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FROM THE EDITORS

Daniel and I wanted to take this opportunity to encourage you to let us know what you have thought of our first three issues—with the themed cluster on Indigenous and Queer Studies, the review essays on the new collection *Reasoning Together*, and the articles on Linda Hogan, D'Arcy McNickle, Sherman Alexie, James Welch, and Charles Alexander Eastman. At the same time, we wanted to let you know about the content of upcoming issues. Issue 20.4 will include a tribute to Paula Gunn Allen by Annette Van Dyke and an essay on the legacy of *House Made of Dawn* by Jace Weaver to celebrate the novel's fortieth anniversary. Essays on William Apess and Samson Occom and a commentary by Sam McKegney called "Strategies for Ethical Engagement: Non-Native Scholars in Native Literary Studies" will complete the issue.

We will also continue the practice of occasionally publishing a special issue. D. Anthony Tyeme Clark will guest edit 21.3 on American Indian literary nationalism. We hope that you are as eager as we are to see these issues in print.

In addition to the book reviews, this issue includes three wonderful poems by Maurice Kenny and three essays that span the late nineteenth to the late twentieth centuries. Joseph L. Coulombe investigates the balance that James Welch establishes in his historical novels between showing the common humanity of Native and non-Native peoples while carefully depicting distinct tribal cultures, and Peter Bayers demonstrates Charles Alexander Eastman's interest in drawing equivalences between Santee and upper mid-

dle-class white manhood in an effort to illustrate that Native men were prepared for U.S. citizenship. In her discussion of Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer*, Janet Dean argues provocatively that the novel "is about acts of collection and re-collection, the meanings and identities they produce, and, more significantly, the losses they inflict."

We hope you enjoy the issue.

James H. Cox and Daniel Heath Justice

Writing for Connection

Cross-Cultural Understanding in
James Welch's Historical Fiction

JOSEPH L. COULOMBE

In *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, James Welch examines the social and cultural links between Natives and non-Natives, demonstrating how different peoples and cultures intersect in both positive and negative ways. While current scholarship tends to privilege autonomous tribal knowledge systems, this essay explores an equally important trend that Welch helped to inaugurate.¹ In his historical fiction, Welch emphasizes connections between cultures—lessening differences between cultural groups and fostering mutual respect in the process—without losing sight of the historical outrages committed upon Native peoples. His earlier novel, *Fools Crow* (1986), recreates the period of first contact between Blackfoot tribes and Euro-Americans to illuminate the alliances and conflicts, the treaties and wars, and the cultural exchanges and political inequities that nearly destroyed a way of life over 130 years ago. The latter novel, *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* (2000), begins where *Fools Crow* left off, focusing on the shift to reservation life among the Oglala Sioux after white America stole their lands. In both novels Welch compels readers to reevaluate common versions of U.S. history. He initially places most readers in the role of outsider, but he ultimately invites them into distinct tribal cultures to deepen their understanding and expand their awareness of similarities between ostensibly different peoples.

Although Welch's fiction appeals to all types of readers—Native, non-Native, academic, and general—this essay considers the ways in which Welch targets a popular audience interested in

but not fluent in Native studies or specific tribal cultures. In a 1995 interview Welch said:

I feel the need to present Indians in a way that would be educational to readers, and I hope it would be entertaining, and really to bring some sort of understanding to the outside community of what life is like for Indians on reservations and Indians in historical times. (Bellinelli)

A sizable portion of his intended audience seems to be readers in the “outside community,” and he addresses this audience in a manner that highlights the links between people of different cultural backgrounds. His presentation of Native words and near-translations, his descriptions of cultural practices, his recounting of tribal stories, his use of humor, and his emphasis upon the importance of community all offer insight into the shared qualities of a common humanity.

By demonstrating similarities as well as showcasing differences, Welch’s historical novels serve to empower and liberate Native people and communities, a stated goal of indigenous scholar-activists Devon Abbott Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson, among others.² *Fools Crow* and *HeartSong* treat racial issues and relationships in a manner that defines the present as much as the past, effectively dismantling many misconceptions and stereotypes that support discrimination today. Although clearly intent upon correcting the historical record, Welch also offers hope for the future, and he targets a general readership to influence popular attitudes. He uses fiction to break down barriers, showing readers that intersections of belief and practice between people makes assaults on one group essentially an attack on the self. James Clifford argues, “‘Cultural’ difference is no longer a stable, exotic otherness; self-other relations are matters of power and rhetoric rather than of essence” (14). Harnessing the power of literature, Welch challenges rigid racial and cultural categories—while still honoring differences—and he reveals shared motivations, doubts, and ideas in order to break down constructed divisions in our past, present, and future.

His focus on connections between people does not prevent *Fools Crow* and *Heartsong* from acting also as resistance literature.³ Both novels explicitly subvert prevailing stereotypes about Natives. While writing *Fools Crow*, Welch himself said: “I’m trying to write from the inside-out, because most historical novels are written from the outside looking in. [. . . From the perspective of *Fools Crow*] the white people are the real strangers. They’re the threatening presence out there all the time” (McFarland 4–5). Welch’s Native-centered approach in *Fools Crow* decenters many readers, compelling them to rethink conventional attitudes regarding the expansion of the United States and the social and military policies that allowed it.⁴ In other words, Welch’s historical fiction initially “others” non-Native readers by placing white Americans at the margins of the main story.

In *Fools Crow* Welch uses the historical narrative to situate readers in a cultural framework specific to the Blackfeet. The events at the novel’s core are historically documented occurrences that Welch outlines in *Killing Custer* (1994). Owl Child, a Blackfeet warrior shunned by his own community for a murder, killed the white trader Malcolm Clark in August 1869. Although the act was revenge for a personal insult, it became an excuse for U.S. troops to attack all Natives, a course of action that culminated in the Marias River Massacre (sometimes called the Baker Massacre). Welch himself has a very personal connection to this history. He has identified Malcolm Clark and possibly Heavy Runner as relations, and he ascribes much of the inspiration for *Fools Crow* to his great-grandmother, Red Paint Woman, who was part of Heavy Runner’s band on the Marias River, and whose stories he heard from his father.

Among other things, *Fools Crow* informs readers that 173 men, women, and children were killed despite a signed agreement between Chief Heavy Runner and General Alfred Sully. Welch focuses on this catastrophe to publicize a fundamental event within Blackfeet and U.S. history as well as to provide a context more generally to rethink popularized historical episodes such as “Custer’s last stand.” To Welch, both massacres are central to Blackfeet history and to U.S. history. To separate them is to distort. Whereas

Custer's death has been mythologized as part of a larger story about American providence, the massacre on the Marias River has been largely ignored. Welch hopes to change that in *Fools Crow* by reconstructing events from a Native perspective, compelling readers to understand them outside of the promotional narrative about "winning the West" and "manifest destiny." In this version, Malcolm Clark is not a victim, but a hapless hypocrite; Joe Kipp is not an intrepid scout, but a self-serving turncoat; General Alfred Sully is not a noble ambassador of white America, but a small-minded negotiator of meaningless contracts. *Fools Crow* resists a whitewashed view of U.S. history and instead recreates a particular cultural moment that demonstrates how different peoples and cultures both clashed and merged.

The Heartsong of Charging Elk also seeks to alter the way that many readers think about Native history and its relation to European/American society, but it performs this task in a slightly different manner. Welch identifies Black Elk as his historical precedent, a man who had traveled with Buffalo Bill's show, missed the return ship home to America, and lived in Europe for two years (56–58). Charging Elk is also left in France by Buffalo Bill's "Wild West Show," and he survives in a new world that is both fascinated and frightened by him. In turn he is simultaneously intrigued and repulsed by French culture. Inverting the imperialist pattern, Charging Elk and the other young Natives travel to Europe in search of adventure, fun, and wealth. They are the explorers who enter and occasionally disrupt the others' world, taking pride in their difference and pleasure in shocking the Europeans: "the young Indians enjoyed the spectacle of themselves reflected in the astonished eyes of the French people" (27). Not going quite so far as claiming to have discovered France, they nonetheless traverse its streets with confidence and bravado.

On the other hand, they face much bias, and Charging Elk's experiences (in some respects) parallel the hurdles faced by Native people generally during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, Charging Elk is declared officially "dead" by inept government operatives, whereas in the United States

Natives were often treated as a “vanishing” people by many white officials. Both Charging Elk and twentieth-century Natives were compelled to survive in a hostile cultural environment that refused to recognize them in any meaningful way and then ignored them as inconsequential. Charging Elk’s dream of Native Ghost Dancers suggests his hope for recognition and independence (114), yet his recurring dream of mass death probably refers to the massacre at Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Reservation in 1890. Many historians consider Wounded Knee as the end of organized armed resistance to white attack and the beginning of a bleak period of forced assimilation. Charging Elk loses many of his Native ways while stranded in France and attempts to blend into life in Marseille. However, when Charging Elk is fetishized by a French man, who drugs and molests him, Charging Elk kills the man. The experience is emblematic of how Native cultures were exoticized by outsiders (despite fierce resistance), while the subsequent trial exposes the overt prejudice at the heart of such simplifications. During the proceedings, “specialists” disclaim on the size of “savages’ brains” and “mental capacity,” all part of a process that relegates Charging Elk to a “living death” (291). Welch’s narrative recalls the manner in which Natives were judged and condemned according to the prevailing culture’s prejudices. In the end, though, Charging Elk gains a renewed sense of self that combines his connection to the past with a strong understanding of his place in the present. He finally gets a real choice, and his decision to stay in France with his wife and expectant child points not only to the impossibility of ever returning fully to his previous life but also to his successful adaptation and contribution to a changed world.

Welch’s historical fiction does more than present Native history from a Native perspective, however. Both *Fools Crow* and *Heartsong* involve readers within a narrative that compels them to resituate themselves.⁵ Particularly for readers not fluent in Blackfeet and Lakota cultures, a period of readjustment must take place. Welch’s use of language forces readers into the role of outsider.⁶ Immediately in the initial paragraphs of *Fools Crow*, readers are confronted with an unfamiliar world in which “Cold Maker” and the “Backbone

of the World” hold dominance. Welch describes people, places, and things using near-translations and Native words that distance many readers from their familiar world. In *Fools Crow* frogs are “green singers,” grizzly bears are “real-bears,” and fish are “the swift silver people who live in the water” (56). White people are “Napikwans,” and the federal troops—appropriately enough—are “seizers.” Thus, Welch defamiliarizes conventional perspectives for many readers, in effect taking control of the language to redefine popular perceptions of American history.⁷

Nevertheless Welch’s choice risks exoticizing a culture that is too often treated as a curiosity; his language could be perceived as contrived or wooden. Critics have discussed the efficacy of writing subversively in English, or “reinventing the enemy’s language” (Harjo and Bird). Robert Gish notes briefly that Welch risks “sil-liness,” but that ultimately his “scheme of naming [. . .] has the intended effect of establishing an older (but for the reader newer) way of knowing” (71). Welch asks readers to do more than suspend their disbelief; he asks them to transform their beliefs by re-visioning the world using new terms and a new context. Blanca Schorcht praises Welch’s use of hyphenated coinages: “This kind of translation simultaneously prevents the exoticization of Native American history while it emphasizes differences in experience” (96). However, while his use of language may initially highlight differences, it ultimately allows similarities to come to the forefront.

To this end Welch’s terminology recalls Ernest Hemingway’s language in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. In this novel set in Spain, Hemingway “translates” Spanish language and culture into English in a manner that retains the flavor of the original. Hemingway’s protagonist, Robert Jordan, who hails from Missoula, Montana (which was, incidentally, also home to Welch), uses diction that reflects both the formality of Spanish (“thou hast,” “thee”) and the literalness, even the stiffness, of translation (“not even in joke” [30], “we are various” [151]). Welch, an avowed admirer of Hemingway, uses language in a similar manner. Both writers initially compel readers to navigate an unfamiliar world but ultimately provide enough information for readers to achieve a greater level of under-

standing. Welch, in particular, invites readers into a unique but often misunderstood culture, allowing them first to become comfortable with differences between languages and cultures—and then to recognize the similarities between people.

Likewise, *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* asks readers to understand western European society via a Native perspective and language. This time, however, Welch defamiliarizes the “white” world, rather than, as in *Fools Crow*, rendering a Native cultural and physical environment in new terms. Early in the narrative Charging Elk wakes up in a “white man’s healing house” after an injury and illness, and he must explain to himself—and to readers—where he is and what he sees. His descriptions interpret French society from the perspective of an Oglala Sioux, while also commenting humorously on non-Native customs (not to mention Charging Elk’s own personal attitudes). Dollar bills are “frogskins”; coffee is “*pejuta sapa*, black medicine” (17); and alcohol is “*mni wakan*, the white man’s holy water” (21). Whites themselves are “wasicuns.” Welch also details Charging Elk’s response to a Christmas nativity scene and the “naked iron tree” (i.e., Eiffel Tower) (42). Interestingly, he describes national anthems as “power songs” (66), a phrase that redefines a typically conservative point of pride into a Native intellectual framework. This reference takes a nationalistic icon (i.e., the anthem)—something that distinguishes one group of people from others—and transforms it into something that crosses cultural borders. In Welch’s treatment, it serves as a connection between people, not a separator.

In this way, Welch does more than disorient readers within his historical fiction; he also reorients them. While his terminology might initially decenter readers, it ultimately invites readers into a rich and vibrant Native world. Welch uses *Fools Crow* especially to teach readers a new way of seeing and understanding. A good example of how this works occurs during a conversation between Fools Crow and Red Paint on the night before Fools Crow leaves to revenge Yellow Kidney’s mutilation. As he and Red Paint lie in their lodge, they hear “the barking and howling of Kis-see-noh-o” (135). While the description of the sounds may signal the specific

animal to some readers, others might not immediately make sense of the reference, and, in fact, several different animals bark and howl. In the next line Welch aids readers by identifying Kis-see-noh-o as the “little-wolves,” thus using a calque to rule out wolves proper and to give a strong hint as to the animals he is referencing. Not until two pages later, however, does Welch identify with certainty the animals as coyotes (137).

This relatively minor detail demonstrates how Welch instructs and includes readers. He first destabilizes or decenters them with a non-English word or a near-translation; then he provides textual clues that allow readers to figure out his reference; and finally he gives them (sometimes) the opportunity to double-check their conclusions. As a result, Welch allows readers to overcome their lack of knowledge and the resulting discomfort. At first they are outsiders, and his language excludes them from full participation within the narrative. However, he does not sustain this exclusion. They gain a small piece of knowledge that involves them more fully in the novel and perhaps promotes their understanding—and hopefully their respect for—the Native American experience.

Readers are asked to perform a daunting task in *Fools Crow*—learn about a complex culture probably unfamiliar to many of them—and so Welch makes efforts to alleviate anxieties that readers might have about being placed in the role of student. Even prominent characters must learn the ways of their own culture. For example, when Mik-api teases Fools Crow about his crush on Red Paint, Fools Crow asks him to speak on his behalf, and Mik-api responds: “Slow down, you foolish young one. [. . .] First, you must go to your father and mother and tell them of your intentions. If they agree, I will talk to Yellow Kidney” (105). Like readers, Fools Crow must be taught the courtship rituals of the Pikunis. As Fools Crow grows and learns, Welch undoubtedly hopes that readers will also mature in their knowledge. *Fools Crow* contains strong elements of the bildungsroman, a component of the novel that undoubtedly rings familiar to many readers. Yet *Fools Crow* also attempts to cultivate public opinion about unfamiliar or underappreciated components of Native cultures. To create a comfort

zone suitable for learning, Welch shows how all people must learn their own culture. By doing this, he not only encourages readers to understand and respect Blackfeet culture, but he also motivates them to learn (or relearn) their own culture and history.⁸

An important way that Welch teaches readers is with Blackfeet stories, a traditional Native manner of imparting information and wisdom to successive generations. He provides fairly detailed accounts of Seco-mo-muckon, of Akaiyan and Nopatsis, and of So-at-sa-ki (Feather Woman) and Poia (Scar Face). At one level these Blackfeet stories provide commentary upon the novel's events. Seco-mo-muckon's pride and deceit echo that of Fast Horse, as does Akaiyan's treacherous betrayal of his brother. Nopatsis's patience, learning, and success parallel the experiences of Fools Crow. On another level, however, these stories draw readers more deeply into Pikuni culture, inviting them to understand and appreciate the worth of the culture that created these stories. Readers receive information that should lessen the difference between cultures, rather than make one seem more exotic or foreign than the other. Some critics even locate a "merging of two cultures" in Welch's depiction of Blackfeet stories. Velie states that Welch's bildungsroman draws upon both the Native tradition of Scar Face and the Euro-American tradition of Horatio Alger (199–200). Whether Welch consciously thought of Alger as he wrote is perhaps less important than that Velie makes this connection. The stories allow bridges between cultures by sharing messages that transcend a specific culture. These stories undoubtedly have specific cultural meanings for the Blackfeet, but when shared with a national and international audience, they will also be understood (as Welch was well aware) in terms already familiar to readers.

Because of this, Welch again risks himself here. Some might argue that publishing Native stories allows them to be distorted by removing them from their most important cultural context and placing them within potentially oppressive belief systems.⁹ However, Native writer and teacher Sidner Larson argues that making connections across cultures is a specifically Native methodology. He asks his students to read Native texts "with strong

emphasis on students relating their own lives to the materials” (14). Likewise, Blanca Schorcht notes how traditional Native stories should be incorporated into readers’ ways of thinking: “Their different worlds engage in dialogues with each other as they converge with the real world of the contemporary reader” (88). Welch values just such connections. In *Killing Custer* he recalls a moment of revelation in his dream to become a writer. In his adolescence he believed that real writers had to live in New York City and, presumably, write about it too. As he tells it, his mother showed him some documents that demonstrated how Sitting Bull lived in and journeyed through northern Montana. He writes: “Suddenly, the area did not seem so remote. Suddenly, my part of the country had history, a *connection* with the rest of the country—at least the west” (232, emphasis added). Welch appreciates this connection because it links Native American history to Euro-American history. He did not see the overlapping histories in conflict with each other; rather, it seems, they inform each other and, moreover, encouraged Welch to write about the Blackfeet experience as part of U.S. history. Whereas Fast Horse in *Fools Crow* foolishly resists any meaningful dialogue about his past (200), Welch uses his historical fiction to open up a dialogue with readers that promises further understanding rather than more violence.

One of Welch’s primary goals is to invite readers into a Native culture and so dispel misconceptions about it. His most successful strategy is his direct description of Native traditions within their cultural framework. The Sun Dance ceremony, for example, is an annual unifying celebration during which individuals make sacrifices for themselves and their people. Readers learn of the important role of the Sacred Vow Woman, about the process by which the center pole of the Medicine Lodge is chosen and prepared, and about how young men enter adulthood by dancing around the pole. Welch’s rendering of the ceremony demonstrates its purpose and, as a result, its normalcy, thus demystifying an important tradition that was criminalized by the U.S. government and is still sometimes treated as an exotic curiosity by non-Natives.¹⁰ Welch’s willingness to share details of the Sun Dance with readers is a gauge of

his desire to combat the distorted images that revolve around the celebration.

In addition, his personal involvement in the ceremony as a child helped Welch become fully aware of his Blackfeet identity. In a foreword to William Farr's photographic history, *The Reservation Blackfeet, 1882–1945*, Welch recalls attending the ceremony with his father and watching the procession of holy people: "A voice, high and distant, sang to the sun and it entered my bones and I was Blackfeet and changed forever. I remember. Thirty-four years later the image of that Sun Dance procession is still with me, and *in my novels and poems I have tried to maintain the spirit of that moment*" (vii, emphasis added). *Fools Crow* captures the spirit of that moment by inviting readers into a literary rendering of the experience. By sharing such an essentially Native ritual with readers, he trusts them with knowledge of the ceremony. In doing so, he offers some level of connection or even belonging—comparable in a small way to his own experience of new self-awareness. Welch reinforces this philosophy of connectedness in *Heartsong*. During a flashback to the Sun Dance, Charging Elk "heard the beat of the drum and he knew it was the heartbeat of the *can gleska*, where all becomes one" (64). His vision of unity suggests again the inclusiveness that Welch associates with the ceremony. Even if readers are not "changed forever," as Welch was, their experience reading about the Sun Dance—and the culture generally—has the power to alter perceptions and foster respect for Native beliefs and customs. In an interview, when asked whether "the word" is sacred, Welch doubted whether "sacred" was the correct term, but he emphasized the ability of language to educate, entertain, and foster intimacy, adding: "Words are probably the strongest link between people. I think in any form of communication people can develop a more emotional relationship over a book. From the writer to the reader it's a very intimate relationship" (Bellinelli). Welch fosters this relationship by detailing Native customs in print, at a time, moreover, when many prefer to keep spiritual and cultural practices out of the hands of those who might mishandle them (and, in fact, have in the past). In this way, Welch constructs a bridge between cul-

tures—showing a trust and honesty that perhaps points to how all might become one.

This transcultural bridge, of course, goes both ways.¹¹ In *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* Welch demonstrates a similar connection between different spiritual systems, but he reverses the cultural direction. While Charging Elk is traveling with the “Wild West” show, he meets a French woman, named Sandrine, who gives him a picture of a man with “a woven chain of thorns” around his heart. He refers to it afterward as “the picture of the man with the bloody heart” (72). His factual description reveals that Charging Elk does not initially understand the spiritual message that Sandrine intends by the image. He sees it literally. Eventually, Charging Elk understands and accepts the image in terms of his own spiritual beliefs: “it had become part of her *nagi* that he must carry always, just as he always wore his badger claw necklace” (72). The gift, to Charging Elk, signifies a cross-cultural relationship—even if not necessarily intended in that way. Rather than becoming interested in Christianity, he incorporates it into his own belief system, demonstrating a respect for others’ beliefs as well as asserting equality between them: the image of Jesus is parallel to his badger claw necklace. Welch’s depiction, of course, suggests a satiric intent. With its oblique reference to the many depredations done to Natives in the name of Christianity, Welch implies that Jesus does, after all, have a bloody heart. The irony fades, however, in light of Charging Elk’s genuinely sympathetic response. His redefinition of the Christ-image emphasizes an intersection of beliefs rather than a conflict between them.

Welch fosters cross-cultural relationships further in *Heartsong* by providing information about Oglala beliefs and by exhibiting those beliefs in action. For example, as Charging Elk ponders Armond Bretueil, the man who drugged and molested him, Welch defines quite explicitly the roles of *heyokas* and *siyokos*. He does not suggest or infer, and he does not expect readers to know already how they differ, as more challenging authors might do. Rather he patiently explains that *heyokas* “act crazy but deep within them, they possess much power. They are to be respected but feared” (180). On

the other hand, siyokos are “evil spirits” (181) and, as a result, more dangerous than the heyokas. These small gestures of explanation suggest that Welch is attempting to meet readers at their level of knowledge and teach further understanding. Moreover, Charging Elk is not quite sure whether Bretueil is heyoka or siyoko, and as a result readers are led to believe that the distinction is difficult even for those immersed in Lakota culture.¹²

Welch, in fact, seems to delight in his ability to foster such ambiguities about culturally specific knowledge. He rarely misses an opportunity to undermine cultural absolutes. For example, in *Fools Crow* readers are told that a married man should not look directly at his mother-in-law; then later *Fools Crow* and Heavy Shield Woman stare at each other: “now this taboo seemed far less important than the bad spirit in the boy they loved” (264). In effect, Welch demonstrates how every culture has rules, and every rule most likely has exceptions. This both prevents us from fully understanding the Blackfeet world and makes us more dependent upon the text to determine Welch’s goals. And yet if Welch sometimes provides readers with the necessary information, he at other times forces us to confront the inevitable ambiguity. For example, *Fools Crow* tells Boss Ribs about Fast Horse’s dream (199), even though he knows that “to tell another’s dream could make one’s own medicine go bad” (48). His change of plan takes place without explanation, demonstrating the gray area surrounding some cultural beliefs and their implementation. Likewise, when Charging Elk visits a new restaurant and finds himself surrounded by hostile American sailors, he sings his death song to escape. On the one hand readers are shown a Native utilizing an important part of his belief system to avoid danger. On the other hand even Charging Elk realizes that the song did not help him in the standard way: “He knew that the purpose of the song had become distorted into a kind of defense mechanism but he didn’t know why—only that it worked this time” (177). Both Charging Elk and Welch seem relatively comfortable with how traditional aspects of Native culture transform themselves into something new. This both complicates our ability to comprehend the Native world in the novels and—in

a way—relieves us from assuming that we require an encyclopedic knowledge of distinct Native cultures to understand the novel. Welch teaches us what we need to know.

