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FROM THE EDITORS

One of the challenges—and pleasures—of editing *SAIL* is deciding how each issue participates in the larger conversations of our field. Once manuscripts have been accepted for publication, we look at the queue and try to see how various submissions connect with one another. Balance, complementarity, and diversity (in subject, critical method, and text) are our guiding principles. Regarding essays, we encourage and, indeed, actively request scholarly articles on underrepresented texts and authors, as there are many Native voices—past and present—that are very much deserving of critical attention. Our field is only as vibrant and dynamic as its new growth allows. Yet we are also mindful of the creative and intellectual genealogies that came before us, and we are pleased to see exciting scholarship continue to develop on works and authors more familiar to a wider readership.

Similarly, we are firmly committed to this journal providing a venue for emerging scholars to address issues of importance to the field, to tribal communities, and to Native studies and the academy in general, whether in critical essays, book reviews, commentaries, or creative work. Yet we also believe that the journal should be a gathering ground where established scholars and artists continue to share their insights and where critical conversations between generations affirm the very best principles and practices of Native literary studies.

To these ends, this issue casts a wide net, and the resulting contributions by diverse voices engage the field in compelling ways. For

example, Susan Power's *The Grass Dancer* is a novel deserving of far more critical attention than it has received to date, and we are pleased to have Vanessa Holford Diana's insightful discussion of the complex (and, to some readers, disorienting) relationship of Dakota spirituality to the narrative and its challenges to many readers' assumptions about what constitutes the "real"—both in the novel and beyond its pages.

Thomas King's 1993 novel *Green Grass, Running Water* has become something of a critics' darling, for good reasons, but the heavy emphasis on that novel to the general exclusion of his earlier and later work has resulted in a diminished understanding of the complex range of King's oeuvre. Francis Zichy's close reading of the "negatives" in King's first novel, *Medicine River*, offers a nuanced corrective to this critical oversight.

Of all the Native writers featured in this issue, Linda Hogan is certainly the best represented in the criticism, but Catherine Kunce's provocative study of grief and the mourning feast in Hogan's *Solar Storms* (1995) asks new and compelling questions of both the text and its critical contexts, to the great benefit of both.

In addition to our book review section, we are very pleased to include in this issue a devastating short story by Beth Piatote, a Nez Perce/Niimiipuu writer and scholar who teaches at the University of California–Berkeley. If this tight, haunting piece is any indication, we have much to look forward to with Beth's future creative work.

In coming issues, we will be including more critical commentaries, responses to earlier commentaries, and, as always, essays and reviews from a range of emerging and established scholars. We would also like to include news and information relevant to the field and upcoming events, as well as *your* thoughts, critiques, challenges, praise, and questions for a Forum section, so please send along any and all feedback to sail@chass.utoronto.ca.

As a closing note, we would like to take the opportunity to extend our appreciation to a few members of our editorial staff who have decided to move on to other projects and opportunities, as well as to welcome our newest members. J. Anthony Tyee Clark, Joanne

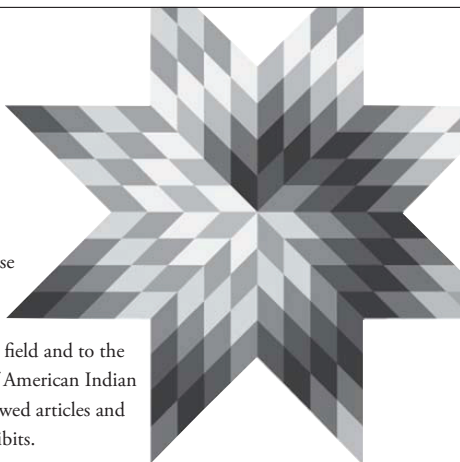
DiNova, and Arnold Krupat have served as Editorial Board members since we became general editors, and have been enormously helpful in offering both general guidance and specific assistance with submissions. We are grateful for their ongoing intellectual generosity and critical acumen, and we plan to continue to draw on both accounts in the future! Janet McAdams has been invaluable in her service as one of our Creative Works editors. She is stepping down to more fully devote her attention to her phenomenal *Earthworks* Native poets series from Salt Publishing, and we wish her every continued success with one of today's most important Native publishing projects.

As we bid a very fond farewell to these much-appreciated colleagues, we extend a hearty welcome to a similarly talented and diverse new group of scholars, including Chad Allen, Kenneth Roemer, Christopher Teuton, and Margaret Noori, who will be joining our continuing members Lisa Brooks, Robin Riley Fast, Susan Gardner, Patrice Hollrah, Molly McGlennen, Lisa Tatonetti, and Jace Weaver in sharing their guidance, energy, and assistance as members of the *SAIL* Editorial Board. Finally, we are also quite excited that the incomparable novelist, poet, essayist, scholar, and playwright LeAnne Howe has agreed to join long-time Creative Works editor and distinguished multigenre writer Joseph Bruchac as a member of our editorial staff. We will no doubt be seeing the fine results of their combined efforts in short order, to the great benefit of both the journal and the field.

James H. Cox and Daniel Heath Justice

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“I am not a fairy tale”

Contextualizing Sioux Spirituality and Story Traditions
in Susan Power’s *The Grass Dancer*

VANESSA HOLFORD DIANA

Yuwipi is one of our oldest, and also strangest, ceremonies. . . . It is an unexplainable experience. How can you explain the supernatural for which there is no rational explanation?

Mary Crow Dog, *Lakota Woman*

Standing Rock Sioux writer Susan Power’s best-selling novel *The Grass Dancer* (1994) includes depictions of the supernatural and spiritual that do not conform to the Judeo-Christian or, in some cases, the atheist or rationalist worldviews of many readers. Power writes of ghost characters and haunted places, communication between the living and the dead and between humans and animals, vision quests, Yuwipi ceremonies, purifying sweats, and an afterlife that is specifically Dakota. As Kelly Winters describes the novel,

In every chapter, ghosts, spirits, and mysterious events occur, so much a part of ordinary life that there is no obvious dividing line between them. To Power’s characters, this is reality: ghosts move among the living; a man who killed dogs is stalked and killed by the protective coyote spirit; an elder dances on the moon; a witch can make any man come to her; men can be forced to hang themselves; there is a medicine hole that leads to another reality; and a young man who fasts and prays for vision can find it and be led to a healing understanding of himself and his past.

As the novel's great popularity indicates, Power is enjoying a growing audience of readers, many of whom will not be familiar with Dakota history and tradition. When I taught the novel in a predominantly white undergraduate multicultural American literature class, some students were resistant to its spiritual elements, which they labeled as superstition—or, as one put it, “hocus pocus.” Those who tried to defend Power's representation of the supernatural explained these elements as magical realism, which they saw as purely a strategy of fiction rather than an expression of a worldview different from their own. And even those who expressed openness to the novel's representation of a Dakota spiritual worldview demonstrated a romanticized and generalized view of Native American cultures in general—highlighting the persistent problem of lack of education pertaining to tribal diversity and history in the United States. In his discussion of mediation and implied readers in contemporary Native American fiction, James Ruppert explains that in part “as a result of a different world view, . . . the contemporary Native American novel is oriented toward a restructuring of the readers' preconceptions and expectations. . . . Native writers . . . often see themselves as changing the way people think and understand” (ix). If my students can be considered a representative sample of Power's non-Native implied readers, then the ways in which many of them responded to the spiritual and supernatural elements of the story raise a series of questions about how Power goes about changing her readers' thinking and what additional information readers of *The Grass Dancer* might need to enhance that understanding.

Ruppert explains that

Native American writers write for two audiences—non-Native and Native American. . . . To illuminate and mediate, they utilize the different cultural codes simultaneously, for then surprise and meaning will be created by the implied reader, as he or she overcomes the momentary and illusory confusion of meeting the Other. (15)

But “overcom[ing] the momentary and illusory confusion of meeting the Other” can be challenging. A number of pedagogical de-

bates related to non-Native readers' subject position in relation to Native American texts address this challenge. Specifically, scholars and teachers discuss—and disagree over—the need for contextualization to enhance students' (and by extension all readers') understanding of Native American literature. Pertinent, too, are debates over our literary assumptions regarding genre categorization, especially that of magical realism. A focus on matters of contextualization relevant to *The Grass Dancer* contributes both to our enhanced reading of the novel in particular and to ongoing pedagogical and critical debates about the implied readers of contemporary Native American fiction in general.

Like the students in my comparative American literature course, general readers of Power's novel face interpretive challenges: one is the temptation to perceive Power as spokesperson for "her people"—which could mean not just Standing Rock Sioux people but Native Americans in general. In an essay on teaching the works of Louise Erdrich, Gwen Griffin and P. Jane Hafen argue that bringing in multiple "works of other writers from the same cultural background . . . reminds students that no one author should be elevat[ed] . . . to a position of possessing an ultimate and singular voice of [her tribe and] reinforce[s] the idea of multiple voices among tribal communities" (98). Susan Power would probably appreciate this effort, since she too is uncomfortable with the role of tribal spokeswoman. In an interview with Shari Oslos, Power says of her novel, "This is not what it's like to be Sioux, it's just a human experience. If you have five different reservation Indians, you're going to have five entirely different experiences." Does this mean that Power's novel should *not* be selected for a book club or taught in a general American literature course? No. But if readers can understand some of the specific and imaginative ways in which Power draws on Sioux culture, then they will recognize both that she is participating in Sioux storytelling traditions and that she is offering a unique artistic vision, making hers one of many "multiple voices among tribal communities" that Griffin and Hafen discuss.

But the degree to which readers need to understand cultural context is debatable. Ruppert explains that

[c]ontemporary Native American writers construct implied readers through the textual perspective presupposed and through the narrative competence required, but also, because they are moving from one world view to another, implied readers require certain epistemological competence at various points in the text. (7)

What does “epistemological competence” mean for readers of Power’s novel? I argue that such competence requires a familiarity with Dakota spiritual and story traditions, yet critics disagree over whether readers of contemporary Native American fiction should need such contextual grounding or whether “narrative competence” is sufficient for readers’ understanding of a text.

Despite the shift toward interdisciplinarity that fields including Native American studies have pioneered, many still advocate traditional Western literary criticism approaches that seek universal understanding and de-emphasize cultural context. For instance, Louis Caton argues that we must seek a more comprehensive theory, such as one based in romanticism, that incorporates as much diversity of interpretation as possible to avoid the risks of “intellectual separatism” (100). Other scholars similarly call for critical approaches that will accommodate Western frameworks such as archetypal (see Sevillano). In addition, pleasure readers and students alike tend to dismiss stories when they feel as if they cannot relate, while a reader-response model allows readers who come to the text as cultural outsiders to make meaning on their own by exploring “personal connections between the text and [their] own experiences” (Goebel 7). This raises the question of the degree to which a Native author accommodates the unfamiliar reader. Duane Niatum claims,

One possible difference between an Anglo artist and a Native American is that the latter may introduce into the work ancestral myths and legends, stories, and jokes. But those people from other cultures should have no problem identifying with the art experience, if the artist has accomplished the job. (555–56)

Niatum's definition suggests that the writer should create a text that allows an outsider reader in without requiring that reader to do any additional background learning. Similarly arguing that reading Native American literature should not require contextualization, high-school teacher Gary McLaughlin advocates instead a reader-response approach. To emphasize cultural context, he argues, would require teachers to "place some considerable obstacles between students and the texts they read" (73). Seeming to agree with Niatum, McLaughlin writes,

In my more frustrated musings I wanted to argue that there were no labels on the novels of Silko and Momaday in bookstores and libraries warning potential readers that they might commit an act of interpretive violence if they did not have the "right" background information. Why couldn't we look at our classrooms as communities of readers? Why couldn't we trust these readers to be aware of the limitations of understanding any text from a different culture? (73)

Susan Power herself seems to support this idea that reading her novel does not require historical and cultural background. In her interview with Oslos, she says, "what a reader makes of my work is beyond my control. I worry too much that people read my work sometimes as History, Sociology, Ethnography, when it's really fiction, and that's all it's meant to be."

However, as many have argued, a reading approach that neglects culturally specific perspectives in favor of a purely reader-response model "presents some problems for the study of Native American literature" (Goebel 7), in particular a problem of limited understanding. One review of *The Grass Dancer* comments on such limitations:

Power brings the reader in touch with a world that may have previously been foreign to them. Power makes it very easy for "outsiders" to understand the lifestyles of the Native American. However, it may be difficult for those without much previous knowledge of Native American culture to see

how important the connection to dreams, magic and family really are to the native people. (Oslos, "Susan Power")

In a commentary on Louis Owens's work, Dorothea Susag claims that Owens "suggest[s] that Indian writers today are pulling both Indian and non-Indian readers into community, demanding that they know something about the mythology and literary history of Native Americans" (41). And Joseph Bruchac further explains that readers need to understand a work within its specific tribal cultural context: "You might make a good case that contemporary Native American writing in English is one continuous literary body, but when you look at the influence of the old traditions and then look at those traditions themselves, you recognize that you're seeing just the tip of the iceberg" (5). Paula Gunn Allen agrees: "The significance of a literature can be best understood in terms of the culture from which it springs, and the literature is clear only when the reader understands and *accepts the assumptions* on which the literature is based" (3; emphasis added). But this is one source of potential resistance to, or at least misunderstanding of, *The Grass Dancer*: an unwillingness on the part of the reader to accept the assumptions on which Power bases her novel. In short, Power's novel demands of readers that they think critically about what they define as the *real*.

The thorny question of realism is an additional subject of debate among scholars of Native American literature: how do we classify Native fiction that challenges Western concepts of the real? When my frustrated atheist student labeled Power's novel "hocus pocus," another student defended her own enjoyment of the novel by claiming that she was "suspending disbelief" as she encountered what she considered the supernatural plot elements. In other words, the first student's dismissal of the spiritual, supernatural, and magical in the story led the second student to differentiate her own beliefs from the supposedly unrealistic worldview on which the novel is based because *of course* such things are not believable, she suggested. Does this student's reading represent a failure on Power's part to achieve what Ruppert describes as the goal of meditation in contemporary Native American fiction, namely to change

a reader's understanding? When we read fiction, we often take a position of suspending disbelief, especially when we encounter the fantastic. And my students had been reading multiple novels in which spiritual or supernatural plot elements conflicted with their definitions of the real, so we had been talking a lot about the genre of magical realism. In a comparative course like mine, magical realism could be considered a useful genre category for considering how *The Grass Dancer*—like other novels such as *Beloved* by Toni Morrison or *Comfort Woman* by Nora Okja Keller—situates itself in relation to Judeo-Christian or Western rationalist worldviews. As Roland Walter argues, "The literary transgression of boundaries separating natural from supernatural categories of reality, truth from imagination . . . undermine dominant Western discourses and rational paradigms" (66). So, by this definition we can consider Power's representation of spirit characters, visions, and magic to be a form of resistance writing through which she challenges Western hegemony, and the novel certainly does perform this function, as in Power's scathing critique of manifest destiny ideology or her humorous characterizations of the various Catholic priests who fail to convert the Dakota people.

But this literary labeling presents a problem. Power has said firmly that the novel is *not* magical realism but rather a realistic representation of her people's spiritual beliefs. In her interview with Oslos, Power comments,

I actually do disagree with [people who] talk about how my work is an example of magical realism and mak[e] references to writers such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez. I really feel that given the culture I was raised in, this is not magical realism, this is actual reality to me. It might not be another culture's reality but it is *not* a literary strategy for me. I'm really writing characters' reality. It never offends me when critics characterize it that way because I understand where that's coming from. It's their cultural interpretation. But I think it's a mislabeling, so whenever I get the chance to talk about it I always mention that. (emphasis added)

Critic Lee Schwenger makes a convincing case for why we should not apply the label of magical realism to Power's (or other Native American writers') work:

From a strictly Western perspective the label magical realism tends to devalue what it calls magic. . . . As popularly defined, magic realism does offer a means of approaching Power's novel, but the concept depends on a dichotomy between the "magical" and the "real," the very dichotomy that I believe Power's novel challenges. Applying the combination of the words *magic* and *realism* to the novel is thus problematic, because, despite the dissolving of different categories, the underlying semantic principle remains: real versus magical, real versus unreal. (50)

Schwenger adds that "one should be careful not to co-opt Power's novel (or Native American literature in general) into a non-Native North American mode of fiction . . . [that] runs the risk of ultimately devaluing the unique nature of a particular mode of fiction" (51). As White Face (Lakota) puts it, "We do not separate our spirituality from reality; they are the same" (qtd. in Farley 68). Given Power's definition of her own story as reality, my student who approached the novel by "suspending disbelief" since "it's just magical realism" was failing to meet the novel on its own terms: she was not accepting the writer's premise that in a Dakota belief system the magical is real, nor was she thinking critically about her own beliefs as culturally constructed. Reginald Dyck explains a truth for all readers: that as they "confront the challenges of interpreting texts from other cultures, they may come to recognize that our own beliefs and assumptions, our ideologies, are also grounded in socially constructed systems of meaning" (49).

Susan Power has said that "a large part of her impulse to write came from the fact that, by writing, she could 'sort through the conflicting values and belief systems [she] was taught by being raised with one foot in the Indian world and the other in mainstream society'" (Winters). Power represents those conflicting values and belief systems in *The Grass Dancer* in wonderfully complex

ways that, while often challenging readers' assumptions, offer what Catherine Rainwater has called a "potentially instructive crisis in the reader" (13).

Such moments of "instructive crisis" suggest that—as Connie Jacobs, Gwen Griffin, Jane Hafen, Bruce Goebel, Joseph Bruchac, and others have argued—readers benefit from contextual information in order to read Native American literature more complexly than they otherwise might. In the case of *The Grass Dancer*, contextual readings representing various Sioux spiritual and story traditions illuminate some of the plot elements or references in the novel that might at first puzzle some readers. These materials include autobiographies by Zitkala Ša, Mary Crow Dog, and Luther Standing Bear; traditional Sioux story collections by Ella C. Deloria and Zitkala Ša, as well as a study of the meadowlark stories by Julian Rice; a study on Yuwipi traditions by William Powers; and a documentary entitled *Wiping the Tears of Seven Generations*, which charts the sacred 1990 Bigfoot Memorial Ride commemorating the one-hundred-year anniversary of the Wounded Knee massacre. Readers who are familiar with these contextual materials will enrich their understanding of Power's complex novel and appreciation for Power's singular craft.

