of tangential importance to Hirschfield's novel, which is a mixture of picaresque, science fiction, Rambo-spoof adventure, and anthropological and political satire. The several plots are too complicated to detail in a brief space; *SAIL* readers probably will be most interested in the chapters involving the Vietnam War veteran's time spent in a secret underground city of Choctaws (and some saucy Natchezes) in Oklahoma. P. P. McDaniel is a Marine Corps deserter who is perhaps paranoid and delusional, and he has been hiding from the government for years in the hills of Southeastern Oklahoma. He runs when military forces invade his sanctuary, and he accidentally stumbles into an elaborate Choctaw city that has existed underground for generations. He gains notoriety there, as outsiders have never found their way into the city before, but he must be educated as a child, since he does not know Choctaw language or history. Here

Hirschfield, author of *The Oklahoma Basic Intelligence Test*, has much fun with history from a Choctaw perspective and the anthropological study of Americans—whom the Choctaw deem Germans. Their perceptive misunderstandings of American history poke fun at the misunderstandings of tribal histories and cultures by German—American anthropologists. The novel is quick-paced (nearly manic at times), but it may frustrate some readers as none of its various plot lines are resolved; the hero is always off and running again before we can learn the final answer to any question the novel raises.

Blanca Schorcht. *Storied Voices in Native American Texts: Harry Robinson, Thomas King, James Welch and Leslie Marmon Silko*. Indigenous People and Politics. New York: Routledge, 2003. 172 pp.

Ellen L. Arnold

As Arnold Krupat points out, the term “oral tradition” has become a “catchall phrase,” often expressing a “vague [. . .] nostalgia for some aboriginal authenticity” without reference to “historically and culturally specific instances” (38). In defining his term “anti-imperialist translation” to conceptualize parallels between Native American and more fully “post” colonial literatures, Krupat argues that to read a native text as “an instance of cultural translation,” one must demonstrate “how that text incorporates alternate strategies, indigenous perspectives, or language usages that [. . .] make its ‘English’ on the page a translation in which traces of [. . .] the ‘Indian’ can be discerned” (38). Blanca Schorcht’s study *Storied Voices in Native American Texts* makes just this case for the traditional stories of Harry Robinson (recorded by anthropologist Wendy Wickwire) and three contemporary novels—Thomas King’s *Green Grass, Running Water* (1993), James Welch’s *Fools Crow* (1986), and Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead* (1991); using specific historical and cultural examples, Schorcht demonstrates with careful precision the perspectives and strategies that make these texts powerful examples of cultural translation. However, Schorcht chooses not to frame her study within postcolonial theory, agreeing with Thomas King that to do so

“assumes that the starting point for the discussion [of Native literature] is the advent of Europeans in North America” (qtd. in Schorcht 4). Schorcht argues that these three novels *resist* postcolonial readings; rather, they are rooted in oral storytelling traditions, and as oral story-telling cycles such as Harry Robinson’s have done since contact, translate European/American English into a “Native English” that re-defines and recontextualizes non-native influences in terms of native worldviews.

Storied Voices originated as Schorcht’s 1999 doctoral dissertation at the University of British Columbia under the direction of Robin Ridington. Schorcht relies heavily on Ridington’s work and a wide range of other ethnographers and literary critics—including Julie Cruikshank, Dennis Tedlock, Jeannette Armstrong, Margery Fee, Gerald Vizenor, Hayden White, and the ubiquitous Bakhtin—to develop an interdisciplinary and border-crossing exploration of relationships between oral storytelling and written native literature. Her introduction, “Listening to Stories,” uses an analysis of Harry Robinson’s stories and conversations with Wendy Wickwire to build a theory of reading contemporary native literature cross-culturally as a continuation of an oral storytelling mode. Schorcht lays out the following questions, which systematically structure the book’s four chapters:

What happens to our reading when Native literatures are read from within the context of ongoing indigenous oral narrative traditions? What happens if we read those traditions as already inherently novelistic? How do orally told stories connect with the process of writing? How do traditional stories found in novels explicitly connect past and present as aspects of contemporary Native reality? And, finally, how do Native authors maintain the dialogic fluidity of oral storytelling performance in written forms like the novel? (4–5)

Challenging a tendency to equate language and culture, Schorcht demonstrates that Robinson, King, Welch, and Silko use a “Native English” that must be contextualized within native cultural narratives and conceptual categories to be read cross-culturally.

One of the significant contributions of this book is its introduc-

tion to the stories and commentaries of bilingual Okanagan storyteller Harry Robinson (1900–1990). Chapter 1, “Recreating the World Through Story,” examines Robinson’s ten-year collaboration with Wendy Wickwire, beginning in 1977, to record his stories, some of which were published in *Write It on Your Heart* (1989) and *Nature Power* (1992). According to Schorcht, these collections comprise the “first comprehensive body of traditional Native stories where the storyteller has provided his own translations,” as well as instructions on “how he wants us to think about Okanagan linguistic categories and cultural experience” (5, 3). Schorcht focuses on stories’ “continuity as social process” to demonstrate how Robinson theorizes his world and experience through narrative (34). She makes the case that Robinson’s story cycles are inherently novelistic, breaking down the opposition of oral and written narrative.

In the remainder of the book, Schorcht draws detailed connections between story cycles like Robinson’s and the three novels. Chapter 2, “Theorizing the World of the Novel,” takes up Thomas King’s *Green Grass, Running Water*, suggesting that the way King incorporates native storytelling traditions and reworks them in relation to “high literature” is directly influenced by Robinson. Schorcht shows how King also employs narrative as theory, bringing together Western and native theories in a dialogic interaction that translates Western canonical texts into the context of a Blackfeet Coyote creation story and a “coyote epistemology” (70).

In chapter 3, “Recovering the World: Western Fictions,” Schorcht examines how James Welch’s historical novel *Fools Crow* retells the Marias River Massacre from a Blackfeet point of view to explore relationships between history, story, and language, in the process recreating the Blackfeet world of the 1860s and “a Native phenomenology predicated on dreams and visions” (108).

Chapter 4, “Prophesying the World Through Story,” reads Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead* as a recreation of the Mayan *Popol Vuh*, a retelling of “the epic exploits of the Hero Twins as they journey through the Mayan Underworld of Xibalba” (109). In a richly detailed comparison of the novel with Mayan texts and cosmologies, Schorcht shows how the novel refuses categories such as story, history, and

prophecy, and the separation of past from present realities. A conclusion, "Emerging Stories," reiterates the main points of the study, argues for the necessity of reading self-reflexively across cultures (citing Greg Sarris), and adds an analysis of Schorcht's own reading process.

Storied Voices in Native American Texts is most valuable for its effective shift in perspective that foregrounds native theories and categories and attempts to build a culturally dialogic theory and practice of reading arising from the literature itself. Also very useful are Schorcht's detailed demonstrations of how culturally-specific oral narrative traditions work to structure these important novels formally and thematically. However, to my mind, Schorcht does not make her case that the novels resist postcolonial readings, and failing to consider their "anti-imperialist" aspects limits her study in a way that oversimplifies these complex novels. The book's most significant shortcoming is Schorcht's failure to contextualize her work in relationship to the work of U.S. critics similarly engaged in articulating indigenous-centered literary theories—such as Robert Warrior, Craig Womack, Kimberly Blaese, Kimberly Roppolo—or to culturally dialogic critical models such as Krupat's ethnocriticism or James Ruppert's cultural mediation.

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Bud Hirsch

We've heard the question, been asked it often by students and colleagues, in department meetings and casual conversation, have even raised it among ourselves: "What is Native American literature?" Is it determined by author ethnicity, subject matter, particular aesthetic

features, ideology, some or all of these? Robert Dale Parker does not answer this question, but he does offer an insightful take on it. Native American literature, for him, is involved in an ongoing process of self-definition, one with a deeper, more extensive history than most contemporary criticism seems to recognize. Such criticism, he maintains, “concentrates on material published since the late 1960s” and affords “little sense of the history of Indian literature or the scholarship about it, let alone the cultures it comes from” (viii). He would rectify this oversight by providing “an interpretative history of the ways that Indian writers drew on Indian and literary traditions to invent a Native American literature” (1).

“Interpretative” is of course the key word here, and in his first chapter Parker establishes the grounding and parameters of his criticism. The “recent explosion of interest in understudied writings,” he tells us, is stimulated by “urgent social motives” and as a result, some critics consider aesthetic matters, if not irrelevant, secondary to political ones (2). For Parker, however, aesthetic and political concerns are inextricably related, and to see them in binary terms undermines both the artistic integrity and social significance of Indian literature. After all, he tells us, there’s “nothing necessarily artistic in cultural identity, but in the act of expressing itself cultural identity takes on aesthetic form” (3). He therefore insists “on the aesthetic value of Indian literature together with its identity as Indian” (3).