Furthermore, in both *Fools Crow* and *Heartsong*, Welch focuses on questions, doubts, and other negative reactions that individuals have regarding traditional elements of their belief systems. Even clearly admirable characters do not subscribe to a monolithic view of Blackfeet culture. For instance, despite the fact that the Blackfeet society was focused largely around raiding and war honors (as much as hunting and trading), Fools Crow vomits from his horse after a raid against Bull Shield. The danger and violence of his killing were apparently too much for him. Although he is initiated into manhood as a result, Welch does not glamorize the moment or the man, and in fact Red Paint questions the necessity of the war party, even though it seeks revenge for her father's mutilation. Welch portrays the misgivings that would have inevitably arisen, and that potentially clash with his effort to present a warrior culture in a positive manner. In the end, however, the complications and paradoxes of Pikuni life and thought make the people and their culture more admirable, because they are more complex.

Perhaps the most sensitive issue that Welch confronts is the doubt that individuals experienced regarding Blackfeet spirituality. Facing a potentially overwhelming cultural onslaught, some characters question their faith. Rides-at-the-door says despairingly:

Sun Chief favors the Napikwans. Perhaps it's because they come from the east where he rises each day to begin his journey. Perhaps they are old friends. Perhaps the Pikunis do not honor him enough, do not sacrifice enough. He no longer takes pity on us. (177)

Welch risks much by voicing such doubts so openly. Historically, much of white America would have likely agreed that Native religions were false, and undoubtedly a portion of U.S. citizens would still consider Blackfeet spirituality as quaint mythology. Welch's portrayal confronts a harsh reality of the Indian experience—their religious misgivings¹³—while ultimately demonstrating how such

questioning can lead to a stronger belief. Fools Crow's journey to Feather Woman at the end of the novel is a good case in point. Along the way he doubts both his dream and his dream helper; he blames Skunk Bear—his animal helper—for betraying him; and he repeatedly doubts his ability to help his people. Yet in the end the tribal beliefs and stories more than adequately inform and support his own experiences.

Similar situations occur throughout *Fools Crow*. Heavy Shield Woman, for example, is naturally apprehensive about her decision to be Sacred Vow Woman, and she evaluates her own worth and motivation. Her self-examination is an effort to understand herself better and conduct herself more appropriately. Welch is not inviting disbelief regarding Native cultural practices but rather demonstrating the full humanity of his Indian characters, unlike works that shroud Native people and customs in mystery.¹⁴ To his credit Welch resists the urge to create perfectly ideal characters. While sometimes heroic, they are always human.

Charging Elk faces similar doubts—and reassurances—about himself and his spiritual beliefs. He remembers how his friend Sees Twice had told him that the white “God Almighty” was “even stronger than Wakan Tanka.” Years later Charging Elk thinks: “Although he hadn’t believed Sees Twice then, now he wasn’t so sure. After all, the *wasicuns* ruled the world” (183). His isolation in France challenges his beliefs, causing him to question his conception of God. In the end, he retains his belief in Wakan Tanka, thanking the Great Spirit for sending people like Yellow Breast to help him. Despite marrying a Christian, and even attending services with her, Charging Elk does not become Christian; instead he simply demonstrates his open-mindedness to others’ beliefs. As James Clifford writes, “It is easier to register the loss of traditional orders of difference than to perceive the emergence of new ones” (15). Welch does not offer a false unity or a homogenous world; old and new differences will always exist between cultures. Instead, Welch shows the normalcy of self-questioning and how doubt is (or should be) part of all faiths.

His European characters share similar moments of uncertainty, demonstrating again the connectedness of all peoples. The ultra-pious René prays regularly to the Christian figure Mary, but he acknowledges that “he had no sign that she had heard him” (266). His wife, Madeleine, admits to herself: “Sometimes his piety was a burden” (100). Likewise, the farmer Vincent Gazier responds to his wife’s illness with religious despair. After Charging Elk tells him that he will pray to Wakan Tanka for her, Gazier gains hope, saying, “‘Thank you, Charging Elk. That is all I ask. Perhaps your Great Spirit . . .’ The gaunt man suddenly stopped. He had almost committed a sacrilege” (317). Apparently he had almost acknowledged the equality of their differing definitions of God—just as Charging Elk had done (and Fools Crow). By showing how individuals respond to life’s challenges in similar ways, Welch equalizes the people and their belief systems. Neither is exotic; both are normal.

One of Welch’s great accomplishments in *Fools Crow* is that he normalizes Native people and society in a historical work that might invite romantic nostalgia. An especially noteworthy example is on the morning that Fast Horse again leaves the Pikuni camp. A blizzard had just blanketed the region, and Welch takes the time to outline the typical activities “on almost any other day” (191) and, in the process, again invites readers into a Native world before white domination:

Some of the men would go off hunting, or just exploring, always with their weapons. The women would prepare hides or continue with bead- or quillwork and gossip. The children would throw stones into the river or play with dolls or sleds. (191)

In the extended description, Welch shows domesticity and contentment without descending into romanticism. Focusing on mundane daily activities, he avoids sentimentalizing a past lifestyle and instead informs readers of its normalcy. The historical perception created by Welch extends to the present, a concern voiced by other Native writers as well. Paul Chaat Smith writes:

One decade we're invisible, another dangerous. Obsolete and quaint, a rather boring people suitable for schoolkids and family vacations, then suddenly we're cool and mysterious. Some now regard us as keepers of planetary secrets and the only salvation for a world bent on destroying itself. Heck, we're just plain folk, but no one wants to hear that. (Qtd. in Shanley, "Metacritical" 223)

Refusing to romanticize Native culture or people, Welch instead creates a range of characters that includes the negative. For instance, the egotistical Fast Horse rejects his culture because he fails to gain instant honor within it. The usually honorable Yellow Kidney rapes a dying Crow girl during a raid. The vindictive Owl Child endangers all Natives by obsessively seeking revenge against all white people. The jealous Running Fisher rapes his father's wife, Kills-Close-to-the-Lake, and then engages in an adulterous affair with her. Writing a historical novel about white America's usurpation of Native land, Welch could have focused simply on the obvious villain, but he took the more difficult path. He was willing to explore ambiguities and allow for exceptions, and he opened himself to charges that he is perpetuating negative images of Native Americans. By showing his characters' mixed motives and bad decisions, however, Welch eludes the either/or mentality that has traditionally presented Natives as simply good or bad.¹⁵

Of course, in his effort to equalize—and to be historically accurate—Welch also shows white characters in *Fools Crow* as criminally small-minded (such as Captain Snelling and General Alfred Sully) and as dangerous turncoats (such as Joe Kipp). Nevertheless, he also presents some whites as fair-minded, mostly the early traders but also the "long robe" painter Long Teeth and the doctor Sturgis. In *Heartsong* Welch described the French as "genuinely sympathetic" to Natives (51), despite their fear and prejudice. In its small way this opens Welch's story to more readers, some of whom might become defensive if they sense that the "good" and "bad" guys are entirely good or bad. Kimberly Blaeser asks the question: "What if *white* society were envisioned as the demonic 'other'?" (164). Welch's historical novels suggest that such a presentation

would amount to extremism or absolutism (and perhaps would be tantamount to the racist depictions of Natives by some white pundits).

In *Heartsong* his European and American characters have decidedly mixed motives. The fishmonger and philanthropist René fosters romantic conceptions of Indians that tend to be reductive, while also having positive liberal leanings that encourage him to help people in need. Whereas he is openly racist regarding African immigrants (165), he recognizes his complicity in Charging Elk's murder of Armand Bretueil. Franklin Bell, an American diplomat who tries to aid Charging Elk, is motivated both by professional self-interest—"It was just business, this whole thing" (142)—and by what seems like a sincere desire to help Charging Elk return home. His contact with Charging Elk also prompts him to express private doubts about Euro-American society. As Bell watches him eat, he thinks: "They must have picked up the niceties of civilization. But what did they think of the white man's civilization? Did they consider it an improvement over their own primitive ways?" (107). His questions simultaneously show an unexamined prejudice as well as a curiosity about other ways of thinking. His interest in Charging Elk's response to "the white man's civilization" suggests his own uneasiness about it. Like Bell, the reporter St-Cyr is both self-focused and curious, "wish[ing] desperately that he could understand what was going on inside that *Indien's* head" (259). His desire to understand is admirable, yet he harbors prejudice against Natives even while he respects Charging Elk.

Rather than separating Natives from whites, Welch reveals their similar thought processes, including those involving ambivalence, hatred, and pride. Among other things, individuals from both groups make identical mistakes. For instance, in *Fools Crow* Owl Child's anger over Joe Clark's insult prompts him to think: "All the Napikwans would pay for those words" (209). He does not distinguish between individual white persons; rather, he discriminates against them all, holding each accountable for Clark's insult. Likewise, an unnamed white man traveling in winter with his son thinks fearfully of recent killings, and as he approaches the

war lodge containing Yellow Kidney, he admits: "I want to kill an Indian" (244). As with Owl Child he blames an entire population for one person's transgression; any Native will serve his purpose, not just those personally responsible for the killings. Such characterization helps equalize people, even as it exposes the lowest common denominator. Stated more positively, Welch transcends narrow definitions of either race as either wholly innocent or guilty, and thus he rejects categorical absolutes.

Despite the weight of historical evidence against white people, Welch seems ultimately to focus on the cynical motivations of humankind in general. In *Killing Custer* he writes:

Custer's last stand has gone down in history [unfairly] as an example of what savagery the Indians were capable of; the Massacre on the Marias [one of the closing incidents in *Fools Crow*] is a better example of what man is capable of doing to man. (47)

Welch would be quite justified in condemning white behavior here, particularly since massacres and other atrocities were conducted by white Americans throughout U.S. history, but he focuses instead upon the capacity for evil by people in general. Avoiding racial generalities, Welch sees the problem as a human one. Perhaps this attitude is what prompts Alan Velie to write: "The politics of *Fools Crow* might best be described as accommodational. Welch presents a number of viewpoints in the novel, but the most responsible and sympathetic leaders advocate compromising with the whites, chiefly on pragmatic grounds" (201). This response, however, seems unfair. Rather than "accommodational" and "compromising"—with its undertone of obliging weakness—Welch instead creates characters (both Native and non-Native) linked by their mixed motives and conflicted desires. Rather than exposing Native concessions, he shows human complexity and universality.

Fools Crow, however, avoids outright cynicism and does more than demonstrate the shared ambivalence of individuals or the inevitable confrontation between groups. He also provides a positive counterbalance to the impending threat by honoring the peo-

ple and culture endangered. One of the ways Welch does this is with humor. Much has been written of Indian humor, and many commentators have demonstrated how Indian humor deconstructs the pervasive stereotype of the stoic Indian—severe, joyless, wooden.¹⁶ Welch taps into this Native tradition to display the joy of Native life. His characters are often laughing and teasing. In this way he demonstrates to readers that—despite the looming danger—Natives lived healthy lives replete with a sense of fun. For example, after a council meeting focusing upon such overwhelming issues as possible extermination, religious failure, and their children's future, the men are still capable of ending the meeting with laughter. Not consumed by the white presence in their land, they relish life and its pleasures (178). Welch prevents readers from reducing them into unfortunate historical victims deserving of nothing but pity.

Throughout *Fools Crow* there is much bawdy humor among the young warriors who tease each other about sexual experiences (or the lack of them). Blackfeet culture appears quite masculine in *Fools Crow*, and the young men engage in playfully competitive banter about lovers, desire, masturbation, and bestiality. Their willingness to accept such kidding points to its good-natured quality. In fact, teasing seems to be one preferred method of communication within the community. When *Fools Crow* asks permission to marry Red Paint, his mother states: "People will make jokes. People will say, There goes Rides-at-the-door's son, he marries whole families" (106). Welch paints a portrait of a people who find humor in almost all things. Even Feather Woman laughs at *Fools Crow* when he fears that he died and went to the Sand Hills (332–33). (However, it should probably be noted that Welch is more likely to describe *how* Pikunis enjoy a joke rather than concoct a joke for readers to relish, a departure from the more explicit, if ironic, humor in *Winter in the Blood*.)

Welch's authorial instinct often seems to be levity in the face of tragedy, even when it involves typically sacrosanct topics such as respecting elders. In an exchange between *Fools Crow* and Raven, Welch deflates the exaggerated reverence for elders that is simultaneously genuine and clichéd, a trope of sorts that Robert Dale

Parker terms “worn generalizations” (1). Discussing human death, Fools Crow solemnly intones the benefits of continual death (as opposed to temporary death), and Raven asks: “Did your grandfather tell you that?” [Fools Crow gravely responds:] ‘He was a wise man.’ [Raven rejoins:] ‘Not always.’ Raven laughs” (163). Whereas Fools Crow displays the proper veneration for his grandfather, Raven’s comment humanizes the man, and he goes on to describe the grandfather as once comically poor and luckless. *Fools Crow* shows a profound respect for the “long-ago people,” but Welch—in true trickster fashion (here, in fact, using Trickster)—takes the opportunity to deflate a truism that might become as hackneyed as the verity “Natives-respect-nature.”¹⁷ In *Heartsong* Welch weighs in briefly on the same issue. During a Christmas dinner Charging Elk and René’s widowed mother seem to share a secret joke amid much laughter, a joke that Charging Elk admits he does not quite understand. On his way out, the grandmother “laughed and made a gesture that looked disturbingly like the Lakota sign for fucking” (209). Again eschewing stale images of august elders, Welch humorously breaks stereotypes and simultaneously lessens differences between cultures.

Ultimately Welch seems more interested in displaying similarities between people than in exposing disagreements or publicizing concessions. Toward this goal, he stresses the importance of community repeatedly in both *Fools Crow* and *Heartsong*. Individual action is valued, but primarily insofar as it contributes to the larger good. In *Fools Crow* Fast Horse enriches only himself with raids that jeopardize the lives of other Natives, but Fools Crow risks his own life to gain a vision of the tribe’s future. Likewise the Sacred Vow Woman at the Sun Dance ceremony represents the entire community: “If you are successful, the Pikunis will prosper and enjoy favor with the spirit world. If you fail, if you are not strong or virtuous enough, great harm will come to us” (102). Moreover Welch ends the novel, not with the massacre, but with the spring rains beginning to fall on a ceremonial dance conducted by Mik-api with the rest of the community. Like Fools Crow’s infant Butterfly, these images promise renewal and connection: the rain indicates

their link to the quickening world (including the blackhorns in the novel's final sentence) after the severe winter; and the ceremony promises rejuvenation to the Native community, an expansive focus that increasingly overshadows Mik-api and Fools Crow in the closing paragraphs. The people, not the individuals, will survive, and Welch completes the novel by pointing to the future rather than the past and thus offering hope to all readers who value community and connection.

Heartsong highlights a sense of community in ways that are both subtler than *Fools Crow* and yet more obviously cross-cultural. Charging Elk increasingly finds acceptance in French society. Employed loading ships, he joins the union:

And they accepted Charging Elk as one of them, a member of the union, in a way that he hadn't been used to. [. . .] And he felt, for the first time since he had left the Stronghold, that he was a part of a group that looked out for each other. And he liked it. (349)

Charging Elk's willingness to join French society springs from his understanding of cultural connection that he learned in the Stronghold. He had, after all, promised René's son, Mathias, that they will travel together to America: "Charging Elk had assured him that one day he could go to the land of the Oglalas and become a brother by ceremony" (171). To Charging Elk, inclusion in different communities is fluid. He accepts the idea that such connections are inevitable and even desired. His love for and marriage to the Frenchwoman Nathalie suggests the depth of his connection to his new world, and their expectant child symbolizes a merging of cultures and a promise for the future. As Charging Elk states, "My wife is one of them and my heart is her heart. She is my life now and soon we will have another life and the same heart will sing in all of us" (367).

Both *Fools Crow* and *Charging Elk* come across as compassionate and flexible thinkers. They show self-respect and strength in the face of adversity and provide examples of men who build upon a solid cultural foundation to grow into a changing world. Despite

its dangers and restrictions, they live freely, bridging the gap between cultures and exerting influence upon those around them. To this end, their stories are liberating and empowering for readers as well, and they attest to the role of literature to make the world a more inclusive and humane place. By shaping their stories in this manner, Welch offers a modest revision to current efforts that seem to downplay the significance of literature as a cultural force for good. Devon Abbott Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson, who advocate appropriately for an activist agenda from writers and scholars, tend to view literature as potentially damaging diversion from the important work waiting to be done: “Not enough is being written about tribal needs and concerns, but an inordinate amount of attention is focused on fiction” (3). Mihesuah makes the case more pointedly: “many fiction writers are apolitical and do not threaten readers; therefore, ‘lit-critters’ can make careers studying Natives without lifting a finger to help solve tribal problems” (38).¹⁸ Rather than viewing critics as “studying Natives”—which implies objectification and false superiority—we might better understand “lit-critters” as learning from Natives, as being put in the position of student. Even the most innocuous art can be political; a poem about a flower becomes a radical statement if presented properly. Welch, in fact, uses fiction to educate readers about American history and, as I’ve argued, about the human relationships and connections that contributed to past failures and that might lead to future successes—for Natives and for all people.

Here in the pages of *Studies in American Indian Literatures* it is important to state expressly that literature and the study of literature—in its myriad forms—can serve a greater good. The state of Native American studies has benefited tremendously from the so-called Native American Renaissance and even owes its existence in part to the literary outpouring of Native writers, despite the dangers of oversimplification and misinterpretation. Without N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, and James Welch as well as the many other Native writers—and the high level of attention given them by scholars and critics—public knowledge of social, political, and legal issues important to Native activists would be

much lower. If anything, we should work to expand the audience for Native writers, not limit their influence and dismiss them (and their promoters) as inconsequential. Read with an open mind (or a good teacher/critic), Welch's historical fiction—and literature generally—can change the world one person at a time, which is, practically, the only way to change the world. Daniel Heath Justice expresses it well: "Understanding art for life's sake aids all Indigenous peoples, including the literary scholars among us, to decolonize our world in mind as well as body, to dismantle the ideas and forces that tear us into pieces." (118). As readers and scholars of literature, we should continue to focus conscientiously on the literary expressions of Native writers. They have taught us important lessons; they have, by extension, educated our students; and in turn our students have influenced others (sometimes as teachers themselves). Welch would likely appreciate the string of connection and understanding initiated by his writings.

NOTES

1. Many critics explain how elements of Native culture are central to understanding *Fools Crow*. For example, Nora Barry outlines how Welch "retells and extends traditional Blackfeet myths, and connects his hero to these myths and to historical events" (3). Kathryn Shanley argues that reading dreams "comprises an indigenous science of probability" ("Lady Luck" 94), which explains *Fools Crow*'s growth as well as his contribution to the community. Bruce Murphree posits that Welch uses Indian legends "to clarify the dangers of straying too far from Pikuni tribal heritage" (186).

2. See Mihesuah's *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians* (1998) and Mihesuah and Wilson's *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities* (2004).

3. Louis Owens laments the way that many so-called postcolonial critics ignore "the existence of a resistance literature arising from indigenous, colonized inhabitants of the Americas" ("As If" 13).

4. Jace Weaver has recently called upon scholars of Native American studies to do what Welch does in his fiction: "It must seek to understand the material from the perspective of the Natives. . . . History of white/Native interaction told largely or exclusively from the perspective of the

settler colonizers is *not* NAS” (236). Kimberly M. Blaeser also writes of Native writers’ focus on history: “By a deft twist of the popular vision of history, they submerge their readers in the ‘what ifs’ of historical interpretation” (163).

5. Kathryn Shanley writes: “Changing the hearts and minds of readers habituated to see ‘Indians’ as exotic Others requires a shift in mainstream worldview, the paradigm through which social interactions and cross-cultural perceptions fall categorically into place” (“Metacritical” 225).

6. Andrea Opitz, who translated *Fools Crow* into German, writes that Welch’s language “forces the reader to recognize and adapt to his or her own marginal position in relation to the particular text” (126).

7. Louis Owens writes that Welch’s use of Blackfeet language “underscores the Indians’ sense of still controlling their world, of being the privileged center within this world wherein the whites are ‘other’” (*Other Destinies* 158).

8. Sidner Larson describes his position similarly: “[M]y lifework has evolved to a place of attempting to interpret to predominantly white middle-class students those American Indian worldviews that I believe may be helpful to them” (4).

9. Paula Gunn Allen makes this charge against Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony*, writing that “the story she lays alongside the novel is a clan story, and is not to be told outside of the clan” because such stories can be “objectified, explained, detailed and analyzed” as though “they were simply curios, artifacts, fetishes” (383). Likewise Peter Whitely writes, “Dissemination of ritual knowledge, either orally to untitled parties or *ipso facto* in published accounts, violates ritual sanctity and effectiveness and may damage the spiritual health of the community” (qtd. in Krupat 21).

10. William Farr describes how early-twentieth-century observers wrote of the “heathenism and bloodshed” of the Sun Dance celebration (66–68).

11. Many writers have written about two-way cultural influences. Historian James W. Loewen outlines this “syncretism—blending elements of two different cultures to create something new” (103). Craig Womack also rejects “the supremacist notion that assimilation can only go in one direction” (12). David Moore notes how both Gerald Vizenor and Vine Deloria emphasize identity building as a process of “change and exchange,” adding, “If power is not a one-way street, Native writers can also redistribute powerlessness across the colonial divide in the name of reversing the present and past” (70).

12. When I presented these ideas at the 2004 Western Literature Association Conference in Big Sky, Montana, an audience member (who self-identified as Native American) indicated that some Lakotas felt that Welch failed to define these terms accurately in *Heartsong*.

13. James Loewen argues that many Natives abandoned their spiritual belief systems after debilitating epidemics swept through their regions (81).

14. Robert Gish, on the other hand, argues that Welch fosters mystery within many of his works.

15. David Murray notes: "The concern for mixedness, for impurities of all sorts, whether formal or racial can be seen not so much as a refusal or betrayal of an Indian heritage or identity as a refusal of the limiting and simplified purities and archaisms of mainstream representations of Indians" (90).

16. See Kenneth Lincoln, Kimberly Blaeser, and also my article on Sherman Alexie.

17. Vine Deloria Jr. writes, "[T]he relationship of Indians with the natural world has become so much of a cliché that it no longer communicates anything except the need for petting zoos for urban children" (viii).

18. Cornel D. Pewewardy also expresses suspicion regarding literary studies and its practitioners: "Literary criticism appears to be emerging as a 'safe' field, one that supports anyone who claims to be Native" (205).

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The Violence of Collection

Indian Killer's Archives

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At the close of Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer*, in a final chapter titled "Creation Story," a killer carries a backpack containing, among other things, "dozens of owl feathers, a scrapbook, and two bloody scalps in a plastic bag" (419). Readers schooled in the psychopathologies of real and fictional serial killers will be familiar with the detail: body parts or other "trophies" (to use this killer's term) often serve to memorialize a murderer's acts (149). That the tokens of violence here are scalps and owl feathers reflects the racial entanglements of this particular killing spree and of Alexie's novel in general. The accompanying scrapbook points to a less spectacular, if no less significant, concern of the text, a concern with the systematized collection and preservation of artifacts of violent racial encounter. As the chapter title indicates, the killer's collection *creates*: it produces a narrative of ethnographic trauma and racial identity. The archive is resistant to tribal specification. The killer, wearing a mask of "cedar, or pine, or maple," brings his archive to "this reservation or that reservation. Any reservation, a particular reservation" (419). Still, the killer's dance, "over five hundred years old," draws hundreds of indigenes, "all learning the same song, the exact dance" (420). At the center of a spontaneous, revelatory ceremony, the archive seems to generate an indigenous identity that is both specific and generalized, a touchstone for all Native American experience since European contact.

The creation of "Creation Story" enacts a central paradox of collections, which theorists have argued serve to contain objects

in a system of knowledge and simultaneously to solidify the identity of the collector. Collections, it has been argued, reveal more about those who create them than about the objects collected. The scalps and scrapbook in the killer's backpack may memorialize acts of violence against white men, but they are by no means a contemporary adaptation of the warrior's counting coup. Rather, the artifacts are at the center of a radical redefinition of indigenous identity produced through the archive of racial encounter. The anonymous Native Americans seemingly drawn by the items in the killer's pack are poised to learn "the exact dance" of indigenous identity. That identity is predicated here on artifacts of non-Native being, on objects—white scalps—that define the non-Native other as victims of violent interracial encounter.

The killer's collection reflects Alexie's penchant for ironic reversal: in contrast to the familiar dynamic of western museums and private ethnographic archives, white men are the objects of collection rather than the collectors here, and Native Americans are the ones reveling in the accumulation of artifacts. In fact, the killer's collection serves as counterbalance to the many collections in the novel that are created by whites to define Native Americans and, consequently, to maintain a racial hierarchy in the modern world. An anthropology professor covetously files away audiotapes of tribal elders performing oral narratives. The white father of an adopted Native American son pores over his atlases of colonized spaces, while his wife conducts research in her collection of books on Native American history and culture. A detective novelist eavesdrops in an indigenous watering hole, accumulating material for his book. A white professor's syllabus for his course on Native American studies gathers a more conventional set of "Indian stories" in the required readings. Through such collections, white authority figures mark their understanding of and their authority over "authentic" Native American culture by accruing both real and imagined artifacts of indigenous existence.