One of the aspects of *The Grass Dancer* that readers may struggle to understand and accept is Herod Small War's role as a Yuwipi man. At one early moment in the novel, Frank Pipe recalls when Herod led a Yuwipi ceremony to find who was killing reservation dogs; the ceremony works, and a coyote spirit bursts through the window to attack the dog killer. Elsewhere Herod practices successful medicine: he fashions a snakeskin belt to protect Calvin Wind Soldier from Anna Thunder's harmful magic, and he has a proven track record in interpreting dreams. When Archie Iron Necklace comes to his friend Herod for help interpreting a dream, the men carry out a Yuwipi ceremony. Herod narrates the scene:

We took the question of Archie's dream directly to the spirits. We fasted, conducted a sweat, and gathered together the holiest, most traditional elders we knew. . . . [Archie's] hands shook as he performed the duties. He tied my hands and feet

with rope, covered my head with a star quilt and bound it to my body using leather thongs. I could smell the sage he tucked beneath the bindings, even through cotton batting and heavy fabric. He lowered me to the floor so I rested on my stomach, and then he blew out the kerosene lamp. In darkness, spirits came to tell their secrets, quiet at first, testing their voices, but becoming noisier. I'd placed gourds on an altar of sage, and spirit fingers snatched them from the ground, shook them until the air snapped, the shrouded windows rattled. In darkness they picked rope knots with sharp fingernails, releasing me, the rope in loose coils, the star quilt neatly folded. (84–85)

Readers who perhaps come to the reading with stereotypical ideas about medicine men may find this scene confusing and hard to believe. They would therefore benefit from learning about Yuwipi ceremonies in Sioux tradition, and they would perhaps be surprised to hear from those writing in “factual” genres descriptions of Yuwipi ceremonies very much like that which Herod experiences.

More surprising is the fact that skeptics witnessing the ceremonies have seen indisputable evidence of spirit visitations. Both Mary Crow Dog in her 1991 autobiography *Lakota Woman* and William Powers in his 1982 ethnographic study *Yuwipi: Vision and Experience in Oglala Ritual* describe the attempted discrediting of famous Yuwipi man Horn Chips in the 1940s, with white agents witnessing the supernatural. In a matter-of-fact tone similar to that with which Herod describes the “star quilt neatly folded” beside him, Mary Crow Dog describes a Yuwipi ceremony in which she participated:

Almost at once the spirits entered. First I heard tiny voices whispering, speaking fast in a ghostly language. Then the gourds began to fly through the air, rattling, bumping into walls, touching our bodies. Little sparks of light danced through the room, wandered over the ceiling, circled my head. I felt the wing beats of a big bird flitting here and there through the darkness with a whoosh, the feathers lightly

brushing my face. At one time the whole house shook as if torn by an earthquake. One woman told me later that in one of the flashes of light she had seen the sacred pipe dancing. I was scared until I remembered that the spirits were friends. (210–11)

Perhaps anticipating her readers' potential skepticism, Crow Dog goes on to prove the truth of Yuwipi ceremonial spirit visitation:

The white missionaries have always tried to suppress this ceremony, saying it was Indian hocus-pocus. . . . They tried to "expose" our medicine men, but the attempt backfired. During the 1940s the superintendent at Pine Ridge had Horn Chips, our foremost yuwipi man, perform the ceremony in full daylight in the presence of a number of skeptical white observers. He had Horn Chips tied and wrapped by his own BIA police. To the disappointment of the watching missionaries, the mystery sparks appeared out of nowhere and the gourds flew around the superintendent's head. The result was that many Christian Indians went back to the old Lakota religion. (211)

Like Power's novel, Crow Dog's autobiography similarly challenges Christian readers' perceptions of superstition versus true faith.

In his study on Yuwipi traditions, William Powers quotes historian Stephen E. Feraca, who also discusses Horn Chips and the attempt to discredit him:

Certain elements among the Teton have often tried to expose the yuwipi men as frauds, usually without success. Horn Chips, now dead, can be considered one of those yuwipi men who has greatly added to the cult's popularity. For one thing his spirits spoke in many voices, and all his prophecies are said to have been fulfilled. Some years ago, by order of the Agency Superintendent, who was in charge of Pine Ridge Reservation, Horn Chip's [*sic*] meeting was held in a lighted room. Indian police were present and the police chief himself carefully tied and wrapped the yuwipi man. Lights flashed

on the ceiling. Horn Chips was untied when the flashing ceased. It is understandable that many Teton refer to him as the “real yuwipi man.” (Powers 12)

Though fictional, *The Grass Dancer* presents the Yuwipi ceremony and Herod’s role as spiritual leader accurately based on William Powers’ and Mary Crow Dog’s descriptions. Similarly, Susan Power accurately depicts the ritual use of sweats in numerous scenes. William Powers describes in *Yuwipi* the purifying function of sweats, and participants in the Bigfoot Memorial ride describe their preparation for the sacred journey, which includes a series of prayers and sweat ceremonies.

While readers of *The Grass Dancer* are asked to accept the truth of Herod’s powers as a Yuwipi man, Power also uses humor to challenge stereotypes that readers might bring to their reading of Herod as a spiritual leader. Herod explains:

I was a pretty famous Yuwipi man, the one who finds things: misplaced objects, missing persons, the answers to questions. There were times when my reputation came in handy. I could clear my face of any expression, retreat into my thoughts, and the people around me would wait quietly, respectfully, convinced I was experiencing a vision. Sometimes their assumptions were correct, but nine times out of ten I was just spacing out. (77)

Power’s juxtaposition of the serious—sometimes Herod does experience guiding visions—and the humorous—other times he is “just spacing out”—results in a matter-of-fact tone through which the spiritual is quotidian.

Such blending of the extraordinary and the ordinary can also be seen in Power’s repeated depiction of spirits haunting the places they once inhabited, where they either appear to or speak to the living. Hauntings are the subject of community stories in *The Grass Dancer*; for example, many characters describe the ghost of the white woman Clara Miller appearing to them at the site of her now-ruined home. Clara’s ghost

defied all stereotypes. She wasn't heard to wail or moan, she wasn't graceful and elegant, she didn't wring her hands or skim along the floorboards. She was built like a wrestler, and so heavy, even as a spirit, that the floor creaked when she stamped through the house. She was always spotted doing chores: churning butter, darning socks, beating rugs, sweeping floors. . . . She had been photographed a number of times by tourists, her cloudy shape caught on film, and although her face was obscured by an opaque mist, one could clearly make out her strict bun and a scolding finger wagged at all the useless people wasting her time. (43)

That Harley witnesses Clara's ghost when he brings Pumpkin to the abandoned house could be read as the power of suggestion played out in imagination. After all, earlier, when a younger Harley hears from Herod Small War the story of the arrival of Christianity to his people, he immediately witnesses a vision of the steamboat that carried a piano and with it "usher[ed] in a new religion" (71). Yet *Power* includes the photographic evidence of Clara's ghost, documented by tourists who are presumably outsiders to Harley's community. It seems here that *Power* challenges readers to resist a mainstream U.S. cultural assumption that truths based on story traditions are less credible than those scientifically proven: an "old wives' tale," rather than a superstition to be dismissed, is instead in a Sioux context a source of valuable knowledge. If storytelling is a central form of cultural transmission and intergenerational education, then Harley's visions represent his dawning awareness of truths around him.

Readers will gain a new perspective on *Power's* depiction of spirit visitations when they learn that other Sioux writers of non-fiction not only relay ghost stories told by elders but also depict spirits making themselves audible to the living, haunting a place they once inhabited. In her depiction of the 1973 Wounded Knee occupation, Mary Crow Dog describes hearing repeatedly emanating from the mass grave spirit voices of those who died in the massacre nearly a century earlier, especially women and children.

As she goes into labor, about to give birth during the occupation, she hears spirit voices that connect her experience of motherhood to the suffering of mothers before her: "I heard that ghostly cry and lamenting of a woman and child coming out of the massacre ravine. Others had heard it too. I felt that the spirits were all around me. I was later told that some of the marshals inside their sandbagged positions had also heard it, and some could not stand it and had themselves transferred" (161). Like the above story about Horn Chips or the photographic evidence of tourists visiting Clara Miller's house, this moment includes white witnesses to spirit presence, suggesting that Crow Dog wants to assert the reality of those spirit voices to her skeptical readers.

A more direct version of spirit communication found in *The Grass Dancer* comes in the form of dreams or visions in which the spirits act as guides and offer prophecies. Characters including Red Dress, Harley, Charlene, and Herod all receive guiding visions from various spirit ancestors. Red Dress is an especially important spirit protector in the novel; critics have described her as "a revelatory spirit speaking from the edge of the world" (Wright 39) and "a powerful spirit of resistance" (Brogan 119). But before she becomes a spirit guide, the young Red Dress transforms into a woman warrior, a spiritual transformation spurred by her discovery of twin sacred stones. Red Dress receives a dream vision instructing her to go to Fort Laramie. As she prepares to depart, she discovers the stones that will guide her:

The day before my journey was to begin, I climbed the top of Angry Butte to pray. . . . My foot slipped on a round stone, and I fell on my back with such force that the wind left my body. I looked for the stone, with angry intentions. I found it touching a second one, its duplicate, and scooped them into my hand. They were perfectly round and unblemished. I lifted one to my cheek; it was impossibly smooth. "They are twin sisters," my mother told me when I showed them to her. "You were meant to find them." I painted them red, the color of life, and wrapped them in soft buckskin. (248)

These sacred stones will later lead Red Dress to her warrior work of killing soldiers at Fort Laramie. The stones disappear when they have marked a target, appearing in each soldier's hand before his death and returning to Red Dress once he is gone. William Powers's discussion of sacred stones helps us understand the ritual role of protective stones in Sioux tradition:

Any adept who wishes to obtain a [stone] spirit may request the appropriate ritual and may go out and search for his own stone, which he later brings to the Yuwipi man. He may also have a buckskin pouch made for the occasion, and during the naming ritual the spirits will place the stone in the pouch in the darkness; it will be returned to the owner at the conclusion of the ritual. . . . If the person brings his own stone, it must be perfectly spherical. (28)

By this description we can assume that Red Dress's killing of each man is a sacred ritual of survival, for after each death Red Dress tells her victim, "You are another one we won't have to fight" (270). Also significant, Red Dress paints her stones red. Powers explains,

there is one other kind of sacred stone that Oglalas recognize as the most powerful of all. Called *iyansa* "red stone" in Lakota and *catlininte* in English, . . . [t]he stone is highly valued by many plains tribes, and according to the Oglala sacred persons it is red because it is made partly from the blood of an older people, antecedents of the Lakota, who died in a great primordial flood. (30)

The "color of life" as Red Dress describes it is also the color of death, appropriate given that her death work is about saving the lives of her people.

Power's portrayal of ancestral spirit guides in her contemporary story conforms to descriptions of the practice of seeking guidance through dreams and spirit visitations, which William Powers recounts in his study. *The Grass Dancer* also recalls Zitkala Ša's writing nearly a century before. In "A Dream of her Grandfather" from *American Indian Stories*, Zitkala Ša portrays a granddaughter

who receives in a dream a spiritual vision from her dead grandfather, who was both a medicine man and an advocate for Dakota rights, visiting Washington, DC, as part of a Sioux delegation. Her grandfather sends her a dream depicting a Sioux camp bustling and healthy. As a result, she is filled with a renewed commitment to carry on his work of political activism to bring about cultural resurgence, a character development that Susan Power echoes in the young Harley Wind Soldier at the end of *The Grass Dancer*. Harley's coming-of-age story culminates with a vision of his dead father, brother, and grandfather, as well as Red Dress, each offering him words of reassurance and guidance. That Harley's spirit visitation was real is indisputable in the novel; as Paula Gunn Allen points out, in the Native notion of reality "dream and vision are synonymous" (*Sacred* 91). Harley, a young man who was lost in despair a short time ago, emerges from his *hanbdeč'eya* vision quest standing tall and embraced by his family and friends; he emerges ready to be a leader, and we suspect that his role in the community will be that of storyteller who passes on cultural continuance to the next generation.

That members of the youngest generation are portrayed as central to cultural and spiritual resurgence is another recurring theme among many Sioux authors. In John G. Neihardt's *Black Elk Speaks*, a prophecy predicts that the seventh generation would experience a spiritual and cultural resurgence, and participants in Big Foot Memorial Ride (1990) commemorating the Wounded Knee massacre believe that resurgence has begun. They describe spirit guides making themselves visible during the ride, showing the way: "they made us realize how holy this ride was" (Moreno and Rhine). Participants in the sacred ride described their prayers, which included those for the children and orphans so that they may have a future and those for the elderly, the culture carriers who passed on language and knowledge even when it was outlawed. One participant affirmed, "Our children are going to be Lakota, speak their language, know their rituals and ceremonies" (Moreno and Rhine). To read *The Grass Dancer* simply as Harley's coming-of-age story in the *bildungsroman* tradition without considering the cultural

and historical significance of Harley's triumphant transformation would be to miss that his growth is part of a prophecy of healing relevant to all Sioux peoples.

While readers might expect to encounter spiritual beliefs different from their own in *The Grass Dancer*, their response to Power's depiction of animals is another possibly unexpected source of "instructive crisis." Power's animal characters have struck my students alternatively as funny, charming, and strange. A dog intentionally urinating on his human enemy's hand-tooled leather purse is funny, but what do we make of the apparently human characteristics of Power's animals? The ongoing battle between Charlene and Chuck Norris the Pomeranian pooch; the angry bull's attack on Archie Iron Necklace's beautiful new Harley Davidson; and the wisdom, loyalty, and self-sacrifice of Red Dress's beloved Spotted Dog all demonstrate the care and detail with which Power characterizes animals in the novel. Anna Lee Walters and Debbie Reese warn that a Western perspective might read such portrayals of animals in a dismissive way:

All nonhuman life was a source of knowledge for indigenous peoples. Their ideas about the natural world are complicated and serious, not the silly caricatures in many books where animals mimic human beings and are depicted without divine dignity or grace. This is what happens when indigenous literatures are interpreted in another cultural framework. (146)

Despite her use of humor, Power does attribute divine dignity and grace to the animals she characterizes, from the snakes who love Red Dress and imbue her with power to the dog who sacrifices himself for her. Julian Rice reminds us that the "Lakota believe that the *wamakaškan* (animals) are our older relatives and should therefore be addressed as *Tunkašila* (Grandfather)" (441–42). William Powers explains that snakes are sacred in Sioux cosmology for their "two-worldliness" (28), and part of what makes Yuwipi men holy is that they can "understand the languages of birds and animals" (36).

One particular use of traditional Sioux animal stories that enriches readers' understanding of *The Grass Dancer* has to do with the meadowlark. In a seemingly minor detail, Crystal Thunder meets her Swedish mother-in-law, Isabel Lundstrom, for the first time and observes, "Despite the heat, she was wearing a heavy woolen overcoat, which I helped her remove. Beneath it she wore a brown cardigan and a yellow scarf tied at her throat. When she cocked her head to the side I nearly giggled: she was the picture of a stout meadowlark" (147). Read alone, this moment seems merely to describe physically the woman who will become a mother to Crystal over the subsequent years. But Power's attention to animal characters throughout the novel, as well as a familiarity with traditional Sioux stories about the meadowlark, suggests that we should think more carefully about the significance of Isabel Lundstrom's character. Ella Deloria comments in the introduction to her 1932 collection *Dakota Texts* that the animal and spirit stories are "from a very, very remote past . . . part of the common literary stock of the people. Constant allusion is made to them; similes are drawn from them which every intelligent adult is sure to understand" (ix-x). I suspected that Susan Power was engaging in just such allusion when she had Crystal describe Isabel Lundstrom as a meadowlark, and when I met Power at the 2008 Native American Literature Symposium, she confirmed that she had had the traditional meadowlark stories in mind when she drew this character description. So what characteristics of the meadowlark might we consider in light of Isabel's relationship to Crystal? First, Julian Rice notes that in Ella Deloria's ethnographic recordings of Sioux tales, the meadowlark is believed to be able to speak Sioux. In his 1928 autobiography *My People, The Sioux*, Luther Standing Bear describes his childhood conflicts with the meadowlarks. His description is noteworthy because he suggests that the ability to understand the meadowlarks depends on one's immersion in Sioux culture, a point he communicates ironically, linking the process of becoming "civilized" with a loss of Sioux identity:

The singing of the meadowlarks would presently draw our attention away from the bow game, and we would start off to

hunt these birds. The larks in our State, at that time, talked the Sioux language—at least, we inferred that they did; but in California, where I now live, it is impossible to understand them. Perhaps they are getting too civilized. In our country, we little fellows thought these birds were our enemies, because they would say things to us that we did not care to hear. They would call out a boy's name, and say that "his mamma wanted him," or some other objectionable expression in bird talk. So we did not like to have these birds come near us. Those early songsters were wise birds, and sometimes we would hunt all day and get nothing. (39)

Standing Bear's description suggests that becoming "too civilized" results in a loss of cultural knowledge, including an ability for communication between animals and humans. Rice explains, "In the Lakota perception . . . the meadowlarks spoke so often and so helpfully that they were recognized as 'the birds that spoke Lakota' and even as 'The Sioux Bird'" (425; qtg. Vestal). In addition, "as a reporter of seemingly trivial matters around the village, the meadowlark articulates experience for the people so that they may continue to live as Lakota" (Rice 425). For Crystal Lundstrom, the move away from her mother Anna Thunder and the reservation might also suggest a move away from Dakota cultural ties. That Isabel Lundstrom goes on to school Crystal in Swedish cooking traditions might also suggest that Crystal is losing connection to her Dakota roots. Yet her relationship with Isabel comes to enrich her life, and when Crystal describes the "two objects I prized above all others" (153), they are the heirlooms given to her by each of her mothers: the turtle amulet Anna beaded to hold Charlene's umbilical cord and the egg delicately painted by Isabel's grandmother and passed on to Crystal. The egg once again associates Isabel with bird imagery, but it also emphasizes that Crystal values both maternal legacies. Like the beaded tapestry of the Last Supper that Crystal and Martin create together, the positioning of Isabel in the traditional Sioux meadowlark story suggests a positive cultural mediation for Crystal.

If Crystal sees Isabel as a meadowlark, she is fitting her Swedish American mother-in-law into a Sioux trope of positive mothering. Standing Bear's depiction of the meadowlarks' taunting emphasizes the birds' particularly motherlike role, which suggests that he, too, alludes to traditional meadowlark stories, such as "Meadowlark and the Rattlesnake," in which a mother meadowlark successfully uses trickster strategy to protect her children from a snake (Deloria 30–31). As Ella Deloria and Julian Rice demonstrate, the traditional Sioux meadowlark stories emphasize the parental role of meadowlarks, who

were also noted for courageously defending their young and ingeniously ensuring their perpetuation, so that the Lakota people felt a special identification with their survival abilities. . . . As the guardian of Falling Star, the meadowlark portrays the ideal parent; as the defender of the nest, the meadowlark manifests the warrior spirit. (Rice 425)

Because Anna Thunder's tragic character fails as a mother to both Crystal and Charlene, Isabel plays an important role to both women. Therefore, it is fitting that Isabel's first words to her granddaughter Charlene, unknown to her for seventeen years, are "I've got lots of raising to do" (308).