He does not, however, argue for a Native American aesthetic. Rather, he agrees with Duane Niatum that “there is no Native American aesthetic, in the sense of a specifically native form, but there are tendencies and topics” (12). Looking through “a historical lens,” examining “a history of ways that Indian writing expressed itself as literary and as Indian,” Parker identifies four recurring topics which “in overlapping ways address gender, sexuality, stereotype, and the appropriation of Indian cultural and intellectual property” (3). These are: “young men’s threatened masculinity, the oral, the poetic, and Indian cultures’ aloof negotiations of what the dominant culture understands as authority” (3). These topics and their interconnection, he asserts, provide the basis for “a new history of the aesthetics of Native American literature” (4–5).

"Threatened masculinity" occupies the next two chapters, on John Joseph Mathews's *Sundown* and D'Arcy McNickle's *The Surrounded* respectively, novels about "restless young men with nothing to do" (5). Both novels were written in the 1930s, and Parker reads them against the backdrop of Depression-era social history and in terms of the specific historical circumstances of the Osage and Salish peoples. Labor, economics, and gender are the focal points of these chapters. Both *Sundown*'s Chal Windzer and *The Surrounded*'s Archilde Leon absorb the "non-Indian colonizing ideologies" of their day which define masculinity in terms of work and self-reliance (2). This definition glosses over such issues as racism and social inequality, to say nothing of cultural disparities, which deny many individuals access to opportunity, and plays into the defensive, self-serving Western über-narrative of the "ingeniously progressive" white man and the "dreamily regressive" Indian (29). Mathews and McNickle see this all too clearly, and their penetrating social criticism lays the groundwork for future Indian activism, but each in his way is trapped by white narrative. "Neither novel," in Parker's view, "can imagine the ideological equipment that might merge living Indian culture [...] with an economic restructuring that resists colonization" (20). As a result, their "pessimistic lament draws dangerously on the myth of the vanishing Indian" (45-6).

Neither Mathews nor McNickle subscribe to that myth, but its presence casts a long shadow over their efforts to deal realistically with the circumstances of their people at this historical juncture. In a sense, this remains a problem for contemporary Indian writers as well. As Parker says, "To face the reservation's suffering squarely can risk reducing it to its suffering," and that risk is the concomitant result of the pervasiveness of such stereotypes as the drunken, shiftless, and violent as well as the vanishing Indian (72). By the same token, those who argue for the merit and value of Indian culture and lifeways often fall into another trap, that of assessing merit and value in terms of Western cultural predilections. This is the substance of Parker's fourth chapter, for me, the highlight of the book.

In chapter 4, Parker looks at orality as "a lever for the invention of Native American literature" and the "translation of stories into 'poetry'—an invention of Indian literature that happens not to be writ-

ten by Indians" (80). Though respectful of the groundbreaking work of Dell Hymes and Dennis Tedlock in the translation of oral narratives, Parker recognizes a "social ideology of genre" implicit in their argument that Indian stories are in fact poetry (84). Their work emerged at a time when "Romanticized ideas of 'the Indian' and romanticized ideas of poetry" converged to create a "surprisingly uncritical reception of [. . . their] claims" (84). By claiming to discover "poetry" as the true nature of Indian narrative and asserting the value of such narrative on that ground, Hymes and Tedlock "misconstrue the social relation between power, genre, and value" (84–85). Unaware of, or at least underplaying, the "metaphoricity" of their identification of oral narrative and poetry, they canonize Indian narratives at the cost of assimilating them "into the very canon that scholars of traditional Native American oral literature are supposedly using them to change" (95). Parker is thus led to conclude, not that translators should refrain from transcribing oral poetry in whatever form they find appropriate, but that they should avoid making unwarranted claims of accuracy and authenticity, claims which presuppose a static, underlying discoverable truth consistent across variations" (99). Parker's argument throughout the book is that Native American literature, on its own terms, matches the best canonical literature and need not be validated by Western notions of value.

Rather than claiming authority, it is the "disavowal of authority" that, for Parker, characterizes Ray Young Bear's poetry (114). In a fine chapter on this outstanding yet under-appreciated poet, Parker explores both the Meskwaki cultural roots which are the foundation of Young Bear's poetry along with his "frank commitment to the screeching present of Indian life" (102). The Meskwaki, Parker writes, "have a history of tenacious cultural and linguistic independence" and "prefer to keep their culture to themselves" (102, 103). Young Bear's poetry must therefore perform a delicate balancing act between what can and cannot be said and often "ask[s] us to rest in uncertainties, in 'not knowing'" (107). His authority as an "Indian poet" is expressed through what Parker calls his "modesty," his very refusal to claim such authority (114).

The penultimate chapter of Parker's book harkens back to the ear-

lier chapters on *Sundown* and *The Surrounded*, but more, it subsumes his concerns about orality and poetry as well. Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* and Thomas King's *Medicine River* occupy this chapter. Parker sees Silko as working in the tradition of Hymes and Tedlock in that she "sees the confluence of orality, poetry, storytelling, and Indianness as a way to invent and sustain Indian literature" (134). As for King, while not the first Indian writer to reconceive masculine identity and construct "more flexible alternatives" than those to which Mathews and McNickle seem resigned, he "can reinvent the possibilities for masculinity and, what's more, he can relax about and even tease the reinventions" (155); also, like Silko, King's narrative structure in *Medicine River* derives from oral storytelling (156).

Parker concludes his study by asserting the importance of seeing Native American literature as "an invention rather than a natural category" (183). He would avoid the construction of an essentialist aesthetic and the kind of canonicity that multicultural writers and scholars have long opposed. He maintains that a "complacency has woven itself into the advocacy of multiculturalism, along with a self-congratulatory quietism that dulls the critical edge and disruptiveness" (184). Parker would agree with Gerald Vizenor that disruption is necessary to restore that edge, to resist the impulse to prescribe and proscribe from a position of presumed authority. If we must devise systems, as it seems we must, each system should "not only represent what it systematizes but also advertise" its limitations (186).

Certainly, Parker's work is open to several criticisms. More texts and writers, for example, might have been considered to add more heft to his argument, and though he justifies his exclusive focus on seminal works by the writers he treats in terms of "their roles as bricks in a larger structure," the inclusion of later works by Silko and King would better demonstrate the dynamics of the process of invention which he perceives as characteristic of Native American literature (17). His readings of the texts he considers are insightful, but not always persuasive. I agree with his general take on *Sundown*, for example, but question his easy dismissal of all positive readings of this novel. Though he emphasizes that, in his failure to grasp the possibilities of Osage culture, Chal's "vision is much narrower than the

novel's" (50); Parker tends to distinguish very little between them. I would quarrel, too, with several aspects of his readings of *Ceremony* and, especially, *Medicine River*, and in any case the section on these novels offers little that readers haven't seen before. Still, *The Invention of Native American Literature* raises crucial questions about how we read and interpret this literature and in so doing it does what any good critical study must—open doors of perception, introduce us to new ways of seeing which compel us to rethink what we know. Parker does not answer the question, "What is Native American literature?" But, after all, that's his point.

Brian Holloway. *Interpreting the Legacy: John Neihardt and Black Elk Speaks*. Boulder: UP of Colorado, 2003. xvi+ 220 pp.

Frances W. Kaye

Interpreting the Legacy is an attractive book with many useful facsimile pages of the transcripts and manuscripts relating to *Black Elk Speaks*. Holloway undertakes an exploration of Neihardt's role in the book as a literary text and particularly of the ways in which Neihardt transformed the transcript materials into the published book. Yet Holloway's work is not as helpful to *Black Elk* readers as one might wish.

Holloway is most useful in his literary analysis of the text as a collaboration between Nicholas Black Elk and John Neihardt. A major problem with his analysis is that he leaves out consideration of the third collaborator, Black Elk's son, Ben, who provided translations of what his father said in Lakota. Although it is hard to identify Ben's contribution, since no record of the original Lakota exists, from a literary and linguistic standpoint, Ben's work was extraordinary. He had been educated in English at Carlisle, which had simultaneously attempted to wipe out his use of Lakota. Before the interviews, he apparently knew very little of his father's early career as a visionary and healer. Yet Ben apparently provided an instantaneous translation with few requests to his father to clarify or restate his words. Thus the stenographic accounts and typescripts of them, prepared by Nei-

hardt's daughter Enid, recorded Ben's English word choices and sentence structure, not Nicholas Black Elk's. Holloway hardly takes Ben into account, beyond quoting Neihardt as saying that his own task "requir[ed] much patient effort and careful questioning of the interpreter" (64).