To various degrees, these white acts of collection resemble the anthropological appropriation of tribal objects that has been the subject of intense debate between tribal leaders and administra-

tors of mainstream cultural institutions in recent years. While that debate centers on material artifacts, on art works, ceremonial items, and human remains, Alexie focuses on the collection of more abstract cultural property taken, sometimes forcibly, off the reservation. Such collections serve as the basis for Alexie's critique of cultural imperialism. In *Indian Killer*, collections are part of the mechanism of racial and ethnic hierarchy in the United States. They reinforce white power and undermine indigenous authority. The latter implications of the ethnographic archive suggest the ways collections can do violence to the racial other, an idea captured in the novel's epigraph, from Alex Kuo: "We are what / We have lost." *Indian Killer* is about acts of collection and re-collection, the meanings and identities they produce, and, more significantly, the losses they inflict.

Collecting both produces and suppresses identities; it is "a form of Western subjectivity" (Clifford 220) as well as "a form of subordination, appropriation, depersonification" (Bal 101). In this essay, I explore the cultural logic of ethnographic archives in the text to illuminate the ways collecting underpins a brutal and undeclared race war. My reading builds on theories of the ways collections radically decontextualize and contain objects of alterity as they shore up the collectors' identities. The description of the killer's collection in the final chapter of the novel reiterates the significance of ethnographic collection examined throughout the text, its violence, its meaning-making, and its political implications. For Alexie, the decontextualization and containment inherent in ethnographic collections constitute cultural violence analogous to the killer's attacks. The depictions of explosive physical violence that have preoccupied critics of the novel serve as inverted metaphors for the kinds of cultural violence Alexie sees inflicted upon Native American identity by the academy, the publishing world, and the armchair ethnographer. The killer's collection dramatically memorializes his own violence, but it is the violence of collection itself that suffuses the novel.

Given the spectacularity of physical brutality in the novel, the graphic descriptions of kidnappings, beatings, mutilations, and

murders, it is not surprising that critics and reviewers have seen violence as the defining quality of the text. While the physical violence of *Indian Killer* is inter- and intraracial, with both white and Native American characters inflicting pain on others, critics and reviewers of the novel have focused on physical violence against whites as a kind of authenticating act for indigenous characters. Arnold Krupat names *Indian Killer* “the first Native American novel I know to take a very particular sort of Indian rage, *murderous* rage, as its central subject—and, it would seem, to encourage its expression” (103, emphasis in original). Similarly, Cyrus Patell writes that the novel “depicts the ontology of hybridity as an ontology of violence” (3). One reviewer attributes the violence of the novel to Alexie’s own purported social dysfunction, calling the writer “septic with what clearly seems to be his own unappeasable anger” (Skow). The focus on the violence enacted by Native Americans and those of mixed race in the novel, as well as on the presumed rage of the novel’s Native American author, is troubling in its obvious double standard; “*murderous* rage” describes the white men in the novel who beat homeless Native Americans with baseball bats as aptly as it describes the attacks of Native American aggressors. Underplaying the universality of racial violence in the novel misses the point that, as Alexie puts it, “this is a country founded on slaughter. Columbine isn’t very far from Sand Creek” (Torrez 3). In fact, the novel is constructed of parallel acts of violence, as the author points out in response to critics: “there was an Indian kid being kidnapped and a white kid being kidnapped. Everyone failed to see any ambiguity” (Campbell). Such ambiguity is captured in the novel’s title, which refers as much to the literal and figurative killer(s) of Native Americans as to a Native American who kills; as one character asks, “If it was an Indian doing the killing, then wouldn’t he be called the Killer Indian?” (247).

At the same time, the critical focus on the physical violence committed by Native American characters obscures more insidious and intangible forms of violence in the text—namely, the ways institutional and private archives designed to authenticate Native American identity threaten the very cultures they would

define and purportedly preserve. Modern practices of ethnographic collecting reinforce an ethnocentric system of knowledge that marginalizes the other. Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* argues that "colonizing knowledges" that possess, classify, represent, and evaluate objects of indigenous cultures are simultaneously "instruments of knowledge and instruments for legitimating various colonial practices" (60). Colonizing knowledges work by defining indigenous cultures as inferior and by restricting indigenous peoples' access to the artifacts, both concrete and abstract, that are central to their identity. Chronicling the devastating effects of Western epistemology and collection on indigenous culture, Tuhiwai Smith notes, for instance, how the nineteenth-century European science of "craniometry," the procurement and measurement of human skulls, aimed to prove the intellectual inferiority of "primitive" peoples (82). Ethnographic collection practices also participate in the commodification of Native cultures, what Tuhiwai Smith names "trading the Other": practices that dilute indigenous cultures by disseminating their cultural properties across the globe (89). These acts of collection impoverish indigenous societies from within, through the removal of pillars of cultural identity, and from without, through "science" that marginalizes. In both cases, and in many other examples from the history of European contact with others, acts of collection do violence to indigenous cultures.

The nineteenth-century collection of human skulls offers a most transparent case of the violence of collection, but even seemingly benign collections in Alexie's novel point to the same mechanisms of colonization. Daniel and Olivia Smith are a well-meaning white couple who struggle to help their adopted Native American son find a sense of racial identity. Their participation in colonizing practices is reflected in their collections, which do more to deconstruct their son's sense of indigenous identity than to reinforce it. The parents' conception of indigenous identity, which they pass along to their son, comes from "books, Western movies, documentaries," "research on Native American history and culture," and "news about Indians" (12, 20). While the Smiths' research seems

well intentioned, in practice these collections of information only contribute to John Smith's confusion. When his parents eventually take him to a reservation basketball tournament, John suffers an identity crisis. Looking at the Native American participants, he feels "betrayed" by what he has learned from the books on his parents' shelves: "He did not recognize these Indians. They were nothing like the Indians he had read about" (22).

Daniel and Olivia's archives of knowledge palliate their guilt at removing their son from his cultural heredity more than they help him determine his identity. Daniel's library of "dog eared atlases," moreover, goes further by helping to solidify Daniel's own Euro-American sense of racial and social dominance. The atlases provide Daniel with a refuge when his notions of racial order become disrupted. When the adult John, who is mentally ill, goes missing in Seattle, Daniel goes out searching for him. Trolling the streets of the city, he interviews the homeless urban indigenes he meets. They lampoon his conventional expectations about Native American identity, those gleaned from the books and movies he has read over the years. One homeless man, sensing Daniel's fears about violence in this part of town, claims to be the "Indian Killer." Others tell him that although they have not seen his son, they do know Loney, Tayo, and Abel, all, of course, luminary characters in the canon of Native American fiction. The teasing reminds us that despite their only son's heritage, the Smiths' knowledge of indigenous culture is mostly limited to what is available in books and films. Unable to find John and shaken by his encounters with the urban Native Americans, Daniel turns to his maps of conquered territories for comfort. Daniel's maps of Southeast Asia and the American West represent "places he had never been" but also the violence—the "wars, wars, wars"—that fragment and distribute spaces among the dominant Western cultures (315).

The reference to the violence of racial encounter in places like Korea, Vietnam, and Montana might suggest Daniel's concerns about the perpetuation of these types of conflicts in Seattle, now under the cloud of racial tension in the wake of attacks by the mysterious killer and by racist white men. However, despite, or per-

haps because of, the histories they encompass, Daniel's atlases ease his mind. "Daniel love[s] maps" because they restore his sense of racial order (315). If Seattle's population of displaced urban indigenes makes him feel dislocated, lost in an unfamiliar world in which non-whites hold power over him, the maps reassure him. In them may be read the story of dominant powers that have systematized a world of colonizers and colonized. Absorbed in a map of the United States, Daniel "silently read[s] his way across the whole state" of Montana, figuratively possessing the space once populated only by Native Americans like his son (316). Against the chaos of downtown Seattle, with its population of urban indigenes who intimidate and tease him, against the specter of the "Indian Killer," Daniel finds the maps heartening. Unlike John, whom Daniel sadly imagines "lost, without a map," the white father gains a renewed sense of his place in the world (316). It is fitting that Daniel, who seems otherwise sympathetic to the plight of indigenous peoples, examines his maps while listening to a radio program by Truck Schultz, the conservative talk-show host whose sensationalizing and conspiracy theorizing foment racist violence across the city. The map collection reflects the ways the archive works to sustain Daniel's sense of a new world order.

The psychosocial effects of Daniel's map collection reveal the mechanism of collection, its capacity to define the world in ways that privilege the collector. Collecting, James Clifford asserts in *The Predicament of Culture*, "cannot be natural or innocent. It is tied up with nationalist politics, with restrictive law, and with contested encodings of past and future" (218). Ethnography itself is a form of "culture collecting," a practice that selects and detaches experiences and artifacts from their Native contexts and places them in a new arrangement (231). Providing a "chronotope for collecting," Clifford reveals the ways modern Western collectors of culture situate themselves "at the end of global history" (244). Claude Lévi-Strauss, for instance, associates indigenous peoples of the United States with the distant past, even as the Native American groups he studies reassert their cultural and political integrity in the present (Clifford 246). As it subjugates the other, that is, ethnographic col-

lection shores up the dominant culture's sense of itself. It is, writes Clifford, "a strategy for the deployment of the possessive self, culture, and authenticity" (218).

Clifford builds on theories that see the systematized projection of values inherent in collection as a means of substantiating authority and selfhood. The possessed object, Baudrillard has said, is "profoundly related to subjectivity: for while the object is a resistant material body, it is also, simultaneously, a mental realm over which I hold sway, a thing whose meaning is governed by myself alone" (7). The collected object in particular defines subjectivity, because collections consist of objects removed from their utilitarian or social context and made relative to the identity of the collector. Susan Stewart elaborates:

When objects are defined in terms of their use value, they serve as extensions of the body into the environment, but when objects are defined by the collection, such an extension is inverted, serving to subsume the environment to a scenario of the personal. The ultimate term in the series that marks the collection is the "self," the articulation of the collector's own "identity." (162)

Thus collection decontextualizes and reorients. Items are detached from their use value or social value and redefined under the collector's authority and as parts of the collector's discursive system. Outside of their cultural context, items become the collector's implements of subjectivity. Through collected objects, the collector constructs "an alternative discourse that is for him entirely amenable, in so far as he is the only one who dictates its signifiers—the ultimate signified being, in the final analysis, none other than himself" (Baudrillard 24). As Mieke Bal succinctly describes it, the collection is "the confrontation between objects and subjective agency informed by an attitude" (100).

Concerns about the ways ethnographic collection decontextualizes and reorients cultural objects in the service of the dominant culture underlie passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, or NAGPRA, called to mind in Alexie's novel

by the bones of Chief Seattle and other Native Americans said to be hidden away in the labyrinthine storage area of a university building basement (139). The 1990 legislation culminated efforts by Native American tribes to repatriate human remains and objects of cultural patrimony taken in the name of trade, education, or science. Supporters of the legislation decried the desecration of graves and the unfettered flow of cultural items into non-Native possession in the collections of white archeologists, hobbyists, and museum curators. NAGPRA advocates saw such appropriation as explicit acts of cultural violence. More broadly, they urged a shift in the authority to define indigenous culture from academic and institutional bodies to indigenous peoples themselves. In the words of Jack F. Trope and Walter R. Echo-Hawk, the legislation represents “the first time that the federal government and non-Indian institutions must consider what is *sacred* from an Indian perspective” (151, emphasis in original). NAGPRA is designed to counteract colonizing knowledges that erase the indigenous perspective. At stake is subjectivity itself, the authority of Native Americans to define themselves and their right to maintain the sanctity of their own cultures.

Writing just after passage of NAGPRA and in the context of its lingering debates, Alexie draws a connection between the remains, funerary items, and “objects of cultural patrimony” protected by the legislation and abstract cultural properties that remain unregulatable (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act 308). To begin with, Alexie examines that ideologically fraught collection ubiquitous in academia, the syllabus. At the outset of the semester, anthropology professor and “Wannabe Indian” Clarence Mather is called to task by a Spokane university student for his reading list for a course on Native American literature (58). Mather asserts the course is “a comprehensive one, viewing the Native American world from both the interior and exterior” (60), but Marie Polatkin points out that “there are only three Indians on this list, and their books were really written by white guys” (59). Significantly, Marie’s objections stem from her sense that Native American stories have been co-opted in this collection. The syl-

labus lists Native American life stories appropriated and shaped by white writers and editors: “there’s a whole lot more biography than auto in those books,” Marie complains (59). The most striking example of texts that subsume the indigenous perspective on the syllabus is *The Education of Little Tree*, a book that appeared on many college reading lists until its author, Forrest Carter, was revealed to be not the Cherokee he claimed, but a white supremacist. But Marie also objects to the prevalence of “as-told-to” texts on the syllabus, those Native American life stories with non-Native coauthors or editors: *Black Elk Speaks*, *Lame Deer: Seeker of Visions*, and *Lakota Woman*. Mather dismisses Marie’s concerns about *Little Tree*’s fraudulence as “rumors” (59), but Marie’s protests go beyond the issue of deceit. She rejects the imposition of a Native American identity predetermined by whites. In her view, the syllabus makes Mather’s “idea of Indians” (or that of Carter or the white coeditors and coauthors represented on the syllabus) substitute for the ideas of “real Indians out there writing real Indian books” (58, 67).

Alexie’s inclusion of a debate about syllabus content brings to the fore the ties between armchair ethnographic collection and academic practices, both, for Alexie, part of the mechanisms of subjugation. Marie sums up her complaints about Mather with a question that strikes at the heart of academic authority in Native American studies: “Why isn’t an Indian teaching the class?” (312). As Patrice Hollrah demonstrates, critiques of the academy’s authority over Native American literature are prevalent in Alexie’s writing. Hollrah notes the importance of such critiques for raising awareness about insidious colonizing practices. However, she finds Alexie’s objections somewhat short-sighted because he “does not offer any solutions or suggestions for white scholars. His only advice recommends deferring to Native scholars and writers because they have the authority of cultural insider status.” In Alexie’s critique, Hollrah concludes, “non-Native scholars are left without entry into the criticism of his work because they cannot speak with authority as cultural insiders” (33). Even as it acknowledges problems in academic representations of Native Americans, such analysis demonstrates how the syllabus debate is at root a struggle for authority:

whereas Marie asks how the Native American voices can be heard, Hollrah wonders how white scholars can gain “entry” into Native-authored texts as instructors and interpreters. The stakes of the debate are high because the syllabus is a collection that inevitably produces and defines authority and subjectivity.

Placing the syllabus discussion in the context of the larger implications of collection in the novel illuminates the processes of collection that validate the authoritative self and inscribe the indigene as other. Mather’s “idea of Indians,” produced and sustained by his collection of texts, allows him to define Marie in his own terms: he complains that she fails to demonstrate “the qualities of a true Spokane” and believes he could teach her “a thing or two about being Indian” (135). Tellingly Mather’s defense of the syllabus is articulated in terms of his rights to authorize indigenous identity as it is represented in the books and stories he feels he possesses; for Mather, in his unforgivable paraphrase of Whitman, “Every good story that belongs to Indians belongs to non-Indians, too” (61). In actuality, and as the novel reiterates in a similar conflict with Marie’s cousin, Mather asserts *exclusive* rights to the “good stories” that define Native Americans. Like the author of *The Education of Little Tree*, Mather lays claim to the indigenous experience as his personal possession. His collection is designed to give him the authority to define comprehensively the Native American world.

Marie notes that the real work of the syllabus is to silence the voices of “real Indians” (67). The violence of this archive is figurative, but nonetheless palpable: “It’s like [the books on Mather’s syllabus] are killing Indian books,” Marie says (68). Significantly, Marie draws attention to the implicit violence in Mather’s archive by inverting it. As Mather lectures on the history of whites “adopted” by Native American tribes, she attempts to shift the topic to the recent murders of white men by a killer rumored to be Native American (61). This connection between physical violence and the violence of the archive reverberates throughout the novel. For Alexie, syllabi like Mather’s are as much a part of the long tradition of interracial violence as the killer’s attacks on whites or the white vigilantes’ attacks on Native Americans are.

Marie's objections to Mather's syllabus come to focus upon one writer in particular, Jack Wilson. A detective writer with questionable claims to Shilshomish heritage, Wilson serves in the novel as another example of the ways members of the dominant culture collect Native American stories in order to buttress the collector's identity and sense of superiority. Wilson is writing a novel titled *Indian Killer* that stars a romanticized Native American detective named Aristotle Little Hawk. The writer gathers material by eavesdropping on conversations and casually questioning customers at Big Heart's, an "Indian bar." Like Mather, Wilson sees the "great material" he gathers, decontextualizes, and reorients in his novels as both an authentic version of Native American identity and his own inalienable possession (338). Wilson feels he has been "chosen for a special task. [. . .] He would write the book that would finally reveal to the world what it truly meant to be Indian" (338). He unwittingly marks the difference between the *real* and his own fictional version of indigenous identity with an idea that also reflects his proprietary relation to the "material" of Native American culture: "He wanted the world to know about the real Indian Killer, not *someone else's invention*" (339, emphasis added). Unable to recognize the distance here between "real" and "invention," Wilson nonetheless stakes a claim to the Native American experience of interracial violence; it is his, "not someone else's." In keeping with Alexie's critique of all kinds of archives, Marie's cousin Reggie Polatkin raises a comparison that makes Wilson's material gathering the equivalent of the kinds of anthropological mining targeted by NAGPRA: after the writer has peppered him with questions in the bar, he asks, "What do you do when you leave here? Dig up graves?" (369).

The comment links Wilson to Mather; digging up and appropriating Native American stories is the primary occupation of both the white detective novelist and the white academic. Indeed, Mather's other ethnographic collection in the novel was literally buried, along with other artifacts and physical remains, in the university basement. "[R]umaging and foraging" in a storage room, Mather had chanced upon "twelve hours' worth of magic," audio-

tapes of Pacific Northwest tribal elders telling stories (136, 139). Mather considers the tapes, like the boxes of artifacts nearby, “a valuable anthropological find” of the caliber that makes academic careers (137). Alexie, however, insists we see the voices and stories preserved on the tapes from a Native American perspective, that of Mather’s former student (and Marie’s cousin) Reggie, and as no less consecrated than the bodily remains. Formerly close friends Mather and Reggie come to blows when Reggie insists that the tapes should be erased. Their argument over the tapes revolves around the same questions of possession, decontextualization, and authority over Native American culture that suffuse debates about the uses of Native American cultural properties. Reggie wants to “erase the tapes because he had not wanted anybody else, especially a white man like Mather, to have them”; he tells Mather, “That’s a family story. It belongs to the family. Not on some tape” (137). Reggie objects to Mather’s appropriation and exploitation of stories now removed from their sacred and social context. “Look, I’m sure the elders definitely didn’t understand how these stories were going to be used,” he argues (138).

Reggie’s comment on the professor’s “use” of the oral narratives hints at Mather’s fetishistic relationship with the tapes. The professor sits alone in the dark listening to “his beloved secret tapes”; he is “personally in love with the Indian elders’ voices” (139). Writing on identity and collection, John Windsor defines fetishism broadly as “the removal of the object from its historical and cultural context and its redefinition in terms of the collector” (50). Taking the Spokane stories out of their context and into his private collection, Mather makes them objects of his own vaguely sexual pleasure and implements of his own subjectivity. He had “come to see those stories as his possessions, as *his* stories, as if it had been his voice on those tapes” (138, emphasis in original).

Mather’s indecent relationship with the audiotapes offers a gloss on Tuhiwai Smith’s assertion that “‘research’ is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary” (1). The collection of oral narratives produces colonizing knowledge, and Reggie’s reaction reflects the ways indigenous people have fought

against such practices. The question of recording and publishing oral narratives is one that Native American scholars have engaged in terms similar to those that circulate in NAGPRA debates. Reggie's uneasiness about the inappropriate uses of the archive of tribal stories echoes, for instance, Ray Young Bear's observations about Mesquakie tribe members' unwillingness to have their own oral stories recorded. Young Bear reports that when he tried to gather oral tales some resistant tribe members suggested sending tribal narratives into the white scholar's archive would amount to a kind of suicide, a sacrifice of the living culture to feed the dead collection (Allen 57). Young Bear is quoted in Paula Gunn Allen's influential essay "Special Problems in Teaching Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*," in which Allen registers the "*tragic consequences*" of publishing sacred tribal stories outside the tribe (57, emphasis in the original). Of Native American stories that are collected and reproduced for Western consumption, Allen wonders, "for whom [are] the tradition(s) be[ing] preserved?" (57). In the case of the tapes in the university basement, the answer to that question is clearly the self-important white academic. That such appropriation is part of the mechanism of racial and cultural erasure is evident in the rumor that the basement that houses the tapes also conceals Chief Seattle's bones and "the bones of dozens of other Indians" (139).

Again the abstract cultural violence of ethnographic collection is linked to the concrete physical violence of the novel, and, again, there is ironic inversion in the unfolding of events. Just as Marie links the literal violence of the killer to the figurative violence of the white professor's syllabus, Reggie initiates a program of physical brutality that parallels the cultural assault of Mather's audio-tape archive. Reggie becomes so enraged about the tapes that he attacks Mather and is expelled from the university. His aggression prefaces a rampage in which he and two friends stalk and assault a white man. The assault corresponds to the acts of a group of white men who roam the streets of Seattle attacking Native Americans; even Reggie's blue eyes match the blue eyes of Aaron Rogers, the leader of the white thugs (90, 189). But Reggie's violence is more than just textual payback. It at once imitates and reverses the kinds

of violence inflicted on Native American culture by ethnographic collection. Like his professor, Reggie is a collector. He archives the pain he inflicts on the white man by recording his victim's cries on tapes, producing an ugly parody of the oral narratives in the university basement. And, like his professor, Reggie teaches, giving his victims history lessons along with the blows from his fists: "My name is Black Kettle," he lectures as he pummels his victim; "you killed me on the Washita River in Oklahoma. You and that fucker Custer, remember?" (257).

Mather had seen himself as "a father figure" to Reggie; fittingly, he shares accountability for inspiring Reggie's sadistic attacks with the younger man's racist white father, Bird (137). In method if not content, Reggie's violent history lessons reproduce the lessons Bird inflicted upon him when he was a child. "The smallpox was God's revenge," Bird had lectured, slapping Reggie. "It killed all the hostile Indians. You want to be a hostile Indian?" (91). Bird's "oral history" is not recorded, but it is preserved, because it is literally beaten into Reggie's consciousness. It allows Bird to define his own identity as superior to the racial other, so much so that he refuses to allow Reggie to use his surname "until he'd become the appropriate kind of Indian" (92). Reggie's physical wounds at the hands of Bird are eclipsed by psychic scars. He grows up believing "he was successful because of his father's white blood, and that his Indian mother's blood was to blame for his failures" (94). The brutal archive produced when Reggie assaults a random white man, then, is meant to be corrective. His tape preserving both the pain of a white man and the alternate history he tells represents an effort to counterbalance the archives of the two white men who have held so much authority over him. With his own collection, Reggie attempts to reclaim the power of the collection to define himself. Not incidentally, his alternative history lessons begin as he asks the victim "What's my name?" (255). The question references the ways his white father has denied him a name, as well as the ways his white teacher has appropriated the authority to define him as a Native American: in the same way that he dismisses Marie, Mather concludes, "Reggie Polatkin had failed to behave like a true Spokane"

(135). In essence Reggie has learned his lessons well from his two fathers/teachers. Like them, he wields his archive to subjugate the racial other, but more importantly to create and enforce his own authoritative identity.

Reggie's recording literalizes the violence of the historical archive—not just the violence within history, as in the story of Black Kettle's death, but the violence *of* history, its capacity to inflict pain upon those about whom the history is being written. As Bird's oral history suggests, historical narratives participate in the cultivation and maintenance of power structures. Yet it is the *collection* of these hegemonic narratives, the archive preserved in Reggie's damaged psyche, that is most significant here. According to Stewart, "the collection marks the space of nexus for all narratives, the place where history is transformed into space, into property" (xii). The processes of collection transform narratives—Reggie's, Bird's, and the Spokane elders' oral histories—into property. Mather's and Reggie's audiotapes create compilations of historical narratives that can be possessed and relished in the same way a collector might own and take pleasure in works of art. Similarly, Reggie's scarred body and psyche, the repository of Bird's racist histories, mark his father's possession of Reggie's identity, as reflected in his assertion of authority over Reggie's name. These properties in turn prop up each collector's sense of domination. Indeed, the "facts" of history become obfuscated in each act, for, as Stewart has it, "the point of the collection is forgetting—starting again in such a way that a finite number of elements create, by virtue of their combination, an infinite reverie" (152). The tribal context of oral narratives, the indigenous experience of racial conflict, and even the alternate histories provided by Reggie are all obscured in the collector's fetishistic or sadistic revel in the subjugation of the other and exaltation of the self as it is captured and preserved in the collection. In some sense Reggie, Bird, and Mather all collect the pain of others in order to elevate themselves.