Yet another way Susan Power challenges readers to rethink the cultural assumptions they bring to the novel is by defamiliarizing Western metaphysical viewpoints, complicating any easy binary notions of the real and the magical. From Reverend Pyke's performance as the prophetic witches of *Macbeth* to Charlene's nightmare of the Salem witch trials, Power reminds us that the Western tradition shares its own stories of witches. Christian readers are reminded too that their sacred tradition is based on storytelling: Red Dress confuses Shakespeare and scripture, and her father—"a logician whose counsel was solicited by other leaders"—asks after hearing the stories of "Cain slaying Abel, Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac, Joseph delivered into slavery by his jealous brothers," why Christians are "so determined to kill their relatives?" (245). Power uses humor to remind us that the taken-for-

granted stories of the Christian tradition are unfamiliar to outsiders. As poet, fiction writer, and painter Eric Gansworth suggested in a conversation about this essay, Power's delightful short story "Angry Fish"—which charts a friendship between Sioux pawnshop worker Mitchell and a come-to-life statue of St. Jude—works well as a companion piece to *The Grass Dancer*, for its irreverent playfulness toward both Christian and Dakota spiritual traditions (*Roofwalker* 54–71). But despite Susan Power's deft use of humor to shatter stereotypes and mediate between worldviews, she is also deadly serious as she reminds us of the consequences born out of the Christian tradition as it has affected Indigenous North Americans. Pyke's character embodies the murderous destruction of manifest destiny, as is evident in his killing of snakes and later Red Dress. Red Dress summarizes Pyke's ideology of man's domination over nature:

Pyke said there was nothing natural about the natural world; it was an evil disorder requiring the cleansing hand of God. When he came across a spider's sac of eggs nestled in the folds of his heavy jacket, he squashed it with his fingers and licked them clean. "I've swallowed the spit of Satan," he announced. (255)

Iktomi, the spider trickster of Sioux tradition, would have a different interpretation of Pyke's story. By contextualizing Power's novel in relationship to these other stories and studies of Dakota culture, readers can appreciate Bruchac's concept of "continuance," which he considers central to approaching Native American writing. Bruchac demonstrates continuance to his students "by constantly linking contemporary Native writers to their roots, to their people and their places, their traditions" (6). Susan Power envisions her own stories of spirit and magic within a tradition of continuance. As she writes in "The Table Loves Pain,"

I am braided with my ancestors, they are alive with me, and together we have survived genocide and assimilation. Old voices sing new songs in me, and I write what I see, what I

hear, what I believe, what I imagine. And the words have power. And the stories have a big heart. Funny or sad, they have the same ending: anything is possible. (117)

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“There isn’t a Mr. Heavyman”

Will’s Negatives in *Medicine River*

FRANCIS ZICHY

The narrator-protagonist of Thomas King’s *Medicine River* is, of course, a photographer, and a photographer works with negatives (“I’ll shoot a negative” [197]), developing them into pictures or “positives” (“the pictures turned out good” [215]). Although a number of readers have commented on Will’s role as photographer in *Medicine River*, it has not been remarked upon that Will is also very strongly given to think and express himself in negative statements, especially in his conversations with his friend and mentor Harlen, who unlike Will is always positive and “ever the optimist” (138).¹ Will’s work with photographic negatives can be seen as a controlling metaphor in *Medicine River*, a figure for his dealing with the world by means of the large number of negative statements he makes, both as asides to himself and in dialogue with others. His proclivity to think and speak in negatives raises a number of important questions about Will’s relations with the Blackfoot community—questions that can be phrased as wordplay on his resonant first name and on his profession as photographer. To what extent is he “will”-ing and able to move from behind the camera to join the community? Are his many verbal “negatives” merely negations, or can and “will” he use them as a photographer uses filmic negatives, as a stage in the process of developing a positive, if not perfect (as even a photographic “positive” still reverses what it represents), relation to the people among whom finds himself after accepting Harlen’s invitation to return to Medicine River?

In my reading of *Medicine River*, Will makes a real movement toward a closer, fuller interaction with the Blackfoot people among whom he lives, symbolized by his “smiling” (216), if initially reluctant, presence in the photograph that he makes of the Bluehorn family, a notable exception to the rule that the photographer is usually behind the camera.² But he makes this rapprochement precisely by constantly testing his interactions with his many negative utterances. It is only on the basis of negatives that the photographer can make pictures, even the one in which Will is himself present and smiling, and Will’s many negative statements and responses are just as necessary to him as a person as photographic negatives are in his chosen profession. It seems that only by constantly repeated acts of careful limitation and definition can he remain true to himself while creating a workable, positive interaction with the community in which he lives.

This moving toward engagement by means of negative statements and gestures might not seem so surprising if we consider Will’s dual heritage. When Ray Little Buffalo says that Will “ain’t no Clyde Whiteman” (78), this double negative manages to insinuate, grammatically at least, that Will is a “Whiteman.”³ He is in fact half White, and it is his White father’s face that is obscured in the photograph Will remembers when Harlen gives him his father’s letters: “His hand lay on her shoulder lightly, the fingers in sunlight, his eyes in shadows” (10). In another photograph, given to Will by his mother on his twenty-seventh birthday, his father “had on . . . a hat that was pulled down over much of his face” (86). Will’s father is doubly a negative for Will in *Medicine River*, since he is not only not Blackfoot, and therefore responsible for making Will himself less than fully Blackfoot, but he is also not present in Will’s life as a positive “Whiteman.” As a result of this personal history, the biggest questions that lurk for Will, and indeed for the reader of King’s novel, are the ones raised early on by Harlen’s humorous but entirely pertinent remarks on the actor Will Sampson: what is a “real Indian” (10) and, especially, does Will qualify? With a playful irony that shows he is not the naive innocent he might sometimes appear to be, Harlen remarks that Will Sampson, playing a sheriff

in a movie, constantly says "Hey-uh" and yet "He's a real Indian, too" (10). Is Will Sampson a "real Indian" in spite of or because he is playing what is usually a White man's role? And because of, or in spite of, his use of that stereotypical "Indian" speech mannerism from the old movies about "cowboys and Indians"? Harlen's pointed ironies have the effect of opening up a space in which stereotypes can be reexamined and the notion of a "real Indian" can, perhaps, be redefined. Such a redefinition, Harlen knows, might be a great help to Will in his private struggle to see himself as a "real Indian" and to be convinced that others accept him as such.

The question whether Will qualifies as "real Indian" was raised earlier in his life, and it was answered in the negative by the Blackfoot community itself, when his family was not allowed back onto "the reserve" after the death of his father because his mother had lost her Indian status when she married a White man (8). As a young cousin puts it, in the brutally honest way of children, "You guys have to live in town cause you're not Indian any more" (9).⁴ Because he has invited Will "home" (8), Harlen must think that in the contemporary context, in a place like Medicine River, the term "real Indian" includes someone like Will.⁵ Yet when he first returns, Will himself may not be convinced of this, because of his having had a White father and, compounding the problem, because even as a White man that father is an absence or negative in his own personal life. In order to belong in Medicine River as a "real Indian," Will must, paradoxically and even negatively, against the grain of his identity as "real Indian," first become fully real to himself as at least partly a "Whiteman" (78). He can do this only if he fills in the face in those photographs his mother gave him, or if he admits that he never can fill it in and contents himself with an imperfect "positive" in this crucial case.

Will's situation in Medicine River, then, is more complicated and difficult, if also potentially more authentic and rewarding, than it was in Toronto. There, again somewhat paradoxically, he could ignore his White self and pass as an attractively exotic "Indian" (Susan: "you're Indian, aren't you?" [108]), especially among White women who are romantically interested in him and then jilt

him (it is more than a little ironic, and might be somewhat bitter, for a person who was not allowed back on the Blackfoot reserve as a child, that a Toronto White woman unerringly identifies him as a “real Indian”). In *Medicine River*, Will can never forget his White father and his White self (which does not necessarily mean he has come to terms with them), and this might help account for his proclivity for negatives and the frequent caginess of his tone and dealings with others. Nevertheless, it is suggested in a characteristically subtle way, near the end of King’s novel, that Will does arrive at an imperfect “positive,” even in his feelings about his father, and that this coming to terms with his White father both enables and limits his engagement as a “real Indian” in *Medicine River*. While growing up, Will always suspected that his mother used the name “Howard Webster” as a cryptic code for his father, and he had “always meant to talk to my mother about Howard Webster, and the time I rode home from the rodeo on his lap” (133). Later, Will can add an adult’s conscious realization to a child’s hunch. Having understood his mother’s game, he can both claim his father in a real but limited sense, as the man in whose lap he rode while driving the car (“I knew the someone in the stories was my father” [124]), and let him go: “Harlen, I don’t even remember what my father looked like” (7). This is a typically careful, accurate negative statement, given the obscurity of his father’s face in both the photographs that Will has seen. In a wry twist, revealing both his mother’s evasion and her discomfort about it, there is a real White man called Howard Webster, and when invited by Harlen to meet him on Christmas Eve (“He married Annie Whiteman [note the name]. Real goofy guy” [258]), Will chooses to stay alone in his apartment and says nothing to Harlen about the significance of “Howard Webster” in his life. This late act of reserving some part of himself even from his friend Harlen (“Harlen Bigbear was my friend” [11]) shows that Will, as a person who is part Blackfoot and part White, continues to relate to the Blackfoot community partly through a carefully delimiting negation—which by this late point in the novel is also, however, the marker of both his self-acceptance and his commitment to others.

I will shortly be taking a closer look at some of Will's most important "negatives" and their contexts, in order to define more fully his self-acceptance and the extent of his commitment. But I want to begin moving toward that definition by first considering the special case of the negative statement quoted in my title, "There isn't a Mr. Heavyman" (223), which is said not by Will but, in an ironic variation on a theme, by Louise Heavyman. Louise's statement is especially resonant because Will's relationship with Louise is one of the most important examples in the novel of his reciprocal drama of engagement and nonengagement with the Blackfoot community. Will he, or will he not, commit himself to her, and if so, to what extent? And what does she really expect from him—and what is she willing to give? After Will and Louise have been seeing each other on and off for a number of months, they are house-hunting together, and when the real-estate agent takes them for a married couple, calling Will "Mr. Heavyman," Louise states that "There isn't a Mr. Heavyman" (223). In this remark, she pre-empts Will in making one of the most significant negative statements in the novel. If Will had made this firmly qualifying declaration himself, that would have been one thing, but to have Louise make it is another. Since he is given to making negative statements that carefully limit his engagement with the Blackfoot community ("Then you don't need me," he says in response to Harlen's "we need a centre" for the basketball team [12]), it is sharply pertinent that it should be Louise who makes one of the most important of such statements. In doing so, she exposes a potential weakness in Will's behavior, since her statement of fact might be seen as a challenge and even as a reproach for a lack of active commitment on Will's part. The challenge to Will as man and prospective husband is wryly intensified because their presumed "married" name is hers, not his (I will return to the fact that we never do discover Will's last name). Although it is a sign of honesty, and might even be seen as an act of self-assertion, not to accept what one cannot wholeheartedly embrace, it is evidence of a passive and non-participatory stance to define one's relation to the world mainly as an onlooker, as when Will says, when asked to take part in the

bone game that Harlen has set up between Big John and Eddie, "I just want to watch" (64). In order to overcome this passivity, Will has to commit himself and become actively involved, if only to a degree, and everything depends on his following through on both the commitment and the limitation that defines the commitment by making clear where it stops.

The nub of Will's problem is thrown into high relief when Louise takes out of his own mouth a negative statement that very precisely defines a limit to his commitment to her—a limit that he is himself perhaps interested in observing. His problem is to belong to the Blackfoot community and yet preserve his particular, mixed individuality, part Blackfoot and part White. He must commit himself to the community without losing his personal self, a self that, on his return to Medicine River, he has not quite defined, because he has not come to terms with the absence that is his father. The importance of the personal, private life is painfully suggested in the account of Will's adolescent attempt to convince his mother that he has the right to see his father's letters, a foreshadowing of his later attempts to create his father out of the void left by his absence. It is ironic and indicative of the importance of the issue that his Blackfoot mother should lecture him on the meaning of the word "private" ("You never heard of private?" [5]) and should claim the letters as her exclusive property. That even the most intimate matters are often shared in the Blackfoot community, and that this sharing surprises Will, is suggested when Bertha and Harlen read these same letters before Harlen gives them to Will so many years later, just after he has returned to Medicine River from his lengthy stay in Toronto. Since it is his mother who emphasizes the importance of the "private" sphere in life, Will's sanction for trying to maintain his personal privacy and distance, even in the face of Harlen's attempt to draw him into the Blackfoot community, can be seen as coming out of that community itself. More precisely, these are the letters of a lover and husband, and also of a father, so that two claims, that of a wife and that of a son, each valid and crucial to the individual involved, are clashing, and such a clash would seem to be very difficult to resolve.

The importance of Will's relations with Louise as exemplifying his relations with the Blackfoot community in general is emphasized by the metaphoric resonances of Louise's last name, "Heavyman," and by the repeated references in *Medicine River* to weight and heaviness, both literal and figurative (2, 56, 70, 76, 120, 188). Louise's last name is "heavy" with implications, both as her name and, with additional irony, when it is attributed, as it is on at least two occasions in the novel (38, 223), to Will as his own last name (the suggestive error is made in each case by a White person, a nurse and a real-estate agent). This recurrent language suggests that one way of looking at Will's relationship with his own past, with the Blackfoot community, and specifically with Louise is to see it as a burden that Will must assume. In spite of Louise's declaration that "there isn't a Mr. Heavyman," Will is in a number of senses, both literal and figurative, just such a "Mr. Heavyman"—or at least that is how Harlen would like to see him: "People who start off skinny . . . have a tough time being fat because they haven't had time to develop the muscle to carry the extra weight. . . . People may think you're a little heavy, Will. But you been like that all your life so you got the muscle to manage it" (76). The troubling side of this ability—and necessity—to carry physical and emotional weight is expressed by Erleen, the White woman who is Will's mother's best friend: "you put on weight when you're young, and you carry it around with you the rest of your life" (70).

This observation is a key to Will's own character and destiny, and its metaphoric implications are made explicit when Will notes that Harlen himself is someone who "took on a lot of weight," on the theory that "If you pass misery around and get everyone to take a piece . . . you won't throw up from the taste of too much grief" (2). Will reacts to this statement of Harlen's with one of his private negatives: "It wasn't something that I went around repeating" (2). By refusing to endorse Harlen's willingness to share the weight of "misery" in his community, Will is, for the moment at least, refusing both the relief of sharing his own burden and the challenge of taking up some part of the burden of others. Does he refrain from repeating Harlen's words out of weakness and defensiveness,

because he realizes the challenging and potentially consoling truth in them, but cannot act on it? Or does he refuse out of strength, asserting his right to relate to the community in his own way?

It is surely a bit of both, and that it is both points to Will's difficulty and its practically efficacious, though less than perfect, solution. In fact, Will does join Harlen in "[taking] on a lot of weight" (2): he performs a remarkable amount of burden-sharing and helping out in the novel, showing that he is both able and "will"-ing to play the part Harlen has assigned him. Harlen's comment on Will's ability to carry weight is one of his most optimistic statements about Will, and it is also one of those moments when he most firmly, if gently, enlists Will's personal "will" in the service of the Blackfoot community. Will has indeed "been like that all [his] life" (76), but his case is a complex and sometimes recalcitrant one, since he has to carry the weight of his dual heritage. More precisely, the Blackfoot part has been, and still is, the known self and the most obvious burden ("You look more like your mother" [168], says the elder Lionel, a consoling remark in this context); it is therefore the one most readily acknowledged and taken up: that is why he has returned to Medicine River. On the other hand, the White part has always been more of an absence than a burden—or, if one might put it so paradoxically, the burden of an absence. Significantly absent in *Medicine River*, therefore, is any mention of Will's last name. Is it his father's, which we never learn? Or does he bear his mother's name, as the character Will Horse Capture does in King's next novel, *Green Grass, Running Water*? Some readers (Davidson, Walton, and Andrews; Robinson) have assumed that Will's name in *Medicine River* is also Will Horse Capture, but Harlen's introduction of Will to Lionel, "This is Rose Horse Capture's boy, Will" (208), pointedly omits to mention Will's last name. While crucially *not* going so far as to endow Will with a Blackfoot name, this omission is also a significant erasure of his White heritage and of his father's presence in his life, since in White, Euroamerican society a child usually bears its father's last name, and Will's last name, in the time and place in which he grew up, would normally have been that of his White father.

There is also an issue of gender here, in Will's personal heritage and his possible self-definition. For Will as a male, it is significant that the known part of his heritage has been female and the absent part male, since this might make it all the more difficult for him, in Harlen's words, to "step in and be the man" (224), asserting and committing himself as a lover and husband to Louise. In Toronto, as well, he found himself playing a passive role in his relations with Susan, who both initiated, conducted, and ended their love affair. When his father absconded, Will had to become the "man of the house" (8), but that premature assumption of the heavy weight of manhood only makes it harder for him to play the role of "the man" later in life, given the absence of a positive male role model and his mixed, frequently negative feelings about his father: "The guy was a jerk, Harlen" (9). In earlier days, in conversation with strangers on airplanes, Will had told "long and elaborate stories" (83) about his father as a sensitive journalist who travelled the world writing about "oppressed peoples" (84), but the negative feelings he bluntly reveals to Harlen carry over to his feelings about himself as a man, as is evident when he is courting Susan. Surprisingly, he thinks of himself as a toad, his "voice croaking along, the warts popping up everywhere" (106), whereas she obviously finds him attractive and interesting.

In spite of Harlen's wish to enlist Will in sharing the weight of the community's "misery" and "grief," there is, therefore, a limit to what Will can bear, if he is to assume any weight at all. It might also be a matter of the kinds of weight that he can and cannot bear, or will and will not bear, and this in turn might have something to do with his desire to make up for the behavior of his father—and with the limited extent to which he can actually do so, as revealed in his compensatory stories, again on airplanes, about his father as a man who "loved his family" (84). Louise's name "Heavyman" suggests that she might be a heavy burden for Will, one that in any event he does not take up in its entirety. But he always feels good with her child in his arms, a physically and perhaps emotionally more manageable burden, and he carries the child on several occasions, including the very moment when Louise says that "there isn't a Mr.

Heavyman" (223). The conventional iconography of First Nations women carrying their children, which is ironically invoked here, casts Will in a female role when he carries Louise's child by another man. But it might be even more to the point to see him as trying to follow Harlen's advice and, reversing his father's delinquent male behavior, playing the role of dutiful father and helpful contemporary husband, as he does earlier when he keeps vigil while Louise has her baby, the other occasion in the novel when Will is called "Mr. Heavyman" (38).