Holloway's attempt to defend Neihardt from readers who question the extent to which Neihardt may have corrupted or compromised Black Elk's story is also unsatisfying. After a careful look at what Raymond DeMaillie, Julian Rice, Michael Steltenkamp, and Clyde Holler see as Black Elk's status as a religious interpreter or innovator, Holloway asks critics to perceive Neihardt, also, as someone whose "spiritualities [. . .] surmount and embrace different traditions" (15). Fair enough. Certainly Neihardt was in his own right a mystic who had been fascinated by his study of eastern as well as Native American religious traditions and was much less a conventional Christian than Black Elk himself, who had, after all, served as a Catholic catechist. The myths that mattered most to Neihardt, however, were the Mediterranean ones, including the fortunate fall and the Greek myths centered around the *Iliad*. Holloway correctly points out that in both *Black Elk Speaks* and the *Cycle of the West* Neihardt rhetorically and directly portrays whitestream society as morally inferior to Lakota society. This is a familiar, even indispensable convention of the "Noble Savage" myth, central, for instance, to Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*. More important, in terms of Neihardt, is the role of this rubric in the *Iliad*. Hector and the Trojans are far more decent human beings than Achilles and the Greeks. As David Young has pointed out, Neihardt's death of Crazy Horse is based on Homer's death of Hector. For both poets, the conquest of the morally superior but technologically inferior people is a tragedy but a *fortunate* tragedy, necessary for the creation of a new and better empire.

Holloway is also disconcertingly vague in terms of whom and what he is defending Neihardt from. For instance, pointing out that Black Elk controlled many aspects of the interviews with Neihardt and continued to correspond with the Neihardt family, Holloway concludes "This is not the picture of a helpless old man being 'colonized' by an invading unsympathetic outsider" (76). No, it is not. Nor

has anyone said it is. Julian Rice, as Holloway notes, has been extremely critical of Neihardt for imposing a Christian view of the fortunate fall on the defeat of the Lakotas, but his criticism is far more nuanced. Michael Steltenkamp, on the other hand, accuses Neihardt of discounting Black Elk's Catholicism. Who is Holloway talking about here and in his other jabs at Neihardt critics? Also, one of the most influential contemporary critics of *Black Elk Speaks* and Neihardt's role in its creation is Sherman Alexie, whom Holloway never mentions at all. No matter how sympathetic to Neihardt, a reader cannot evaluate generalized arguments by unnamed critics.

The most troubling aspect of *Black Elk Speaks* for me and many other readers, however, is the ending of the main text, before the postscript. This is by far the most often cited passage in *Black Elk Speaks*, the part about the "people's dream" dying in the "bloody mud" of Wounded Knee. Holloway claims Neihardt "created [this passage] using the imagery and tenor of Black Elk's telling" and reads it as the final ascent of despair but also as "a nonethnocentric, nonpatronizing version of hope: from bad times will come good" (168). I am not convinced by that reading. Black Elk ended the interviews with his marriage, two years after Wounded Knee. Neihardt ends the body of the book, coinciding with the transcripts, with terminal words—"ended," "over" (171). The most optimistic words are "dead" and "died." Inkтоми can come back to life after dying, and death can bring rebirth. But "ended" is a linear term. Hoops and circles do not end. The enormous popularity of this short section of *Black Elk Speaks* and its resonance with all the "vanishing American"/"Last of the Mohicans" clichés indicate that if Neihardt did intend this ending to be read as just a necessary part of the cycle of life, death, and rebirth, he failed, despite the hope of the postscript.

Interpreting the Legacy is most useful for the textual analysis Holloway performs on Enid's typescripts, Neihardt's manuscript, and the final printed text. The long facsimile passages, as Holloway points out, allow for a nuanced reading of what Neihardt contributed to the form of the collaboration. Although the interview transcripts, edited and published by DeMallie in *The Sixth Grandfather*, are closer to what Black Elk originally said, I know from my own teaching experi-

ences that Neihardt's rewriting and editing make Black Elk's ideas far more accessible to non-Lakota audiences. Holloway's book helps explain *why* this would be, though it is not useful for the arguments over *if* this should be.

Marjorie Weinberg. *The Real Rosebud: The Triumph of a Lakota Woman*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2004. 86 pp.

Harvey Markowitz

Among the many unintended consequences of nineteenth-century assimilationist Indian policy was its tendency to split native communities into several, ideologically opposed factions. Comprising one of these divisions were individuals whom federal officials labeled "blanket Indians" because of their staunch resistance to all government efforts at "civilization and Christianization." At the other extreme were so-called "progressivist" Indians who repudiated their native cultures and values for those of Euroamerican society. Falling in between these two camps were tribal members who, for pragmatic and/or philosophical reasons, attempted to construct bridges that would allow Indians to operate in both worlds. Though sometimes lumped with progressivists, persons belonging to this last group were quite often involved in a complex form of "cultural brokerage" that was grounded in the traditional Indian belief that individuals should utilize their gifts for the welfare of their communities. Such brokers generally conceived of their contributions to Indian interests in terms of the two interrelated goals: first, that of replacing predominantly negative stereotypes of Indians with more accurate and sympathetic images and, second, that of discovering ways that would allow present and future generations of Indians to become part of the national mainstream without sacrificing their identity as Native Americans.

In her new book, *The Real Rosebud*, Marjorie Weinberg tells the story of three generations of Sicangu Lakota cultural brokers—Chief Yellow Robe, his son Chauncey, and Chauncey's daughter "Rosebud"—describing in six brief chapters their commitment to bridging the cultural chasm between the Indian and white worlds. As the

book's title suggests, however, Weinberg is principally interested in describing Rosebud Yellow Robe's pursuits and "triumphs" along these lines.

Born in Rapid City, South Dakota, on February 26, 1907, Rosebud was the eldest of Chauncey and his Caucasian wife, Lillian's, three daughters. Shortly after Rosebud's arrival, Chauncey confided to his former mentor and friend, Captain Richard H. Pratt (founder of the Carlisle Indian School), that he and his wife had assumed that their first child would be a boy, and thus had neglected to consider any girl's name. It was "only as he was writing a letter to his father, on the Rosebud Reservation, that he decided Rosebud would be a fine name for his firstborn" (28). Chauncey also enrolled his daughter at the agency and saw to it that she was allotted 160 acres of reservation land.

However, in spite of her ties to the reservation, Rosebud seems to have spent very little, if any, time there. In fact, she appears to have derived most of her knowledge of traditional and contemporary Indian life from her father and from tribal elders who visited the Yellow Robes in Rapid City.

After graduating from Rapid City high school Rosebud enrolled at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion, but was obliged to return home after one year to tend to her terminally ill mother. Notwithstanding the brevity of her career, she gained local and national notoriety for being a "Sioux Indian and a relative of Sitting Bull" and by staging a program of Lakota dances in which she dressed in male attire and performed the hoop, rabbit, and war dance. As a result of this publicity, she was offered a leading role in Cecil B. DeMille's film *Ramona* and a walk-on part in Eddie Cantor's Broadway show, *Whoopee*, both of which she declined.

Following her mother's death in 1927, Rosebud decided the time was ripe to try her luck on the New York stage. However, under the guidance of her manager (and soon to be husband) Arthur Seymour, she instead developed a night club act of American Indian dances which she performed in "a stylized Indian costume." Her career took yet another turn when a new manager booked her to lecture on In-

dian myths and customs at the American Museum of Natural History. These appearances eventually led to her twenty-year engagement (1930–1950) as the director and star of a recreational project at Jones Beach called the Indian Village. Here Rosebud would entertain and educate children and adults from Long Island and New York (including the author) about Indians by telling stories, singing songs, directing Indian games, and teaching handicrafts, including how to make war bonnets.

During her years at Jones Beach, Rosebud also appeared on and scripted radio and television shows about American Indians. In 1991, *Las Vegas Sun* reporter Ed Castle authored two articles in which he theorized that Orson Wells had derived the name of the famous sled in *Citizen Kane* from Rosebud, conjecturing that the director must have seen her name on the daily sign-in sheets at the CBS studio where both of them were working.

Following the closing of Jones Beach, Rosebud continued to lecture throughout the New York area on American Indians. In 1989, the University of South Dakota presented her with an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters for her work to preserve and promote understanding between Indians and whites. She died on October 5, 1992, at the age of 85.

Slight as it is, *The Real Rosebud* has many things to recommend it. The most important of these is its portrayal of the sense of commitment that the Yellow Robes brought to their mission of building bridges between the white and Indian worlds. When Rosebud stated in 1992, “My parents were the inspiration for what I have achieved. They learned to live in two worlds, Sioux and White, and won the respect of both,” one can sense the emotional depth of these words (5).

However, the book has some critical shortcomings. One of the most significant of these is its failure to develop adequately the social, ideological, and emotional world of American Indian cultural brokers such as the Yellow Robes. Acting as mediators between Indian and white worlds commonly brought with it some very unpleasant fallout. By placing themselves betwixt and between, these bridge builders made themselves the targets of abuse and recrimination from whites

and Indians who opposed their irenic agenda. The emotional toll of this kind of hostility could be devastating, leading such mediators to bouts of pessimism and doubt concerning their chosen mission.