In the violent triangle of Reggie, Bird, and Mather, Alexie represents the collision of conventional ethnography and what Mary Louise Pratt has named autoethnography: self-representations

produced by the other that entail “partial collaboration with and appropriation of the idioms of the conquerer” (7). Deploying Pratt’s concept in an analysis of Alexie’s poetry, John Newton has noted the ways Alexie projects a history of Native American experience that always exists in dialogue with the histories produced by the culture in power.

In Alexie’s poetics of the contemporary reservation, history is neither metaphysical or even tribal, but always emphatically a history of contact. [. . .] Alexie’s work employs a cheerful pop-cultural globalism in negotiating a history which is drastically specific. The result is a “postcolonialism” that makes no claim to disentangle itself either from the colonial past or from the postmodern present. (415)

And yet Reggie’s autoethnographic history in *Indian Killer* is not a playful fusion of perspectives, but a recirculation of the pain produced in the colonial encounter, and it is this cycle of destruction that calls into question readings that brand Alexie’s writing as either quirkily postcolonial or, more problematically, unthinkingly incendiary. Contrary to Arnold Krupat’s assessment, the novel does not condone Reggie’s sadism. Instead, it illuminates the extent to which ethnographic collection perpetuates a culture of violent racial division within, as well as outside of, marginalized cultures by disseminating fictions of identity based on subjugation of the other. In collection adheres power, but it is power based on an imagined system of relations that requires constant buttressing. Maintaining this system through collection perpetuates violence and destruction.

When he adopts the dominant culture’s practice of violent collection, Reggie attempts to produce for himself a sense of indigenuous identity, to answer the question “What’s my name?” But he unleashes a brutality that is indiscriminate in its targets and ultimately endangers, rather than generates, a concept of Native being. “[L]ooking for a reason to fight” after attacking the white man, he targets John Smith at a bar (280). John has no knowledge of his tribal identity and envisions his adoption as a warlike kidnapping.

He emerges from childhood in confusion about the “authenticity” of his Native American identity that evolves into schizophrenia, and at the bar he looks to Reggie and his friends for help, believing “[t]hese Indian men, these warriors, would know how to be Indian” (280). Perhaps sensing weakness, Reggie claims the authority to define John or, rather, to deny him a definitive identity: “You don’t belong here. You ain’t Indian” (281). Significantly, Reggie’s words echo Mather’s dismissal of Reggie as not “a true Spokane,” as well as Bird’s assessment that his son was not “the appropriate kind of Indian” (135, 92). In other words, though it aims to counter the collections of his white male authority figures, Reggie’s own violent collection by no means supplies a reliable Native subjectivity or authority. Instead it perpetuates the confusion, the schizophrenia, of racial identity for Native Americans in a world of fictions partially produced through the archive. His physical assault on John and his raw anger (“You’re lucky I don’t kill you,” he whispers) frightens his Native American co-conspirators because it seems disconnected from Reggie’s hatred of whites (281). It also deepens John’s self-destructive despair, his sense of being hemmed in by “so many places to drown” (282).

In this sense the novel joins critics who call into question the ways autoethnography requires appropriation of the idioms and mechanisms of the dominant culture. If Reggie’s autoethnographic collection of tapes turns the tables on Mather and Bird, it also turns against any definitive sense of an indigenous self. The antagonism to Native American identity registers in Reggie’s rejection of the urban Native American community. Reggie’s friends argue that his taping of his victim’s cries is “sick,” and they worry that his violence has no meaning because it has no boundaries: “We ain’t supposed to be hurting our own kind, are we?” one asks (320). Reggie, “thinking of Dr. Mather’s precious tapes,” listens to the tapes of his victims and wonders “[w]ho can say which story is more traditional than any other?” (320). But unlike the Spokane oral narratives, the tradition preserved in Reggie’s tapes is not really a tradition of identity, but one of meaningless destruction, even the destruction of identity. It is no surprise that when he is challenged

by his Native American friends about his behavior, Reggie violently turns on them as well (321). In the end, rather than enjoying a solidified sense of indigenous identity, Reggie leaves his Seattle community “running” (407). Speeding toward a new city “north or south, east or west,” he gives the white man with whom he catches a ride a nonviolent lesson in revised Native American history, even as he admits to himself that “every city was a city of white men” (409).

Reggie’s anticlimactic departure and his lack of direction reveal the destructiveness of appropriating the methods of collection to re-establish an indigenous identity. However, it is in the characterization of John Smith that Alexie most fully deconstructs collection and the collector. John’s failure of identity, materialized in his mental illness, is rooted in cultural loss, since he was denied a tribal history when he was adopted and grew up feeling “less than real” (17). His belief as a younger man that he is pregnant and will give birth to a child is symptomatic of his desire for a sense of self. Significantly, in his effort to solidify an identity his own schizophrenic collections, “[b]oxes of assorted junk [. . .] stacked neatly in every corner” of his apartment, caricature the systematic collections of others in the text (356). Like the boxes of tapes and artifacts in the university basement or the shelves of books in his parents’ home, these collections are important comforts to their owner, and when he hears of crime in the neighborhood, John worries about the safety of his possessions (98). The difference between other collections and this one, however, is that John’s “junk” lacks any comprehensible system for conferring identity. Lacking a system that reorients objects in relation to the collector and against the racial other, John wanders through the text knowing only “something had been lost” (127).

In fact, John is in many respects the novel’s anti-collector, a man without the personal authority to foster his own social power through collection. He confesses to a white priest that he feels caught in a process of collection over which he has no control, one in which he is not an accumulator but an unwilling repository:

All the anger in the world has come to my house. It’s there in my closet. In my refrigerator. In the water. In the sheets. It’s

in my clothes. Can you smell it? I can never run away from it.
[. . .] I hear it all the time. All the time the anger is talking to
me. It's the devil. I'm the devil. (200)

Surrounded by rage, John feels compelled to kill. Unlike Reggie or the titular killer, however, he does not intend to collect victims or create an archive of multiple violent encounters. Instead he searches for the *one* white man “responsible for everything that had gone wrong” (27). It is fitting that John, who believes his identity has been stolen from him, targets the detective novelist who steals his identity in two ways. Wilson’s books are included in John’s mother’s library of readings about indigenous identity; her belief that his novels “really get it right” reveals the ways she uses the literary collection to authenticate John’s identity (355). As John’s schizophrenia suggests, such texts as Wilson’s are not only inadequate but also damaging to the indigenous sense of self. More poignantly, Wilson stakes a claim to John’s identity when he uses him as a model for Aristotle Little Hawk. Seeing in him the image of his hero, Wilson “wanted John all to himself” (269). He begins stalking John, his secret fixation recalling Mather’s relationship with the audiotapes. The writer’s imaginative appropriation of indigenous identity in general, and of John’s identity in particular, typifies the kind of intangible collection that Alexie sees as insidiously destructive to Native American culture, for it suggests how white writers and academics make real people and real cultures parts of colonizing archives of Native American being.

The closing confrontation between Wilson, a creator of “Indian stories,” and the tribeless John, a man robbed of indigenous stories, crystallizes the theme of the violence of collection. John confronts Wilson about the damage he has done in the interest of selling books. “Please,” he begs, “Let me, let us have our own pain” (411). The plea boils down Alexie’s assessment of ethnographic collections throughout the text: like others, Wilson is a collector of the pain of the racial other. The processes of ethnographic collection become linked to physical violence once again as John cuts Wilson’s face. The scar created serves as counter-text to Wilson’s writings; John tells him “people will know you by that mark.

They'll know what you did" (411). Importantly, however, this act of violence leaves an artifact of interracial experience different from Mather's, Bird's, Reggie's, or Wilson's collected artifacts, and serving in stark contrast to the killer's scalps. It does not function by bolstering the collector's identity or subjugating the other. Rather, it is oriented toward an audience that will read a history of white appropriation in the scar. The mechanisms of collection will be legible in Wilson's face.

Leaving Wilson alive, John commits suicide by jumping off a building. As in the case of Reggie, the only way out of the system of power created by white collections is a hasty exit. For John, however, there is at least a symbolic possibility of redemption, for his final scenes in the novel find him rising above his dead body. Though he embarks on a ghostly quest to find his "real name," suggesting his connection to Reggie, John is very different from the violent collector (413). Regardless of intentions, the novel suggests, such authenticating collections as Reggie's, Wilson's, Mather's, Bird's, Olivia's, and Daniel's are never benign. As John tells Wilson in his final words of the novel, "you are not innocent" (411). Nor, Alexie reminds us, can such collections ever accurately define what is or was "authentic" or provide someone with a "real name." Collections are part of our fictions of identity, no more real than the characters in Wilson's novels. In short, as one white character puts it, "things have never been like how you think they used to be," even if collections attempt to make them so (387).

Understanding the critique of collection in Alexie's novel allows us to recognize the final chapter, "Creation Story," as caution, rather than celebration. The collection in the titular killer's backpack that seems to draw hundreds of Native Americans in an ecstasy of communal identification in fact dilutes indigenous identity in its refusal of tribal specification: "With this mask, with this mystery, the killer can dance forever" (420). It is fitting that the killer is never identified in the text, never, indeed, even described in any detail, because his identity derives from his collection of murderous artifacts alone. He cannot be more or less than "the killer." The mask of indefinite origin and association (made of

“cedar, or pine, or maple,” representing “any reservation” [419]) obfuscates identity more than it reveals it. Indeed, the mask recalls John’s description of his feelings of cultural indeterminacy much earlier in the novel: “Though he knew he wasn’t a real Indian, John knew he looked like one. His face was his mask” (276). Despite his purportedly authenticating collection, the killer is no closer to a sense of indigenous identity than is John Smith in his search for his “real name.” The killer bears much in common with Reggie as well: in the end he is not a figure of triumph, but a directionless, nameless, faceless product of violent collection, “spin[ning] in circles” (420). The final chapter of the novel, then, reveals not the triumph of counter-collection, but its dangers for Native Americans and others, its propensity to perpetuate mutually destructive racial hatred and violence. The archives of Native American violence in the novel, like the archives of white violence, threaten only to recirculate upheaval and redouble the general schizophrenia of a divided national culture. Much more than just a collection of violence in itself, then, *Indian Killer* dramatizes the violence of collection, expanding and amplifying protests against cultural imperialism in disturbing and unforgettable ways.

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Charles Alexander Eastman's *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* and the Shaping of Native Manhood

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Malea Powell has argued that Charles Alexander Eastman “imagined new possibilities for Native resistance and survival in the face of violent assimilation strategies” (404–5). To Eastman, Natives had little choice but to acculturate to white society if they were going to resist white domination and survive. But gaining full equality in U.S. society proved difficult in the Progressive Era, given continued white paternalistic regard for Native peoples, as well as enduring negative white stereotypes of Natives, particularly the notion that they were racially childlike, boyish savages incapable of measuring up to the standards of racially superior, “manly” civilized white men. Although scholars have noted the role of gendered discourse in Eastman’s writings, it deserves much more critical attention, for it is an essential site of his resistance to white domination. Eastman fully recognized that Natives had to overcome white racist ideologies that circumscribed their manhood if they were to gain full equality in U.S. society. In his *From the Deep Woods to Civilization*, Eastman challenges this racism by negotiating the values of white middle- and upper-middle-class manhood, as well as stereotypes of Native manhood. Drawing equivalences between Santee and middle- and upper-middle-class white manhood, Eastman illustrates that Santee—and by extension all Native males—are intrinsically equal to white males in their manly attributes and thus capable of full and equal U.S. citizenship.

Eastman was a firm advocate of the goals of the Dawes Act (1887), the purpose of which was to transform Native males as rap-

idly as possible from their supposed savage state into self-made, individual citizens by making them agrarian farmers. In his analysis of Eastman's *Indian Boyhood* (1902), David Carlson writes:

Eastman's primary intent [. . .] does not seem to have been to challenge the dominant Western paradigm of the individual self. Rather, he foregrounds the teleology of allotment law, rooted in Euro-American emphasis on growing out of boyish "savagery" into a more "mature," civilized form of identity. (608)

Eastman, in fact, often used Darwinist discourse to describe this process, but Drew Lopenzina argues that Eastman's "unstudied usage of such idiomatic speech was more of a linguistic shortcoming than a hardened conviction that the Indian stood below the white man on some imaginary genetic ladder" (737), a claim that is underscored by Eastman's desire to prove that Native men were, in fact, equally manly to white men. Eastman believed that the Dawes Act was generally unsuccessful because most whites could not shake the deeply held racist assumptions perpetuated by many anthropologists that Natives were somehow biologically behind whites on a progressive evolutionary paradigm, making the goals of the act incommensurate with biological reality (Carlson 613). Carlson argues that in *Indian Boyhood* Eastman challenges evolutionary anthropological assumptions by employing the legal discourse of allotment, which was predicated on the assumption that Natives could, in fact, assimilate into white society. According to Carlson, by adhering rhetorically to legal rather than evolutionary anthropological discourse, Eastman stood a better chance of arguing for Native equality because he was able to elide the racism of so-called biology (613–14). By the time *Deep Woods* was published, anthropology had begun to undergo a radical change under the influence of Franz Boas, who challenged the progressive evolutionary paradigm by advocating a culturally relativist anthropological model, a change that influenced Eastman's own writing as reflected in *Deep Woods* (Allred 118–19). Certainly Eastman rejects the evolutionary model that created racial hierarchies, but he does

so by confronting this evolutionary model directly, not by eliding it as he did in *Indian Boyhood* with legal discourse. In turn, Eastman works to find similarities between Santee and Euro-American culture in order to “envision himself as a member of [Euro-American] society” (Allred 120), which is reflected in the ways he draws equivalences between Santee and white manhood.

Eastman’s comparison of Santee manhood to white manhood poses theoretical challenges for scholars, however. The masculine values by which Eastman defines Santee manhood are eerily similar to those defined by white middle- and upper-middle-class men of the Progressive Era. As Erik Peterson argues, Eastman saw continuities between the two cultures. Peterson, quoting Paula Gunn Allen, maintains that “continuity” means “bring[ing] those structures and symbols which retain their essential meaning forward into a changed context in such a way that the metaphysical point remains true, in spite of apparently changed circumstances” (150). In regard to the question of manhood, however, I do not claim with absolute certainty that Eastman’s equivalences in *Deep Woods* constitute metaphysical continuities, for to do so would be to take an unsubstantiated critical leap given the lack of scholarship on Santee manhood. While there has been some limited scholarship on Lakota manhood,¹ and drawing equivalences between Lakota and Santee manhood is a potentially useful tool for exploring Santee manhood, this, too, has its risks. Although both tribes were Dakota, there were cultural differences between them before and after white contact.² However, despite these caveats, I would nonetheless like to suggest that much of Eastman’s comparisons about Santee manhood—and in turn its similarities to constructions of white manhood—can be inferred from other Dakota contexts, particularly in the work of the well-known Ella Deloria, the Yankton Dakota ethnographer, though Deloria cautions against assuming all Dakota peoples were (and are) the same, noting that in the case of the Santee, “In thought, too, and in ceremonies they resembled their Chippawa neighbors more than their fellow tribesman to the west. Yet they are Dakotas; and Dakotas are classified as a Plains culture” (*Speaking of Indians* 17). While the Santee practiced dif-

ferent ceremonies and thought differently, this does not mean that everything about them was culturally different from the western Dakota—certainly the different Dakota peoples saw themselves as closely related. For the purposes of my argument, I argue the correlations between Santee notions of manhood and Teton manhood are similar. I make this claim based on the work of Deloria, particularly her novel *Waterlily*, a novel whose content was drawn from her assiduous ethnographic studies, as well as her ethnographic study of Teton Dakota in *Speaking of Indians*. The novel's representation of Teton male culture clearly resembles that as described by Eastman's experiences as a Santee. Importantly, Deloria twice makes reference to the interactions between the Santee and the Tetons as common people, which establishes some cultural continuity, despite the novel's point about the dialect difference between the tribes. In Deloria's writings the roles of Dakota men were primarily, depending on the person, warriors, hunters, or scouts. In terms of the values that were prized by Teton men, independence and individuality were respected, as well as personal restraint and selflessness in war and in the routines of daily life. Deloria's depiction of Teton manhood in *Waterlily* underscores this point, in which she presents Teton males as undertaking any number of roles instead of warriors. As she writes in *Waterlily*, some men had an "outstanding" skill and were admired for this," and it did not mean becoming a warrior (96–97). *Speaking of Indians* also underscores the point that any male was respected for his individual talents. While individuality and independence were respected, to be a good Teton male also meant having a strong ethic of kinship that bound males to their people in order to serve the common good of the tribe, even if it meant occasionally doing women's work "when necessary" (*Speaking* 40). In fact, generosity and reciprocity for the welfare of the community gave specific Teton males (and females) a position of high honor in Teton culture—"amassing goods for oneself" was considered dishonorable (*Speaking* 68). As Deloria writes, being good citizens "was what men lived by," and "social standing and reputation hinged on it" (32). Moreover the cultural values of physical fortitude, courage, and bravery are clearly regarded with

admiration by the men in *Waterlily*, particularly in the novel's allusions to the admiration of war scars on male bodies and Deloria's depiction of the ritual of the Sun Dance, in which men pierced their bodies and hung from the sacred pole in order to sacrifice for the Great Spirit. In *Speaking of Indians*, Deloria writes that boys were trained to be "daring and brave and to endure hardship without crying out. [. . .] [T]he warriors put him through tests of courage that were hard, not to say dangerous" (67). The values of respect and generosity toward others, even strangers who may be outcasts, were greatly admired by Teton male culture, according to Deloria's depiction of Teton males in *Waterlily* (214). Additionally, Eastman's claims about the nature of Native warfare and subsequent peace between traditional enemies square with Deloria's portrayal of the Teton Dakotas and their interaction with the Osages as represented in *Waterlily*. Given Deloria's example of Teton male culture and its close resemblance to Eastman's portrayal of Santee manhood, it is reasonable to claim that Eastman's portrayal of his manhood does stem from a Santee viewpoint. However, it is also clear that Eastman was keenly aware of his primarily Anglo audience and its obsession with regenerating white manhood in the Progressive Era. As a result he frames his discussion of Santee manhood in a discourse that substantiates his Santee viewpoint while simultaneously appealing to Anglo definitions of gender in the hopes of gaining a voice for himself and Native men in U.S. society and, more importantly, a position of equality to whites.

In the Progressive Era, Anglo middle- and upper-middle-class definitions of manhood underwent considerable change. Victorian notions of manhood emphasized "self-restraint," as well as "Intelligence, altruism, and morality" (Bederman 185). Progressive Era white males admired all these traits and saw them as necessary to proper "manly" behavior of "civilized" peoples, but they worried that strict adherence to these virtues would lead to the demise of the Anglo Saxon race. While the technological successes of modern civilization were a sign of American progress, according to prominent whites such as Theodore Roosevelt and the psychologist and educational theorist G. Stanley Hall, modern civilization threat-

ened the well-being of the Anglo Saxon race because of its effects on white males. According to these men, white males were being emasculated by the modern world because they had few avenues for exhibiting what they perceived as key traits of "true" manhood. The modern world, they thought, no longer allowed individual men to forge their identities because its routinized, predictable daily life undermined a robust male virility. Following a Lamarckian theory of evolution, these men believed that without the opportunity to enact their virility, white men would lose this racial trait and would therefore be unable to pass it on to their progeny, leading to the demise of Anglo-Saxon racial dominance. For Hall and Roosevelt, the importance of living a "strenuous life" could not be overstated. Boys and men needed to enact their primitive instincts, which for Hall meant that "Boys needed to read bloody stories and engage in fisticuffs when necessary [. . .] in order to avoid exacerbating civilization's excess of manly self-restraint" (Bederman 98). For Roosevelt, white men had to find ways to emulate their frontier ancestors such as Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett, who proved their individual physical prowess by hunting big game and warring against Indian "savages." The extent to which Roosevelt believed that war was a necessary tool for regenerating white manhood is evidenced by his vociferous advocacy of the Spanish-American war and his own actions as a Rough Rider during that war.

Hall's and Roosevelt's concerns regarding manhood were reflected throughout white middle- and upper-middle-class U.S. consciousness. For instance, Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (1902) and Zane Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912), both best-selling novels, are preoccupied with white virile manhood and its role in perpetuating Anglo Saxon civilization. In "real" life, white males donned primitive costumes and plunged into the wilderness to enact their manhood (Nash 141–43, Wrobel 90), or they hunted big game in the "last frontier" of Alaska, at times emulating "Indians" during their adventures.³ The rise of the Boy Scouts also reflected anxieties about the health of Anglo Saxon manhood. As Philip Deloria writes, Ernest Thompson Seton, one of the early founders of the Boy Scouts and a believer in Hall's theories, "was an espe-

cially youth-oriented antimodernist, worried about the decline of America's next generation from 'robust, manly, self-reliant boyhood' into a lot of 'flat chested cigarette smokers, with shaky nerves and doubtful vitality' (107). The Boy Scouts offered white boys the opportunity to either "play Indian" or mimic white frontier heroes such as Boone and Crockett in order to rejuvenate their primitive instincts and ensure their virility.

Even organized religion reflected the need on the part of many white males to address the pressures of the modern world, as evidenced by the rise of "Muscular Christianity." The goal of Muscular Christianity was to remasculinize Jesus, whom white middle- and upper-middle-class men believed had become excessively feminized in Christian discourse and iconography. These men quite literally wanted a virile, physically robust Jesus. As Michael Kimmel writes, "In the Muscular Christian iconography, Jesus had dark hair, calloused hands, and a well-developed physique. Gone was the sad, sweet man with flowing robes and pacific gaze. And gone was the image of the religious life as sedentary and feminizing" (178). Whole books were devoted to virilizing Jesus, with titles such as *Building the Young Man* (1912), *The Manhood of the Master* (1913), and *The Masculine Christ* (1912). Each of these books "portrayed Jesus as a brawny carpenter, whose manly resolve challenged the idolaters, kicked the money changers out of the temple, and confronted the most powerful imperium ever assembled" (177). Jesus, of course, was unmistakably imaged as white in this ideology.

As a Native trying to acculturate to white civilization, Eastman had to negotiate white ideologies of manhood if he was to gain acceptance in the dominant culture as an equal to white men, no easy task given his supposedly savage, inferior race and the role it had in white imaginings of their own manhood. For centuries the dominant culture had developed ingrained notions of what it meant to be an "Indian," which had little, if anything, to do with Natives themselves. During the Jacksonian era, for instance, Indians were infantilized as children in order to justify their removal.⁴ To white middle- and upper-middle-class males of the Progressive Era, Indian men—at least as they had existed prior to

their final military pacification—represented a foundational form of primitive masculinity in their physical and martial prowess, whether in the stereotype of the wild, blood-thirsty savage or that of the noble, virtuous savage unsullied because of his connection to the natural world (Berkhofer 98; Klopotek 252). In Progressive Era frontier mythology, white frontier heroes identified with primitive Indian virility in order to rejuvenate their own virility. However, unlike Indians, “civilized [white] men had evolved the advanced intellectual and moral capacity to master their masculine passions” (Bederman 84–85), a belief that Eastman works to overcome in *Deep Woods*.

As evidenced by Eastman's *From the Deep Woods to Civilization*, it is clear that he was attuned to Progressive Era white middle- and upper-middle-class notions of manhood, not least of all because he mentions that he had the “honor of acquaintance with many famous and interesting people,” a list that includes both Hall and Roosevelt (107–8). Moreover, Eastman was intimately involved with the Boy Scouts, and he knew Seton, one of the organization's founders. He writes in *Deep Woods* of his “work for the Boy Scouts, whose program appeals to me strongly,” and he explains that he helps to manage camps in New Hampshire, “where my whole family are enthusiastic helpers in the development of this form of open-air education, patterned largely on my own early training” (108), which is to say Eastman's life spent living in traditional Santee fashion until age fifteen. Most importantly Eastman's awareness of white middle- and upper-middle-class male notions of manhood is evidenced by the discourse of his narrative, which draws considerable attention to dominant white codes of manhood.

One might wonder what, if anything, Eastman had to gain by becoming an advocate for the Boy Scouts. For one, it would seem that in his advocacy he would be capitulating to romanticized notions of the “primitive” masculine Indian, particularly the image of the noble savage, as he would be supporting the process by which Anglo boys emulated “Indian” life and values. Moreover, the potential danger of Eastman's work with the Boy Scouts is that the very thing that he would have been helping to sustain was his

own secondary status as Native. He would be teaching white men how to rejuvenate their manly virility by “playing Indian” and in turn ensure the racial dominance of Anglo-Saxons, at least according to the ideologies propagated by Hall and Roosevelt.