Even more suggestive is the moment when Will changes South Wing's diaper (143), while Louise remains asleep in bed, on the first night they spend together, after she has initiated their sexual intimacy, just as she will end it on the day she takes the dark room out of her new house: "Louise laughed and leaned over the table and kissed me. . . . She stayed there, leaning on the table, close to me. And she kissed me again. 'Why don't you see if South Wing is okay, first.' I stood up, and Louise put her arms around me" (142). This is a remarkable passage, rendered in King's usual unobtrusive style, as firmly precise as the frequently negative language of his protagonist-narrator. We notice that it is Will, and not South Wing's mother, who is to check if the child is "okay," and that throughout this time he says nothing and makes no move in Louise's direction—not even after she has kissed him twice and embraced him (those few words "I stood up" are eloquent in suggesting his purely reactive behavior). Louise is entirely in control here, but she is also the only one risking a move in the other person's direction. It is a sign of her high degree of self-confidence that she takes the initiative with so reticent a man, and even if she has interpreted his attention to the child rightly as a sign of interest in her as a woman, still she and Will are locked into the roles of "strong" (30), active woman and passive, if not weak, man. In light of a scene like this, Will's later carrying Louise's child as they are looking for a house for her, and not for them, even after they have been keeping company for some months, both defines and limits his role: he "will" be a helpful friend to Louise and a father of sorts to South Wing (as he himself has nick-named her), and he "will" fulfill Martha

Oldcrow's prescription ("Needs a father, that one" [139]), but he "will not" live with or marry Louise.

This makes it all the more challenging that Louise should say that "there isn't a Mr. Heavyman," and, in another passage laden with the language of heaviness, that "marriage was always more of a burden on women than on men, that women always had to take on extra weight, while men just fell into marriage as if they were falling into bed" (188). Will distances himself from this opinion, as he does from so many of Harlen's: "I tried to stay away from talk like that" (188).⁶ And well he might, since it would seem (for one thing) that he has spent a lot of time with the burden of Louise's daughter in his arms. But what she says about men "falling" into marriage looks like a telling comment on Will's passivity. Does Will "stay away from talk like that" because he is defensive and aware that it is partly true, at least as far as the falling into marriage as if "falling into bed" goes? Or does he stay away because he feels, as a man who has carried her child on many occasions, that such "talk" is more than a bit unfair? Perhaps it is both: in any event, it is an ironic comment on Louise's theory, that Will does not exactly jump at the opportunity to marry and have a woman take on "more of a burden," if (against her own theory) Louise herself wants marriage and has made that clear to him, and if it is Will's doing—an assertion of his "will"—that they do not marry.⁷ My reading of this relationship is that Will and Louise are two people who at bottom know their own minds and know it is not marriage they want, at least not with each other, but who allow themselves, for some good and some not-so-good reasons, to indulge in a bit of muddle and wishful thinking. Louise means it, then, when, somewhat against the evidence of how things have been in her (unmarried!) relationship with Will, she opines that marriage is more of a burden for women than men, and Will means it when he tells Harlen, "I like being single" (31), and, even more to the point, in one of his firmest negatives, "I don't want to get married" (30).

Nevertheless, marriage to Louise, as much as he really does not want it, is highly tempting to Will because it would be a fine compensation for the delinquency of his father, not just as a father, but

as a woman's lover and husband ("he's always trying to compensate," Floyd says of Harlen as a basketball coach [19]). In the event, Will finds a way to make good his father's neglect of his children, symbolized by his giving South Wing the spinning top his father had promised but never delivered (7). But he cannot compensate for what happened between his father and mother, because that was as private as she says the letters are and, as in every relationship, partly her doing, since she insisted on marrying the man she loved in spite of her family's disapproval and his being a White man of known unreliability of character. In nearly the final lines of the novel, Will affirms, in one of his most positive statements, that South Wing "was going to love" the top that he has so inexpertly wrapped as her Christmas gift (261). In this making of a positive, even out of his characteristic self-deprecation, he conclusively defines what he can and will do to make up for the delinquency of his father.

His desire to compensate for this delinquency of his father might explain why, quite early in the story, Will has his most affirmative moment of feeling about Louise and the community of Medicine River while waiting in the cafeteria of the hospital where she is giving birth to the child of another man: "I began thinking about Louise, and for the first time since I had come back to Medicine River, I felt good. Clean and strong. Maybe we could give it a try *with the baby and all*" (38; emphasis added). This is a striking admission of his mixed feelings about being back in Medicine River, and it is a most remarkable thought for a man contemplating marriage, since in an important sense the baby can never be his ("She's not my daughter, Harlen" [134]), whereas the woman could be, if she was really in love with him. But it is also true that the baby, since it has no "will" of its own and "needs a father" (139), can be *made* his, whereas the woman, if she is in love with another man, will never be his, even to the extent that Susan was, if only temporarily (when Louise cries during the movie on their first date, it is because she remembers Harold, something that Susan never did because of Ralph).

Compensation is therefore Will's fate, and he is both driven and cramped by his father's delinquency.⁸ Whatever he was to his wife,

Will's father abandoned his own children, who like South Wing were not able to take care of themselves. It therefore makes sense that Will should "compensate" (19) by "developing" this "negative" into the "positive" of becoming adoptive father to another man's child. Here his will can prevail, whereas in his relationship with Louise his will alone cannot carry the matter, even if it were fully engaged, as it does not seem to be. The interaction with Louise, unlike the one with South Wing, is not a purely voluntary matter even on his own part, though his conscience would like it to be (as Harlen might say, one can lead a horse to water, but one can't make it drink, even if the horse you are leading is yourself). Will cannot force himself to love Louise "in the marrying way," and to Martha Oldcrow's question "You love her [Louise]?" (139), he can say no more than "No. Yes, I like Louise" (139), a fine juxtaposition of an honest negative and a carefully qualified positive. When Martha asks him, of South Wing, "You love her?" (139), he answers "Sure." When this lazy response is challenged, he comes through with "I love her" (139), perhaps his most succinct and forceful positive. Who could be hard-hearted enough to refuse to love an abandoned child? Certainly not this grown-up abandoned child.

It is surely significant, also, that Martha asks Will about South Wing before she asks him about Louise, since this shows the elder's priorities, which are also Will's. After all, Martha says, "Needs a father, that one," but she does not say, "Needs a husband, that [other] one." Still, the latter might also be true, or why would Louise dally with Will and the prospect of moving in together, sometimes a prelude to—when not more conventionally the result of—marriage? When Will says he "likes" Louise, Martha says, "Okay. Like is close enough" (140), but this idea of an intimate relationship between a man and a woman might not be quite the same as Will's idea or, indeed, Louise's. Perhaps that "like is [*not*] close enough" for Will and Louise has something to do with Will's having experienced something quite different with the White woman Susan—not to mention Louise's experience with the Cree Harold, also an outsider to the Blackfoot community, even more so than the partly White Will, as Harlen keeps pointing out ("He's

Cree, Will" [31]). Like Will's mother, these truly strong characters seem to have an instinctive feeling that it is more interesting and romantic to go outside the "family" to found a family. "Nothing more important than the family" (27), says Harlen—who does not have one, except in the compensatory form of the community as a whole. Nevertheless, in doing so they are hitting on unsuitable choices, and although Harold later proposes marriage (more than a bit tardily), Louise decides he is not husband material, since he so nicely proves her skeptical theory about men and marriage. Susan is herself not wife material, at least not for Will; nevertheless, she stands for the "other" that is a part of himself that he needs to recover, whereas the Blackfoot part is the known self. His relationship with Louise and her daughter is, then, one of Will's main challenges in Medicine River, and one that he can only partly meet, but this is not the only test to which his will is subject after he returns to take on the role of "Indian photographer."

In his ongoing relations with the Blackfoot community, Will is tested a number of times, and in each case he uses negatives to carefully define the extent and limits of his engagement. Although as photographer and person he prefers to stay behind the camera, Will is coaxed into the photograph of the Bluehorn family, and in the same way he cannot completely control his engagement with the community, even by asserting his right to remain a nonengaged onlooker. As basketball player, the lesson he has to learn is that although the team does need him (12), this does not mean that they cannot do without him. An early, defining moment comes when, after Harlen himself starts as center on the Friday of a weekend tournament, Will leaves in pique and drives back alone in his own truck (20). Later he prefers to drive his truck to and from the United States with only Harlen as company, rather than go with the "the rest of the boys" (104), who, in Will's own wry words, have "Leroy's wagon, the drum, a case of beer, a bunch of those cheap cigars. . . . What else could they need?" (104). A similar reservation about unconditional participation is jokingly expressed in Will's answer when Harlen's brother Joe Bigbear asks what Will and Floyd were up to in the washroom of the American bar: "What'd

you do, get married in there?' 'Floyd proposed,' I said. 'But I said no'" (152). Harlen is not the only character to be severely challenged by Joe, who like Will's brother James is a "real Indian" with a wide experience of the world beyond Medicine River, in which he has chosen to live, as Will temporarily did in Toronto, but without Joe's panache and success. Next to Ray Little Buffalo, it is the self-described "Joe Bigbear, Indian hunter" (149; a most interesting moniker, considering the meaning of "Indian hunter" in American history) who makes the most incisive observation on Will as aspiring "real Indian" who "ain't no . . . Whiteman" (78). Just before shaking hands with Joe, Will decides to fool him, anticipating that Joe will try to crush his hand in his strong grip, because "there are people, whites mostly, who understand handshaking as a blood sport" (147; has Will momentarily forgotten that Joe is an Indian?). So Will gives Joe "the fingers and no more" (a neat metaphor for his cagey behavior throughout), whereupon Joe remarks, "squeezing my hand and leaning over and whispering in my ear so most of the people at the table could hear" (147), "You shake hands like a damn Indian" (147). It would be hard to do justice to the wryly humorous force of this moment, but we can observe how right it is that Will should be caught out as "damn Indian" by that larger-than-life "real Indian" Joe, in an action by which he thinks he has evaded Joe's challenging handshake, which Will takes to be stereotypically "white." And yet, we notice, the upshot should be consolatory for Will, since Joe is confirming his "Indian" identity, if comically and ironically, at the expense of his cranky standoffishness.

Having been truly caught and defined in this not-entirely-comforting way, Will fires off an equally sharp remark at Floyd's expense, in response to that later sally of Joe's when Will and Floyd emerge from the men's room: "What'd you do, get married in there" (152). Will's comeback, "Floyd proposed . . . but I said no," is perhaps the cleverest of his often-cagey negatives, and it resonates especially in connection with his later unfulfilled relationship with Louise. As clever as his riposte is, it does not entirely put Will in a good light. But here as elsewhere in the novel, even the most wryly unsettling comedy, laden with negatives, has a good-humored tone

and points the way to a finally positive interaction between the characters. For Will, specifically, this comedy is both prophylactic and a way of relieving a personal burden of bad conscience and unease. In these words, Will is comically raising, and getting out of the way, the possibility that, for what he must feel to be very good reasons, “No” might be his answer to a fuller engagement with the Blackfoot community as a whole. His revealing joke suggests that, at the deepest levels, Will wants the community to court *him*, in compensation for having once rejected him, and this helps to explain his cranky behavior in his early days on the basketball team. In spite of his negative protestations (“I said no. No time. No interest. No energy. No shoes” [13]—note again the free indirect discourse), his leaving the basketball tournament in pique because he was not allowed to start actually suggests that Will would like very much to play on the team and to take his place in the community, but he would prefer to do so on his own terms. When he accepts the fact that the team could use him but can also carry on without him, he makes the contribution he can, and they win the championship with Will as center, even without the much more talented Clyde Whiteman. It is symbolic of his success in finding a place on the team, and in the community as a whole, that Will plays center, although until returning to Medicine River he had been an outsider, a marginalization that was confirmed when his family was not allowed back onto the reserve after the death of his father. Will observes that “it wasn’t so much the law as it was pride . . . that let my mother go as far as the town and no farther” (9). After his return, the law that once deprived his mother of her status has changed, and Will is made to feel welcome by almost everyone in Medicine River, making it clearer than even in his mother’s case that personal pride is at issue.

The weekend basketball tournament, and other episodes such as Will’s driving January Pretty Weasel to her husband’s funeral, though he “didn’t want to go” (43), are lessons in learning that the community does need him and that he can share the burden of its “grief” (2) without losing his individuality or becoming overburdened (they will not insist that he drink or smoke—Harlen him-

self doesn't—or play the drum). The harshest challenge, however, is posed not by the kindly Harlen or the formidable Louise but by the one person who clearly does not welcome Will to Medicine River, the bullying and egotistical David Plume. Unlike Harlen, with his emphasis on reconciling the personal and the communal, David Plume puts his challenge to Will in abstract and political terms that intentionally dwarf the private individual: "It feels good to be a part of something important" (199). As when he demurs at Louise's one-sided theory of marriage, Will is too thoughtful and, in this case, too clearly master of the situation to give in to David Plume's moral blackmail.⁹ The final exchange between Will and David Plume is worth citing at length, since it is an especially good example of Will's carefully precise way of meeting a challenge, in this case with positive statements that contain important and entirely conscious reservations:

"I meet a lot of Indians [says Plume], you know, who are sorry they didn't go to Wounded Knee. . . . They feel like they got left out. It feels good to be part of something important."

"Yeah," I said. "I know what you mean." . . .

"A person should do something important with their life. You should think about that."

"I will." (199–200)

Here are two of Will's most important statements, both grammatically "positives," and yet both carefully delimited. They could, in a twist on the paradox of a "negative" that is used to generate a "positive" (a "positive negative"), be called "negative positives," or "positives" that are really implied "negatives." As such, these statements show that Will does not have to use explicitly negative grammatical constructions to affirm reservations and limitations in his responses to particular challenges issuing from the Blackfoot community. To take his first statement: of course Will knows what it means to feel "left out" and to want to be a part of "something important," something bigger than himself. The novel is the record of his struggle to belong to the Blackfoot community in an authentic way, true both to his private self and to the community

as a whole. As for his response to Plume's second remark, about the need to do "something important" with his life, Will distances himself from this bullying language, implying a preference for a more modest way of looking at his role in the community, somewhat as he and Harlen decline to imitate the heroics of Joe Bigbear in jumping from the bridge (163). And Will accomplishes that distancing in a characteristically subtle but firm way, using a grammatical "positive" to suggest reservations and define limitations even in a statement of assent. In his last words to David Plume, Will makes what rings out as a strongly positive statement, all the firmer for its brevity, playing on his own name as an active verb: "I will" (200). This is the potentiality that has inhered in Will's name from the first, the self-assertion of someone who knows who he is and acts accordingly, who can and will "will." In this context, Will's use of his name as a verb asserts the right to refrain from a particular action—and instead to do the right thing as *he* sees it (he is not only will-ing but will-full). Responding with pointed accuracy to Plume's insinuating words, which were meant to box him in, Will breaks free of the trap, since his "I will" contains an entirely intended reservation. That is, he will seriously and independently "think about" "do[ing] something important with [his] life" (200), but he will make no commitment to do as Plume has been urging. Will's brief statement "I will" is the first time that he has been able to combine the photographer's "negative" and his "positive" in one verbal gesture. His statement is a "negative positive" in response to David Plume's bullying challenge, but it is a "positive positive" as a statement of his own very different program for doing "something important" in life, which is not to join Plume's protest in Ottawa but to be a friend (if not a husband) to Louise and a father in a real, if honestly limited way to South Wing. This "positive" therefore complements, and goes beyond, his many earlier "negatives" that serve the cause of minimal factual accuracy ("The Blackfoot didn't fight Custer" [107]), even in the face of Harlen's enthusiasms. There is still a "negative" or reservation implied, but as a precise response to a challenge that is itself posed in a bullying, negative way. Earlier, Will's "negatives" had been a re-

sponse to Harlen's kindly "positives," whereas here his "positive" is a response to Plume's ill-willed "negative." In his answer to Plume, Will's affirmation of his right *not* to act takes the unambiguously positive form that it never quite takes in his unwillingness fully to commit himself to Harlen's projects for him as "real Indian" in Medicine River. Because he has so fully met Plume's insidious attempt to expose him as not quite a "real Indian," while remaining true to his personal style of asserting precisely defined qualifications, even in his most apparently positive statements, we can be pretty sure that Will can now take care of himself in the Blackfoot community. And because he can take care of himself, he can also commit himself in a less guarded and defensive way than heretofore. By expressing his willingness to "think about" "do[ing] something important with his life," he is asserting the right to decide not to give in to Plume's moral blackmail, and this leaves him free to do something of his own, with his whole "will" behind it. We can be pretty sure, then, that Will means it when, in response to Harlen's too-kindly assurance that Plume "doesn't mean to make people feel bad," Will states, in yet another firmly positive negative, that "He didn't make me feel bad" (198).

In spite of Harlen's theory that grief is lightest when shared, there are, finally, certain burdens, such as the burden of his dual heritage, that Will must carry himself, if he is effectively to share the burdens of others. Or, as Susan puts it, somewhat ironically, considering the difficulty that Will as a man has in learning this lesson, "'You know what I've discovered? I don't really have to have someone. I can do everything for myself. Men are used to that, but I never could do it all by myself. Life, I mean.' I said I understood" (230). We can imagine the ironic reservations with which Will "understands" Susan's glib egotism. The evidence of this novel does not suggest that "men are used to" self-determination—certainly not if that includes more than desultory interactions with women. And Susan crudely overstates the case for independence, offering a "negative" ("I don't really have to have someone") to Harlen's overly optimistic but sincerely compassionate notion that "misery" should be "passed around" so that everyone can "take a piece" (2). By the

end of the story, Will has “understood” how to reconcile and get the best of both of these half-truths. He is learning to deal with “Life” by himself and also to “have someone”: if not a wife, then “friends,” both men and women, and, above all, “family” (202, 255), in the form of a child that he has named and adopted, if not biologically fathered, whereas his own father had two biological children that he abandoned. It is a measure of what Will both can and cannot be to the child that he had no say in deciding her legal name, but that his nickname for her should have stuck in daily use.

Near the start of his relationship with Louise, Will also offers understanding to her, as he did to Susan: “You understand, don’t you Will? ‘Sure’” (42). What she is asking him to understand at this moment is that the baby she has named Wilma (a wryly ironic verbal echo of his own name) is her baby and Harold’s. This early exchange is echoed in their next-to-last conversation, when Louise tells Will that she is going to spend Christmas in Edmonton with Harold: “‘I know,’ I said, still smiling [as he does in the picture of the Bluehorn family]. ‘He’s South Wing’s father.’ ‘That’s right,’ Louise said, ‘He is South Wing’s father’” (258). This final reminder, by Will himself, of the biological facts, is a neat reversal of Louise’s statement that “There isn’t a Mr. Heavyman” (223). Here he says it first, though she might have; there she said it, though he should have. Will’s statement (“He is South Wing’s father”) is a somewhat bitter “negative positive,” at least for Will, and Louise’s declaration (“There isn’t a Mr. Heavyman”) is, by end of the novel, a “positive negative,” to the extent that it reflects the true wishes of both Will and Louise and defines the mutually desired limits of their relationship. Will’s own words would seem to take away from him the fatherhood that he is longing to exercise in compensation for his father’s delinquency, but as in the matter of his mother’s and his own “Indian status,” it is not “the law” (9) that matters most but what people choose to make of it. This is therefore not Will’s last word on South Wing: he has a later one when he says that “South Wing was going to love” the top he inexpertly wrapped for her Christmas present (261).