The absence of this sort of information is particularly glaring in the chapters dealing with Rosebud's life. It is all very well for the author to quote her as saying that "There are no problems [. . .] only solutions," but we never get any real sense of what these supposed "non-problems" were and how Rosebud faced and "solved" them (4). Given her tenuous relationship with the reservation after which she was named, did she ever struggle with issues of identity? How did she feel about making such compromises as wearing a "stylized" Indian costume during her dance performances or a war bonnet (which no traditional Lakota women would have done) at Jones Beach? Did everyone, everywhere always respond to her efforts with accolades and paeans? If so, it certainly makes the word "triumph" in the book's subtitle ring a bit hollow.

The Real Rosebud is a diverting, effortless read that leaves open more questions about its subject than it answers.

Dean Rader and Janice Gould, eds. *Speak to Me Words: Essays on Contemporary American Indian Poetry*. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 2003. 294 pp.

Molly McGlennen

There has been a lack of critical attention toward Native American poetry to date. As editors Dean Rader and Janice Gould of *Speak to Me Words: Essays on Contemporary American Indian Poetry* note in their introduction, only a handful of book-length texts are devoted entirely to native poetry, despite the burgeoning field of Native American literary criticism, and despite the extensive attention to Native American fiction, autobiography, and oral traditions. As *Speak to Me Words* shows, native poetry needs its own critical studies because the poets are developing a site of unique native discourse as well as a forum to continue the fight against prejudice and injustice. While native poetry often has a minimal presence at conferences and in college

classrooms, *Speak to Me Words* labors to fill this gap and lay the groundwork for subsequent critical attention to contemporary Native American poetry. In this way, it is a book of beginnings. It respects poetry's demand for astute close reading and honors the spirit that native poets invoke through their creative expression.

Because of the enormous task upon which *Speak to Me Words* embarks, the breadth of its coverage of native poetry as a genre is overwhelmingly varied; however, despite the diversity of approaches, the essays each note similar notions of native poetry's power and healing capacity. *Speak to Me Words* reflects upon as many trajectories of native poetry as the text's space allows: Fourteen essays in all, not including Rader and Gould's dialogical and candid introduction, the collection includes older essays alongside brand new ones (for example, Simon Ortiz's well-known 1993 essay "Song/Poetry and Language—Expression and Perception" beside Robert Nelson's new essay "Dawn/Is a Good Word: Naming an Emergent Motif of Contemporary Native American Poetry"), female and male voices, and native and non-native authors. What is more, eight of the fourteen essays are exclusively about native *women's* poetry; three of the authors identify as Two-Spirit. At its very best, the essays in the collection provide criticism that recognizes the significant distinction of native poetry as a genre. The authors analyze what the poetry is doing both *because of* and *in spite of* the fact the poetry is written by native people.

Each essay in the collection explores how scholars of Native American poetry are not only reading, discussing, and analyzing the work, but also how native poetry is positioning itself alongside and distinct from the American canon. Eric Gary Anderson's essay, "Situating American Indian Poetry," complicates notions of genre that stem from Western literary traditions and asks "can American Indian literature be properly and best taught, critiqued, and understood by way of non-native categories such as genre?" (34). His essay goes on to address hard questions about what characterizes native poetry, showing how the writing itself collapses western constructs while expressing its primary concern: to give back to and sustain community. Janice Gould's "Poems as Maps in American Indian Women's Writing" illustrates native women poets' preoccupation with mapping as

well as the significance of cartography as a tool to restore balance and allow healing. In acknowledging the spirit in poetry, Gould is not alone. Marilou Awiakta's "Daydreaming Primal Space: Cherokee Aesthetics as Habits of Being" examines the use of native knowledge as a means to—once again—live "poetry as a habit of being" (61). Carter Revard's essay "Herbs of Healing: American Values in American Indian Literature" argues how Native American poetry not only stands up against the Western classics, but also how it adds to this canon by taking poetry one step further: native poetry has the power to cure. Other essays in the collection utilize specific tropes and motifs in order to situate native poetry; for instance, Daniel Heath Justice's "Beloved Woman Returns: The Doubleweaving of Homeland and Identity in the Poetry of Marilou Awiakta," utilizes Cherokee basketweaving, while Janet McAdams' essay on Carter Revard's poetry studies the new space "angled mirrors" create.

What's more, by pairing previously published essays from the 1980s and 1990s alongside essays written specifically for the collection, one can note the progression and advancement in critical writing about native poetry. For example, in "Ain't Seen You Since: Dissent among Female Relatives in American Indian Women's Poetry" (published originally in *SAIL* in 1983), Patricia Clark Smith states, "I think we have come to a time when it is both possible and compelling to ask whether there is something that might be called a contemporary American Indian 'way' of writing poetry" (107). And in "Answering the Deer: Genocide and Continuance in the Poetry of American Indian Women" (from *The Sacred Hoop*, 1986), Paula Gunn Allen demonstrates ways in which native poets bear witness to racial destruction while creating means to "survive in the face of collective death" (144). While both essays appear dated in ways of articulating native poetry's importance and presence, they are nonetheless the bedrock upon which a new generation of scholars are building fresh critiques and criticisms. Dean Rader's essay initiates a new genre, the "epic lyric," in order to pose types of indigenous literary theories that will help scholars better read native poetry in a way that "embraces inclusion as opposed to exclusion" (126). Rader argues that "because the epic lyric both adheres to Western literary conventions and ex-

plodes them, and because its bicultural blueprint enables it to reside in both Anglo and native spaces, it engenders a unique kind of poetry that demands a theory of reading as unique and inclusive as the genre itself" (128). In addition, Quo-Li Driskell's "Call Me Brother: Two-Spiritness, the Erotic, and Mixedblood Identity as Sites of Sovereignty and Resistance in Gregory Scofield's Poetry" challenges familiar and stereotypical constructions of gender and identity in native writing and pursues how this poetry has that power to decolonize and resist forms of oppression.

Speak to Me Words offers the genre of Native American Poetry a place to grow. From the collection of various essays and the extensive suggested reading list at its end, one is able to determine what work needs to be done in the field—the work the field deserves. In the introduction, Gould asserts that "the American Indian poets I admire most are those whose work seems infused with—informed by—this [healing] spirit" (11). *Speak to Me Words*, on its most primal and fundamental level, unearths the very essence that distinguishes native poetry from all other forms of writing. It is the literature of prayers that heals us all.

John Caldwell Guilds and Charles Hudson. *An Early and Strong Sympathy: The Indian Writings of William Gilmore Simms*. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 2003. 604 pp.

Miriam H. Schacht

William Gilmore Simms (1806–1870), a white southern author and editor, was best known for his lyrical and romantic writing, as well as for his preoccupation with history, particularly the American Revolution and the world of the frontier. Like many of his white contemporaries, Simms had an interest in the creation of a national body of literature, and Simms's writings about Indians, collected in this lengthy anthology, are best viewed as part of his nation-building project. Although, as editor Charles Hudson notes, Simms also "saw himself as a spokesman on Indian affairs for the South" (xlix), it would be unwise to read Simms for information on Indians or Indian

affairs, for the Indian representations in these texts are confined to that familiar trope known as the noble savage—which, as Philip Deloria notes in *Playing Indian*, balances both “an urge to idealize and desire Indians and a need to despise and dispossess them” (4).

Such attitudes are not surprising for a nineteenth-century white writer, and analysis of them can help illuminate the development of dominant attitudes toward native peoples. However, the anthology’s editors—John Caldwell Guilds, a Simms scholar, and Charles Hudson, a retired anthropologist—do not provide such an analysis. Instead, their introductory materials border on hagiography, as they attempt to prove that Simms “almost certainly knew (and cared) more about the American Indian than any other man of letters of the nineteenth century,” in spite of much evidence to the contrary (xxix).

The brief preface suggests that Simms accomplished an “extraordinary achievement in portraying the American Indian” and that *An Early and Strong Sympathy* is useful “to anyone interested in understanding the Native American in the context of emerging American civilization” (xi). American civilizations, of course, had been “emerging” for centuries before Europeans came to this continent; here and elsewhere, the editors use the term “American” as a placeholder for “Euroamerican.” Equally as distressing as this normative whiteness is the notion that Simms’s writing offers a means of understanding Indian peoples. Just as James Fenimore Cooper’s Mohicans tell us much about Cooper but nothing about Mohicans, Simms’s Indians offer us little more than insight into the mind of a white plantation owner in the nineteenth century. The introductory materials, however, do not recognize these limitations and promise a great deal more than the texts themselves can deliver.