For Eastman to be heard by the dominant culture, however, he had little choice but to negotiate the terms of their culture and their ideas about “Indianness.” Philip Deloria has argued that in order to gain a voice in the Progressive Era, Natives “played Indian,” which suggests “how little cultural capital Indian people possessed at the time” (125). Similarly Penelope Kelsey writes that in regard to the Boy Scouts, “Eastman had a sense of the performative nature of race and ethnic difference, and he manipulated it to achieve a desired effect upon his audience” (36–37). And Malea Powell argues that Eastman

authenticates himself as Indian in the terms of the dominant culture while he simultaneously authenticates himself as civilized: in doing so he participates in a rhetoric of survivance in which his practice of what [Powell calls] tactical authenticity is what enables his survival as an Indian/Dakota. (418)

One way Eastman authenticates himself is through his use of masculine discourse in *Deep Woods*, which identifies him as Indian while also giving him a tool to resist white Progressive Era racist notions of Native manhood.

Eastman’s very “success” as a civilized Native would have challenged the racist ideologies of his white contemporaries. As noted earlier, Eastman was an advocate of the Dawes Act, which in its original goals assumed that Native males could be transformed from childlike, and therefore implicitly boyish, savages into civilized, individual men. As David Carlson argues, “the paternalistic identity model of the Indian as child [. . .] buttressed the federal government’s allotment policy” (605). This paternalistic attitude toward Indians is perhaps best exemplified by Merrill E. Gates, who was president of “the famed Lake Mohonk Conference of the Friends of the Indian” (Berkhofer 172–73), the goal of which was to help formulate assimilation strategies to integrate Native

Americans into white society. As Gates stated, "Like a little child who learns the true delight of giving away only by first earning and possessing what he gives, the [male] Indian must learn that he has no right to give until he has earned, and that he has no right to eat until he has worked for his bread" (qtd. in Berkhofer 173).⁵ As noted earlier, David Carlson has argued that in terms of Indian manhood, this notion of childhood was specifically linked to ideas about "boyishness" in Eastman's Indian boyhood. *From Deep Woods to Civilization*, by its very title, suggests a similar progressive ideology. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the dominant white ideology was that Indian men were hopelessly boyish because of their racial limitations—it was thought that it would take generations for Indians to catch up racially to white men. But Eastman's narrative challenges this supposition in that it mirrors Hall's recapitulation theory, which argued that the growth of individual white boys into men mirrored the stages of evolutionary growth over the span of human history.⁶ Eastman's life makes it clear that Indians certainly were not, as Hall and others believed, racially limited by their primitive nature, masculine adolescents on the evolutionary scale. They were inherently intellectual equals to whites in every way, shape, and form, as evidenced by the fact that Eastman's entrance at the age of fifteen into white society saw him transform from a "boyish Indian" to a fully acculturated "civilized man." In particular he had a high level of written literacy, as well as several college degrees, including an M.D. from Boston University.

Eastman also combats the notion that Indian men could not be fully capable of "civilized manhood" by problematizing white stereotypes of Indian manhood. As early as the second paragraph of *Deep Woods* Eastman writes, "From childhood I was consciously trained to be a man" (1), a statement which clearly establishes Eastman's awareness of the importance that his Progressive Era male audience attached to defining manhood. The passage continues: "that was, after all, the basic thing; but after this I was trained to be a warrior and hunter, and not to care for money or possessions, but to be in the broadest sense a public servant" (1). Eastman's rejection of materiality, his role as a "noble" communal servant to his

people, and his training as a warrior and hunter certainly meet his white audience's expectations about "Indianness," particularly the image of the noble savage. But drawing from Deloria, Eastman's self-representation is also predicated on the truth about Dakota men. They were warriors and public servants. Warring and hunting would have been immediately recognizable to his white male readership as emblems of manhood, but just as these activities did not solely define civilized white manhood, they did not, according to Eastman, solely define Indian manhood because the conjunction "but" precedes his reference to these activities. In fact, the syntax of the passage suggests that these activities do not necessarily have *any* intrinsic link to Indian manhood but were simply roles taken on by Santee men. Moreover, Eastman points out that he was "*trained* to be a man" and "*trained* to be a warrior and hunter," underscoring that Santee manhood has no intrinsic racial urges that set Santee men apart from white men. Rather, Santee manhood was culturally constructed, and therefore Santee men can easily be trained to assume "manly" roles within white society. One paragraph later Eastman reinforces his goal to debunk any notion that Santee—and by extension other Indian males—were, by their racial nature, prone to violence and intrinsically needed war to realize their manhood:

I felt no hatred for our tribal foes. I looked upon them more as the college athlete regards his rivals from another college. There was no thought of destroying a nation, taking away their country or reducing the people to servitude, for my race rather honored and bestowed gifts upon their enemies at the next peaceful meeting, until they had adopted the usage of the white man's warfare for spoliation and conquest. (1–2)

White notions of Indian manhood, in other words, are theirs alone, having no basis in reality. As this passage underscores, Dakota men traditionally may have hunted and engaged in warfare, but they were (and still are) capable of exhibiting "civilized restraint"—even more than whites.

Eastman also challenges the notion that Indians were, at their

root, childish or “boyish” savages when he describes his daily life the year before he entered white civilization:

In the winter and summer of 1872, we drifted toward the southern part of what is now Manitoba. In this wild, rolling country I rapidly matured, and laid, as I supposed, the foundations of my life career, never dreaming of anything beyond this manful and honest, unhampered existence. My horse and my dog were my closest companions. [. . .] With them I went out daily into the wilderness to seek inspiration and store up strength for coming manhood. (3)

He then explains, “I had now taken part in all our tribal activities except that of war, and was nearly old enough to be initiated into the ritual of the war-path” (3). Eastman clearly appeals to his white audience in his reference to a “manful” “existence” and “coming manhood.” Invoking images of the mythic frontier with his reference to southern Manitoba as “wild” and “wilderness,” he presents himself in an “authentic” “Indian” fashion, living an uninhibited, independent life, “honest” because of his close contact with the natural world. To his audience his reference to “strength” would be seen as both mental and, more importantly, physical as he readies himself for “coming manhood.” He represents everything that white middle- and upper-middle-class men felt they had lost in the modern world—he is self-reliant and implicitly physically robust because of his close contact with the wilderness. But above all, although an adolescent, his daily life of training is a “*manful existence*” that stores up manly strength for his “coming manhood,” which explicitly challenges suppositions that once Santee males actually came of age, daily Indian male life remained “boyish” when compared to the daily existence of white males.

Eastman’s ironic reference to the warpath plays upon his audience’s expectations as well, suggesting that he was prematurely cut off from realizing a central component of his racially primitive manhood. But Eastman reorients the very meaning of the warpath for his audience, with his claim that war had never been an intrinsic part of Indian manhood, and that the warpath was nothing

more than a ritualistic means through which Indian boys officially entered “manhood.” In fact, he suggests that there is very little difference between the male values of “the Indian” and the “civilized” worlds. Although the vocations of Santee and white men might be different, Eastman suggest that at their root both cultures fostered the same values in manhood—in particular, independence, bodily vigor, and civilized restraint. Eastman further blurs the distinction between white and Indian worlds by drawing an equivalence between the way in which Indians and whites became (and become) men, and by applying the discourse of the warpath to his entrance into white civilization.

For instance, once Eastman decides to reject his traditional lifestyle in favor of acculturating to white society, he travels by foot from South Dakota to Nebraska in order to attend the Santee Normal Trading School. Although he has second thoughts about his choice to enter white society by training at the Santee school, he follows his father’s wishes and stays. As he tells his companion Peter, who decides not to attend the Santee school with Eastman, “Tell my father [. . .] that I shall not return until I finish my warpath” (20), which is to say his path into white civilization. The white world and its daily trials and tribulations—its demands on him to be courageous and brave—become the test and school for the realization of his Santee manhood.

Eastman’s advocacy of the Dawes Act as a vehicle for regenerating Native manhood also helps to underscore his attempt to draw correlations between the Indian and white worlds. Regarding reservation Indians, for example, he writes:

I had come back to my people, not to minister to their physical needs alone, but to be a missionary in every sense of the word, and as I was much struck with the loss of manliness and independence in these, the first ‘reservation Indians’ I had ever known, I longed above all things to help them to regain self-respect. (71)

Eastman makes it clear that the inability to make war is not what has emasculated Native men; instead, it is life on reservations fol-

lowing their military pacification that makes them dependent "boys." Eastman also describes the need for Indians to "quit the forest trail for the breaking-plow, since pastoral life was the next thing for the Indian" (33), or more specifically, to take up an existence as agrarian farmers in order to *regain* the independent manly life they knew previously *as Indians*, even if their traditional role as scouts, hunters, and warriors will have changed. This reclamation of Native manhood is apparent in Eastman's description of his father at his homestead in Dakota territory: "The man [his father] who had built the cabin—it was his first house, and therefore he was proud of it—was tall and manly looking. He stood in front of his pioneer home with a resolute face" (9). To many of his readers, the farmer represented a nostalgic image of the idealized heroic artisan, "the independent farmer as autonomous worker and family man, virtuous and virile" (Kimmel 108). Eastman's father offers his white readership a familiar image, assuring them that Indians can easily be full participants in this manly vocation because they are simply being restored to a way of life that in its goals of manly independence simply mirrors the traditional values of Santee manhood.

Eastman also draws equivalences between Indian and white manhood by measuring white manhood against *the standards of Indian manhood*. He writes early in his narrative, "I had attained the age of fifteen years and was about to enter into and realize a man's life, as we Indians understood it, when the change came" (3), which is to say his entrance into white civilization. Ostensibly, then, Eastman is cut off from realizing his manhood, at least as "Indians understood it," and he suggests that Indians and whites have a culturally—and, in many white eyes, racially—different conception of manhood. But, in fact, "As we understood it" becomes a framework through which Eastman can validate Native males as racial equals to white men. He reverses the colonial gaze by inverting the U.S. frontier paradigm, moving from his Santee society to explore and observe white civilization in order to find ways in which it measures up to Santee expectations.

Eastman's overt observations of the white body as he explores

Euro-American civilization also conforms with the concerns expressed by leading white males of the era: that overcivilization had literally weakened the white male body, threatening the future of the Anglo Saxon race and by extension the national health. A powerful, muscular body was an emblem of white male health and virility, and metonymically the health of the nation. Importantly, for white middle- and upper-middle-class males, “the metonymic process of turn-of-the-century manhood constructed bodily strength and social authority as identical” (Bederman 8). Through his image of his bodily health, Eastman, too, authorizes himself and Native men as legitimate male citizens who literally can embody social authority. As Eastman notes in the second paragraph of *Deep Woods*, in his childhood he “was made to build a body both symmetrical and enduring—a house for the soul to live in—a sturdy house, defying the elements” (1). This passage clearly indicates that the image of the body as a site for registering Santee identity and social authority *begins* with Santee culture. This rhetorical strategy establishes the notion that Natives do not, by any means, racially *lack* any intrinsic masculine qualities. In turn, when Eastman stops to observe white bodies, his comparison of his body to theirs, or his admiration of white bodies, is not framed as an obsequious colonial subject measuring himself *against* those bodies, but as (at the very least) a cultural equal who hopes that white manhood can measure up to Santee manhood in *its* standards.

For instance, in his travels to the Santee Training School he stops overnight at a white farmer’s homestead, where for the first time he observes the everyday workings of this aspect of white civilization. At one point during his stay he watches the farmer and his son forging a plow, “hammering with all their might.” Eastman continues,

With sleeves rolled up, face and hands blackened and streaming with sweat, I thought [the farmer] looked not unlike a successful warrior just returned from the field of battle. His powerful muscles and the manly way in which he handled the iron impressed me tremendously. “I shall learn that profession if ever I reach the school and learn the white man’s way,” I thought. (22)

Later in the narrative, Eastman explains that after being educated at the Santee school, he attends Knox College in Illinois, where he again records an image of the white male body. "Here, again," he writes, "I was thrown into close contact with the rugged, ambitious sons of western farmers" (32); the "rugged" underscores the manliness of the prototypical agrarian pioneers' bodies. The importance that Eastman puts on observing white bodies is exemplified also when he visits Chicago on his way to Dartmouth College. About Chicago policemen he remarks, "It seemed to me that the most dignified men on the streets were the policemen, in their long blue coats with brass buttons. They were such a remarkable set of men physically that this of itself was enough to catch my eye" (36). The farmer's manly body is like the warrior's body, and given that Eastman is on the "war-path" when he describes the bodies of "sons of western farmers" and Chicago policemen, his physical description of them is implicitly measured against the Native warrior's body. In the end, his comparison of white bodies to Native bodies is aimed at drawing an equivalence between the two, but Eastman was well aware that robust white bodies exemplified a *civilized* body, something he takes care to emphasize when describing Native bodies.

For whites, a civilized body meant that while bodies needed to be robust and virile, their bodily passions also had to be controlled. Through vigorous exercise, white bodies could maintain their supposed virility while simultaneously allowing a physical outlet for the release of bodily passions, which if unchecked would be disruptive to civilization and signify that they were little more than boyish savages. After describing his entrance into white society, Eastman writes that at Beloit College,

I spent three years of student life. While in some kinds of knowledge I was the infant of the college, in athletics I did my full share. To keep myself at my best physically, I spent no less than three hours daily in physical exercise, and this habit was kept up throughout my college days. (32)

While attending Dartmouth, he explains that he "was appointed football captain for my class," (38) and when studying medi-

cine at Boston University, he writes that his patrons with whom he stayed, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Wood, “were very considerate of my health and gave me opportunity to enter into many outdoor sports, such as tennis and canoeing, beside regular gymnasium work” (41). Michael Kimmel has written that for white males of the Progressive Era, “Perhaps the most important vehicle to recreate manhood was sports,” which included tennis, weightlifting, and football. According to the thinking of the times, “Sports were heralded as character building; health reformers promised athletic activity would make young men healthier and instill moral virtues. In short, sports made boys into men” (Kimmel 137). Eastman, then, appeals to white sensibilities to underscore that he and Indians, too, are capable of participating fully in so-called civilized “manly” bodily exercise with the goals of restraining their passions and becoming moral beings, no differently than whites did.

Eastman’s ability to exhibit manly restraint is evidenced at other points in his narrative as well. For instance, he recounts how he mingled at the college with “pale-face maidens” in his time at Beloit College, but to underscore his manly restraint, he follows this image with a statement regarding his transition from Knox College to Dartmouth:

Soon I began to lay definite plans for the future. Happily, I had missed the demoralizing influences of reservation life, and had been mainly thrown with the best class of Christian white people. With all the strength of a clean young manhood, I set my heart upon the completion of a liberal education. (34)

He signals that, while bodily “virile,” he is no wild savage prone to uncontrollable lusts, but a “man” on par with his white counterparts, morally “clean.” This is reinforced in his description of his “civilized” marriage to Elaine Goodale, which, as he states, was the key “to [his becoming] a complete man” (71). In both images, Eastman works to challenge the stereotype of the sexually unrestrained Indian depicted in classic works such as Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans* or visualized in John Vanderlyn’s 1804 paint-

ing *Death of Jane McCrea*—the rapist threatening the very basis of white civilization.

This is not to say that Eastman does not at times play to his audience's stereotypes of Indian men and their supposed unrestrained racial passions. For instance, in regard to his appointment as captain of his class football team, he writes:

My supporters orated quite effectively on my qualifications as a frontier warrior, and some went so far as to predict that I would, when warmed up, scare all the Sophs off the premises! These representations seemed to be confirmed when, that same evening after supper, the two classes met in a first "rush," and as I was not acquainted with the men, I held up the professor of philosophy, mistaking him for one of the sophomores. Reporters from the Boston dailies made the most of their opportunity to enlarge upon this incident. (38)

In the next paragraph he writes that "a warlike Sioux, like a wild fox, had found his way into this splendid seat of learning" (38). One might read these passages as Eastman's capitulation to white stereotypes of primitive male Indians, the incident with the professor only confirming Eastman's inability to restrain his irrational, martial masculine passions. But it is difficult not to view this passage ironically considering Eastman's implicit mockery of the sensationalism of the Boston dailies and his earlier examples of self-restraint, as well as the fact that he knows his audience is well aware of his success at Dartmouth and his graduation from Boston University with a medical degree.

Eastman's reflections on Christianity also underscore Indian manly self-restraint. In regard to his attempt to convert his fellow Natives to Christianity, he writes that he met with various "young men of the Sioux, Cheyennes, Crees, Ojibways, and others" "to set before them in simple language the life and character of the Man Jesus" (81). One of the attendees, an "old battle-scarred warrior," remarked in regard to Christian ideals, "Why, we have followed this law you speak of for untold ages!" (80–81). Another older Native stated, "I have come to the conclusion that this Jesus was an Indian.

He was opposed to material acquirement and to great possessions. He was inclined to peace. He was as unpractical as any Indian and set no price upon his labor love" (81). Eastman goes on to explain that unlike whites, who do not adhere to these principles, they were "commonly observed among [Indian] people" (81). Eastman's use of the adjective and capitalization of "Man" to define Jesus, as well as his equivalence between an old warrior's description of Native values and Jesus's, is an unambiguous framing of both Jesus and Indians as exemplars of manliness. In their past Indians were quintessential examples of "Muscular Christians." Indians had bodily prowess, exemplified by the scars of the old warrior, yet they also were more than capable of exhibiting what were considered restrained, "civilized" Christian values of peace and love. In regard to his own experiences, Eastman writes: "The Christ ideal might be radical, visionary, even impractical, [. . . It] still seemed to me logical, and in line with most of my Indian training" (79). And his "Indian training," to recall what he states from the beginning of his narrative, was predicated on the notion that "From Childhood [Eastman] was consciously trained to be a man; that was after all, the basic thing." Eastman, in other words, was from childhood trained to be a Christ-like *man*, unlike many of his white peers.

As this image of Christ helps to underscore, in order to combat well-entrenched racist stereotypes of "Indian" manhood, Charles Alexander Eastman worked to draw equivalences between Indian manhood and white middle- and upper-middle-class manhood in *From the Deep Woods to Civilization*. While drawing from his own Santee notions of manhood, Eastman also understood the necessity of appealing to his white audiences' notions of manhood if he was to further the goals of the Dawes Act. As he makes clear, Native men indeed were manly men on par with white men and therefore deserved full opportunity to become fully integrated and, most importantly, equal and independent members of U.S. society.

NOTES

1. Sioux gender roles in the nineteenth century are vastly understudied. For an overview of the scholarship, see Gibbon, 94–99.

2. For starters, the Lakota and Santee handled "Two-Spirit People" differently, which would potentially have bearing on any questions of gender in Santee culture. Historically, Native peoples as a rule simply did not define gender in the same reductive binary categories of Western culture, nor did they assign the same values to those gender roles. As Will Roscoe has argued in his study of "berdaches," or what is the preferred terminology of "two-spirit people," *Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America*, "Alternative gender roles were among the most widely shared features of North American Societies" (7). It is difficult to assess how much Eastman was familiar with Two-Spirit People because he does not address this reality in his writings. Given his traditional upbringing, one could argue that he would have been familiar with Two-Spirit People, which is likely the case. Unlike Lakota culture, Santee culture did not assign a special status to Two-Spirit People. In fact, Little Crow, Judy Wright, and Lester Brown point out that if a male member of the Santee publicly declared that he did not "accept either the tribally defined male role or its assigned responsibilities [. . .] he was to be considered dead to all his family members [. . .] and he could no longer interact socially with members of his tribe or family" and "was banished from the camp or village where he had spent his childhood" (23–24).

3. See Kollin 62–64 on Alaska's role in the production of "virile" manhood. On the role of hunting in the production of white manhood, see Bayers, ch. 1–3. On white men imagining themselves as Indians in Alaska, see Bayers 55–57.

4. See in particular ch. 7 of Rogin's *Fathers and Children*.

5. See also the preface to Prucha's *The Great Father* on the paternalistic attitude toward Native Americans, particularly as "dependent children" (ix–xi).

6. For a complete overview of origin and development of Hall's theory, see Bederman 77–120. See also Carlson's analysis of how Eastman's *Indian Boyhood* responds to theories of recapitulation.

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Story Words

An Interview with Richard Wagamese

BLANCA SCHORCHT

Storyteller, novelist, journalist, and critic Richard Wagamese was born in 1955 in northwestern Ontario and is from the Wabaseemoong First Nation. Wagamese's literary and fictional writings blend traditional Ojibway oral storytelling style with the highly literate genre conventions of the novel. Wagamese, a National Newspaper Award-winning columnist, was awarded the Alberta Fiction Prize in 1995 for his first novel *Keeper 'n Me*. He has taught creative writing at Indian Federated College (now First Nations University) in Saskatchewan and currently runs a storytelling circle, Deh-bah-juh-mig (Telling Ourselves), in Vancouver, British Columbia. In addition to his novels Wagamese has written a book of essays, *The Terrible Summer: The National Newspaper Award-Winning Writings of Richard Wagamese* (1996), and a memoir, *For Joshua* (2003). His second novel, *A Quality of Light*, was published in 1997. *Dreamwheels*, his third novel, was published simultaneously in the United States and Canada in 2006, and his most recent novel, *Ragged Company*, was released in 2008. Not only was *Ragged Company* released this August, but Wagamese also published another book released in August called *One Native Life* (a book of nonfiction essays).

The formidable body of work that Wagamese has produced in the last decade or so reflects his concerns with broadening the scope and range of Native American and First Nations writing while simultaneously drawing on traditional concepts and aesthetic principles of Ojibway oral storytelling.¹ Both his fiction and nonfiction writing explore what it means to be human within the context of an often-complicated cultural diversity and oppressive history. When it comes to discussions of his own background, Wagamese insists on an inclusive approach to the ideas of identity and ethnicity; he promotes the blending of old and new to recreate vital, liv-

ing traditions that maintain their connections to both past and present realities of Native experience. As the anthropologist Robin Ridington has pointed out, "Oral tradition and narrative authority are not confined to a 'pristine' aboriginality and orality. Indians who eat pizza and write novels do so in ways that are true to their traditions" (221). Wagamese's writing highlights what it means to *be* Aboriginal or Native within the context of both contemporary indigenous reality and experience, and human experience in general.

All of the characters in Wagamese's books reveal their points of disconnection with the mainstream, hegemonic world of North American consumer culture. Their stories of transformation, however, often come about through multiple points of connection, both to one another as human beings and with the physical world of which they are a part. Sometimes these points of connection derive from strange and unexpected alliances. In his latest novel, *Ragged Company*, for instance, Wagamese explores the paradoxically diverse and similar histories and experiences of homeless people through the lens of five very different characters. Some of these characters are Native; some are not. Their backgrounds are as varied as their shared experience of homelessness is similar, and they live out their lives in a fictional town that could be anywhere in the United States or Canada. In this novel, as in much of Wagamese's writing, the transformative power of storytelling lies in its shared experience. Ridington describes the power of such literature in this way, "First Nations oral and written literatures enact a mode of discourse based on shared experience and mutual understanding. First Nations literature now exists in and about a variety of contexts" (223).

Cultural identity and understanding, Wagamese suggests, come about through story, and perhaps even more specifically through the ability of a story to reframe personal and shared experience. The story functions at once as both catharsis and catalyst. Wagamese, a talented oral storyteller as well as a writer, often begins his storytelling circles with the same words; he says, "There was once, for all of us, a fire in the night . . . To talk, to tell our stories, to teach each other, is as necessary to our growth as water. We're all storytellers. We always were. But most of us have forgotten that . . ." By encouraging listeners and readers to think about and, ideally, reconstruct and thereby "own" their stories, Wagamese's novels remind us of the transformative power of narrative, as it cuts across cultural boundaries and histories. We may not always understand everything that we read about other cultures, but there is always a recognition of the

points of connection *and* disconnection that bring us together as human beings.

Wagamese's generous spirit and his multiple roles as teacher, storyteller, and mentor are felt throughout this interview, which took place in his home in Burnaby, British Columbia, with his partner, Debra Powell, present.² We shared tea, ice cream, and cookies, and as the dialogue continued after the end of this piece, the conversation turned to a discussion of blues guitar music, on which Wagamese is an expert, and baseball, perhaps the first love of his life.

BLANCA SCHORCHT (BS): I had one big question that I was going to ask . . . Richard, you always talk about yourself as a storyteller, and I think you are an oral storyteller, as in the sharing circle, for example. But then I also think of you as a writer. You write novels. How do you see these two as being the same or different?

RICHARD WAGAMESE (RW): Everybody is a storyteller. When I taught creative writing in Saskatchewan, I'd tell those people in the classroom that there was no way that I could tell them how to tell a story. There is no way that I can teach them how to be a storyteller because everybody is that. From the time we get a facility with language when we're first aware, when we're conscious, when we're children, the very first thing we do is tell stories. Somebody says, "Well, what did you do last night?" and in order to answer that question you have to tell a story about what you did the night before. So, from the very beginning of our interactions with each other, we tell stories. And so for me, I'm stating a fact, a human fact: I'm a storyteller.