Medicine River ends mutedly, but not darkly, on a day that “had started out overcast,” with a later “winter sun” that was “lying

low on Medicine River" (261). Will takes a "a long walk in the snow," alone on Christmas, after talking "for a long time" with his brother James "about being kids in Calgary, about Mom" (but not, of course, about Dad) and telling James he was "sorry" for throwing a rock at him as a boy (260). As we have noted, Will is alone on Christmas because has not accepted Harlen's invitation to meet the real Howard Webster and has not revealed to Harlen who "Howard Webster" was in his life. The novel's ending thus affirmatively closes the circle of Will's troubled relations with "family," both personal and extended, and also leaves things open enough for Will to acknowledge and bear, in a solitude that is the index both of his strength and his weakness, the burden of his dual heritage and mixed identity. In Toronto, he might have had plenty of exciting company among strangers who are interested in him as an exotic "Indian"; in Medicine River, he has come "home" (8) to "family" (27) in order to be alone as someone who "ain't no . . . Whiteman" (78), and the novel makes it quite clear that for Will this is the best, though less than perfect, outcome.

By focusing on the readaptation of Will in Medicine River, King's novel manages, then, to offer a searching and illuminating dramatization of the very big issue raised at the outset in Harlen's only apparently goofy remarks on the actor Will Sampson. In this day and age, in an Alberta town like Cardston or Lethbridge (and in other towns like them throughout North America), what is a "real Indian"? In partial answer, we can imagine the perhaps forgivable misinterpretations of two possible readers of King's novel who are still worlds apart, but who might be instructed by a fuller consideration of the novel to draw a little closer together in understanding. My student from Montreal Lake in north-central Saskatchewan, taking a summer class in the Indian Teacher Education Program at the University of Saskatchewan, who thought that Will was a White man, needs to re-read the novel to realize that he is actually a "real Indian." And a White reader like the writer of this article, who encounters more and more First Nations students of varying backgrounds in his classes, needs to read the novel to discover that a "real Indian" can have a White father and, in the un-

matchable words of Ray Little Buffalo, can be someone who “ain’t no . . . Whiteman.” That is, he definitely is at least partly a White man, and in certain ways, expressible by statements grammatically both positive and negative, more “White” than many “Whites.” He is educated, sophisticated, highly self-conscious, and usually prefers salad to meatloaf; he cannot remember Martha Oldcrow’s song, because he never learned it; he does not smoke, drink in bars, play the bone game or the drums, and he admits to Clyde Whiteman that he’s never been in jail (125). Yet Harlen never doubts that Will is a “real Indian,” which is why, of course, he joshes Will at such length about Will Sampson. The biblical Samson, like Will, was a bearer of conspicuous burdens, but Will is no tragic figure doomed by his own strength, no epic (or even mock epic!) hero who hunts pigs in Australia or jumps off bridges in a dare, but the protagonist of an everyday story that is no less hopeful for its many shadows and wryly comic ironies. And Harlen is someone who should know about all this: he also doesn’t smoke or drink—because he is a former alcoholic who can’t, so his abstaining is a sign both of his present strength and former weakness, and his is a concrete case that both raises and qualifies *that* stereotype from “the semiotic field of the Indigene” (Walton 78). Will is a “real Indian” because he is not a stereotypical Indian, conforming to neither “negative” nor to “positive,” romanticized stereotypes.¹⁰ In his interview with Hartmut Lutz, King stated that he “would like to see some . . . very ordinary images, Indians doing ordinary things” (Lutz 114; qtd. in Hirsch 147). For “ordinary things,” we can read “white things”—or at least “white” in the popular imagination, which needs to be corrected, and supplemented, to read “real Indian things too.” Because these Indians (I am using King’s own word) are doing these things as Will is, as “real Indians.”

NOTES

1. For discussions of photography in *Medicine River* and in King’s work as a whole, see Davidson, Walton, and Andrews (98–104); Walton; Robinson; and, an especially helpful discussion, Christie.

2. See also Hirsch: "Will's active development toward a full realization of his Indian self occurs well beyond adolescence, but it does occur" (148).

3. For a discussion of the issues raised by the necessary, and necessarily problematic, use of such labels, see Davidson, Walton, and Andrews (205nn2–3). Like those authors, I use the term "White," capitalized, to designate Caucasian people because this usage is "in accordance with King's own choice of language" (Davidson, Walton, and Andrews 205n2), although many people who make up mainstream Canadian society are not, of course, "White" Caucasians. To designate members of the Medicine River community in which the novel is set, I have tried for the most part to use the most accurate term possible: the people think of themselves as Blackfoot. In the time and place of the novel (the mid-1980s, in southern Alberta), a frequent term of self-reference is "Indian": as far as I can recall, the word "Native" is used only twice in *Medicine River*, once by a White woman in Toronto (229), and once by Harlen when he refers to the "Medicine River Friendship Centre Warriors" as an "All-Native team" (12). As a general label, the term "First Nations" seems to be the most widely accepted one in Canada at this date, and I have used this when it is not possible to refer to one of those nations by its own proper name (Cree, Blackfoot). Americans have the term "American Indian," as in the title of *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, but adoption of "North American Indian" would have discomfiting political implications in Canada, although it would be a useful reminder that First Nations people do not always acknowledge the border between Canada and the United States.

4. After 1982 the law was changed and "it became the band's responsibility to decide whether a woman was status or non-status" (Westman 115). Yet it is "in town" (9) that Will remains and where Harlen and the main characters of the novel live, so that the town is the main setting of the novel, though Will makes at least two important trips to the reserve, to visit the elders Martha Oldcrow and Lionel James.

5. A few years ago, while teaching *Medicine River* in summer school at the University of Saskatchewan, I had a student in her early twenties, from a band near Montreal Lake, who on her final exam referred to Will as a "White man." This student had read the novel with some care, and I thought her error (to which I will return) much more interesting than a number of more obvious, accurate things she might have said about the novel.

6. This is a subtle example, in a novel that consists of so much direct

dialogue, of what in English is called free indirect discourse, after the French “discours indirect libre.” By not quoting her words directly, Will is able to distance himself from Louise’s remark, but he also subjects himself to it by drawing attention to her thoughts and their possible application to himself. It is worth noting that Susan’s earlier question (another example of a woman putting him on the spot), “You’re Indian, aren’t you?” (108), is also recorded as an indirect quotation, without quotation marks in the text. Will does not reveal his answer, if he ventured one.

7. In the opinion of Davidson, Walton, and Andrews, Louise “remains ambivalent about the possibility of marriage or even the possibility of living together” (43). Parker finds that Will “explicitly doesn’t want to marry, and neither does the object of his timid affections, Louise Heavyman” (139).

8. Thus Parker remarks that “his father’s failure burns into Will the difficulty and seriousness of marriage and fatherhood” (141).

9. And he knows full well, as does the community at large, that Plume’s own claim to have been present at Wounded Knee might be spurious, since the evidence is a photograph that is as difficult to interpret as the ones of Will’s father. Walton writes that “Will continuously associates his father with photographs,” in an “effort to control and fix the ‘reality’ he is constructing through postcards and pictures” (82). As a photographer, Will knows better than to do that, but David Plume certainly tries, when he asks Will to enlarge the photograph that is supposed to prove he was at Wounded Knee (King 192). But Will is professionally aware of the impossibility of fixing reality in photographs, and he is familiar with the deceptive business of making photographs in general: “I’ll shoot a negative [of Plume’s picture], *touch it up* and print a couple of wallet-size photos” (197; emphasis added). In order to produce this touched-up photograph, we note, he starts by “shooting” a picture of a picture.

10. For other comments on King’s treatment of stereotypes about First Nations people, see Parker, Hirsch, Peters, Robinson, and Stratton. With a sharp eye for King’s real burden in *Medicine River*, Parker has pointed out that “King’s work has the effect of arguing that traditional, stereotypical representations and appropriations of Indians get Indian speech ridiculously wrong, not because they exclude the oral and poetic, but because they reduce Indian speech to a narrow, tilted [*sic?* “stilted”?] sense of both” (163). Hirsch notes that King is on record as saying that “he is tired of both negative and romanticized images of Indians and ‘would like to see some . . . very ordinary images, Indians doing ordinary things’” (Lutz 114; qtd. in Hirsch 147).

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Feasting on Famine in Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms*

CATHERINE KUNCE

In 1899 H. B. Cushman observed that when a Chickasaw died, tribal lamentations would last for several days and would conclude with a feast (410). Nearly one hundred years later in 1997, in the prologue to her novel *Solar Storms*, Chickasaw Linda Hogan recounts a "mourning feast."¹ But in her presentation, Hogan changes several mourning-feast customs, the most salient of which requires that the mourned be deceased. The alteration of the traditional mourning feast serves not merely as a signpost for changing Native American rituals. Rather, the transformed mourning feast in *Solar Storms* indicts white culture for causing Native American famine, both physical and emotional. But in blurring some demarcations of culpability and in providing a role model in the form of the character offering the feast, Hogan points to ways in which the Native American community might respond to the emotional, bodily, and cultural starvation inflicted through postcolonialism.² In this manner Hogan eschews what David L. Moore deems construction of reductionist binaries concerning colonization.³

Hogan's *Solar Storms* recounts the story of Angela (Angel) Wing, a beleaguered seventeen-year-old whose disfigured face bears the scars of an unremembered trauma. Angela's deranged mother Hannah Wing necessitated Angela's placement in foster homes, from which Angela has fled for years. In a court record Angela discovers the name of Agnes Iron, whom she contacts, believing her to be a relative. Agnes, Angela's great-grandmother, immediately sends money for Angela to join her in Adam's Rib, an economically

depressed town situated between Minnesota and Canada in the Boundary Waters area.⁴ Through her gradual identification with the Adam's Rib community, Angel's psychic wounds heal, even as events bring Angel to a confrontation with her mother and the restoration of the memory of her repressed past.⁵

Before asserting the degree to which Hogan changes mourning feast norms, we first might consider what a "normal" mourning feast would entail. Determining such normalcy proves difficult, if not impossible, in part because different Indigenous nations at various times alter specific traditions. As Homi K. Bhabha notes, "The enunciation of cultural difference problematizes the division of past and present, tradition and modernity, at the level of cultural representation and its authoritative address" (207). Yet according to Ernest Stromberg, in the past, ignoring First Nations' cultural specificity "served to reduce hundreds of complex individual cultures into a single category" (98). As Craig S. Womack maintains, "Native literature, and the criticism that surrounds it, needs to see more attention devoted to tribally specific concerns" (*Red on Red* 1). Since both Bush, the character preparing the feast, and Hogan herself hail from the Chickasaw nation, some concordance between the feast in *Solar Storms* and Chickasaw mourning feasts seems likely. But perhaps more importantly, Bush even inverts the feast's would-be cross-tribal common denominators.

For some Westerners who associate feasts with joyous occasions such as births, weddings, liberation from oppression, and gloriously heroic feats, holding a feast in order to mourn might in itself appear an inversion. This might seem true even though the Irish, for example, provide ample food during wakes, and people frequently offer bereaved families prepared dishes as tokens of affection and support. In any case, within the definition of any "mourning feast," the most fundamental characteristic proves so obvious that we can easily overlook it: the person whom the community mourns should indeed first be dead. Another prominent feast attribute relates to food preparation: since participation in the feast involves virtually all group members, food preparation involves community cooperation. As with any feast, we might

expect the quantity of food to be great and the quality of it the best that could be provided. Furthermore, in Native cultures, mourners often share their food with the departed. W. M. Beauchamp notes that “It was a prevalent idea that the dead liked the good food of this world, and this was often placed on graves. If it disappeared . . . it was supposed to be eaten by the dead. . . . [It was] thought the soul lingered near the body until the Feast of the Dead” (109). Hogan’s character Bush breaks these “rules” of the mourning feast and also adds some unprecedented procedures. And whether breaking an old rule or instituting a new one, each breach of feast protocol calls up an awareness of the causes of starvation and to supply methods of combating it.

In commencing *Solar Storms* with a remembered mourning feast and in titling that remembrance “Prologue,” Hogan disorients readers by dismantling conventional notions of structure, pre-saging the dismantling of mourning-feast conventions even while asserting the underlying value of ritual. Conventionally, a prologue serves in part to situate a play’s action between past and future. But *Solar Storms*’s prologue provokes more questions than answers. Readers’ “questioning” might relate to Craig S. Womack’s notion of the reader/text dialogue. Womack suggests that we need to cultivate “a self-awareness of our own role as readers in shaping what we encounter and a resistance to reading where we talk back to texts, where we ask questions, rather than view the texts as the authoritative final word that has come down to us in some pure form” (“A Single Decade” 55). Hogan forces us to ask, for whom is the feast held and why? Locating the answers to these questions requires us to read the novel both progressively and retrospectively, invoking a method similar to the one Native Americans must employ to “recover . . . lost stories and cultural practices” (Womack, “A Single Decade” 19) while safeguarding their meaning for future generations. Observing Native American women’s writing, Carolyn Dunn and Carol Comfort suggest that such literature often contains a “confounding of divisions—between sacred and secular, between animal and human” (xiii). Dunn and Comfort might have added that the “confounding of divisions” also concerns the temporal,

for allying ancestral experience with that of the living quickens a “dead” past, even as it weds the living moment to a revered ancestral past. Hogan’s blending of the three conceptions of time—past, present, and future—into a unified comprehension ironically mimics the most efficient way to read *Solar Storms*: in simultaneous relation to time’s three (perhaps illusory) divisions.⁶ According to the narrator in the prologue, true tradition comes from “the map inside ourselves” (17). Only by the novel’s end do the narrator’s words fully unveil hidden connections between tradition and its significance to the present moment. The subtle nexuses of unified (cyclical) time and culture correspond to presenting and then subverting the classical prologue’s function. The novel’s beginning, then, marks the end of formal structure that mandates a straight line of narration. Hogan in effect bends the line of narration back on itself, much in the way Erich Neumann configures human consciousness as uroborus, or as a serpent swallowing its tail.⁷ Pleading in “The Snake People” for an appreciation of the unjustly maligned serpent, Hogan alludes to a similar epistemological metaphor but extends the comparison to encompass all consciousness, rather than merely the human:

[T]he image of snakes twined about a tree or one another looks surprisingly like the double, twisted helix of DNA, the spiral arrangements of molecules that we share with every other living thing on earth, plant and animal, down to the basic stuff of ourselves. Perhaps Snake dwells at the zero of ourselves, takes us full circle in a return to the oldest knowledge, which says that the earth is alive. Our bodies, if not our minds, know that zero, that core, the constellation of life at our human beginnings, the same shape of that galaxy. (235)

As Donelle N. Dreese maintains, Hogan’s valuing the form of the snake challenges a linear construct of life:

Due to the snake’s ability to coil itself in the form of spiraling circles, it echoes the circular life philosophy of continuity, reciprocation, and holistic living (nurturing spiritual, men-

tal, physical, and emotional needs) rather than the Western linear construct, which leaves a loose end dangling into oblivion. (8)

In framing the feast within a prologue that relates at first glance incomprehensibly, and in retrospect profoundly, to the novel's thematic concerns, Hogan contravenes the letter of structural law, even while upholding its spirit.

Hogan replicates the spiraling form of the snake in the structure of *Solar Storms*. Only by going back to the text's beginnings can we gain understanding. It seems to me, too, that Hogan's prologue relates more to song than it does to the confining conventions of a literary prologue. In its exquisite poetic expression and its fluid emotive power, the novel's beginning requires of the reader a receptivity akin to what Simon J. Ortiz suggests will allow a listener to "hear" a song. When he hears a song, Ortiz

listen[s] carefully, but I listen for more than just the sound, listen for more than just the words and phrases, for more than the various parts of the song. I try to perceive the context, meaning, purpose—all these items not in their separate parts but as a whole. . . . A song, a poem, becomes real in that manner. You learn its completeness; you learn the various parts of it but not as separate elements. You learn a song in the way you are supposed to learn a language, as expression and as experience. (115)

If we are attentive "listeners" to Hogan's opening "song," we hear how unusual the mourning feast actually is. We sense something is amiss, for Hogan only hints that the person honored at the feast might not be dead. It is true that the story is told in the first person and also true that the narrator addresses an absent second person: "The last thing Bush did to prepare her feast in honor of you was to open the jar of swamp tea, and when she did, I smelled it. It smelled like medicine to me" (14). Although the narrator of Bush's feast apparently addresses another, the tone and presentation of the story induce us to forget that the "you" addressed might be another living person—we suspect, falsely, that the narrator speaks to a

spirit. In confusion we turn once again to the prologue's beginning lines—the only two sentences of the prologue not printed in italics. Juxtaposed with the italicized words, those first two sentences baffle us: “Sometimes I now hear the voice of my great-grandmother, Agnes. It floats towards me like a soft breeze through an open window” (11). Is great-grandmother Agnes, then, someone dead addressing the living narrator who remembers the words? All we know for certain is that Hogan presents Bush's mourning feast oddly—as a prologue—and we cannot determine who lives and who, if anyone, has died. This confounding of the reader appears deliberate. When anthologized, the prologue was stripped of its first two sentences and a few other lines that evidence that both the narrator of the prologue proper and the narrator of the first two sentences are alive.⁸ The removal of just a few lines frustrates the most careful reader's ability to determine whether anyone has actually died. In constructing her prologue to perplex, Hogan countermands classical literary protocol and invites readers to reconfigure notions regarding the living and the dead, both textually and physically. As Melani Bleck observes, “Hogan portrays writing as an act of liberation from spatial boundaries” (33). Bleck additionally asserts that not only do “Hogan's novels' characters, their perspectives, languages, writing, and their worldviews dissolve . . . stereotypes that bind Native Americans[,] [but] [s]he too takes issue with the structuralist assertion that . . . ‘Literature and language remain . . . bounded entities’” (32). Bush's mourning feast, as prologue to *Solar Storms*, points to the played-out (starved) representation of the prologue, even as it replenishes (feeds) it with renewed vitality.

Probably as deliberate as it is ingenious, Hogan's tactic to ask readers to “listen” carefully proves effective not only because readers keep turning pages as they struggle to solve the mystery of the prologue but also because offering a mourning feast for one still living mirrors Bush's own feelings about the “dearly departed”—a little girl gone from Bush's life, but one not deceased. Only later in the novel do we learn the convoluted story of why Bush provides the feast for a living girl. Bush informally adopted Angela, the

granddaughter of Bush's philandering husband, because Angela's mother (Bush's husband's daughter-in-law, Hannah Wing) was clearly insane. Everybody in the community "knew . . . [that] Hannah Wing . . . stood at the bottomless passage to an underworld. She was wounded. She was dangerous. And there was no thawing for her heart" (13). Bush devotes herself to little Angela and adores her adopted granddaughter. But inexplicably the county takes Angela from Bush. The court's action proves worse than a death sentence for the child, for first the court grants custody to Angela's natural mother. Given Hannah Wing's nature, we suspect that she will torture the girl if she does not kill her immediately. Only gradually do we fathom the depth of Bush's sorrow at losing the child and fully appreciate how completely the county's action jeopardizes Angela's life. Bush understands that, in losing custody, she loses all contact with the child. The child is literally "lost" to her. Her anguish, coupled with her uncertainty concerning Angela's fate, legitimates Bush's holding of the mourning feast even though no one has literally died.