In their separate introductions, Guilds and Hudson try to provide a context for Simms’s work as a Southerner writing about Native Americans in the 1820s to 1860s. However, in the span of nearly forty pages, neither introduction discusses perhaps the most vital issue facing Native Americans in this time and place: Removal. This omission is even more puzzling because Simms himself writes on the subject, and his views here are instructive. Simms opposed Removal, but hardly out of advocacy for Indian rights. Instead of being removed to

Oklahoma, Simms suggested that Southeastern Indians be “subdued and kept subordinate to a superior race, in familiar and daily contact” (121). A slaveholder himself, Simms believed in the beneficial and civilizing effects of slavery on African Americans; while he never mentions the word “slavery” in relation to Indians, it is not hard to imagine what being “subdued and kept subordinate” would have entailed. In this context, to take Simms’s claim of “an early and strong sympathy” for Native Americans at face value, and to omit any mention of Removal is, quite simply, breathtakingly irresponsible.

Simms’s nonfiction texts offer ample testimony to contradict the claims of sympathy and enlightenment made in the introductory material. For example, in “North American Indians” (1828), Simms refers to Indians as “a connecting link between the man and the monkey,” “sullen, revengeful, and inhuman, but not cowardly” (10, 15). In an 1844 text describing the events leading to Removal, Simms hails the European colonists carrying “the banner of civilization, day by day, still deeper into the forests,” where “the red man, stationary but unperforming, impeded the progress which he refused to facilitate” (82). Professions of sympathy are largely limited to his materials about or to ethnologist Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, whom Simms was hoping to enlist as a contributor to his journal.

While his essays and letters provide the most explicit statements of Simms’s views, his stories and poetry tend to emphasize the “noble” aspects of the noble savage, as lovestruck maidens and courageous warriors abound (though the Indian heroes are often contrasted with compatriots who are “lazy, like all [their] race” [232]). Moreover, all of Simms’s Indians are representatives of a dying race, and while this is not unexpected, it is shocking that the scholarly introductions appear to concur, describing Indians as “heroic and doomed,” “a defeated and dispirited people” (xxiv, xxxvii). The unquestioning repetition by contemporary scholars of that most precious of colonialist fictions, the myth of the vanishing Indian, serves to perpetuate the stereotypes that are at the root of Simms’s writing.

Additionally, statements like “Simms had experiences with Indians unmatched by any other man of letters of his time” raise questions about the scope of the research for this project (xxxviii). Why

are nineteenth-century Native American authors such as William Apess, Elias Boudinot, or George Copway not considered to be “men of letters”? Even among white authors, some, like Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, had experiences beyond Simms’s four or five trips into “Indian country.” Moreover, the oft-recurring phrase “men of letters” indicates yet another weakness—female authors, white or Indian, are also disregarded. A survey of nineteenth-century whites writing on Indian themes would be incomplete without Lydia Maria Child or Catharine Maria Sedgwick, and LeAnn Howe’s *Shell Shaker* could certainly challenge the claim that “no man of letters has come forward to improve upon” Simms’s historical fiction about Southeastern tribes (1).

These limitations make the introductory materials worse than useless. Not only does the anthology continue to promote colonialist stereotypes about Indian people, but its marketing as “Native American Studies” will offend anyone who believes that authors in this field should be conversant in Native American history and aware of Native American perspectives. Sadly, this is perhaps the book’s greatest contribution: *An Early and Strong Sympathy* demonstrates how far mainstream academia has yet to come in acknowledging indigenous histories and perspectives.

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Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, ed. *Louis Owens: Literary Reflections on His Life and Work*. American Indian Literature and Critical Studies Series 46. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2004. 257 pp.

Rick Waters

The late Louis Owens left behind a tremendous amount of work, both creative and critical, that will occupy scholars in the field of Native American literature for a long time to come. In fact, a substantial amount of critical attention has been given to that work already. The collection entitled *Louis Owens: Literary Reflections on His Life and*

Work is an invaluable addition to that body of scholarship. Most of the volume addresses his fiction and autobiographical writing, although nearly every essay considers those contributions in the context of the critical work, framing each as inseparable from the others.

In her introduction, editor Jacquelyn Kilpatrick observes that Louis Owens “spent much of his life teasing apart the meanings that surrounded him, separating the real from the imposed or supposed and putting it all back together in works of literary complexity” (4). She appropriately notes that these works “have changed the way readers interpret Native American Literature” (4).

The body of the text is framed by the hunting metaphor Owens expresses in his essay “The Hunter’s Dance,” found in *I Hear the Train*. The first entry is a poem by Neil Harrison which evokes hunting, and the book ends with a personal essay by Jesse Peters referencing the same metaphor. In between, we find that metaphor elaborated upon as we see the complex mind of Louis Owens carefully and deliberately tracking the insights that made him justifiably famous in his field.

Chapter 1 is an interview that A. Robert Lee conducted with Owens in 2001, the last interview the writer gave before his death. Those who knew Louis Owens will hear his voice in those pages, and it is sad indeed that the proposed book of interviews, *Outside Shadow*, would never be completed.

The second chapter consists of the editor’s essay, “Taking Back the Bones: Louis Owens’s ‘Post’-Colonial Fiction.” Here we find Kilpatrick noting that “Owens and other Native writers must tell a story, but they must also *un*-tell a story” since what “most of Euramerica knows about Native Americans has much to do with stereotypes developed politically, cinematically, or in literature and little to do with the actual people” (54). The author quotes Owens’s observation that readers of Native American literature are expected to appreciate not only the “western tradition,” but also the mythologies of the indigenous peoples evoked in “Native American” fiction and poetry. Concluding her examination of *The Sharpest Sight*, Kilpatrick says of Owens, “quietly, firmly, and with a loaded pen, he writes back to the center and takes back the cultural bones” (77).

Elvira Pulitano’s essay, “Crossreading Texts, Crossreading Identity:

Hybridity, Diaspora, and Transculturation in Louis Owens's *Mixed-blood Messages*" is chapter 3. Pulitano examines Owens's use of postcolonial theory, claiming, "Owens situates the experience of Native American people within a postcolonial discursive mode, anticipating the rather complicated issue of how appropriate or even legitimate it is to use the category 'postcolonial' in relation to the Native American condition" (83).

Chapter 4, Susan Bernardin's "Moving in Place: *Dark River* and the New Indian Novel," effectively examines Owens's final novel as another sophisticated investigation of his characters' relationships with the complex idea of wilderness. Bernardin points to the image of a Hamm's beer sign migrating from one Owens novel to the next, symbol of "the long-cherished notion of finding oneself in the 'wilderness' [...] suitably emptied of indigenous people save for the moving 'sign' of their appropriation," seen in the Ojibway canoe forever "moving" in place in the beer advertisement (107).

In chapter 5, Linda Lizut Helstern's "Re-storying the West: Race, Gender, and Genre in *Nightland*," we learn that "*Nightland* is the Cherokee ritual term for West, home of the Thunders and home of the dead." Helstern sees Owens to be engaged in "reconfigur[ing] the mythic West of cowboys, Indians, and frontier justice as postcontact Indian Country inhabited by a cultural mix of Anglos, mixedbloods, fullbloods, animals, and ghosts" (119).

Gretchen Ronnow contributes "Secularizing Mythological Space in Louis Owens's *Dark River*" as chapter 6. Ronnow argues that this novel "describes the ultimate uselessness of myth in holding a culture together and the inability of myth to contain or to satisfy the individuating Self" (139). She adds, however, that the novel also "subverts its own story and fractures any restricting structure," thus allowing the reader "to glimpse the transcendent possibilities—not of myth, but of language" (139).

Renny Christopher's "Louis Owens's Representations of Working-Class Consciousness" makes up the seventh chapter, and introduces a little-examined facet of Owens's work. Christopher points out that Owens explores social class and work in addition to ethnicity, noting that the writer himself was "mixed-class" as well as "mixed-blood"

insofar as he moved from being solidly situated in the working class to academia, where most of the people he met seemed more at home than he.

Chapter 8, John Purdy's "*Wolfsong* and Pacific Refrains," examines the complexity of Owens's debut novel, calling it "a deceptively simple read." Purdy observes that Owens "pieces together contemporary materials into clever stories that resemble stories with recognizable story conventions and orientations, yet he subtly reconfigures them to reveal a reality of contemporary America that is lost in the portrayals others, including Hollywood, market" (176).

The ninth chapter, called "Not the Call of the Wild: The Idea of Wilderness in Louis Owens's *Wolfsong* and *Mixedblood Messages*," by author David Brande, reads the fiction and criticism as engaged in "inextricably interconnected issues." These include "the survival of indigenous tribal social forms, the preservation of intact ecosystems, and the complicated tensions between dominant Euramerican environmental practices and ideologies, on one hand, and indigenous tribal ways of inhabiting and representing the landscape, on the other" (195).