Traditionally, there are certain rules that apply, one of them being that you tell a story for the story's sake, without curlicues or window dressing at your whim or discretion. You tell a story for a story's sake, without interpreting. You give it the way that it came to you. Along with that goes the principle of humility. To offer that story up with the kind of honesty and integrity in the way that it came to you requires a great degree of humility on your part because everyone wants to go for the laugh, or they want to get the emotional response, or they want to win an intellectual point. It's all built into the system. But in the traditional framework, what

the oral tradition is built on, you try to forget all that and just very humbly tell the story. And the story itself gives you tools. It gives you humor. It gives you pathos. It gives you drama. It gives you wild fantasy. It gives you morality. It gives you a value structure. So you can have all of those things at your disposal anyway. When I'm telling a story, I try to rely on all of that.

When I'm a writer I use all of that storytelling tradition in a different form. When I start to write a new book, I don't concern myself much with the basic concepts of literature. I don't concern myself with theme, plot, scene, and so on. I start with telling the story for the story's sake, just like relating a legend or a cultural myth. And I try to retain all of the principles and values built into the oral tradition in the process. In the long run they're not different. It's just a matter of reminding myself that that's what I'm doing. I'm performing the function of the storyteller in a different medium. And that way I know that I'm still perpetuating those storytelling traditions and teachings. Because I'm actually focused on that and allowing myself to do that. So, there's not really a difference. It's just the form that makes me a writer, not the philosophy.

bs: So you see writing as a kind of process of translation between modes of expression?

rw: Yes. I mean, it has its beginnings in the fact that I had to appropriate the English language in order to do what I do. My first decision was that I was going to appropriate it at the highest possible level that I could, so that I could function in that language system as best as I could at a professional and publishable level. In order to do that I also had to bring all of the other elements of storytelling to the same kind of level, the same kind of tradition. So, maybe not transfer so much as incorporate one into the other venue.

bs: Yes, that makes sense to me. I'm thinking, when I hear you talking about storytelling and tradition, of looking at this in terms of your own cultural traditions. And I'm wondering whether you see this kind of writing, then, as something distinct from other kinds of literature?

rw: I don't think so. I think that, in terms of popular literature, popular fiction, Stephen King, John Grisham, who-have-you,

they're still performing the same function. They're still asking people to gather around a fire in the night and listen to a tale. They're still asking people to do that. The elevated opinion I might have of the kind of work that I do is still often that same invitation, the difference being, I think, that I and the people who come from indigenous cultures—because we've never separated ourselves from those traditional activities, lifestyles, and teachings—we're more conscious of those connections. They've been transferred to something a little more esoteric, but the function is still the same: "Hey, I've got a good one. Come here and sit down."

BS: Then, do you see a good story as entertainment, but also much more than that?

RW: Sometimes it's really hard for anybody to see themselves beyond the scope of the world that they're living in—until you engage their imaginations. Then they step beyond the structural containment of their world into some magic realm where anything is possible. And when you make that transition to the "anything is possible" world—when you suspend your disbelief—you are able to see yourself through the storytelling device in an entirely different framework. I read *Kidnapped* when I was twelve years old, when I was a foster kid living on a farm in southwestern Ontario, having a really hard time in school and genuinely hating my life. But as soon as Robert Louis Stevenson suspended my disbelief, I saw myself as Jack Hawkins. And it became possible for me to imagine myself living somewhere other than where I was living.

So, stories are not just entertainment. They're something more. When you invite somebody for a story to sit by that fire, it's not just because I'm going to entertain you for a half hour. It's, "Come on over here and listen to this story that I've got because I can take you somewhere . . . I can take you with me somewhere and I'll bring you back." But you can always have that ability to go back there again whenever you want. It's a teaching device. It's a spiritual mechanism to allow people to see beyond their restrictive borders, whatever they might be. It's a very philosophical tool because a story gives you the "what if" equation to toss into your outlook on the world. And it's also entertainment. It's also, "Forget about what's

going on here for a while and listen to this, or read about this and be transported.” So, it’s way more than entertainment.

bs: The categories aren’t ever mutually exclusive—entertainment, teaching, spirituality. I’ve read most of your books now, and one of the things that really strikes me when I read your works, especially *A Quality of Light*, and the new manuscript [*Ragged Company*] is that you really focus on the oral tradition. Your writing is very oral. When I read, I hear your voice. I hear speech more than I read print. I can really hear it in my head—that this is how the people are speaking—so I hear that connection to storytelling that you talk about. The other thing that strikes me is how you bring different people from different backgrounds and different worlds of experience together in your books. I think of *A Quality of Light*, for instance, where the characters come from completely different worlds—at first. You’ve got a young Native boy in a white foster home who seems to have the ideal home situation in many respects. And then you have a young white boy who has a very troubled home life. You’re very much playing against some of the stereotypes that are out there. And the characters come together in some productive and really tragic ways because of the world around them. In your latest manuscript those connections seem to be a theme again. I wonder if that’s something that you’re really interested in emphasizing as part of your teaching?

rw: Well, you have to write what you know. And in *A Quality of Light*, I was each of those two main characters. I was, at one point in my life, a Native kid who wanted to be anything but Native. And then I was also the young man who wanted more than anything to be educated and to epitomize that grand, romantic warrior lifestyle. So I was both of those people. When it came to writing that particular story, it wasn’t so much the bringing together of two separate characters and two separate backgrounds; it was more the exploration of the two separate selves that I had been in one point of my life. It was very cathartic because I really needed to examine, for my own growth, for my own understanding of myself, how it felt to be those people at certain times.

When Joshua Kane in *A Quality of Light* confronts his parents

at the kitchen table and says, “Why didn’t you tell me? Why didn’t you tell me that people would hate me just because of the way that I look? Why didn’t you tell me they’d swear at me and put me down, beat me up?”—I wanted so badly to ask those questions when I was a kid. And the anger that came out of that particular character in that particular scene was my anger. Because I wanted the answers to those questions, and I wasn’t getting them. And I wasn’t given the forum or the situation to put them out there. Ever. So fiction became the cathartic way and means of me being able finally to say the things to my adoptive parents that I’d always wanted to say. And when Johnny writes the big emotional letter at the end of the book, those are the kinds of things that I’d always wanted to say to the people who in one way or another put me down, demeaned me, or marginalized me. Fiction, again, gave me the chance to be able to do that, through the voice of the character. So, the fiction brings *me* together. In the new manuscript I have five characters from very disparate backgrounds. They all come together in a common love of movies and film, and they find friendship and a pathway to redemption through that.

What I’m finding is that the more that I write them, the more, again, they [the characters] are parts of me—who I’ve been—at some point in my life. *Ragged Company* deals a lot with homeless people. I’ve been homeless. I’ve slept under bridges, and I’ve slept in parks and under trees. I’ve been there. I’ve had to go to shelters for my food. And I know something of the mindset that happens when you, yourself, by your own choice and decisions, minimize your world. I’ve lived in situations in my life where my whole physical reality was six blocks in the city. Everything that I did, everybody that I knew, was six blocks, on a very street-level kind of association. So I understand that. And, in a way, I’m letting that go now because through these characters I’m working my way through how that might have happened to me.

There’s a journalist in there that’s jaded and bitter and doesn’t want to tell stories anymore. And I’ve been that guy. I’ve been a journalist for a long time, and I’m re-examining that. And other people who, through the course of the story, have to confront

choices and decisions that their life spun on. And it took them a while to recover equilibrium so that they could stand to look at it. Well, I've done that, a lot of times, and so I understand that process. I understand the feelings. I understand the disorientation. I understand the displacement when you finally stand on your own two feet and say, "What was that!?" And so when I write these people's stories, I understand that implicitly.

I really feel like, at this stage in my writing career, it's not so much about bringing disparate people and characters together; it's about bringing all the different parts of myself, at forty-eight years old, into one place and one time. I think that I'm still very much involved in the cathartic process in my own writing. I don't know how that will be once I finish this manuscript and start the next one. I don't know what form of catharsis I will be involved in. If I ever run out of issues, maybe I'll run out of writing. I don't know. But it always seems that I need to reach into me to find the crux of a conflict that I can understand, and to try and dissect it and characterize it and use it as a plot and a thematic to drive the story.

BS: You've said that, in the process of your writing, you have the idea for a long time, and then you start writing it. So, in the case of *Ragged Company*, we have these very different characters. I'm wondering if the characters don't also develop as you write them, further and further, in the process of this catharsis. Do you already have it all mapped out in terms of where they are heading? Or does the end result come out of a process that is ongoing for you as you are writing it down?

RW: No, I find that I know where I'm going, and with this manuscript, I know where I'm going to get to. What surprises me sometimes is what the characters say on the way. I know where I'm going to take them, and I know the step-by-step arc of the story, but what they say on their own behalf while I'm doing that surprises and amuses and distresses me sometimes. So I know the travel. I just don't know the content of the journey all of the time.

BS: So they do have a life of their own. They do become real. I'm curious: when we first met, you said to me that you don't read "Native literature" anymore, and I found that fascinating, espe-

cially because it seems that you draw on your own background and understanding of oral tradition in your writing. I'm wondering if you could talk about that a little bit, what that distinction between Native and non-Native literature might mean? And how you see yourself as fitting into either category—or not?

RW: I'm a huge baseball fan. Every year the world gets real to me when pitchers and catchers report to spring training. And then I think, "Good, now we're back to where I can understand." One of the biggest dreams and fantasies that I've had since I was nine and discovered the game is that I would get the call to come to spring training—to come and try out for major league baseball. And the upshot of the dream was that I would be the starting fielder for the Boston Red Sox, and I'd stand there and say, "Wow, this is it!" That was my ultimate dream.

So, when I wanted to write a story, when I wanted to write a book, I didn't want to play "AAA." I wanted to play major league. I knew that there were places that I could go and take my work where I would likely get published because my name was Richard Wagamese and I had won a national newspaper award and I had this background in the Native community as a cultural columnist and a storyteller. I could have submitted a manuscript and gotten published because I was Ojibway. I had an Ojibway, exotic-sounding name, and I told my stories in a fashion that was, quote, "Aboriginal, Native, First Nations."

No, I wanted to know that when I sat down at the end of the day and handed that manuscript in, that I was going to be considered solely on the nature of my skill, without any of those other inclusions. Just, "This is really good writing. This is a good story. I think we should publish this." Not, "Oh, is this guy Native?" but that it [the story] stood on its own in a world of published material, as publishable, worthy, professional. So I went to Doubleday instead of Theytus Books or any of the other smaller publishing houses that specialize in Native books. I wanted to be a writer. I didn't want to be a *Native* writer. I just happened to come from that particular background, but I didn't want to pigeonhole myself. I learned a little bit about that in journalism, because in journalism I was a

“Native columnist.” I wasn’t a columnist; I was always a “Native columnist.” And I didn’t like that; I hated it because anything that I wanted to write, it had to be filtered through that lens. I just wanted to be a writer. And the only way that I was going to be a writer was to go major league and get published through a major Canadian publisher. That was my goal and my aim, and I got there.

I don’t read Native literature anymore because it seems to me that we have been locked into an ideological framework that we are supposed to center our writing around. We are supposed to be deeply, darkly metaphysical people who are shape-shifters and have shamans at their disposal and beck and call, who are always surviving some kind of issue, who are always rising above some fantastic thing—this cataclysmic event that affects not only one’s personal life but one’s culture and people. And we have to write stories that show us escaping the claws of that horrible event or situation. And nobody was doing anything different.

I got tired of it. I wanted to read stories that were peopled with characters who just happened to be black, who just happened to be Arab, and where what was driving the novel and the story wasn’t the ethnicity or the background of the major characters, but the story itself. Telling the story for the story’s sake. And I wasn’t seeing any of that. I got tired and I thought, I’m not going to read Native literature again until I start to see stuff that’s giving a life to our people beyond what we assume that we are. We assume that we are survivors, but we are a whole lot more than that. We have done more in 570 years of exposure to the colonizers’ mentality than just survive. If that’s all we’ve done, if all we’ve done is survive, if that’s our view of ourselves, then we are really shortchanging ourselves. Because we’ve done a whole lot more than that, and our literature needs to reflect this.

Our literature needs to reflect that we have scientists who contribute major work to our understanding of the world. Our literature needs to reflect the fact that we have men and women who meet each other, fall in love, and have families, who don’t necessarily have issues that they have to survive. Our literature needs to reflect the fact that we can go and live wherever we want, do what-

ever we want, love whoever we want, become whoever we want, and never lose our ethnic identity, never lose our absolute sense of ourselves as First Nations people. We need to write stories that say that because that's what happens every day in every community, every city across Canada. We have Native people who are doing that, and if our literature doesn't reflect this, then we do the ultimate indignity to ourselves.

If the ultimate human right is the ability to know who you are, as storytellers and as writers, and if we're not allowing our people the power of imagination so that they can get beyond their restrictive borders and see that they can be scientists and still be Native, or genetic physicists and still be Native, or whatever, then we're not allowing them to know fully who they are. We're selling ourselves short. So, until we start to write those kinds of stories, I'll read other people's writing. I'll read great black writers. I'll read Arab writers. I'll read Russian writers. I'll read all these other people who have spawned this great literature and who have found a way beyond just a survivalist mentality.

BS: So, who do you like reading, then?

RW: You don't have enough room on that tape! I like reading Naguib Mahfouz, the Egyptian Nobel Prize winner for literature in 1991, who writes fascinating stories. One novel in particular, called *Children of the Alley*, is about the poor subclass in Egyptian cities, including Cairo, where the entire world is the alleys of the inner city. It's a great story, very magical and very uplifting, and it allows you to see yourself transported to a different kind of reality. It makes you a believer.

I really like Cormac McCarthy's *The Border Trilogy*. It's very Faulknerian, and it's very mythic, and I really enjoy his work. I'm also reading Walter Mosley right now, who wrote the . . . detective story. It's about an aged and infirm black blues man in the inner city who's been reduced to poverty and disease. He starts to look back on his life, particularly his meeting with Robert Johnson, the seminal blues guitar player. It's all about blues and music and ethnic identity expressed through the music. And Toni Morrison. Zora Neale Hurston. The list goes on and on.

BS: I'm wondering, when you talk about Native writing, whether you see a difference between Canada and the United States?

RW: Not terribly. We have people who are regarded as bright new voices who are still stereotyping their own people. In my first novel, *Keeper 'n Me*, I used local dialect to drive the story, and people might say that's stereotyping, but it's really not when you're trying to give an active, actual portrayal of speech and patterns.

BS: The dialect question is a fascinating one. I always find that it's problematic when I'm reading books where dialect is represented in writing. It's difficult to read dialect without ideology creeping in. When we read dialect, whether it's 'Rez English' or whether it's Ebonics—anything that isn't standard Canadian or American English—ideological implications always seem to come into the reading. I think of Maria Campbell's *Stories of the Road Allowance People*, which is very oral, for instance. With my interest in linguistics, I'm always torn between the idea—the ideal—of the representation of actual speech, but how do you guard against ideology creeping in for the reader who sees the representation of dialect as stereotypical, who immediately places value judgments on the characters in a novel because of those dialects. How do you feel about that?

RW: I'm writing a novel that deals with people on the street. And in order to do that, I need to use representational language. One of the things that is very important to not alienating my audience, and not having them make assumptions about the characters I'm creating, is to become skillful at creating the voice that I need and that the characters need, but within the framework of professionally published English language. To do that you need to work hard at creating the pitch and timbre and tone of a person without becoming too pidgin-English, without using too many dropped consonants, too many short forms. You have to be really conscious of that. But you also have to give the language enough of it to give it the flavor that you need so that you can suspend your disbelief. In order to do that, you have to be a writer—you need all the literary devices to do that. You need simile, metaphor, irony . . . all of those things. But you also need to find your way into the souls and

spirits of the characters so that they have idiomatic, particular speech patterns that identify them right away.

I'm using five separate first-person voices in *Ragged Company*, and I hope that what happens is that the reader can delete the heading that identifies the speaker and yet would still know automatically which one of those five characters is speaking, because they all have to be different. They have to stand on their own as homeless: this is Timber; this is Double-Dick; this is Granite; this is the old lady. The reader has to be able to know that from the writing.

One of the things that I ran into with *Keeper 'n Me* was that because I concentrated so much on getting the dialect right, it did make the book very hard to read. The transfer of dialect and speech patterns from the air when we hear it to the word when we read it is very different. The transfer works when you read it out loud to yourself, but when you're just there with the page in front of you, it makes it very hard to follow the story. And when you're working at that level, you really can't afford to distract your audience from the story itself. Because you're writing for the sake of the story. You're not writing to convince readers that you are an absolute mesmerizer with language, or that you can make this person "speak." As a writer, you're still trying to drive the story, so you have to reduce that distraction and be able to texture it, give it the flavor of speech so that the voice is still in their head but it's not distracting readers off the page. This takes skill, and you need to work at it.

BS: One of the ways that you dispel stereotypes in *Ragged Company* is in the contrast between the representation of the dialect, which some people might read as lower-class, "Rez English," and the voices of your characters, who are very intelligent. They're thinking. They're giving voice to very sophisticated thoughts. When they go to see a movie and they haven't got a clue what it is about—in one case the movie is in a different language—they're still getting a sense of its meaning. I thought that technique was really interesting and complex when I was reading the book. Here we've got these people labeled and categorized in one way, as homeless and hopeless—even their speech categorizes them that way—but then there's this other layer of meaning going on. And I won-

dered if that complexity was part of your strategy as well, because I really liked that paradox about those five characters.

rw: I don't think I set out with a specific strategy. I've always considered each book a new challenge to take me to another level of writing. Looking back at my work, when I read *Keeper 'n Me* and then I read part of *A Quality of Light*, I know that I grew as a writer. When I read *For Joshua* and then read parts of *A Quality of Light*, I know again that I grew as a writer. Reading the parts of this current book and working it through now and comparing it to the books that have gone before, I know absolutely that I've become a better writer, more skillful and more able to transport people out of their reality—more able to suspend my own disbelief, and, as a result, more able to be generous with my characters.

Debra mentioned to me the other day that she didn't feel any sympathy for this one character, and I said, "Good. I don't want you to feel sympathy for him, because basically he's an unsympathetic character." He's a mean-mouthed, angry, bitter, street person that I don't want to be sympathetic. I didn't want to create that part. Ten years ago, I would have gone for that. I would have wanted his story to be heart-rending, have him suffer such traumatic losses that you can't help but feel sorry for him. I didn't know as much then about the fact that you could create an anti-hero kind of character who could still pull readers along and involve them in his life. My goal is to let the characters have their story.

bs: Many Native writers in Canada don't specialize in novels. But you've always written novels. I'm wondering, did you intentionally decide on the novel form, or was the subject matter of each of your novels just something that came to you as a long, extended story?

rw: *Keeper 'n Me* was the first piece of fiction that I ever wrote. I didn't write short stories prior to that. I wrote really crappy poetry when I was younger. *Keeper 'n Me* just came out of me. And since then, it's been the same thing: the stories have just come out of me, and I'm so used to writing long now, I don't know whether I could do it short. I think it's because of the way that I process, the way that the story gets born in me before I start to write. I think it's just the way that I'm supposed to tell my stories, through the form of the novel.

BS: *For Joshua* was quite a departure for you. Do you think that you will write more nonfiction books as time goes on?

RW: I'd like to write another nonfiction title, but I think it would have to be a really specific and impactful story. I'd like to write someone else's biography, but it would have to be a really dynamic kind of story. I can't see myself writing a memoir again. Maybe in another forty years, when I've had more things to memoir about . . . But if I came across a life story that was engaging and worthy, I'd write a biography.

In *Ragged Company* I have five characters, only two of whom are recognizably First Nations people. That's less than half of my major characters who are Native. I think that in the next book that I have percolating in the back of my head, there may be a few more outwardly Native characters, but I'm going to take them to a place where Native people aren't supposed to go. And I think that my work will eventually have characters who are integral to the story, and the fact that they happen to be Native will be incidental to the fact that they are important to the story. And that's the direction that I believe that our literature needs to go—not to create stories reflective of our people because the characters are Native, but stories that are reflective of our people because they are people. They have undergone this tremendous fictional journey to resolve a conflict, and the fact that they're Native is incidental. At the end of the book, the reader could, and should, almost think, "Oh, that was Harry who lives down the street." Or, "That was my Iranian butcher . . . their life story . . ."

BS: Do you think that part of the problem is that what we call Native literature, up until now, has been pretty much content-driven? I've sometimes had people say to me of a writer—Louise Erdrich comes to mind—that her writing isn't always "Native." One of her recent novels is about her German heritage and the German side of her family, and there are very minor Native characters. At one point I was discussing the book with a colleague, and he said, "It's a great book. I loved it too. But that one's not Native literature." How is that possible? Do you think that part of the issue is about content, and that the definition of Native literature needs to be changed or redefined to become something bigger?

rw: I think that because I am who I am, no matter what I write, it's going to be classified as Native literature, regardless. Whether it becomes more mainstream in terms of acceptance—well, that's what I hope for.

bs: You want to be shelved on both sides of the library—am I right? Here is Richard Wagamese in this section because his background is Ojibway, and here he is over there with everybody else, because he is a great writer.

rw: Yes, because I'm Ojibway, I'm always going to be lumped in with Native writing. But my whole *raison d'être* for writing is to un-lump myself and to be just a writer. And this is an important distinction, I think. Too many of us go the cheap route. This is going to be a little inflammatory, but . . . We have people claiming their identity and being categorized as Native writers who bear a certain amount of non-Native genealogy in their blood. Now, I think that it would be an amazing story if one of them were to write a book about how difficult it is to fit into their German half, as a Native person, instead of writing about how difficult it is to fit in as a Native person with their German roots. I need to hear somebody who tells me about that, how difficult it is to try to live as a half-Native, half-Jewish person, but really trying to fit into the Jewish community, instead of the other way around.

The other way is too easy, because we have those mechanisms within our television and our publishing. As long as you have a little bit of First Nations blood in you, you automatically qualify. That makes it too easy. I want to hear the other side of the story. And I haven't found anybody brave enough to tell me that yet. How does it feel to try and be a part of this other community while being half Native? Or, I really want to explore my German, or Jewish, or Scottish roots. But you need to be brave to tell that story—and you can't get a grant to do that. There's no publishing house that's specializing in ethnically displaced German people with Native roots.

There is a lot that needs to happen in terms of storytelling. It's time we stopped bullshitting about the strength and solidarity of our culture, because most of us live in cities, because most of us live in a cultural way that is far from pure and traditional. The bulk of

Native people in this country, anyway, are living transitional lives. They want to move from sweat lodges and Sun Dances and powwows to pickup trucks and home computers. And we're still trying to retain our sense of identity. So to be presumptuous and write books that reflect our unflinching connection to our story of the past is bullshit. Because we're not always connected that way, and if we write books that say that we are, we're disempowering our own people again because we're not allowing ourselves to imagine ourselves as anything else.

BS: That's a fascinating idea.

RW: That would make a better story to me.

NOTES

1. In writing about Native peoples and literature, I have had to decide whether to refer to the original inhabitants of North America as *Native*, *Aboriginal*, *indigenous*, *Native American*, *American Indian*, *Indian*, and/or *First Nations*. All of these terms have slightly different meanings and connotations associated with them, and the meanings shift depending on where one is located. Thus, in the United States *American Indian* and *Indian* are still commonly used terms, while in Canada the word *Indian* verges on being politically incorrect. In Canada the term of choice is *First Nations*, but this term is somewhat exclusive, referring most precisely to those people who, in the United States, generally correspond to federally recognized American Indian tribes. Because I want to preserve the sense of common experience that Native authors reveal in their writing, and because many of these authors are of mixed-blood descent, I have chosen to use the term *Native American* or *First Nations* sparingly. I use the term *Native* with an uppercase letter to distinguish the indigenous peoples of North America from non-Native people "native" to either Canada or the United States. *Aboriginal* and *indigenous* are also commonly used terms, but *Aboriginal* continues to resonate with the original inhabitants of Australia and New Zealand. Because, in the context of this interview, I am limiting my discussion to the American continent, I prefer the term *Native*. I note that this is also the term that Richard Wagamese uses most frequently in his speech.

2. Wagamese divides his time between his home in Burnaby and his house in Paul Lake, near Kamloops, British Columbia.

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POETRY

Ragina

MAURICE KENNY

What was she doing out of context . . .
the story, history, the fact,
fact that Native women did not marry
those pinked faced pinched noses
for any reason . . . surely not in love
especially as he was just off the boat
she was not even a captive like her
extra-great-grandmother Eunice West
taken by force in 1711 and held in stout
arms of some handsome Mohawk . . .
the very thing romance is made from.