All this personal history may seem like fate, but the indirect cause of the unorthodox feast is literal and figurative starvation perpetrated by whites. Hannah Wing's insanity compels Bush to care for Angela in the first place, but Hannah's depravity results from the starvation of her people. Hannah Wing's mother, Loretta, came "from the Elk Islanders, the people who became so hungry they ate the poisoned carcasses of deer that the settlers left out for the wolves. The starving people ate the bait" (38). Loretta smells of cyanide, and she passes on her insanity and her distinctive odor of almonds to her daughter, Hannah Wing. Thus, behind Hannah's insanity lies white encroachment upon Indigenous people's resources, even to their food. Tracking the incipient cause of the Elk Islanders' starvation, Agnes Iron speculates that "It might have started when . . . the logging camps started and cities were built from our woods, or when they cut the rest of the trees to raise cattle" (40). Bereft of game and dispossessed of their own land, the Elk Islanders suffer extreme privation. Bush's nontraditional feast points back to the "original sin" of starvation caused by white settlement of Native lands.

For Hogan, starvation relates not simply to human privation—physical, cultural, and spiritual—but also to the land’s and to other life forms’ hunger.⁹ Later in the novel Bush, Angela, Dora-Rouge, and Agnes embark on a journey, not only to locate Angela’s mother and to escort Dora-Rouge to her ancestral homeland, but also to protest construction of a hydroelectric project. As Barbara J. Cook explains, “Hogan draws on the reality the indigenous inhabitants of James Bay [Quebec] faced and on their resistance to the project. The project was launched in 1971 to provide electricity for New York City without prior notification to the people it would affect” (“Hogan’s Historical Narratives” 43–44). Donelle N. Dreese notes that “Hogan strives to break down the human/nature dichotomy and heal the alienation between humans and the natural world that has led to environmental degradation” (9). Starvation involves far more than humans. Along the way to protest the construction of the dam, Angela speculates that, in the past, “the people in the north found direction in their dreams. . . . They dreamed where food animals lived. These dreams they called hunger maps and when they followed those maps, they found their prey. It was the language animals and humans had in common” (170). Jim Tarter contends that *Solar Storms* posits “a common animality, a common plant nature, a common earthliness” (145). Just as the novel’s structure unites times past, present, and future, so too it links human starvation and the natural world’s privation.

Just as the initial cause of Hannah’s insanity is the Elk Islanders’ starvation, the cause of Bush’s bereavement is the actions of the county. In this too we see a miscarriage of justice at the hands of whites. No tribal court awards Angela to her violently insane mother. The entire community of Adam’s Rib realizes the danger of returning the child to her mother. Eventually the county court places Angela in foster homes, but it acts only after Hannah horribly disfigures Angela’s face. Only near the end of the novel do we learn what Hannah has done to scar Angela so. The mother has eaten part of her daughter’s face—a grotesque response to starvation and insanity. When at the age of seventeen Angela finds her way back to Adam’s Rib, she begins to understand that her own

emotional starvation would have been avoided had she stayed with those who loved her. We know that Bush fought the courts to prevent Angela's return to Hannah, but Hogan does not reveal why Bush failed in her battle. Why did the court ignore her legitimate testimony? An easy answer might be that courts typically favor the natural mother, but we suspect that racism figures in the ruling (i.e., the testimony of a nonwhite who counters white "rules" must be suspect). In any case, rules made and administered by whites impel Bush to hold the mourning feast.

The court's ruling results in the emotional starvation of both Bush and Angela. In *Solar Storms* inner sorrow resonates in an outer abode and vice versa. When Angela returns to Adam's Rib, she has run away from numerous foster homes, knowing that "no one had ever wanted [her] for good" (26). Deprived of affection, Angela feels she dwells in two rooms: "One, the darkest, was a room of fear, fear of everything—silence, closeness, motionlessness and how it made me feel and think. . . . And there was the fire-red room of anger I inhabited permanently" (27). Significantly, Bush's small three-roomed house, like Angela's two "rooms," becomes a metaphor for Bush's sorrow at losing Angela. The prologue proper begins with Agnes saying to Bush as she prepares the mourning feast, "The house is crying," for "steam [runs] down the walls" (11). But Bush replies that "the house [can] withstand it" (11). Agnes, comprehending the depth of Bush's anguish, does not believe this. Even though the wallpaper in Bush's house peels and even though "now and then a tear would try to gather in [Bush's] eye" (17), both Bush and her house indeed withstand the sadness, but not without a wasting away of spirit. Twelve years after the feast, when Bush and Angela reunite, Angela mistakes Bush for a deer, "thin and brown" (67). Angela recounts that "From the first time I saw Bush, I knew that she, like myself, understood . . . loneliness. She, too, had only thin, transient bonds to other people, having grown up on the outskirts of their lives" (67). Hogan's repetition of "thin" in adjacent sentences underscores the ravages of emotional hunger precipitated by the county's ruling. Had child and adoptive grandmother been allowed to remain together, the bond between them, and their subsequent bonds to others, would have been fleshed out.

In connecting external and internal famished spaces, however, Hogan also posts exit signs that illuminate escape routes from such starvation. One exit leads to rituals performed simultaneously. In pairing inner and outer landscapes, Hogan asserts the primacy of forging new associations with place. For although a common ancestral birthplace invites cultural homogeneity, relocation of First Nations forced inhabitants to reassess their relationship to their land. The attendees of Bush's feast all represent dislocated peoples. The feast reflects this dislocation, but in an unexpected way. Ironically, during the feast in *Solar Storms*, the "landscape" of cultural interaction shrinks to a house. In staging that seemingly limited interaction, Bush's house hosts not only a feast but also a transforming sweat-lodge ritual. Situated on a small island completely surrounded by ice, Bush's house initially appears as the emblem of her sorrow-frozen heart. Watching the approaching guests "arriving that cold Sunday," Agnes observes that

Across ice they looked like mere shadows against a darkening winter evening. Wind had blown snow from the surface of the lake, so in places the ice was shining like something old and polished by hands. Maybe it was the hands of wind, but the ice shone beneath their feet. I scraped the window with my fingernails and peered out. (14)

Indeed, Agnes knows that outside lies "a bone-chilling, hurting cold, the worst of winters" (15). Yet "The room was hot" (15), Agnes remembers, so hot that when the guests try to depart, they discover that "the door froze shut" (17). With its "small, now-stripped [appearance] and its . . . wood and wallpaper [that] were stained where rain had seeped through" (15), the house recalls a sweat lodge. Like a sweat-lodge fire, Bush's "cooking stove heated the house" (11). The small house replicates a sweat lodge with its circle of diners (who enter ceremoniously, taking care to remove their boots) and with its "smell . . . of cedar" (14). In "All My Relations," Hogan reveals that during "a sweat lodge ceremony, the entire world is brought inside the enclosure. The soft odor of smoking cedar accompanies this arrival" (39). Hogan additionally notices

that within the sweat lodge, “willow branches move overhead” (Chandler 25). Similarly, when Bush holds her feast, “branches of trees scraped against the windows like they were trying to get in” her house (*Solar Storms* 11). Further likening Bush’s feast to the sweat-lodge ceremony, Hogan writes that the house seems to chant when its “teakettle [begins] to sing as if it remembered old songs some [of the diners] had long since forgotten” (14). While the Native American diaspora sundered people from places and concomitantly from cultural identities, Bush’s smoky house/hogan invites guests to participate in ritual, the glue of culture. Perhaps Hogan folds one ritual (the mourning feast) into another (the sweat-lodge ceremony) because diaspora and genocide resulted in doubly severe wounds, far too deep for a single ceremony to heal.

The diners accept Bush’s invitation to participate in a kind of sweat-lodge ritual. Summarizing Hogan’s ideas on the function of the sweat-lodge ceremony, Chandler notes that “The ceremony’s purpose includes restoring, renewing, and restructuring the human mind by remembering ‘that all things are connected’” (25). Certainly the guests ultimately connect to one another during the feast. When they first enter Bush’s house, they are “uncomfortable,” but as the feast progresses, the house “[grows] smaller. It settled” (*Solar Storms* 16). The people also “settle”; one diner later “took some tobacco out of the tin and pinched it into his cheek and smiled all around the room” (16). By the end of the feast, the guests, “white-haired people, black-haired people, and the mixed-bloods,” are “talking and some even laughing, and there was just something in the air” (16). That “something” undoubtedly relates in part to the healing power of the sweat lodge to fortify the bonds of community.

In breaking tradition by preparing the food for the feast by herself, Bush additionally instructs the people of Adam’s Rib about the true worth of both community and tradition. Only Agnes keeps Bush company as she prepares the food for the feast. Bush works “day and night” for the numerous people who will attend (12). Since Bush “is a quiet woman, little given to words,” and since she “never takes kindly to being told what to do,” Agnes “let[s] her be”

while Bush “prepare[s] the feast” (13). But this unsociability may reflect more than just Bush’s solitary nature. She might not have convinced others to help her, since the community knows that she is preparing an unorthodox mourning feast. Agnes remembers that

To get them to her banquet, [Bush had] told them this was her tradition, that it was the only thing that could help her get over her grief from losing [Angela]. There wasn’t one among us who didn’t suspect that she’d invented this ceremony, at least in part, but mourning was our common ground and that’s why they came, not just for her, but out of loyalty for the act of grief. (15)

In part because Bush comes from Oklahoma and in part because of her reticence, the other people at Adam’s Rib never fully accept her; indeed, they virtually ostracize her. Yet Bush battles for a child not related to her by blood. Furthermore, Bush alone has the courage to deal with Hannah Wing’s insanity. We later learn that Bush also raised Hannah and even attempted to heal her and to scrub the odor of cyanide from her. Only Bush ventures to defy tradition by changing feast rules. By altering customs, Bush renders the “tainted” feast a communion. In telling Angela about Bush’s mourning feast, Agnes muses, “I don’t know how to measure love. Not by cup or bowl, not in distance, either, but that’s what rose from the iron pot as steam, that was the food taken into our bodies. It was the holy sacrament of you we ate that day, so don’t think you were never loved” (16). The feast attendees, then, not only mourn the “loss” of a loved one but also celebrate union. The communion with the “dead” joins Angela to each person partaking of the food and also expands the community, by “taking in” another valuable outcast. Agnes explains that the community “came to love [Bush] that night. She’d gone to the old ways, the way we used to live. From the map inside ourselves. Maybe it reminded us that we too had made our own ways here and were ourselves outcasts and runaways from other lands and tribes to start with” (17). Although the outcast Bush breaks with tradition by cooking the food her-

self, her solitary labors compel the community to remember the origin and reason for traditions. Traditions encourage community solidarity, especially in the time of grief. Pointing to Hogan's mixed-blood Chickasaw/Anglo heritage, Benay Blend remarks that "As a participant in two cultural traditions, Hogan draws from each to create new patterns of individual and communal identity" (67). By insisting that the community draw "outsiders" into its circle, Hogan draws a "map that resists the falsely rigid bounds of outwardly imposed culture . . . [and] integrates all fragments of her being into what she depicts as whole" (68). As Christopher B. Teuton asserts, "The act of returning with new knowledge and fresh interpretations creates new terrain upon which the community may continue to grow. Knowledge is sought and valued in relation to the collective harmony and survival of the community as a whole" (197). Outsider though Bush is, her knowledge of the need for the feast ensures the emotional and cultural survival of the community of the diners.

For Hogan, the disruption of community and its traditions goes beyond the tribal. Catherine Rainwater observes that in both *Mean Spirit* and *Solar Storms*,

Hogan emphasizes not only the mistreatment of Indians, but also the paradoxically self-destructive actions of white society as it damages the earth where white people and Indians alike must live. As Dora-Rouge says in *Solar Storms*, the Europeans have "trapped themselves inside of their own destruction" of the world. (98)

Although unequivocally incriminating whites for Indian starvation, Hogan shows that whites too risk suffering the poisonous effects of the ecological damage they incur.

Besides widening the community's parameters, Bush's initiating a unique practice ensures the community's distribution of grief. After her guests have eaten, Bush, "in front of everyone, . . . cut[s] her long hair. The way we used to do long ago to show we had grief or had lost someone dear" (16). Nor is this the only custom she revives: "When the dishes were piled up, [Bush] went to

the middle of the room where she had placed her earthly goods, then in a giveaway, she gave each diner present some part of her world" (16–17). Bush gives away virtually everything she owns, including her food—she even gives away the clothes she wears to the feast, keeping only her white sleeping gown, a seemingly foolhardy gesture, since the feast takes place during the coldest time of the North's winter. Yet Bush's innovative ritual does more than show her individual willingness to attune with Angela's suffering under Hannah's starvation-induced coldness and insanity. The dispersal of Bush's possessions activates a primary function of a mourning feast: to distribute the grief among an entire community. After cataloging the items the diners take from Bush, Agnes concludes, "But the most important thing they carried [away] was Bush's sorrow. It was small now, and child-sized, and it slid its hand inside theirs and walked away with them. . . . After that [Angela's] absence sat at every table, occupied every room, walked through the doors of every house" (16–17). Beyond invoking Christ as the unseen guest at every table, Bush's dispersal of material things helps her achieve an important goal of a funeral: to help the bereaved overcome sorrow. While other types of feasts might serve to distribute the community's abundance, in Bush's mourning feast, the distribution of goods signals the equal distribution of sorrow. Bush performs no act of selfishness here, for the entire community should have mourned the loss of the child in the first place. In addition, the community previously excluded Bush from itself and consequently slighted her suffering. Only as she gives away her possessions do "Some of the people [cry]. Not just for [Angela], but for all the children lost to us, taken away" (17). By incorporating the new ritual of giving away all she owns, Bush reminds the community of its obligation to "take away" a portion of individual sorrow.

While other feasts might feature food reflecting the community's bounty, many of the foods Bush serves at her feast call attention to white actions that have caused emotional and physical starvation. The first food she prepares, oxtails, calls to Agnes's mind the encroachment of white settlements:

I thought of the old days when the oxen arrived in black train cars from the dark, flat fields of Kansas, diseased beasts that had been yoked together in burden. All the land, even our lost land, was shaped by them and by the hated thing that held them together as rain and sunlight and snow fell on their toiling backs. (11–12)

Bush is left not even with the “diseased beast,” but merely the discarded tail of an animal that, like Indigenous people, suffered greatly under white rule. Instead of rejecting the oxtails as repulsive reminders of whites’ stealing of tribal lands, Bush, who is capable of distinguishing the victim (the oxen) from the victimizer (whites), uses the symbol of white oppression to nourish her guests.

She also cooks rabbits, “poor, thin, winter rabbits” (12). Agnes’s ruminations about the oxen remind us that land appropriation by whites has eliminated the plentiful game that once sustained Indigenous people. The starvation of Hannah Wing and the people of Elk Island represents those most brutally victimized by white settlement. Bush also prepares corn, an inexpensive and indigenous food staple of the Chickasaws (Pritzker 372). But according to Agnes, the most significant food Bush offers her guests is the wild rice (also indigenous) harvested two years before. As Agnes explains to Angela, “the rice was the most important thing because you had gone with us that fall day. You were all wrapped in cotton, with netting over your face so that the little bugs and dust wouldn’t bother you as we drifted through the plants, clicking the sticks that knocked rice into the boat” (13). Agnes’s story of the wild rice reveals Bush’s love for and devotion to Angela and reminds us of the county’s outrageous decision to separate Bush and Angela, emotionally starving them both.

While the foods Bush serves underscore her reasons for holding the mourning feast, her actions in relation to those foods suggest ways in which members of the community might counter physical and emotional starvation imposed by white actions. Both Agnes and Bush realize that the oxen, dislocated from lands to which they

had adapted, share with Indians the burden of a yoke that inhibits natural existence. Although the rabbits Bush serves are “poor and thin,” Bush herself has hunted them. Bush supplies her guests with more than lean game here—her actions suggest that self-reliance has its place, even though white practices tremendously inhibit the exercise of that self-sufficiency. Bush also suggests the value of self-reliance in her own growing of the “inexpensive” corn she provides—Bush gathers or grows practically all her own food. But perhaps more significantly, Bush does not just serve the corn she grew; she transforms it. She “soaked the corn in lye and ashes until it became the sweetest hominy, and who would have believed such a caustic thing could sweeten and fatten the corn?” (13).

Bush uses what she has, transforms it, and uses it to “serve” the community. Holding the feast in itself witnesses Bush’s power to transform “a caustic thing.” Bush herself has harvested the wild rice, but its significance extends beyond a nod toward self-reliance. Since the rice connects Angela to Bush in memory, we realize the value that Bush places on memory of Angela to help call her back.

Bush will wait twelve years for Angela’s return, and she will never give up hope. But before Bush demonstrates such unwavering fortitude, she first fights the county for Angela’s custody. Political action, then, precedes patience. In an interview with Barbara J. Cook, Hogan proclaims that “For Native peoples there is no difference [between the spiritual and the political]” (Cook, “Interview” 11). Bush’s fight with the courts and her protesting the Quebec damming project helps to “negate . . . the stereotype of Native women as passive victims of oppression” (Blend 69).

To sustain her vigil for Angela’s return, Bush relies not only on memory, community, and political activism but also on divinity. Agnes remembers that “Bush put a piece of each of the different foods in her blue bowl for the spirits, wiped her hands on her apron, and took the bowl outside. I could see through the doorway how heat rose from the bowl like a prayer carried to the sky, begging any and all gods in the low clouds to listen” (15). Bush alters the custom of leaving food outside for the departed spirit, for Angela is not dead. But Bush, after losing her battle with the

county, continues to press her case with higher courts. Her preparation and management of the food speaks eloquently about her self-reliance, intelligence, power of transformation, memory, political activism, reliance on divinity, and perseverance. All of these qualities can be taken up to minimize the ravages of cultural and physical starvation.

Each of the qualities that Bush employs to counter hunger belies its own definition. Bush's "self-reliance," for example, carries neither Horatio Algerian nor isolationist sentiments. Ultimately, self-reliant strength functions for communal good. Paradoxically, part of that strength rests in her willingness to relinquish all she possesses, including her self-reliance. Because she has given away her worldly possessions, Bush runs the risk of freezing to death. After the feast, the ghost of her self-reliance forbids Bush to come to Agnes's house on the mainland. But Bush finally accepts Agnes's offer of shelter. Worried about Bush, Agnes says,

I laced up my boots and went back over the frozen water [to Bush's house]. She was thinner, but she looked happy, and she didn't argue when I opened this bear coat I've always worn and wrapped it around the two of us and walked her back to the mainland. . . . We were two people inside the fur of this bear. (18–19)

Reconfiguring the holy trinity, the "community" of Agnes and Bush is contained by the animal world. Blend concludes that, ultimately, Hogan "create[s] new patterns of individual and communal identity" (67). That Hogan represents those patterns with such indefinable precision testifies to her artistry.