"The Ludic Violence of Louis Owens's *The Sharpest Sight*," by Paul Beekman Taylor, is chapter 10. Here, Taylor reads the novel in terms of "violence of gesture and language" (215). He concludes that in this novel Owens "reconnoiters and violates the smug sanctuary of the established literary territory," and like his character Jessard Deal, "destroys a house with words" only to rebuild "on the purged site a new literary form that declares an open house for his reader" (222).

The final chapter is called "'You Got to Fish Ever Goddamn Day,' the Importance of Hunting and Fishing through *I Hear the Train*," by Jesse Peters. A personal essay combining a reading of Owens's final book with a reminiscence of a fishing trip shared by Peters, Owens, and two other friends, this is a most fitting way to end this collection as it personalizes a man known by many only through the printed page. Peters effectively evokes the persona of a complex thinker in the apparently easy-going stride of an angler wading in the river.

This collection of essays will aid both newcomers to the work of Louis Owens as well as seasoned fans to more fully appreciate the

complexity and range of issues treated in the fiction, autobiography, and literary scholarship produced by this fine writer who left us much too early.

Lynn Riggs. *The Cherokee Night and Other Plays*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2003. 343 pp.

Craig S. Womack

The University of Oklahoma Press's republication of three of Lynn Riggs's plays starts off strongly with an introduction by Jace Weaver, a Cherokee critic who has written about Lynn Riggs in his seminal 1997 work of Native American literary history *That the People Might Live: Native American Literature and Native American Community*. Weaver describes the growing interest in Lynn Riggs in the 1990s among American Indian scholars and an expanding view of those works of Riggs that critics might consider as Indian-themed. Weaver also points out the centrality of music in Lynn Riggs's plays and his life. Riggs was a guitar player and singer who collected and scrutinized the folk songs of his Oklahoma upbringing. *Green Grow the Lilacs* was a musical with sung lyrics as a central feature before Rodgers and Hammerstein ever turned it into the smash Broadway hit *Oklahoma!* Riggs uses song to amplify the situations in his plays, a factor the critics have not analyzed. Weaver also acknowledges the beginning collaborations in the late 1930s between Riggs and composer Aaron Copland where they were beginning to influence each other's work, opportunities that, unfortunately, were cut short.

In addition to these important musical cornerstones for Riggs's plays, another Weaver insight is the disturbing ethnic cleansing that occurs in the transition of the play *Green Grow the Lilacs* to the musical *Oklahoma!* where, in the latter case, native people and all other non-white ethnicities are completely erased. However briefly, perhaps even problematically, the topic is alluded to in *Green Grow the Lilacs*, the play, nonetheless, insists on Cherokee jurisdiction. Aunt Eller tells the mob trying to haul Curly back to jail in the concluding scene,

Now I see you're jist a gang of fools. Trying to take a bridegroom away from his bride! Why, the way you're sidin' with the federal marshal, you'd think us people out here lived in the United States! Why, we're territory folks—we ort to hang together. I don't mean hang—I mean stick. Whut's the United States? It's jist a furrin country to me. And you supportin' it! Jist dirty ole furriners, ever last one of you! (103)

Weaver also makes an interesting comparative note in relation to Riggs. Riggs is often viewed as a second-rate playwright in relation to Williams, O'Neill, Miller, and Odets and leading figures in modernism. If, however, one scrutinizes Riggs according to how well he depicts his home country, he is much more effective at representing Oklahomans than Steinbeck (arguably the latter author might achieve a greater poetic truth than accuracy). It strikes me that in terms of speech Riggs is unsurpassed at capturing Oklahomans although the sensationalism in his plays often distracts him from his characters' interiority. Weaver concludes his introduction by hoping that the anthology will be a beginning, rather than an ending for continued republication of Riggs's work.

Apart from Weaver's deft handling of the anthology's opening, the book suffers. If it is a beginning it is a truly feeble one, at least in terms of the contextual materials that introduce the plays. Unfortunately, Leo Cundiff, the nephew of Lynn Riggs who has the rights for some of Riggs's plays, according to a July 28, 2004, article in the *Oklahoma Gazette* for which Cundiff was interviewed, took the anthology hostage by threatening the University of Oklahoma Press (UOP) that he would withhold permission for the publication of Riggs's work if anything was said in the book about Riggs's gay identity (40).

Consequently, the word "gay" appears nowhere in the volume nor does any reference whatsoever to any aspect of Riggs's sexuality, a factor, it must be said, that is essential to any mature understanding of Riggs's plays and his life. The contextual information that prefaces each play is misleading due to the erasure of such important facts. Because I think it is ridiculous that a university press can be so easily hijacked, and because I think the volume suffers by withholding critical informa-

tion about Riggs, I intend to use the word “gay” as frequently as possible in this review, to wallow in it as it were; more appropriately to regard such matters as celebratory rather than denigrating.

Phyllis Braunlich, the author of a 1988 UOP biography of Riggs entitled *Haunted by Home: The Life and Letters of Lynn Riggs*, should be credited for acknowledging Riggs’s homosexuality in print in her own book. Braunlich includes in her discussion the fact that Lynn Riggs was a gay male in long-term same-sex relations, most notably with the Mexican playwright and painter Ramon Naya. She denies, however, the potential for gay readings of Riggs’s plays, at least according to the *Oklahoma Gazette* article previously alluded to. Brian Daffron, the author of the article, summarizes Braunlich’s position by saying, “she doesn’t see Riggs’s plays as being homosexual in content, although, she said some of his posthumously published poems dealt with potential gay issues” (39).

I respectfully disagree with this position while confessing admiration for Braunlich’s book and the courage it took for an Oklahoma author to write against the grain and acknowledge Riggs’s homosexuality in her biography. Lynn Riggs’s plays are “homosexual in content” to whatever degree gay readers, and other readers, find gay meanings in them. Art is not about a single reading assigned by an artist’s biographer, his nephew, his critics, a gay Creek and Cherokee novelist, Oklahomans, or even the artist himself. It is for these reasons that art is both subversive and necessary: for all the ways in which it resists the “official story.” Otherwise, we could simply rely on someone like Donald Rumsfeld (I am hoping he will be deposed by the time this review appears in print) for both aesthetic pleasure and reliable information.

Within the field of literary criticism I will concede that readings follow certain conventions, rules one might say. One such expectation is that a claim made about a literary work must be corroborated by the actual language of the work in question rather than by imposing an interpretation without textual evidence.

In the case of Lynn Riggs’s plays this is not hard to do. Two of them, *The Cream in the Well* and *The Year of Pilar*, (significantly, not included in the anthology) feature characters who engage in same-sex relations or are perceived as having done so. Clabe Sawter, a major

character in the first play, gets a dishonorable discharge from the Navy for prostituting himself with men. Trino Crespo is an important character in the second work whose aristocratic Spanish family in Yucatan becomes suspicious that he is living in a sexual relationship with a Mayan worker by the name of Beto. Both plays, in the most obvious of ways, have “homosexual content” (One should not have to add that they are also about many other things as well but given the nature of the rhetoric that attempts to save Riggs and his plays from their gayness I will add it. It is also interesting to note that both of these plays have more overt Indian subject matter than Riggs’s other work). Apart from these two plays where the gay possibilities are overt rather than covert, there are all the lines in the other plays that open themselves up to rich gay interpretations. These lines, as previously stated, can be sought out as invigorating new insights rather than burdensome liabilities. Such lines occur in *Out of Dust*, one of the plays included in the volume:

Rose: What’re you tryin’ to tell me?

Jeff: Rose, if I was not what I make out to be—! If it ever come out that I wasn’t—!

Rose: You couldn’t be anything but what I see.

Jeff: What do you see?

Rose: A man that holds his head up and looks at you clear and good.

Jeff: (With self-loathing.) Good!

Rose: You’re who I love and what I love.

Jeff: Don’t! Don’t let yourself!

Rose: I can’t say no to that any more than to a cyclone or prairie fire.

Jeff: You got to do it! It’s time you did.

Rose: What is it, Jeff? You tried to tell me before—and I wouldn’t let you! I was afraid to, I—I’ll listen now. (323–24)

Sure, I will admit I cannot “prove” these lines are gay. I cannot pass a wand over the words and see if it beeps like the one the security guy or gal (not so discretely) waves over one’s crotch so frequently these days at the airport. There is not a gay molecule in the passage I can

isolate in a test tube. Even in the postmodern moment we might or might not be in, many would admit that a literary thesis is not exactly the same thing as a scientific hypothesis. With or without “gay proof,” however, reading these lines for their gay possibilities makes sense because of their amazing consistency throughout Riggs’s entire body of work where time and again his characters meander outside of rigid hetero strictures into queerer symbolic horizons.

Searching for gay meanings in these cases, simply put, enriches Riggs’s plays. Such readings revive tired archetypal ones along the lines of themes of youthful rebellion against older authority, social science readings of the cruelties of pioneer life, biographical readings of tyrannical fathers and wicked-witch stepmothers, and any other number of dated party-line interpretations. It is time to dust Lynn Riggs off and trot him out (of the closet) for a new generation of readers.