She found a ticket to the New America
with a slightly Irish brogue.
And here we are . . . a brood,
For his name shall die and her name
shall cease to be and only the mewl
of a scraggly cat will be heard in the night
mixing with his death rattle which
rose and gurgled for nine dark nights
and nine dark days until the nurse placed
a pillow gently on his face and handed
his gold watch to the sweated palm.
Ah history, you're the scoundrel where
the blame has come to rest, where the sins

of omission and the sins of action
 dwell in the heart and hide in the spirit.

She crossed into the New America blameless
 and innocent and March came down with
 fury and the blizzard covered the footprints
 as he strode from his raw cabin to her lodge
 with not a single flower tight in his hand
 (neither plastic nor newly sprung). Did
 she have a choice! Questionable.

Bad times there were: no work, no work,
 no work for Indian man or child, woman,
 or girl. And so she said with bent head
 yes I will and suddenly or what seemed
 suddenly there stood Cecilia, Julia
 and the boy child Andrew Anthony as red
 of skin as brown was his mother.

She never forgot to sing lullabies,
 told them stories of brother wolf
 and cowardly thrush and breathed
 a million years into his young lungs,
 breathed health, and as much wisdom as
 she might summon in her song. Story
 after story fell from her lips as though
 they were Sky Woman falling from the
 Spirit World through the vast nest
 of stars to Turtle's back clutching a
 strawberry vine in one fist.

And this is how his world commenced

Like all little boys he came head first
 screaming, kicking the sides of her womb
 thrashing and begging for independence.
 Hairless, toothless monster of a day old
 already knew where he was going and where
 he had just come from. But really not anything

different from any other newborn. Probably not, except there seemed an extra sense of defiance, will, a strength of scream few lads brought into this world at birth. He would never need to struggle, fight for strength . . . in a sense it was God Given, or thrust upon him by the will of the Creator as though he was the first born, the twins of Sky Woman, extra special, composed of good and bad: he would carry the tooth of wolverine and the scent of the wood lily until death.

An auspicious beginning: a ferocious March storm dragged him screaming into his mother's arms to nestle there in warmth under sisters' eyes and a gruff father's voice to the day she would no longer be his protection.

Indians

The Depression
Franklin Delano Roosevelt
help is on the way
with the C. C. C. and
Social Security

He didn't bring
the men and families
down from Kanawake
but on arrival
of the two men and
two women and horde
of kids he got them
jobs. Not much.
Ditch digging was all
he could offer.
They didn't complain
but took what was
offered gratefully.
Today you might say
they were migrant workers
but so was he as he
was never granted
citizenship until
nineteen-twenty-four.

Hunger is an ugly thing.
He knew what it was . . .
no not as a boy on the farm
but as the water boy
for fifty cents a day.
Too young to work iron
for the American
genius, he did encourage
later the “Indian” men
to climb high in good
spirit/balance
to the great skies
where the Haudenosaunee
first lived in harmony.

In his inimical way
he touched that sky.

Spirits

I am typing poems
old poems
for a new collection
of some pieces
first published
40 years
or so ago;
many I don't remember
many probably shouldn't have
been printed;
and as I sit here
to the machine typing
all sorts of annoying noises
completely enfold the inner cups
of my ears
eyes, too,
are acting strangely . . .
seeing things they shouldn't see,
figures who are not really at my right
shoulder, figures I don't recognize
like those I have written
poems to/for.
The power. The Power
is both amazing/
frightening.

I'll be happy when
this project
is finished
and I can place these
ghosts away in closets
and dark drawers
their homes
again.

Book Reviews

Virginia Sutter. *Tell Me, Grandmother: Traditions, Stories, and Cultures of Arapaho People*. Boulder: UP of Colorado, 2004. x + 149 pp.

Brian Hosmer, *Newberry Library and University of Illinois at Chicago*

I learned to tolerate white culture because it was my growing up environment but my Arapaho ancestry took over at birth, and never felt like anything but an Indian. During the fourteen years of assimilation into the white man's way of life, my mind, body and spirit became more and more Arapaho. (19)

Autobiography holds a significant place in American Indian literatures. Eastman, Bonnin, and Standing Bear penned life stories for popular audiences, as did Mourning Dove, Sara Winnemucca, Copway, and Apress. If we include "as told to" stories (from the iconic *Black Elk Speaks* to *Son of Old Man Hat* and *Lakota Woman*), the rich corpus of orations, and the many fictional works that are explicitly autobiographical, the life story is, indeed, an enduring genre of American Indian letters.

This also is a literature with a purpose, often intended as much for non-native as native, and crafted to contest toxic stereotypes produced by colonialism. Away the savage, and enter the fully developed human being, heir to a complex cultural tradition, and able—if allowed—to participate mean-

ingfully in American life. I am an Indian and an American, to paraphrase Charles Eastman.

Enter Virginia Sutter's *Tell Me, Grandmother: Traditions, Stories, and Cultures of the Arapaho People*. Part life story, part history, intended for Natives and non-Natives, Sutter's autobiography also seems designed to reconnect the author with her Northern Arapaho heritage by, in a sense, recontextualizing her lived experiences *through* Arapaho history and culture. This is accomplished, or attempted perhaps, by imagined conversations with Goes In Lodge, Sutter's paternal great grandmother, a historical figure who "provides" Sutter with critical insights that the author then communicates to the reader.

Imagined conversations with her ancestor/historical consultant distinguish what otherwise can be read as a fairly conventional story of separation and loss, followed by healing and renewal, and ultimately affirmation of the therapeutic power of homeland, Native cultural values, and tribal community. Born during the Great Depression, raised by non-Indian relatives (her mother was white), Sutter struggled with school, though not so much with academics as with the racism in her Wyoming classrooms, and the rigid discipline of the BIA boarding school at Haskell, which she attended for just one year. From there came a variety of odd jobs, a stint in the U.S. Navy, marriage to a non-Indian, children, travel from Texas to Hawaii, and, finally, in 1969 a return to the Wind River Indian Reservation. This was at the behest of her father, a Northern Arapaho man who had been largely absent from her life up to that point.

Again, according to literary convention, return to a reservation community rekindles an interest in Native culture. In a particularly telling passage, she asks, "Grandmother Goes in Lodge, when did I realize I was Arapaho, and Indian? This is a question you never would have understood, or asked. . . . You were fortunate to come into this world knowing who you were" (47). Once back home, Sutter establishes close relationships with elders, particularly women, suffers through an unhappy second marriage (this time to a Native man), opens a reservation business, becomes just

the second woman elected chair of the Northern Arapaho Business Council, raises her children, and earns several academic degrees. The book ends, however, with Sutter working for an Indian nation, but not her own, apparently successful in reconnecting with her culture, but disillusioned by the realities of tribal, family, and community politics.

All of this sounds pretty familiar, even a tad pedestrian, particularly given Sutter's writing style, which tends toward the cliché, and is more than a little wooden. "We are all children of Mother Earth, free to seek our own path," she writes, "as the four leggeds, the fish, and the fowl are free to seek their own way." Sounds a little New Age-ish to me.

Struggles with composition undoubtedly result from working with these imagined conversations. They dominate the book and in places are cleverly arranged so as create parallels between lives across the generations. The theme of migration also links the two life stories, and imagined conversations offer Sutter an opportunity to present the history and culture of Northern Arapaho people. But too often historical details are presented in ways that resemble stale century-old ethnographies, and the narrative constructed for *Goes In Lodge* is forced, awkward, contrived. "I had a premonition I would never enjoy a peaceful and joyous time with these friends and relatives" (98), Sutter offers in one place. And in another:

The pain was gone from my body, and I sense light all around the lodge. In the distance there was drumming, and the songs were happy ones. I sighed as I relaxed my hold on my husband's earthly body. It was time and I was ready. I closed my eyes and drifted into my final sleep. (122)

Tempting as it may be to focus on Sutter's prose, to do so would be to miss this book's very real contributions. *Tell Me, Grandmother* can be read as a history of the Arapaho people during the nineteenth century, or as a history of the Wind River Reservation, particularly in the latter half of the twentieth century, or as autobiography. But mostly, this book recounts the author's search for identity. It is autobiography as therapy, to be sure, but Sutter tells

a complex story. She is at her very best when describing her own efforts to reconcile competing sets of values, waging as it were a battle for her mind and soul. Western individuality versus Native communalism, the material or the spiritual; call it what you like, it is the stuff of American Indian literature. But Sutter avoids the too easy path, where these value systems are pitted against one another, where one must prevail for the person to become whole again. Instead, Sutter is an individual and a tribal person; she is competitive and yet uneasy with competition.

And in this sense her autobiography can be read as emblematic of the struggle of so many Native Americans of the twentieth century, who seek to reconcile modernity with tradition, and who struggle to recast, reframe, and restore what is Native, even as the majority culture has done its best to uproot, separate, and tell Natives that they can be either modern or Native, but certainly not both. Sutter challenges that formulation, even if she might not know it herself.

Clyde Ellis, Luke Eric Lassiter, and Gary H. Dunham, eds.
Powwow. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2005. 309 pp.

Janis (Jan) Johnson, *University of Idaho*

As the first collection of essays devoted solely to powwow culture, the goal of this offering is to explore the dynamism of the expressive culture of powwow. According to the introduction,

Once widely considered an icon of a post–World War II Pan-Indian movement in which Native people seemed to be part of a homogenized, melting pot Indian culture, in fact powwow culture began as—and remains—a complicated amalgam of sources and practices reflecting both particular and generalized notions of identity. (viii)

Contributors explore intertribal—“You know, when they sing at powwows, the emcee calls it a set of intertribal songs, not a set of Pan-Indian songs”—elements of powwow, as well as its numer-

ous local and regional differences and meanings (xiii). To accomplish this, the collection is helpfully organized into three parts: "History and Significance," "Performance and Expression," and "Appropriations, Negotiations, and Contestations." The editors want "to draw attention to some of the differences and similarities from community to community and group to group and to help point the way towards a more systematic and nuanced cross-cultural understanding of powwows" (xiii). Furthermore, the collection's goal is "not to cover all of the powwow's cultural practices, geographical regions, dances, or song styles but simply to spark interest in the powwow as something more than a set of generalized cultural practices" (xiii). As a reader situated in the Columbia Plateau of the Northwest, my appreciation for local, regional, and other differences in this enormously important "life way" has been deepened considerably by this useful and at times deeply engaging collection.

Four essays in "Part I: History and Significance" provide a background on the emergence, growth, and ritual elements of what we think of today as powwow. Patricia Albers and the late Beatrice Medicine present "Some Reflections on Nearly Forty Years on the Northern Plains Powwow Circuit," stating, "The greatest changes we have witnessed over the past thirty-seven years have to do, on the one hand, with shifts in the relative support that certain kinds of celebrations receive and, on the other hand, with the sheer growth and diversification of certain powwow activities" (28). The authors refer to a continuum of celebratory events from "long-standing tribal traditions controlled entirely by native peoples" to "a world of commercial festivals under the direction of white-run civic organizations" (28–29). Albers and Medicine compare and contrast "traditional" and "contest" powwows and the rise of powwow dance as a "professional occupational class" with prize money exceeding \$100,000. They conclude that white-run exhibitions have declined in numbers, support, and importance, and that family-run celebrations still survive and flourish and are "standing at the heart of today's celebratory activity" (41). Traditional powwows are "turning away from commercialism and competitive

dance while intertribal context powwows have become much more commercialized, regimented and ‘professionalized’” (42). Above all, powwow persists, Albers and Medicine claim, “for the sheer enjoyments they offer, for the good feelings they bring, and for the aesthetic pleasures they create” (42).

Essays in “Part 2: Performance and Expression” explore the discourse of tradition in Lakota identity through the dance and song of the powwow complex, the largely dialogic role of emcee discourses in powwow, the significance of the powwow princess. In “East Meets West: On Stomp Dance and Powwow Worlds in Oklahoma,” we are reminded that very local and specific dance traditions existed long before the emergence of what we now call powwow, and that both traditions persist simultaneously today in groups whose “common heritage is rooted in homelands in the southeastern or northeastern Woodland region” and who now live in Oklahoma (173). Jason Baird Jackson provides detailed and vivid descriptions of the specifics of Stomp Dance traditions.

“Part 3: Appropriations, Negotiations, and Contestations” is for me the most exciting and thought-provoking section of the collection. Five essays explore important yet lesser researched locations and manifestations of powwow traditions, including “The Monacan Nation Powwow: Symbol of Indigenous Survival and Resistance in the Tobacco Row Mountains,” “Two-Spirit Powwows and the Search for Social Acceptance in Indian Country,” “Powwow Overseas: The German Experience,” “Dancing with Indians and Wolves: New Agers Tripping through Powwows,” and “Purposes of North Carolina Powwows.”

Of particular interest, especially in light of the complexity of contemporary Indian identity, are the two essays focused on eastern Native peoples in the Piedmont and Coastal areas of the Carolinas and Virginia. Due to persecution by the dominant society these people were driven underground for their personal and family survival or were absorbed into other ethnic or racial identities due to violently oppressive political and social regimes such as the Indian Removal Act. In “Purposes of North Carolina Powwows” Chris Goertzen writes, “The known history of *every*

Piedmont and Coastal North Carolina Indian population is of jeopardy, amalgamation, dispersal, new alliances, and movement” (294). In recent years powwow has become a way to reconstitute personal, family, and group identity as Indians as well as “the main tool North Carolina Indians have for defining their collective identity to outsiders” (285). For the Occaneechi-Saponis, who were “hidden in plain sight” while being called Cuban, Samoan, Black, Hawaiian, and Mexican, “[t]heir eventual public reemergence as Indians came with their first powwows” (281).

Also of note is Lisa Aldred’s examination of recent forms of New Age commercial exploitation of powwow—what she calls “stealaways”—including “floating powwows” held on cruise ships and cyberspace appropriations of powwow and Indian culture in “Pow-Wow” software created by McAfee Associates. This free software allows users to create “tribes”: “These neo-tribes, or cyber-tribes in this instance, are imagined collective group identities defined through consumerism,” writes Aldred.

Powwow is a useful resource not only for understanding the emergence, development, meanings, and traditions of contemporary powwow, but also for making visible its numerous antecedents and multiple variations. Many of these essays will inform my teaching and will be useful to students doing research work in Native literatures and cultures.

Lawney L. Reyes. *Bernie Whitebear: An Urban Indian’s Quest for Justice*. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 2006. xii + 179 pp.

Carrie Louise Sheffield, *University of Tennessee, Knoxville*

Beginning with a brief discussion of Sin Aikst tribal history, and following with a focus on the role of both friends and family in Bernie Whitebear’s life, *Bernie Whitebear: An Urban Indian’s Quest for Justice* departs from traditional biographical structures. It is not merely a story about Whitebear’s achievements; it provides an essentially personal commentary on the impact the Termination era had on Urban Indians in the Spokane area and elsewhere.

In doing so Reyes draws upon not only his own memories of his brother Bernie Whitebear's life, but also letters sent to him by Whitebear, conversations with Whitebear's peers and friends, and diaries Whitebear's mother kept. These sources influence Reyes's very personal voice, making the text read less like a biography and feel more like a quiet conversation with him. The lack of an overtly academic voice makes this text accessible to American Indian studies scholars on all ends of the spectrum.

In telling the story of Whitebear's accomplishments, his friends, and, more importantly, his family, Reyes stresses the community over the individual and thus emphasizes the entirety of Whitebear's life and not just his activism. Indeed, much of the first half of the text recounts Whitebear's childhood and adolescence. In this telling we learn of the close relationship Whitebear had with his family and how, although they experienced severe poverty, of which Whitebear, even at a young age, was clearly aware, he maintained a positive sense of self and fostered the sense of selflessness that would prove to be so foundational for his later activism.

One of the most critical moments in Whitebear's adolescence was when he was invited to stay overnight at the home of a white friend named Paul. Paul's mother was angered at this event, calling Whitebear a derogatory name and saying he was not welcome back. His friend, however, did not accede to his mother's perspective on race and was angered at his mother for it. We come to see racism on an extraordinarily personal level through these accounts. From his mother being called the derogatory "squaw" and Whitebear being called a "siwash," the daily racism faced by American Indians becomes clear.

In telling of Whitebear's participation in traditional fishing on the Puyallup River, Reyes develops his criticism of the individual and political racism that many Native Americans face even today. Through his stories about Whitebear's friendship with fellow activist Bob Satiacum, Reyes problematizes the status of Native American treaty rights in America and shows, through Whitebear's voice, the iniquity of American jurisprudence:

They have created a playing field that is not level and passed laws to sustain it. The laws are always created in their favor. The problem is they ignore those laws and they don't abide by them. . . . The whites break those treaties and laws whenever it becomes an obstacle to their greed. (70–71)

But a large part of the fight for Whitebear became not just the right to fish the salmon, but the preservation of traditional methods of preparing it. Although his people were not traditionally salmon fishers, Whitebear came to recognize the significance of preserving tribal traditions through his friendship with Satiacum. And once again we see Reyes subtly pointing out larger issues facing Native Americans in general and Urban Indians in particular—the loss of cultural identity after termination.

The second half of the text focuses more closely on Whitebear's activism. And in so doing Reyes continues his commentary on political issues surrounding Native Americans. As he tells of how Whitebear worked to gain lands for powwows and other cultural events, and even staged a takeover of Ft. Lawton (where Indians and non-Natives alike seized lands on the closed military base), Reyes comments on issues such as land tenure and the policies constructed by the federal government to "take land from Indians" (88). However, Reyes clearly steps away from idealizing all Indians and demonizing all whites in this text. In the process of fighting to regain land, Whitebear met resistance, not only from local, state, and federal authorities, but from other Indian groups as well. And at the same time, he received assistance not only from white celebrities like Jane Fonda, but also from white friends and community members.

Throughout the text, Reyes works to show Whitebear as more than just an activist: we come to know him as a person. His sense of humor, his close relationships with other people, and his struggles with racism are all equally critical aspects of his activism. What the reader receives from this text is not simply information about what Bernie Whitebear did (although that in itself is highly important); rather, the reader also receives an approachable text that comments on the status of Urban Indians in the period sur-

rounding Termination. We see the poverty many Urban Indians, including Whitebear's family, had to endure with the loss of tribal lands, the sense of hopelessness brought about by a racist job market that refused to hire Urban Indians for anything but the most menial of jobs, and the need for a continued movement toward the preservation and celebration of Indian cultures and diversity in America. It is this preservation and celebration—the very things that Whitebear fought for and achieved—that will be the central tools in combating the continued impact of colonialism in the United States. Reyes's text provides a significantly different perspective on Native American history and political issues in the United States—rather than dry factual listing of data, this text gives the fight for Native American rights in the United States a human face: that of Bernie Whitebear.

Larry Mitchell. *Potawatomi Tracks (The Ballad of Vietnam and Other Stories)*. San Francisco: Heliographica P., 2005. 134 pp.

Scott Andrews, *California State University, Northridge*

Potawatomi Tracks is the story of Larry Mitchell's personal triumph after years of struggling with drugs, alcohol, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. He concludes this thin volume with a list of successes: his marriage is put back together, he is named an Honored Veteran on the Prairie Band Potawatomi Reservation and given a parade (thirty-two years after returning from Vietnam), his wife is getting her master's degree in education at the University of Kansas, and his two sons are enrolled in universities. In that sense, it is a good story. Life. Renewal. Hope. Success. Happiness. Gratitude. All good stuff. *Potawatomi Tracks* joins the growing list, though still a short one, of autobiographies by American Indian veterans of the Vietnam War. Taking its place in the larger, national narrative of that war and the years that followed, its story of ultimate triumph is welcome and healing for the men and women who served, for those who waited for them, and for the entire nation.

Although *Potawatomi Tracks* joins the list of American Indian narratives of the Vietnam War, it is not typical of them. Mitchell's drug use, for instance, starts in Europe, after he has seen active duty in Vietnam. And he goes AWOL in Europe, where he travels on forged papers and discovers his joy of reading. What other American Indian authors can say they got their thirst for reading after an encounter with a biography of General Erwin Rommel and were inspired to start writing by the works of Henry Miller? Once Mitchell returns to the United States, his story becomes more conventional of Vietnam War narratives, as he tells a story of depression and drinking. He finds new hope and a purpose in his life in the woman he courts and then marries. His story is heroic in its mundanity—it is the story of holding a family together against the burdens of alcoholism, depression, and poverty. Mitchell's story is the convergence of issues known by many American military veterans and issues known by many members of America's poorest reservations.

Mitchell's story is also peculiar because of the way it is presented. On first picking up the book, I thought I had encountered an autobiography in the form of an epic poem. The text *looks* like a long poem and the title suggests the story will be told as a song—a “ballad.” However, a search for poetic devices, such as enjambment, figurative language, symbols, and tropes, is relatively futile. For instance, early on Mitchell writes:

There was no healing ceremony waiting for me on
the

reservation. (32)

Why break “the” to its own line here? Why emphasize “reservation” with indenting? Why not emphasize “no healing” with a line break instead? Perhaps Mitchell's story is recounted as a modern version of a coup tale—a warrior's story of his exploits in battle; perhaps *Potawatomi Tracks* is intended to be more like a transcribed oral telling, similar to something the Dauenhauers present with their Tlingit oral narratives. Regardless of the book's intended narrative structure, its publisher needs to be castigated for the book's

sloppy editing. I do not hold this against Mitchell. It is enough that he has shared his story with us; ensuring that his manuscript reached us with careful preparation was Heliographica's responsibility. I wish Mitchell continued health and happiness, and I hope he explores the possibilities of his narrative style further (with a better publisher).

Bruce King. *Evening at the Warbonnet and Other Plays*. Los Angeles: UCLA American Indian Studies, 2006. 323 pp.

Jane Haladay, *University of North Carolina, Pembroke*

With its roots in indigenous traditions of oratory, ceremony, and communal genesis and performance, American Indian theater is arguably the most holistic form of Native American literature. As noted by playwright Bruce King, author of this collection, theater's "structured illusions transcend time, languages, and cultures" to bring immediacy and originality to every new performance of a staged production, because "theatre is a living art."¹ King is a member of the Turtle Clan of Hodenusaunee-Oneida Nation and has been a vital member of the Native theater scene since publishing his first play, *To Catch a Never Dream*, in 1969 at the tender age of seventeen.² *Evening at the Warbonnet and Other Plays* is King's first published collection.

The six-part dedication of the book (to his wife, to his kids, to his mother and siblings, "to all the Vietnam War veterans[,] / to the Hodenusaunee and / to the American Indian Studies Center") provides a fitting outline of the content and concerns of the five plays gathered within this volume. The plays grapple with subverting stereotypes and representing the complexities of Native communities' contemporary concerns: the continuance of ancestral beliefs, cultural practices, and spiritual expressions; addressing the backstabbing and jockeying for political power that arises between community members; and facing shame over acts of betrayal, deception, and violence to return to living in a good way.

Written between 1979 and 2003, King's five plays (*Whispers*

from the Other Side, *Dustoff*, *Threads: Ethel Nickle's Little Acre*, *Wolf in Camp*, and *Evening at the Warbonnet*) are prefaced with brief "Production History" notes that will be helpful to students and scholars of American Indian theatrical history. The collection demonstrates King's artistic development across more than two decades and takes us for "a ride into an American Indian twilight zone," as Hanay Geiogamah notes in the collection's introduction, where we meet a range of characters including corrupt tribal officials, shattered Vietnam vets, and old Coyote himself/herself, who—because of an aborted scam on Creator—has been working cleanup crew in an Indian bar called The Warbonnet for the past three hundred years. As this scenario makes clear, King frequently weaves threads of humor and playfulness even into some of the plays' most serious moments.

Perhaps the most complex play in this volume is *Wolf in Camp*, which addresses the ongoing and controversial theme of what and who is "authentically Indian" within the community of American Indian theater itself. The play focuses on a Native theater company in rehearsal and opens with a romantic image of idealized "Indian experience": actors in beautiful regalia appear dreamlike onstage toting such signifiers of Nateness as "an otter-skinned war lance" adorned with feathers while burning "a sweetgrass hoop." This idyllic scenario is punctured, however, when one actor, Fish, flubs his lines and begins to improvise; the director cuts the scene, and readers/audience members are made aware that we are witnessing the playwright's representation of Native actors representing Native Americans. Cast members begin bickering about the value of "playing Indian" in this manner for paying audiences, and King further complicates the rehearsal by gradually revealing that Fish (a late replacement for a hospitalized cast member) is actually an elder whose awareness and eventual exposure of the "wolf in camp" of the play's title comes from his genuine knowledge of traditional stories and culture, much of which is neither known nor remembered by the younger actors. Fish and Otiyahneh ("Wolf" in Oneida language), who poses as a potential backer of the ensemble, square off over the control of character and voice through writ-

ten versus performed story texts. King expresses his opinion on the matter through multiple characters including Delores, who asserts that drama is “not in the book dear, it exists in the living.” Still, by the end of *Wolf in Camp* an exhausted Fish exclaims of the storytelling project: “Boy, you really got to be careful how you write, inet?” King consistently teases reader/audience expectations—held by Natives and non-Natives—around manifestations of Native authenticity and cultural productions.