In amending traditions of the mourning feast, Hogan indicts white culture for causing Native Americans' need to alter their own customs. But ironically, the alteration of traditions spotlights the enduring value of the very traditions Bush modifies. The unusual mourning feast points to the resilience of Indigenous people and reveals their valor in dealing with hardships perpetrated by white culture. We often forget that the celebration of our own national feast, Thanksgiving, commenced with whites' showing gratitude

to the Indigenous people. Native American generosity toward settlers ensured the newcomers' survival. It is bitter food for thought that the development of white abundance precipitated the starvation of such gracious hosts.

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, all Hogan quotations are from *Solar Storm*.

2. Although Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin's groundbreaking *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post Colonial Literatures* conceives of postcolonial literatures as "writing by those peoples formerly colonized by Britain" (1), which includes African, Caribbean, Australian, Canadian, New Zealander, and (eastern) Indian writings, the work does not discuss American literatures, since the United States won independence from Britain before the beginning of the nineteenth century. Yet Deborah L. Madsen finds the exclusion of U.S. writing "untenable. Writers of colour, publishing in America, face precisely the problems of marginalization and cultural erasure that confront post-colonial writers of Africa and the Caribbean, and indigenous post-colonial writers of Canada and Australia and New Zealand" (5). Regardless of the parameters established by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, Madsen and others argue persuasively for extending the boundaries of postcolonial discourse.

3. David L. Moore contends that too often analysis of Native American literatures has been framed by "dialectical binaries, such as civilization v. wilderness, Euro-American v. Indian, or Euro-American v. African American, [which] [miss] the blurring of those boundaries that drives the pragmatic unfolding of American identities and differences" (10).

4. For a discussion of the biblical references in *Solar Storms*, including the town name of "Adam's Rib," see Norienne Courtney Fauth, "Excavating the Past: (Re)Writing Continuity in Postcolonial Native American and Jamaican Literature."

5. Beyond the story of Angela's healing, according to Ellen Lester Arnold, *Solar Storms* creates "'a third space' in the general sense that Trinh T. Minh-ha uses it . . . to refer to that undefined and indefinable space between binary opposites, a 'non-binartist space of reflection'" (7).

6. In his brilliant essay "Standing Naked Before the Storm: Linda Hogan's *Power* and Critique of Apocalyptic Narrative," Michael Hardin hints at the connection of the Christian "linear, apocalyptic" vision and

Gerald Vizenor's transformation of this vision into "a return, a cyclic event" in *Heirs of Columbus* (143).

7. Drawing on classical Greek mythology and Jungian psychology, Neumann delves into the evolution of consciousness.

8. See Linda Hogan, "Bush's Mourning Feast."

9. In discussing Hogan's *Mean Spirit* and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, Jennifer Brice shows how "dispossession [in the two novels] leads to spiritual anorexia" (128).

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SHORT FICTION

The News of the Day

BETH PIATOTE

The mirror fell off the wall, and Marcel knew that his father was dead in another country. Marcel reached his hand to his breast pocket and withdrew his watch from its place near his still-beating heart. The face told him the time, and the minute hand obediently ticked forward. Marcel sat down. He looked at the watch again. He thought of his sister laying the plates on the table for the evening meal. He thought of his mother, face tilted toward the sky, lifting her hand to suspend a crystal snowflake in the window of his father's shop in Paris.

Marcel sat there, staring at the wall that had so recently released the mirror, at the faint outline where sunlight had faded the surface.

Marcel heard the handle of the door click open. Charles entered the room, his books and a newspaper tucked neatly in his arm, pressed snugly against his black overcoat. His shoulders bore the evidence of snowfall, but the flakes were quickly disappearing into the darkness of the wool. His eyes took in the surroundings: the unmade bed, the mirror sprawled on the floor with a jagged crack across its face, Marcel's troubled expression. Charles closed the door quietly behind him. Charles crossed the room to his desk, slipped into his chair, and unfolded his newspaper. He sat, straight-backed, and opened the pages, the greyish newsprint like a sagging flag in his slender brown fingers. From behind the paper, Charles did not observe Marcel, although it would have been easy enough to do so. Charles was a man who respected another man's dignity.

Marcel continued to stare at the wall.

Charles shifted in his chair.

Snow floated silently from the sky in the fields beyond their shuttered window.

There had been no good news for months. Every day Charles would fortify himself to open the paper, scanning it quickly for dispatches from the correspondents at the Agency. It had been less than two weeks since Sitting Bull had died at the hands of Indian police. Sometimes, when he could voice the words, Charles read the news out loud to Marcel, who listened attentively. It was one of the many things Charles appreciated about his friend; Marcel did not resist hearing stories of the military campaigns on Indian lands. Marcel did not flinch at stories of starvation at the Agency or the persistence of the Ghost Dance; he neither defended nor decried the Seventh Cavalry. Marcel could take it in with perfect equanimity—the gift of his foreign blood. Why this was such a blessing Charles could not precisely express.

Occasionally the two men spoke to one another in French, a convergence they discovered soon after they arrived, from separate worlds, at Boston College. It had started as a little joke between them, when Marcel had cast a sly smile at Charles during a lecture on the French-Indian War. Their alliance was a conspiracy against history, a challenge to the end of the Seven Years War. By fate the two men had the same French surname, and this fate is perhaps the reason why they were assigned to share a room in the men's hall. Roommates for the past three years, the pair now spent their Christmas holiday virtually alone in Boston. Neither could return to his own country.

Charles's name was borrowed from the Jesuit fathers. From them he had adapted his tongue to French and Latin and the Eucharist, and as each of these alien tastes had dissolved in his mouth he felt hungry for more. The first foreign languages came a little easier to him than English. For Marcel it was much the same—first he spoke his mother tongue, then Latin, then English. When the two friends needed to speak most easily to one another they fell into French. But Charles remained always alone in his own first language.

In their quiet room, Charles fixed his eyes on the front page. A

FIGHT WITH THE HOSTILES. BIG FOOT'S TREACHERY PRECIPITATES A BATTLE.

Marcel groaned softly as he allowed his body to collapse onto his bed. Marcel stared at the ceiling. The familiarity of this repose provided him some comfort, as he gave his mind to thoughts of his father. In August Marcel had begged his parents to allow him to stay home in Paris, to help his mother run the bookstore after the stroke. But Marcel's father had insisted that his son return to his studies. Now Marcel could think only of his need to hear his father's voice again.

Marcel wasn't sure if Charles had made a noise, or moved, or what precisely, but Marcel became aware of his friend. Marcel turned his face toward the desk.

The words came out dry and mechanical. "What is the news?" Marcel asked.

Charles did not answer right away.

Then Charles cleared his throat and held the paper away from his chest.

"There was an attack," he said.

Marcel sat up. "And?"

"Many were killed. It says here . . ."

Charles cleared his throat again.

"It says here that *Big Foot's* braves turned upon their captors this morning and a bloody fight ensued. The trouble came when the soldiers attempted to disarm the Indians, who had surrendered to Major Whiteside. This move on the part of the troops was resisted, and a bloody and desperate battle at close quarters followed, in which the Indians were shot down ruthlessly and in which the lives of several soldiers were sacrificed."

Charles paused. His eyes scanned the column. He continued: "*The Indians were shot down wherever found, no quarter being given by any one. . . . It is doubted if by night either a buck or a squaw out of all Big Foot's band is left to tell the tale of this day's treachery.*"

Charles closed the paper and laid it to the side of his desk.

Charles shifted his body slightly away from his friend. He pulled open the desk drawer and extracted a small wooden box. He care-

fully withdrew a quillwork amulet attached to a leather cord. He ran his thumb across its gentle form, a little blue lizard.

"*Non*," Marcel whispered. "*Cela ne peut pas . . .*"

Charles nodded. He could not turn to his friend. Charles would not look at the mirror, the door, the bed. He could see only his mother's work in his hands.

Outside the snow continued to fall.

A rap on the door shook the stillness of the room. Both men looked up.

"Telegram!" came a voice from the other side.

Charles rose, crossed the room, and calmly opened the door. Marcel watched the black-rimmed paper pass from the dispatcher's hand to Charles. Marcel buried his face in his hands and waited for Charles to deliver the news. But Charles did not come to Marcel's side.

Marcel heard a noise then, the crinkle of paper like the breath of a falling leaf. Marcel slowly turned his gaze to his friend. Immediately he saw why Charles had remained in place: the telegram was for him.

The newspaper quotations in this story, represented in italics, are drawn from "A Fight with the Hostiles," *New York Times*, December 30, 1890, 1.

Book Reviews

Claudia Sadowski-Smith. *Border Fictions: Globalization, Empire, and Writing at the Boundaries of the United States*. New World Studies. Ser. ed. A. James Arnold. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2008. ISBN: 978-0-8139-2677-3. 187 pp.

Jill Doerfler, *University of Minnesota Duluth*

As interest in the field of border studies grows, there is a need for succinct, teachable texts that can be used to shape courses. Indeed, for those looking to develop a literature course that analyzes the impact and influence of borders, *Border Fictions* is an excellent choice. This text is also highly useful for scholars who are interested in learning more about this growing field and how its methodologies and insights might prove useful in their own work. *Border Fictions* is on the cutting edge of the field and is (to my knowledge) the first text that compares and contrasts multiethnic and transnational cultural representations in fiction about the U.S. borders while placing the literatures within their social and political contexts. In *Border Fictions*, Claudia Sadowski-Smith proposes a new model of inter-American studies utilizing fiction and theories of globalization. Each chapter examines a range of fiction, by both well-known and lesser-known authors, including novels, short story collections, autobiographies, and plays, and places the pieces within their respective historical and political contexts. Sadowski-Smith also puts the pieces in dialogue with each other, establishing valuable connections as well as important distinctions.

She emphasizes a hemispheric orientation, focusing on two specific manifestations of empire—free trade and the increased militarization of the U.S. border.

In the useful introduction, Sadowski-Smith describes the methodological concentration of the text:

Border Fictions suggests an alternative inter-American framework that focuses on North American borders and that places into dialogue hemispheric approaches to these geographies from Chicana/o, Asian American, American Indian, Latin American, and Canadian studies. Such a model shifts the focus in humanities-based border studies from a particular ethnic group, its critique of exclusive notions of U.S. citizenship, and its connections to Latin America, to a spatialized perspective that acknowledges the internal diversity of border areas and its linkage to theories of nationalism and U.S. imperialism. (17)

She is careful to note that while she proposes the bridging of academic disciplines, such collaborations and connections need not lead to the weakening of individual ethnic studies departments or the creation of inter-American programs. She envisions interdisciplinary partnerships that would encourage new forms of academic inquiry. While acknowledging that this study is limited to texts either written in or translated into English, Sadowski-Smith notes that work in inter-American studies could be developed in Spanish, French, Portuguese, Indigenous languages, and the many other languages of the Americas.

The first chapter, “Chicana/o Writing and the U.S.-Mexico Border,” delineates the historical tradition of Chicana/o literature that develops the international boundary between the United States and Mexico as an explicit setting and theme. As a means to set the stage for comparison, Sadowski-Smith traces the themes of borderlands/*la frontera* and Aztlán in the work of many authors including Ito Romo, Miguel Méndez, Gloria Anzaldúa, Sandra Cisneros, and Lucrecia Guerrero. In doing so, she places Chicana/o and Latina/o studies at the intersection from which other literatures may be connected in an inter-American studies framework.

In chapter 2, "Asian Border Crossings," Sadowski-Smith examines representations of "undocumented" Asian im/migrations throughout the Northern Hemisphere. She focuses on the overlooked early work of Edith Maude Eaton (Sui Sin Far), which is set in Canada and depicts the first-known fictional representation of a character to cross the U.S.-Canada border. She also examines Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* for similarities in the experiences of Asians and Latinas/os with U.S. expressions of empire. Sadowski-Smith demonstrates that the works of both authors reveal important intersections among Asian American, Chicana/o, and inter-American studies.

Chapter 3, "Native Border Theory," explores Indigenous perspectives on the U.S.-Mexico and U.S.-Canada borders through the fiction of Leslie Marmon Silko and Thomas King. The focus of these authors on border tribes (Yaqui and Blackfoot) complicates the well-defined colonial nation-state borders, including the role of the border in American Indian studies, while articulating tribal land struggles and sovereignty. Sadowski-Smith argues, "Silko and King fictionalize possible responses to these developments (economic hemispheric agreements and U.S. border militarization) in hemispheric notions of indigeneity that highlight native sovereignty, border crossing, and land rights" (95).

Chapter 4, "A View from the South," considers concerns about nationalism and empire in fiction from Mexican and Mexican American writers including Carlos Fuentes. In 1995, Fuentes published an entire work of fiction on the contemporary U.S.-Mexico border, *La frontera de cristal* (translated in 1997 as *The Crystal Frontier*). Fuentes articulates several forms of nationalism that are detached from state-sponsored forms and highlights how contemporary state governments have created conditions that intensified Mexico's trade and labor dependency. Sadowski-Smith also explores the lesser-known work of Federico Campbell, some of which focuses on Tijuana, and Rosina Conde, whose work highlights gender.

While noting exceptions such as the work of Russell Brown, Sadowski-Smith argues that contemporary inter-American schol-

arship has all but ignored Canada and its border with the United States, pointing out that most U.S. cultural productions depict Canada as an extension of the United States. Thus, chapter 5, “A Border Like No Other,” addresses a variety of Canadian fictions, including works by Janette Turner Hospital, Michael V. Smith, Clark Blaise, and Guillermo Verdecchia, that examine Canadian identity and the ways in which its southern border has functioned in relation to immigration and trade.

In *Border Fictions*, Sadowski-Smith packs in a breadth of textual analysis, theory, and historical and contemporary background information all while demonstrating the ways in which a spatialized application can bring new insights. This text is an important contribution to the field that will be highly useful for courses discussing globalization, nationalism, and borders. For those of us working in the field of American Indian literature, the text provides a new analytical lens and opens up a range of valuable possibilities for increased dialogue with other fields.

Ernestine Hayes. *Blonde Indian: An Alaska Native Memoir*. Sun Tracks: An American Indian Literary Series. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 2006. ISBN: 0-8165-2537-4. 173 pp.

Becca Gercken, *University of Minnesota Morris*

With her opening words, Ernestine Hayes informs readers that she will tell her story in a fashion that honors her ancestors and Tlingit oral tradition. She begins in her native language—the book’s first printed words are “haa shagoon” (“our ancestors”)—and gives her Tlingit name, Saankaláxt, before her “white man name.” She proceeds to recount her ancestry, establishing both her right to speak as a Tlingit woman and her connection to the land: “We belong to Lingít Aaní” (n. pag.). It is a traditional beginning to what has become, sadly, a traditional story: Native families damaged by assimilationist policies and alcohol abuse. Yet Hayes offers a hopeful narrative of returning home to the land that will always embrace its people.

The daughter of a Lingít woman and a white man, Hayes grew up in the Indian Village in Juneau, Alaska, before moving with her mother to California. She spent her earliest years being raised by her grandmother and her aunt while her mother was treated for tuberculosis. Hayes, who began abusing alcohol as a teenager, describes a life of hardship that includes relationships with abusive men, estrangement from her children, and extended periods of homelessness. Through it all, the idea of returning to Alaska sustains her. The land itself, consistently represented not only as the singular shaping force of her culture but also as part of her family, signifies redemption for Hayes.

Hayes divides her memoir into four sections, each introduced by a traditional story; every section includes not only details of Hayes's life but also origin stories, clan histories, and the histories of her family and other members of the Indian community. She moves from autobiography to Raven stories to stories of the land with little transition, reminding readers that, for her, there should be no disconnection among these aspects of life. These shifts work best when Hayes allows readers to form connections, as when she moves from sharing troubled parent-child relationships to stories of salmon spawning and bears feasting before hibernation; the reader understands that while the perfection of the earth's cycle highlights the tragedy of failed elders in Juneau's Indian Village, Hayes takes hope from nature's cyclical pattern that conditions for herself and her people will improve. The text is less engaging when Hayes overtly "reads" for us, as when she warns that Tlingit children in the womb are just as likely to hear "the crooning of a drunken woman" or the "angry shouts of a jealous husband" as songs that tell "the history of the clan and the stories of her people" and then states in the next line, "These are the scars with which Raven is now born" (19).

The repetitions within the text firmly locate Hayes in the oral tradition, as do her frequent calls to the reader, "Let us look to Lingít Aaní" (58), and markers of storytelling practices, "This is our story" (74). Even readers familiar with strategies for reproducing oral storytelling may at first be disconcerted by Hayes's

frequent and lengthy word-for-word repetitions. There is also an entire storyline, featuring Old Tom and his family, that seems disconnected from Hayes's own story, although one can read these sections anthropologically as an effort to include male experiences and to show the cyclical nature of the damage affecting Hayes's community. There are also isolated passages that seem to float in the text with no chronological grounding and key points that lack context or explanation, most notably commentary on Hayes's extended homelessness. And while the title prepares readers for an examination of Hayes's mixed-blood ancestry, other than an opening sequence in which her grandmother sings "blonde Indian" to her and brief remarks regarding her father, Hayes does not engage this topic. Still, Hayes's easy movements from her own history to traditional stories hold the text together as a compelling memoir.

Readers will surely appreciate this addition to American Indian autobiography since there is a dearth of first-person narratives from Alaska's Native peoples. Hayes's inclusion of her people's origin stories is captivating, in particular her description of the Tlingit clan system. Hayes teaches us that "On one river, the people came over the ice. On the other important river . . . the people came under the ice. . . . It was decided by those wise ones that they would form one people, in two sides" (132). Hayes's renderings of these traditional stories, including the stories of Raven, the bear, and the salmon, are lyrical and yet rigorous. She makes sure to separate herself from an academic understanding of her culture: "Contemporary scholars call [the Eagles and the Ravens] moieties, but my grandmother only ever called them sides" (53). Hayes's strategy here, and in similar sequences throughout the book, allows her to speak with double authority; she retains the traditional story and meaning of her people while acknowledging her full awareness of how outside "experts" understand her culture.

Passages in which Hayes describes the Alaskan landscape are often riveting, and she masterfully weaves in traditional stories, teaching us bits of Tlingit as she moves forward in her narrative. Her representation of the land and its people can sometimes be read as essentialist—in her opening, Hayes writes that "There is

not one Lingít person, from the most modern corporate executive to the most unsophisticated villager . . . who will not say, ‘This is our land, for we still belong to it.’” Yet such comments are almost always tied to a traditional story or, as with the case above, to a culturally appropriate introduction. Hayes’s determination not to provide transitions between specific moments of autobiography and traditional stories or clan histories complicates this issue and may leave some readers feeling that Hayes too often speaks for all Tlingít people.

Hayes currently teaches English at the University of Alaska Southeast. *Blonde Indian* includes little commentary on the education that helped her attain this appointment, an exclusion that prompts readers to credit her eventual success to Tlingít tradition and the hard path Hayes took to return to it rather than any formal training. Indeed, in the description of her formal education at the hands of white teachers and priests, Hayes mourns the fact that “After a while [she] could no longer hear the forest, and worse, the forest could no longer hear [her]” (162). With the publication of this memoir, Hayes can be sure that the forest will hear her.