Of course, gay readings suffer the same danger of becoming canonical too, but art, good art anyway, has the potential of challenging the status quo and opening itself up to new interpretations with changing generations of participants in the artistic process. Riggs’s protectors miss the point that Riggs’s plays depend on an audience—not merely on Riggs and whatever his original intentions were or some kind of essence in the pages of the plays themselves that determines their “one true meaning.” If someone claims the plays are not about homosexuality, we might use the critical tools available to us to question the unstated assumption that they are about heterosexuality—that they contain some kind of hetero inner core.

An alternative way of getting at these subversive readings rather than searching between the lines for gay presences is to ask the question, how does Riggs depict heterosexuality? The surest way for a character to get shot, stabbed, burned alive, brained with a rock, drowned in a river, and any other number of violent deaths in a Lynn Riggs play, is by entering into a romantic relationship with a person of the opposite sex. Riggs problematizes every single heterosexual relationship in his plays in ways that far exceed the normal traumas of straight marriage. To somehow miss this is a major critical blunder.

This is where it gets really sad. Those who would deny the plays’ gay contents or Riggs’s gay life are driving nails in Lynn Riggs’s liter-

ary coffin. If there is a small outside chance that a Lynn Riggs literary revival might occur, and there is some evidence of such beginnings, it will come from two directions: 1) those in gay and lesbian studies in search of literary forbears; critics whose interests include, among other potential gay topics, how gay writers in previous generations had to present their work in relation to the social climate of their time; and 2) those in Native American studies hoping to recover native intellectual voices which have been previously overlooked, native thinkers from earlier generations who might provide insight into the evolution of native letters.

The old interpretations do not address either of these issues, and if they are strictly adhered to, Lynn Riggs will be forgotten. Riggs's gatekeepers are doing him no favors by denying him the very audiences most interested in him. What could be the good in this? Who is really being protected—Lynn Riggs or the reputation of Lynn Riggs's guardians?

At any rate, the anthology provides us with the three plays themselves whatever the deficiencies in the vehicle that carries them. *The Cherokee Night*, which Riggs claimed as his most important play, is a sophisticated, oftentimes puzzling, work. Scholars interested in 1930s native writers such as John Joseph Mathews, D'arcy McNickle, and Mourning Dove, that is critics who have analyzed the federal policies and literature of the time period, could add to their studies Riggs's assessment of the Indian union since he makes the Cherokee future a major theme of the play. The play's unconventional time structure allows Riggs to concentrate on the poetic link between ideas and events rather than the order in which they occur. In spite of the play's romanticism regarding dying cultures, it is chock full of really strange, wonderful moments that resist easy interpretations. One gets the sense that all the doom and gloom about the end of the trail for Cherokees really has to do with something else, and the play opens itself up to a number of alternative readings. The play also conveys a good deal of traditional Cherokee references and cultural information, an aspect of it that has not been analyzed yet. In terms of a less pleasant cultural issue, the racism against African-Americans in the play needs to be discussed rather than simply pretending there is

none, and this applies to the racism in a number of other Oklahoma Indian authors and Indian authors more generally.

The Cherokee Night has been anthologized recently in two works besides the UOP collection. Yet one understands why UOP includes it, given Riggs's own convictions about the importance of the play in relation to his other writings. *Green Grow the Lilacs* and *Out of Dust* might not be the best inclusions, however, relative to *The Cream in the Well* and *The Year of Pilar*, because of the two potential audiences to which I have already alluded and the fact that both of these latter works deal with gay and Indian identities more directly than any of Riggs's other plays. I am much less convinced than the book's contributors that *Out of Dust* is Riggs's best play given the familiar Riggs theme of the overbearing father who must be destroyed by his oppressed son which is better treated in *A Lantern To See By*. I would have been interested to know just what makes *Out of Dust* the pinnacle of Riggs's achievement, had the contributors felt inclined to share this information with readers.

I believe that the issues I have raised in this review are central, not peripheral, to native studies. For instance, in 2004 some of the tribes in Oklahoma, using state government as their "role model," were scrambling to pass hate legislation against gay marriage, in emulation of white state government, after two women approached the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma for a marriage license. The tribes hope to make gay marriage illegal like the state is trying to do. Somehow it is hard for me to believe that a sovereignty position that views tribal government as derivative of state government, and of all the state governments to choose from picks Oklahoma as the most exemplary one, is a move forward. It is amazing that the environment for gays and lesbians has actually gotten worse in the state since Lynn Riggs's time. On May 3, 2004, the very state government the tribes seem so enamored of right now, passed legislation that stated that the gay and lesbian parents of adopted children are no longer their legal guardians.

This act of aggression against the state's own citizenry was passed by an overwhelming 97–11 majority. Perhaps now these children can be rounded up and removed somewhere west of the Mississippi. The *Oklahoma Gazette* had an ironic comment about these matters when

they printed the telling line: “Finally, state government and the tribes have something they can agree on.” The tribes, sadly, seem to lack the vision of viewing gay marriage as an opportunity to actually do something sovereign and to delineate tribal government from state government, asserting autonomy instead of derivative status, seeing gay marriage as an opportunity rather than a liability and a “crisis” of modern life. Sadly, a tribal council member was quoted as saying, “Not even the state of Oklahoma gets to have gay marriage,” again, insisting on the superior sovereignty of the state over the tribes. What a pathetic state of affairs. The queerer edges of Lynn Riggs’s work should be celebrated rather than viewed as a liability, and we need to challenge the assumption of a heterosexual sovereignty that has long held creative responses to his plays in check.

In *Green Grow the Lilacs*, Ado Annie, the magnificently butch farm girl, in a moment of exasperation, swears off men generally and the Syrian peddler particularly. (In the musical version of *Oklahoma!* I often direct in my head, Ado Annie works a butter churn suggestively up and down while singing “I’m Just a Girl Who Cain’t Say No,” a part I hope to someday present on stage as soon as I find the right bonnet). Immediately after Ado Annie’s repudiation of menfolks, Laurey asks her to be her date to Old Man Peck’s party (a pecking party!). Perhaps we can simply relegate all this to the prairie innocence of a bygone era. The point I wish to make, however, is this: Isn’t it fun when we don’t? Why not have a good time with the play (Ado Annie would!) by opening up interpretations rather than closing them down? Is it impossible to imagine Riggs could have been having fun with these scenes too, stretching them out beyond their heterosexual boundaries? Why not regard the play as living art rather than a museum piece defined by one or two of its curators? Chill out, folks. Why, the way you’re sidin’ with the federal marshal, you’d think us people out here lived in the United States.

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Nathaniel Lewis. *Unsettling the Literary West: Authenticity and Authorship*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2003. 297 pp.

Gregory Wright

In one swift stroke, Nathaniel Lewis attempts to turn Western American literature and its critical traditions on their heads. With Western American literary scholars struggling to overcome the perceived second-hand status of their literature in the traditional literary canon, Lewis offers a reason for such status and a way to make these texts more palatable to the East Coast literary establishment. The answer lies in the postmodern theories of Jean Baudrillard. While the application of Baudrillard's ideas on the literature of the American West offer insight into the production and critical reception of such texts, those same theories do little to illuminate Native American texts and critical traditions.

With postmodern theory in hand, Lewis identifies that "[t]he pursuit, production, and marketing of the 'real West,' all but define the history of western literature and criticism" (1). As a result of Western authors' fidelity to the "real West" or what they perceive to be "real," the West as a place and idea becomes a simulacrum for both writers and readers. Western literature loses its literary force because "[i]magination, style, fancy, and genius were avoided, and any polished regularity of form or sophistication of style became suspect, for they suggested the authorial manipulation of material rather than the faithful recording of region" (35). Although Lewis teases out this argument early in his work, as he discusses the production of early dime novels and travel journals, he provides examples of how a diverse range of writers from Edgar Allan Poe, Joaquin Miller, Frank Norris, Terry Tempest Williams, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Vladimir Nabokov succumb to the authenticity game. Perhaps the most insightful question that Lewis raises in his work strikes at the heart of Western American literature: "[W]hich came first, the West or representations of the West?" (62). Staying consistent with his purpose to "unsettle" the literary West, Lewis offers no answers or conclusions, allowing readers and scholars to come to their own conclusions.