King writes minimal stage directions into these plays, making it at once more challenging to visualize the activity onstage and more engaging to concentrate on the plays as “form[s] of dramatic storytelling,” as Geigamah observes. This focus on the drama of story to render its own visuals in the reader’s/audience member’s mind simultaneously reflects King’s background within the long-house tradition and the influence of his realist/surrealist artistic mentors such as Samuel Beckett and Arthur Miller. *Evening at the Warbonnet*—the longest play in this volume and the one most often performed—features two central characters, Ducky and Ki, who are the tricksters Loon and Coyote in human form. It is the nightly task of this dynamic duo to party with and relentlessly prod the Indian clientele who wander into the bar to the point of brutally honest disclosure of their most fiercely guarded wounds of past wrongdoings. This ritual is necessary for the bar-goers, who are initially unaware of the fact that they are dead, to lay down their burdens in order to cross to the other side of the river free of the guilt, shame, and denial weighing them down. In this way, they will be able to achieve redemption when they face Creator.

The trajectory of King’s artistic career and the extent of his involvement with various Native communities attest to his claim that his work is primarily for Indian people. “I am not concerned with the mainstream, with what’s going on Broadway, or in L.A., all of that,” King remarked in a 1993 interview with Paul Rathbun. Rather, King “need[s] to get feedback from Native peoples personally to see that they identify with the characters in [his] plays, that they know what [he’s] talking about and that it makes sense to them.”³ As Geigamah remarks in his introduction to *Evening*

at the *Warbonnet and Other Plays*, King's "work has rarely been reviewed by a professional critic," a fact that Geiogamah believes has "worked in [King's] favor." These are plays of and for Native peoples, although anyone interested in Native literature and theater will appreciate them since the plays will certainly continue to stimulate fresh literary and performative interpretations.

NOTES

1. Bruce King, "Emergence and Discovery: Native American Theater Comes of Age," *American Indian Theater in Performance: A Reader*, ed. Hanay Geiogamah and Jaye T. Darby (Los Angeles: American Indian Studies Center, University of California, 2000), 165.

2. Paul Rathbun, "Native Playwright's Newsletter; Interview: Bruce King," *American Indian Theater in Performance: A Reader*. Geiogamah and Darby 305–6.

3. Rathbun 316.

Ed White. *The Backcountry and the City: Colonization and Conflict in Early America*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2005. 236 pp.

Keith Lawrence, *Brigham Young University*

A revisionist consideration of colonial dynamics undergirding the American Revolution, Ed White's *The Backcountry and the City* employs a Marxist paradigm to argue that, largely as a consequence of ongoing urban/rural conflicts in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century colonial America, distinctively "American" formulations of liberty, individualism, democracy, republicanism, antifederalism, and "rights" had permeated colonial American politics and society long before the Revolutionary moment itself. Appealing to Marxist foundationalists like J. Franklin Jameson, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Barrington Moore Jr.,¹ White posits a persistent divide between the colonial city dweller and his peasant farmer neighbor on the frontier, two distinct bodies from whose natural conflicts gradually emerged a kind of practical government, a utilitarian means of negotiating their respective demands

or wills that stopped short of institutionalizing the ever-expanding “backcountry” yeomanry.

White breaks his discussion into five parts: “Divides,” “Seriality,” “Fusion,” “Institution,” and a conclusion entitled “Toward an Antifederalist Criticism.” In the first of these, “Divides,” White briefly delineates the colonial American “urban”/“rural” gulf.² In his second chapter, White establishes separation, dispersal, individualism, isolation—“Seriality”—as the distinguishing marker not only of the colonial American frontier but of any liberal society. Here, White traces the early eighteenth-century unfolding of ineffectual land-use laws through which the Penn family sought recourse against backcountry “squatters” who (in White’s euphemistic phrase) “quietly possessed” Penn lands and refused to pay rent or to leave. White then argues that the backcountry gradually acquired a voice through “collective seriality,” heroically bartering for greater protection from marauding Indians as well as from urban abuse.³

In its movement toward “collective seriality,” the second chapter thus prefigures the third, “Fusion,” which describes how “serial” individuals may come together—may begin to see and define themselves according to “group existence” (82). Here, White relies on the *Narrative* (1799) of James Smith to show the gradual emergence of backcountry “group formation” during the last half of the eighteenth century, describing Smith’s alignment with his captors and other Indian groups as well as with other frontier whites. In this context White portrays the so-called Paxton Boys of the early 1760s as a particularly dynamic pre-Revolutionary backcountry group. White’s fourth chapter considers the colonial “Institution”—that is, a political entity meant to “counter serial dispersal and group fusion by managing both tendencies” (141). He opens the chapter with an assessment of colonial Christianity as “institution,” particularly as represented through the missionary career of David Brainerd among the Native Americans of Pennsylvania’s Susquehanna Valley. White then turns to the emergence of a second “institution,” American federalism as the spawn of the failed Albany Plan of Union (1754); the chapter’s larger argu-

ment considers Native American roles in effecting American institutionalism and particularly American federalism.

White's conclusion, "Toward an Antifederalist Criticism," reworks an earlier article White published in *American Literary History* (1999); it argues that the traditional reading of Franklin's *Autobiography* as the memoir of a prototypical American—the self-made man as well as the responsible citizen—is misguided. Especially given its insistence in parts III and IV upon the primacy of ends over means (as illustrated through Franklin's blithe depictions of himself playing "group" against "group" to preserve the larger "institution"), White argues that the text is instead an apologetics of American federalism. In asserting that an unpacking of Franklin's mythology may hold keys to the simultaneous unpacking of "the institutional appropriation of nationalism," White finally advocates an American return to a kind of Marxist equilibrium he terms "creative antifederalism" (210).

The Backcountry and the City is an important contribution to early American social, political, and literary scholarship, verifying what many of us already suspect to be true about colonial American society: that frontier inhabitants played a larger, more crucial role in nation formation than they are generally allowed; and that, for better or worse, economics invariably dictates how human beings think and behave. White's focus allows him to carefully weigh representative historical moments, assessing their independent and collective relationships to his larger argument—which, at its best, is provocative, incisive, and persuasive.

And yet despite its deliberately narrow thesis, White's book is an overly ambitious and overly politicized project. White tends to handle the details of history much more competently than its generalities, and introductory and transitional passages are often marred by wild assertions. He shows, for example, a remarkable misreading of (or willful blindness to) colonial American literary scholarship of the past twenty years when he condemns such scholarship as suffering from "an overemphasis on elite discourses as discourse, an exaggerated focus on nationalism, and a neglect of recent ethnohistorical work" (xv). And when he declares, without

the least evidence of irony, that “long gone are the days when theory anthologies included a section on ‘Sociological Approaches’” (17), the reader wonders how White could possibly ignore the extent to which sociology, empirical or otherwise, undergirds virtually every contemporary critical theory. The reader is equally taken aback when White points to a single text, the Library of America edition of Franklin’s *Writings*, to support his claim that American literary scholars tend to “bury” Franklin’s work from “the 1750s, 1760s, and 1770s” between “the early prose pieces of the 1720s and 1730s and the stylistically different postrevolutionary writings” (176).⁴

There are even more surprising lapses in White’s larger argument. Crucially, he fails to acknowledge the existence of an urban underclass, together with its certain influence on the urban elite. Even if one is persuaded by White’s argument for the “yeoman” origins of the American self, in other words, his position is undermined by its exclusive focus on the backcountry peasant—by its failure to consider how backcountry and urban peasants worked with or against one another in respective or collective struggles against the urban elite. Similarly, in his insistent pairing of Pennsylvanian yeomen with agrarian endeavor, White does not adequately allow for the fact of agrarian wealth and leisure, especially as enjoyed by the colonial “gentleman farmer.”

Structural flaws in White’s third chapter seriously undermine his argument there. In the first place, the chronology of the chapter is difficult to follow: it references events from the 1730s eventually tied to the Paxton conflict of the 1760s; then turns its attention to Smith’s captivity of the 1750s, together with a number of his late-century experiences and observations from the 1770s and 1780s; then moves backward for a closer look at the Paxton situation, this time focusing on events of the 1750s that led up to the actual conflict in late 1763. Second, despite insistent buildup from the earliest pages of his text regarding his interest in and intended focus on the Paxton incident as a telling moment in backcountry history, White finally gives the so-called rebellion much less space than he allots to most other historical building blocks in his text, including the captivity of James Smith. Finally, that Smith becomes the

effectual centerpiece of White's third chapter is itself problematic. Even the most casual reader of Smith's account realizes that the midcentury captivity has been written and published nearly half a century after its occurrence—and that its memories of a youthful half-decade with the Caughnawagas have been filtered through and likely changed by the perspectives of its worldly wise and jaded—and, yes, post-Revolutionary—narrator. A somewhat more careful reader will recognize that White does not engage the issue of how much of Smith's remembered captivity—of his "fusion" with his Indian captors—is likely attributable to frontier wish fulfillment, to fictionalized male fantasy. The careful reader will also perceive White's dodging of crucial cultural implications of his own argument, implications centered in questions like these: To what extent is Smith's narrative "remembered"—or "created"—in the context of late eighteenth-century "Indian fiction," culminating in Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntly*, also published in 1799? To what extent does the late nineteenth-century vantage point recreate the European American/Native American dynamic, especially its "safe" or "unsafe" points of positioning? Above all, how does the 1799 publication date of Smith's narrative call into question White's reading of Smith as having faithfully documented the evolution of the American "group"?

Despite White's clear efforts to attend to Native American influences on American democracy, including on the Constitution, he shapes his argument only after carefully detailing the position of his detractors—and in a way that renders his own position tentative and anemic. And in his assessments of the so-called Paxton Rebellion and, in a later chapter, David Brainerd's missionary labors, White tends to construct Native American players as objects of white aspirations and machinations rather than as clearly independent subjects who dictated their own history as they also shaped that of European America. Indeed, White never details the atrocities committed by the Paxton Boys against Native Americans in late 1863 and early 1864, nor does he adequately explore the emotional power of white reports of these atrocities, including the report of Franklin. Most simply put, White constructs the backcountry yeo-

men as the Marxist heroes of his text; and he seems to resist giving Native Americans a role or position whereby they might potentially upstage his heroes. Accordingly, White's own discussion of Pennsylvanian Indians rarely rises above the level of Crèvecoeur's discourse in *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), a discourse roundly condemned by White for its employing Indians only "as a foil through which to sort out the limitations of seriality" (54).

A final lapse occurs in White's treatment of Franklin's *Autobiography*. Here, White begs the questions of Franklin's intended audience and purpose in writing. True enough, we will never know whether Franklin intended his memoir to be a private or a public document, whether (had he lived to complete the manuscript) he would have sought—or even permitted—its publication. Still, if White's argument is to be fully persuasive, it must not only allow for the Franklinian masquerade and play to which White appropriately points, but must also entertain the notion of Franklin's *Autobiography* as public text. That is, White needed to consider whether Franklin—in the seemingly coy revelation of his hand, of his "trade secrets," as it were—was not indeed revealing his own antifederalist sympathies while perhaps nudging the reader toward a similar response.

Although flaws in *The Backcountry and the City* are not inconsequential, the strengths of the text will afford it a measure of scholarly endurance. Through an appropriate and revealing geographical focus, White constructs a pioneering assessment of the colonial underclass in conflict with the urban elite and knowingly suggests how the conflict may have contributed to the emergence of American federalism. The sweep of the text is admirable and engaging; and while at times its economic positions are simplistic, they are generally clear and provocative. Even with its limitations, White's text will stand as a scholarly point of departure in the years to come.

NOTES

1. Represented, most particularly, by Jameson's *The American Revolution Considered as a Social Movement* (1926), Sartre's *Critique de la raison*

dialectique [*Critique of Dialectical Reason*] (1966), and Moore's *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (1966).

2. But then he is detoured into an unnecessarily windy justification of his critical position and consciously narrow focus—on Philadelphia and the surrounding frontier as metonym for early eighteenth-century British America—a detour comprising the bulk of the chapter.

3. The chapter ends with a hurried, seemingly obligatory discussion of “serial women” and “gendered seriality.”

4. Relative to this last example, the larger issue is not that there are precious few options for locating an author's “middle works” in a chronologically arranged anthology—but that, in this very Library of America edition cited by White, the texts from Franklin's middle period comprise a larger section of the volume than do the post-Revolutionary writings—and a section more than twice as large as that comprising the earlier texts.

George Flett. *George Flett: Ledger Art*. Spokane, WA: New Media Ventures, 2007. 81 pp.

Richard Pearce, *Wheaton College*

George Flett lives on the Spokane Reservation, where his family has played a prominent role in tribal affairs for many generations. His mother, a well-known storyteller, has passed the storytelling tradition down to him. In *George Flett: Ledger Art* he now passes these stories down to the next Spokane generation—and also to us—in accurate pictographic detail and compelling visual arrangements. He draws his images on not only ledger pages, but also maps, Western Union telegrams, a tribal census, *Congressional Records*, stock certificates, and World War II ration books.

George Flett: Ledger Art is a beautifully produced book housed in a cloth-covered, inlaid slipcover. It contains thirty-seven plates and five illustrative photographs, along with a rich and valuable introduction by Scott M. Thompson. Thompson is a teacher, artist, scholar/craftsman of Plains and Plateau Indian culture, and author of *I Will Tell of My War Story: A Pictorial Account of the Nez Perce*

War. Steeped in Spokane culture and a longtime friend of the artist, he explicates Flett's use of color and clothing design. He also elaborates on the oral tradition—where storytellers employed a variety of voices, gestures, pauses, and facial expressions. And he points out the specific ways Flett translates these dramatic conventions into his storytelling images. Indeed, part of what distinguishes this collection are the storytelling figures and subtitles that are implicitly in the past tense, or a written story serving as present retelling. For example, in "Warrior's Dream" there is the subtitle "In my dreams I met with the Upper, Middle, and Lower Spokane Chiefs Near Oyaken Creek." On the left-hand side of this drawing is a penciled figure of Strong Eagle, along with his name glyph, while to his right (in the important pictographic position) are the three chiefs, whose colorful attire is explicated by Thompson. And in "Story of a Prairie Chicken Dance," as Thompson explains, a storyteller uses words and actions (in a series of images) to relate his tale to an attentive audience. Flett, I should add, has popularized the Prairie Chicken Dance in the Northwest through drawings that vividly capture the vitality of the dress and movement. He has sponsored Prairie Chicken Dance contests on the Spokane Reservation, and last year he brought a group of drummers with him for an exhibition of his work in California.¹

What also distinguishes the drawings in this collection are, first, Flett's complex use of adjoining and overlapping mixed media (which add material and historical dimensions to his stories) and, second, his use of photo transfers, thought images, and embossed images of memories and spirit helpers. As a result we can come close to seeing the way Native people saw their world. Flett talks about "layering": "Layers not only of time—from ancestral to the current day to future generations—but he also sees spiritual layers."² Hence we see not only the action of a historical character but his thoughts, dreams, memories, and spirit helper. And the embossed images make their presence felt as well as seen as the light changes, literally adding a spiritual dimension to the work.

One of the most interesting of these mixed-media pieces, "Spear in the Ground," contains a pictographic story of Flett's maternal

grandfather, who was left in a cradleboard leaning against a spear in the root-digging plains. Knowing that she could not take care of him, his mother had placed him on a regularly traveled route. She left when she heard someone coming, and the couple riding along the trail knew they were meant to take him. The story is drawn in colored pencils on a cash book page, which has been burned into the shape of a buffalo robe. Flett both appropriates this material record of Western expansion, using it to record his own individual/tribal history, and shapes the Western accounting page into a form of traditional Native clothing. Moreover, he places the transformed cash book page upon a faded Department of the Interior geological survey map of the Spokane Reservation's Turtle Lake area—the small part of the reservation left after the land allotments.

On the important right-hand side of the cash book page is a colored pencil image of the baby in his cradleboard, leaning against the spear. Underneath the spear is written what will become the baby's Spokane name, "Spear in the Ground," followed by his name glyph, a small penciled drawing of the spearhead. The couple who will raise him can be seen to the baby's left, riding toward him along a well-traveled trail. Above the baby and to the right (providing another layer and point of view) is a small image of the hiding mother, looking down at the baby and at the same time picturing (in a thought picture to the left) the fight where her husband was killed by a cavalry soldier. A spiral of sacred smoke connects the baby to his father and the soldier who shot him.

Above the cash book page, layered on the geological survey map, is a bright yellow sun. And, forming another layer in front of the sun, is a photographic transfer of John Stevens, Flett's ancestor, who took part in discussions of tribal land allotments. Then, painted in bright colors on the foremost layer, the legendary tribal leader Strong Eagle gallops across the Turtle Lake area and over the cash book, the legs of his painted war horse spanning the map. Finally, serving as a mat and frame for the multidimensional montage and pictographic story, is a blank ledger page. And typed on a panel in its large right-hand margin is the grandfather's story, now retold by George Flett, which concludes: "It is not written but

etched in my heart, and this is how I picture that moment. This painting depicts how it might have been. This is how I honor my maternal grandfather ‘Spear in the Ground.’” The story is signed “George Flett—Spokane, Spokane Indian Reservation, Wellpinit, Washington.” And beneath his signature is the glyph of his “‘sum-ish,’ bull elk or buffalo.” Flett’s term “this” in “this is how I honor my maternal grandfather” may refer to a lightly penciled drawing below his narrative—of the baby in his cradleboard, leaning on the spear. But it also refers to the layered, multidimensional story. What we experience, then, is George Flett telling the story etched in his heart to honor his grandfather, which includes the tellings, retellings, and associated stories across three generations.

In these beautifully reproduced drawings Flett uses his skill, imagination, and knowledge to not only tell but also to include the retelling of important Spokane stories. He does so in ways that convey their thick cultural and historical texture, reflect the vitality of his tribe, and expand the potential of ledger art.

NOTES

1. Digital images of the drawings I discuss may be found at <http://www.wheatoncollege.edu/Arts/flett>.

2. Scott Thompson quoted by Kevin Taylor, “He Shares Many Horses,” *Pacific Northwest Inlander* July 5–7, 2007, 17.

Contributor Biographies

SCOTT ANDREWS (Cherokee) is an associate professor at California State University, Northridge, teaching American Indian literature and American literature (including literature of the Vietnam War). He has reviews, essays, and poems appearing (or forthcoming) in *American Literature*, *Arizona Quarterly*, *Indigenous Nations Studies Journal*, *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, and *Studies in American Indian Literatures*.

PETER L. BAYERS is an associate professor of English at Fairfield University in Fairfield, Connecticut. He has published a book and a number of articles, including ones in *Anglo Men's Studies* and *Native American Studies*. He is currently working on a book-length manuscript, tentatively titled *American Indian Masculinities*.

JOSEPH L. COULOMBE is an associate professor of American literature at Rowan University in southern New Jersey. Currently writing a book on contemporary Native authors, he has published a chapter on Sherman Alexie as well as presented papers on Alexie, James Welch, Leslie Marmon Silko, Gerald Vizenor, and Linda Hogan, among others. His first book, *Mark Twain and the American West* (2003), was part of the Mark Twain and His Circle series at the University of Missouri Press, and it includes a chapter on Twain's use of nineteenth-century stereotypes of Native Americans to construct his early persona.

JANET DEAN is an associate professor of literary and cultural studies at Bryant University, where she teaches courses in American literature, American studies, and Native American studies. She is the author of numerous articles on the literature and popular culture of the American

West and the recipient of the Western Literature Association's 2006 Don D. Walker Award for her essay on the Dakota Conflict of 1862. She is currently completing a book on the ways women mediate the racial conflicts of the frontier in the nineteenth-century American imagination.

JANE HALADAY is an assistant professor of American Indian studies at the University of North Carolina, Pembroke. She holds a PhD in Native American studies with an emphasis in feminist theory and research from the University of California at Davis and an MA in American Indian studies from the University of Arizona. Her scholarship and teaching focus on literary and pedagogical decolonization strategies and American Indian self-determination. Her home place is California.

BRIAN HOSMER is an associate professor of history at the University of Illinois at Chicago and director of the Newberry Library's D'Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian History and the Committee for Institutional Cooperation American Indian Studies Consortium. His research interests focus on intersections between economic change and cultural identity in American Indian communities, and his publications include *American Indians in the Marketplace: Persistence and Innovation among the Menominees and Metlakatlangs, 1870–1920* (1999) and *Native Pathways: Economic Development and American Indian Culture in the Twentieth Century* (2004), which he coedited with Colleen O'Neill. He recently was on leave at UIC's Institute for the Humanities, focusing on a history of work and attitudes toward work on the Wind River Indian Reservation.

JANIS (JAN) JOHNSON is an assistant professor of English and American Indian studies at the University of Idaho.

MAURICE KENNY, born in Watertown, New York, in 1929, is one of the most celebrated Native American poets of all time. He has published over thirty books of poetry, fiction, and essays. His *Mama Poems*, an extended elegy, won the American Book Award in 1984, and his books *Blackrobe*, *Isaac Jogues*, and *Between Two Rivers* were nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. He considers his most important work to be *Tekonwatonti, Molly Brant, 1735–1795*, a historical poetry journey in many voices that honors the Mohawk figure Molly Brant and explores an important time in American history when the British, French, Iroquois, and colonists were

engaged in a monumental collision of cultures. Calling him “a master lyricist,” Joseph Bruchac writes: “Kenny is the creator of a new form of dramatic monologue in his creations of the voices and time of Isaac Jogues and Molly Brant.” For the past four years, between New York and Mexico, Kenny has extended his method of historic poetry in writing two new books, *Conversations with Frida Kahlo: Collage of Memory* and *Connotations*, a collection devoted to the life of his father. Kenny has taught in many places, including St. Lawrence University, Paul Smith’s College, the University of Victoria, Lehigh University, and the University of Oklahoma. In 1995 St. Lawrence University awarded him the degree of doctor of literature. He currently teaches at the State University of New York at Potsdam as “Writer in Residence.” His latest poetry collection is *Carving Hawk: New and Selected Poems*. His favorite flowers are Black-Eyed Susans and Blue Morning Glories.

KEITH LAWRENCE is an associate professor of English at Brigham Young University, where he teaches courses in contemporary ethnic American literature, world literature, and the literatures of early America. He is the lead editor of *Recovered Legacies: Authority and Identity in Early Asian American Literature* (2005) and is completing an anthology, *Asian Images: Asia and the Asian in European American Writings, 1850–1920*.

RICHARD PEARCE retired in 2001 from Wheaton College in Massachusetts, where he had taught and published in the field of modernist fiction for almost forty years. After a visit to George Flett’s studio on the Spokane Reservation, he began to study ledger art. In 2003 he curated a show of George Flett’s work at Wheaton College and developed a Web site designed to preserve not only images of Flett’s ledger drawings but also Flett’s own words, which are used as much as possible in the commentary (<http://www.wheatoncollege.edu/flett>). In 2004 he began writing about women and ledger art, developing his collaborative approach and focusing on Sharon Ahtone Harjo (Kiowa), Colleen Cuttschall (Oglala Lakota), Linda Haukaas (Sicangu Lakota), and Dolores Purdy Corcoran (Caddo).

BLANCA SCHORCHT is an associate professor in the English Program at the University of Northern British Columbia. She specializes in Native literatures and oral and written traditions. She is currently working on a research project that focuses on Okanagan elder and storyteller Harry Robinson’s oral performances. Her book, *Storied Voices in Native*

American Texts, was published in 2004 and has been described as being “in the top quartile of academic work related to First Nations/American Indian peoples in the past decade.”

CARRIE LOUISE SHEFFIELD is a lecturer in English at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She holds a PhD in English with a specialization in theory and cultural studies from Purdue University. Her scholarly interests include Native American literatures and contemporary 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.

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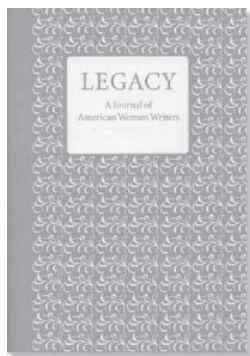
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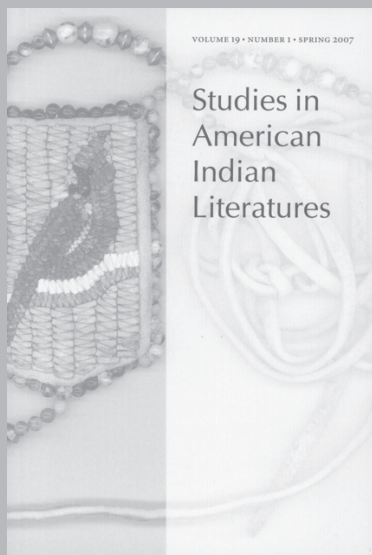


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