Although Lewis provides new ways of examining Western Ameri-

can texts, his work offers nothing to American Indian literary studies. Lewis tackles the place of American Indian literatures as they relate to Western American literature in his chapter titled, "Inside Out in the Postmodern West," where he lumps American Indian writers in with postmodern writers like Vladimir Nabokov and Peter Handke. During the first twenty-three pages of the chapter, Lewis's hope is to examine "how the idea of authenticity functions in relation to Native American literature and culture" (205). For Lewis the best way to investigate the authenticity of American Indian writers is to "*displace* Native American literature" (206). Postmodern theory serves to "*displace*" and deconstruct American Indian authenticity even as Lewis acknowledges that American Indian scholars like Elizabeth Cook-Lynn and Craig Womack fight the "overlaying [of Native American literature] with an authoritative and ill-fitting European theory grid" (210). Lewis dismisses the resistance of native scholars to Euro-american literary theories and forges ahead with the same arguments he uses to deconstruct European and American writers of the West. He contends that because American Indian writers create from a traditional, communal center their work lacks the vibrancy and creative genius that only an individual can bring. Lewis believes the controversy surrounding Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* exemplifies the inherent problems of authenticity in American Indian literatures. Silko parrots back the community's story, which diminishes her talent as a writer and storyteller. This assumption, however, does not account for the fact that stories change according to time, teller, and audience. The Laguna Pueblo lies at the center of *Ceremony*, yet the telling and the shaping of the story are Silko's alone. At a time when American Indians recover their history and demand more tribally specific criticism, as Craig Womack suggests in *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*, Lewis finds that tribal cultures and their influence on tribal writers seem "rude," "condescending," and "an imperialist opposition to true Native culture" (213). While Lewis asserts that he writes from the role of cultural outsider, he participates in the continuing construction, and—for the purpose of this book—deconstruction of American Indian authenticity.

Lewis seems to include his discussion of native writers and stories

only because, for him, there are Indians—real or unreal—in the West. According to his argument, one must deconstruct American Indian authenticity to deconstruct the West. Yet, Lewis points out in his last chapter that he is an authority on American Indian literatures because he is an “insider [. . .] both in the academy and, of course, in [his] own book” (207). Unfortunately, Lewis escapes his own deconstruction. While Lewis has a strong grasp on the history and construction of Western American literature, he merely “tours” through Indian country.

Contributor Biographies

SCOTT ANDREWS (Cherokee) is an assistant professor at California State University, Northridge, teaching American Indian literature and American literature (including literature of the Vietnam War). He has written for *SAIL* about autobiographies of American Indian veterans of the Vietnam War, and he has three poems set for publication this year in *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*.

ELLEN L. ARNOLD is an assistant professor at East Carolina University, where she teaches Native American literature, women's literature, and ethnic studies. She has published *Conversations with Leslie Marmon Silko* (University Press of Mississippi, 2000), essays on Silko, Linda Hogan, and Carter Revard, and is currently editing an essay collection on Carter Revard's poetry.

ESTHER G. BELIN is a writer who was raised in Lynwood, California. She graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, and the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico. In 2000 she won the American Book Award for her first book of poetry, *From the Belly of My Beauty*, published by the University of Arizona Press in the fall of 1999. She has just finished her second book, *Home is Where the Flavor Is*. Belin was one of the cofounders for the Women of Color Film and Video Collective. As a student at the University of California, Berkeley, she produced five videos. Her first published work appeared in *Moving the Image: Independent Asian Pacific American Me-*

dia Arts. Other published works appear in these anthologies: *Neon Pow Wow*, *Song of the Turtle*, *Speaking for the Generations*, *Native American Voices*, *American Indian Urban Experience*, *Pride of Place*, *The Iowa Review*, and *Sister Nations*. A second-generation, off-reservation Navajo (Diné), she currently lives in Durango, Colorado, about two hours from her homeland.

JEFF BERGLUND is an assistant professor of English at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff. He is the author of the forthcoming *Canibal Fictions* and coeditor of the forthcoming *Sherman Alexie: A Collection of Critical Perspectives*.

SHIRLEY BROZZO, an Anishnaabe from the Keweenaw Bay Tribe of Chippewa Indians, was born in Ironwood, Michigan, then moved to Marquette in 1989. In 1992 she earned a bachelor's degree in business administration and in 1994 she earned a master of arts in English, both at Northern Michigan University. She actively participated with the advisory board as a student representative before she was hired as an adjunct instructor for the Center for Native American Studies in 1995. In addition to teaching the "Native American Experience" class, she also created a class, "Storytelling by Native American Women." Besides working for CNAS, she is the coordinator for the Gateway Academic Program, a retention program for Diversity Student Services. Her stories and poems are published in over twenty-five sources. She has three adult children, Jamie, Brandi, and Steven, and her hobbies include working puzzles, reading, and crocheting.

BUD HIRSCH is associate professor of English and coordinator of undergraduate studies at the University of Kansas. He has published articles and reviews on contemporary American Indian literature and British Romantic poetry, was head writer on two documentary films on the Kansas Kickapoo and Potawatomi and one on the off-reservation boarding school, and has coedited four textbooks. His forthcoming article on Thomas King will appear in the Summer 2004 issue of *Western American Literature*.

LORETTO L. JONES, of Cherokee descent, has finally returned home to Fairbanks, Alaska, where she is enrolled in a master of fine arts program. She lives in a dry log cabin surrounded by elk, birch, and aspen. She has been a meteorological technician, a commercial diver, captain of an Alaskan fishing boat, a grant writer, and executive director of a nonprofit organization. Her status as mother is ongoing. Her poetry and photographs have appeared in various venues. "Taku" is her first published short story.

FRANCES W. KAYE teaches Great Plains studies, Canadian studies, and Native American studies at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and sometimes at the University of Calgary. Her essay "Just What Is Cultural Appropriation, Anyway?" appears in *The Black Elk Reader* (2000). Although her brother's genealogical research indicates she has distant relatives among the Shinnecock people of Long Island, she claims no tribal affiliation.

ARNOLD KRUPAT's most recent books are *Red Matters: Native American Studies* (2002) and *The Turn to the Native: Essays in Criticism and Culture* (1996). *Here First: Autobiographical Essays by Native American Writers*, coedited with Brian Swann, appeared in 2000. With Michael Elliott, he has written the section on Native American fiction for the forthcoming *Columbia History of Native American Literature Since 1945*, edited by Eric Cheyfitz. He has published a novel, *Woodsmen, or Thoreau and the Indians* (1994), and has completed a second novel, *What to Do?* He teaches at Sarah Lawrence College.

HARVEY MARKOWITZ is a visiting assistant professor of religion at Washington and Lee University. He has served as assistant, associate, and acting director of the D'Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian History, the Newberry Library, and tribal liaison–fieldworker for the National Museum of the American Indian. He holds a PhD in American church history from the divinity school of the University of Chicago. He is the author of *American Indians*, *American Indian Culture*, and *American Indian Biographies*.

MOLLY MCGLENNEN is of mixed heritage (Anishinaabe, French, Irish) and was raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She received her MFA in creative writing from Mills College and is presently completing her PhD in Native American studies at the University of California, Davis. Her dissertation is on contemporary native women's poetry. Her creative essay "She's Nothing Like We Thought" was recently published in *Genocide of the Mind: New Native American Writing* (Thunder's Mouth Press, 2003), and she has poems appearing in the upcoming "special Native American issues" of the poetry journal *Shenandoah* and the women's studies journal *Atlantis*. Her essay "Adjusting the Margins: Locating Identity in the Poetry of Diane Glancy" appeared in the Winter 2004 issue of *SAIL*.

MIRIAM H. SCHACHT is a doctoral candidate at the University of Texas, Austin, where she teaches courses on Native American literature and on representations of American Indians in popular culture.

CHAD URAN (MA, University of Iowa, 2002), an Anishinaabe from White Earth, is doing research on the aesthetics of second-language Ojibwemowin acquisition curriculum development. His dissertation work, supported by the Ford Foundation and the University of Iowa Presidential Fellowship, will center on an Ojibwemowin immersion school in northern Wisconsin. A version of this paper won the first prize at the Fourth Annual CIC-American Indian Graduate Student Consortium Conference at The D'Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian History in the Newberry Library on April 25, 2003.

RICK WATERS teaches Native American literature, world religions, and the "core humanities" courses at Truckee Meadows Community College in Reno, Nevada. He and his family live near Pyramid Lake, and he spends every free moment walking the steep hillsides of the Pah Rah Mountains.

CRAIG S. WOMACK (Oklahoma Creek-Cherokee) teaches American Indian literature in the English department of the University of Okla-

homa and is the author of *Red on Red*, a literary history of the Musko-gee Confederacy, and *Drowning in Fire*, a novel.

GREGORY WRIGHT is a PhD candidate at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. His dissertation is titled “Violating the Feminine—Land, Body, and Spirit—in Western American Literature.”

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.

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Fax: 918-458-6101
Website: <http://www.cherokee.org/>

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
P.O. Box 455
Cherokee, NC 28719
Phone: 828-497-2771 / 828-497-7007

Navajo Nation (Diné)
P.O. Box 9000
Window Rock, AZ 86515
Phone: 928-871-6352 / 928-871-6355
Fax: 928-871-4025
Website: <http://www.navajo.org>

Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians of North Dakota
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