Stew Magnuson. *The Death of Raymond Yellow Thunder, and Other True Stories from the Nebraska-Pine Ridge Border Towns*. Plains Histories Series. Lubbock: Texas Tech UP.
ISBN: 978-0-89672-634-5. 324 pp.

Jeanette Palmer, *University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

In Gordon, Nebraska, a man named Raymond Yellow Thunder (Lakota) was murdered in cold blood. His killers were not hardened violent criminals, but they were hardened racists and they were drunk. A young woman and three young men were the perpetrators of this crime; in their view, they were just having “good fun” with an Indian. How anyone could think that throwing an elderly man into the back of a car and driving around for hours and then throwing him in a broken-down car lot half-naked in the winter is “having good fun” seems incomprehensible to right-minded peo-

ple; yet, this is how Raymond Yellow Thunder was abused. These young people were the product of a racist, lawless environment. Raymond Yellow Thunder was just trying to walk home.

Generations of violence, broken treaties, squatting settlers, and lawlessness contribute to the tenuous relationship between Native peoples and Euroamericans in Nebraska and South Dakota; this text addresses all of these issues. *The Death of Raymond Yellow Thunder*, by Stew Magnuson, is a microcosm representing the macrocosm of relationships between Euroamerican homesteaders, the U.S. government, and Native nations for centuries. What happened to Raymond Yellow Thunder, sadly, is not unique; however, Magnuson shows that destructive and prejudicial relationships in border towns and among their citizens are more common than most people may know. Often, border towns near reservations are largely overlooked by law enforcement and the general population. Magnuson deftly unravels the intricacies that led up to the death of Yellow Thunder. This spiderweb of interrelationships, misunderstandings, prejudice, and government negligence combined with the will of Native people to survive are the parts that make up the whole.

Magnuson begins with the inability of the U.S. government to protect the Black Hills from gold speculators and land grabbers in the late 1800s. He continues through time to illustrate that the U.S. government has consistently been unreliable in its role to enforce its own laws and treaties regarding sovereign Native nations. Magnuson recounts the plight of John Gordon (the namesake of Gordon, Nebraska) and his confrontation with the U.S. Army. Gordon was trying to illegally lead a party of gold speculators into the sacred Black Hills, or Paha Sapa. Although the army was successful in foiling Gordon's trip and he was clapped in irons, Gordon was made a hero by the townspeople because he was just a common man trying to get rich and make good. Magnuson also gives a good background of the Native Lakotas, their connection to the land and their removal from it to the Pine Ridge reservation, as well as background on Red Cloud and other prominent Lakota people. A common thread of the text is the white man's historical disrespect for Native people's land, culture, and rights.

Magnuson traces the history of Native people, non-European immigrants, and Euroamerican settlers who came to the area in the late 1880s. He questions the motives and biases of some news reporters, throughout the decades, regarding what they reported about the history of Gordon and the trial of Yellow Thunder's murderers, versus actual historical events. Many stories of European settlers are intertwined with the story of the establishment of the small Nebraska border towns. Some settlers were friendly with the Native peoples while others were not. Magnuson includes a short history of Mari Sandoz and her father Jules, who was a friend to the Lakotas. When discussing the actual trial of Yellow Thunder's murderers, Magnuson gives a fair accounting of all the parties in attendance, from the wife of the murderer to the American Indian Movement (AIM) activists, including Russell Means and Bob Yellow Bird. Magnuson's fair and neutral reporting coupled with his immense amount of research gives the reader an excellent perspective on the trial. He deftly expresses the significance of the drum that the Native peoples intoned throughout the trial, the oppressive heat they must have withstood, and the relief of a fair decision by a fair judge and a jury that convicted the criminals.

Magnuson does not attempt to bias the reader's view; instead, his goal seems to create awareness of the current situation between Native peoples and Euroamericans in border regions. Not only is the town of Gordon scrutinized, but the surrounding settlements of Whiteclay and Alliance are too. Magnuson delves into the horrible past where signs in shop windows disallowed entrance to "dogs and Indians" as late as the last decade (192). The fight for Whiteclay is also a part of this text; Magnuson addresses the irresponsibility of the Nebraska government to police the border towns and enforce alcohol consumption and sale laws. The town of Whiteclay, just a few miles from the dry Pine Ridge Reservation, sells thousands of cans of beer a week yet has only fourteen residents. This town is a menace to all the people it services and is part of the governmental negligence Magnuson addresses. His call seems to be for government to enforce its laws regarding the sale and consumption of liquor and quit turning a blind eye to the situation.

The book incorporates numerous photographs that enhance the text, lending it a sense of poignancy and immediacy. At the conclusion of the text, Magnuson leaves the reader thinking. Nothing has been solved; things remain as they are, yet now the reader is responsible for what has been learned and can no longer ignore the reality.

The index offers a quick guide to the information, and the notes include a plethora of valuable sources for further investigation on the topic of border towns, the American Indian Movement, and government policy and negligence. This well-researched, excellently written, and informative book flows in and out of the history of the border of South Dakota and Nebraska. From readers looking for an informative read that flows like a well-written novel to researchers seeking information, this text is a valuable source. *The Death of Raymond Yellow Thunder* traces the horrible death of a gentle man and the people who survived after him. This story is about survival and the hope for change.

Brad D. Lookingbill. *War Dance at Fort Marion: Plains Indians War Prisoners*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2007.
ISBN: 978-0806137391. 290 pp.

Phillip Earenfight, ed. *A Kiowa's Odyssey: A Sketchbook from Fort Marion*. Seattle, WA: U of Washington P; Carlisle, PA: Trout Gallery, 2007. ISBN: 978-0295987279. 230 pp.

Joyce M. Szabo. *Art from Fort Marion: The Silberman Collection*. Western Legacy Series. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2008.
ISBN: 978-0806138831. 197 pp.

Richard Pearce, *Wheaton College*

Three new books broaden and complicate our understanding of Fort Marion narrative art by looking at it both more closely and more broadly from overlapping perspectives. They also provide new information about the drawings and the individual artists and place them in a transcultural context. Brad D. Lookingbill's *War*

Dance at Fort Marion is a collective biography of the prisoners and Captain Richard Henry Pratt. By focusing closely on about twenty warriors (including the warrior woman Buffalo Calf), Lookingbill gives us a sense of them as individuals and shows how, in their different ways, they not only adapted to the requirements of a military prison but also appropriated what they could from their experiences to gain new forms of power and enlarge their sense of Indianness. He also shows how, despite his dedication to assimilating his prisoners, Pratt came to understand much about their culture and became flexible in executing his educational plan.

Lookingbill begins with the last days of Plains Indian resistance and takes us through the traumatic twenty-four-day journey of seventy-two warriors from Fort Sill, Oklahoma, to Fort Marion in St. Augustine, Florida. He elaborates on their basic training (where they competed to become members of a chain of command and were allowed to have guns on guard duty) and their variety of new activities and experiences. And he focuses on individual warrior-artists, as they met white people from the growing number of tourists, sold them their art, and gave well-attended performances of their tribal dances and wild-west shows. But Lookingbill also shows how these activities had ambivalent consequences. On the one hand, they enabled the prisoners to perform their traditional roles, maintain their art forms, and educate their patrons about their different lifestyles. On the other hand, however, they provided Pratt with what he saw as evidence of his success in transforming savages into civilized people. This is particularly evident in his encouragement of ledger art, where, beside providing the prisoners with colored pencils and ledger books, he instructed them to draw pictures in serial order—which, as other authors elaborate, would exemplify the evolutionary philosophy upon which his educational program was based.

Lookingbill also follows the prisoners as they returned to their reservations, where the federal government, failing to abide by its promises, offered little assistance. As a result, many warriors went back and forth between the “white man’s road” and “the blanket,” and some of them suffered greatly. Nonetheless, many of the pris-

oners incorporated what they learned and came to believe at Fort Marion, while maintaining their old beliefs and practices—and creating resilient new forms of Native identity.

In *A Kiowa's Odyssey: A Sketchbook from Fort Marion*, Phillip Earenfight has produced a beautiful book with actual-sized and true-colored ledger drawings by Etahdleuh Doanmoe. He has also brought together new essays by four major scholars, who provide complementary perspectives and shed new light on the drawings, the cohort of warrior artists, and this singular moment in Southern Plains Indian history.

The collection begins with Brad Lookingbill's "Because I Want to Be a Man': Portrait of Etahdleuh Doanmoe," where, continuing the collective biographical approach of his book, Lookingbill elaborates on the narrative Etahdleuh produced in his series of drawings. He fills out the historical details of the scenes in Etahdleuh's ledger book—a Kiowa camp before the surrender, entering Fort Sill, the stops along the cross-country ride to Florida, and life in the prison and St. Augustine—and focuses on moments that provide traces of Etahdleuh, the complicated man who "remains [a] kind of mystery" (52). He also provides more specific information about Pratt's compassionate concern and respect for his prisoners, particularly Etahdleuh, with whom he became very close, and his flexibility in the practice of his historically liberal experiment.

Pratt risked his commission to "rehabilitate" his prisoners. He did not require but expected them to attend weekly religious services. He recognized the damp and dismal condition of their quarters and directed them to build new ones on the upper deck. He assigned some of them guard duty on and off post. He hired them out for responsible forms of work and let them keep the pay. He gave them permission to "showcase their culture" (43): paint their bodies, strip to breech cloths and hold powwows, perform war dances, beat their drums, sing traditional songs, reenact mock hunts, and stage Native drama to large audiences who bought their tickets. And, of course, he allowed them to wander around St. Augustine and sell their art. He also appointed Etahdleuh as the quartermaster sergeant, enabled him draw stores from the supply room, and gave him the responsibility of keeping records on gov-

ernment issues of food and clothing. Etahdleuh, in turn, did this so well that he was rewarded with the freedom to go off post to Pratt's house, deliver messages, and become a familiar figure in the household.

Finally, Lookingbill follows Etahdleuh to Carlisle, the Smithsonian, his reservation, and, when he became ill, back to Carlisle, where he soon died. Recognizing the complications of Etahdleuh's life, Lookingbill concludes:

Etahdleuh died tragically, but his story lives on through the renderings he made at Fort Marion. . . . Each drawing opens a window into Etahdleuh's world, providing glimpses into his point of view. . . . His depictions wonderfully present the blending of discourses as well as the mixing of messages. They illustrate his devotion to Kiowa belief, that is, Etahdleuh stood in good relation to all things. The sketchbook of his odyssey movingly documents the exploits of a Kiowa, whose resiliency enabled him to rearticulate and to enlarge his own sense of identity in relation to others and to changing circumstances. His tale of resistance, incarceration, and exile defies any single reading, though, because the bundle of episodes remain forever entangled with his "being" as well as his "becoming". . . . His chronicle of memorable scenes represents his quest to tell his own story. The drawings illuminate the historical consciousness of a warrior artist, who "counts his coup" in service to his people. . . . [and] lived an exemplary life with distinction, one that in many respects revealed his deepest aspirations for himself and for the Kiowa. They also open old wounds that remain painfully fresh, especially for the generations scarred by actions intended to, in Pratt's words: "kill the Indian [stet.] and save the man." (52)

Phillip Earenfight is an art historian and the director of Dickinson College's Trout Gallery, which owns three of the drawings made at Fort Marion. His essay is titled "Reconstructing *A Kiowa Odyssey*: Etahdleuh, Bear's Heart, and the Yale-Dickinson Draw-

ings from Fort Marion.” While narrowly focused, it leads us to understand that the sketchbook called *A Kiowa Odyssey* is not simply a series of pictographic drawings produced by Etahdleuh Doanmoe but a carefully organized multivocal narrative of transformation, resulting from a collaboration of Etahdleuh, Pratt, and his son Mason in three distinct phases.

The first phase is only speculative. There is strong evidence that Etahdleuh created the sketchbook for Pratt, who had provided not only materials but also encouragement and, possibly, Western models of art and narrative. Moreover, the book was created shortly before the prisoners’ release, when both he and Pratt might have wanted a record of their years at Fort Marion. Etahdleuh had learned to read, write, and live by the white man’s ways, and Pratt would have wanted evidence of his educational experiment’s success. So it is likely that Etahdleuh was a willing participant in a form of collaboration that had already begun to shape the genre of ledger art.

In the second phase, Pratt disassembled the pages, numbered them, and typed lengthy captions on those pages that were not titled by Etahdleuh. He therefore turned the series of individual events into a Western narrative, so that the message derived from the sequence is more important than any single image. Indeed, the captions impose Pratt’s interpretive frame on the narrative and pass on some erroneous information to future readers.

In the third phase, Pratt’s son, Mason, to whom he gave the disassembled pages, rebound the book and titled it *A Kiowa Odyssey*—imposing a further limit on the interpretation through the reference to Homer’s epic. Mason also frames what has become a narrative with before-and-after images of Etahdleuh. He adds a print after a painting by Charles Russell of a buffalo hunt as further evidence of Etahdleuh’s assimilation. And he appends a preface that frames the history of the sketchbook within his father’s life. Finally, Earenfight situates the sketchbook among others once owned by Pratt, in collaboration with George Miles, curator of Western Americana at Yale’s Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. He also extends the ledger book’s story to include the role of museums—and provides a segue to the final essay in the volume and to Joyce Szabo’s *Art from Fort Marion*.

Art historian Janet Catherine Berlo's final essay complements the histories of the Fort Marion warrior artists and Etahdleuh's physical sketchbook. She illuminates both the historical content and the style of each drawing. She focuses on the Plains Indian sense of place. Most importantly, she elaborates on the transcultural dialogic that quickly developed in Fort Marion. For, while warriors originally drew pictures to show other warriors, they soon began to draw for army officers, and, at Fort Marion, they drew for the white patrons they met in St. Augustine. The result was a complicated transaction or transcultural exchange. On the one hand, the warrior-artists came from a long history of successful adaptation, a tradition of recording ethnographic details of other tribes, and vivid memories of the traumatic cross-country journey that was nonetheless filled with new sights daily. On the other hand, they gained experience in the conventions of Western art and altered or extended their own conventions in their drawings for white patrons.

This transcultural exchange—with its imbalance of power—led to changes in the artists' subject matter and style along individual lines. But, at the same time, each artist developed some way to “affirm the value and vitality of [his own] traditions in an alien environment” (185). And, as Berlo concludes, “While the Fort Marion prisoners were the objects of the touristic gaze, they were, in turn, gazing back. That is one of the reasons their art is so singularly compelling—it seems to serve as a snapshot of an unusual moment in time. And yet this snapshot synecdochically represents generations of cross-cultural looking” (186).

Joyce M. Szabo concludes this new brilliant triptych of books with her *Art from Fort Marion: The Silberman Collection*. Focusing on the drawings as well as photographs, stereo cards, and letters in the Arthur and Shifra Silberman Collection in the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, she compares and discusses the complex works that supplement those discussed by Lookingbill, Earenfight, and Berlo, adding new information and broadening our understanding of the subject. She also takes up where Berlo left off by expanding the unique transcultural context

of Fort Marion ledger art. Indeed, we enter *Art from Fort Marion* through a sepia-tinted title page with twelve blanketed warriors looking back at the reader. And the transcultural context continues to become a physical part of our reading experience as we encounter many more photographs of warriors in different groupings, as well as the individually distinguished ledger drawings, a map of their journey, and a well-informed text.

Szabo's transcultural context also begins with the cross-country journey, but she shows how it was perceived and represented in different ways. And she expands the transcultural context of Fort Marion art by showing how the cohort of Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, Comanche, and Caddo tribes—with different histories, cultures, and artistic conventions and no experience of living together—formed a collective identity while maintaining their individual and tribal differences. Szabo recounts the differences among the cultures and their experiences with representational art. And she explains how their new experiences, their access to Western forms of representation, and the physical form of the ledger book changed the way they looked at and represented their world.

Moreover, Szabo shows how the Fort Marion artists recorded many of the changes that occurred concerning questions of identity as they interacted with one another, Pratt, their teachers, and people from St. Augustine; as they witnessed new sights; and as they engaged in a variety of new experiences. "These transformations . . . reflected a monumental series of life changes" (153). Their ledger art, she concludes, can "be compared to records of heroic action; the Fort Marion prisoners were warriors surviving another kind of battle" (170). At the same time, their art, along with the photographs of prison life and the prisoners in various groupings or engaged in different activities, played a role in expanding the experience of the tourists who came to St. Augustine, by "giving them insights into lives they could never experience" (169), particularly since the artists had to explain some aspects of their lives to the people who bought their drawings.

Finally, Szabo turns to the role of collections and collectors in the transcultural phenomenon of ledger art, explaining that

in many cases collecting objects is the equivalent to or a substitution for collecting people. Evidence of Native cultures housed in collections, whether private or held by public institutions, is a way of containing or restricting those cultures. This is a reflection of the colonialist attitude of previous eras that continues to exist for many. (170–71)

Late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century museums were influenced by the anthropologists who believed that Native cultures were disappearing. The Silbermans were ahead of their time in wanting to include a wide range of Native drawings and paintings to be appreciated as fine art as well Native American art. But their collection is notable for its absence of protest art and the more daring art of the early twentieth century. Silberman “was a romantic who focused on the past glory of Native American history” (173).

The romantic view has been changing since the 1970s. And now Lookingbill, Earenfight, Berlo, and Szabo have brought our understanding of ledger art into the twenty-first century by filling out the individual and collective histories of this transcultural art form—which Szabo distinguishes by highlighting its intentionality. Chiding those who might call it by the biological term “hybridity,” she makes explicit what was implicit in the collective argument of these three books: “The artists at Fort Marion made drawings that communicated something of what they wanted to relay in ways the new audiences for their work could understand on at least some level” (172–73).

Amelia V. Katanski. *Learning to Write “Indian”: The Boarding-School Experience and American Indian Literature*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2005. ISBN: 0-8061-3719-3. 274 pp.

Ruth Spack, *Bentley College*

In *Learning to Write “Indian”* Amelia Katanski approaches the subject of boarding schools from the perspective of literary and cultural criticism. Using Paul Kroskrity’s model of the repertoire

of identity, she explores the complexity of self-representation in both turn-of-the-century and contemporary narratives. Katanski makes a significant contribution to the field in tracing the continuum of the boarding-school narrative through a variety of genres over time and showing how students “learned to write ‘Indian’”—that is, learned to use the tools they acquired at school “to represent themselves as individuals, as tribal members, as Indians, as artists” (89).

Chapter 1, “Storytellers and Representative Indians in a Theory of Boarding-School Literature,” aims to provide a historical and theoretical foundation for the analyses that appear in the subsequent chapters of the book. For the most part, this chapter covers familiar ground with regard to turn-of-the-century social evolutionism and the colonization of American Indian education, yet Katanski humanizes the events of the era through a detailed discussion of Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Storyteller*, in which she links a particular family’s experience to the larger political scene.

Chapter 2, “The Man-on-the-Bandstand and the Represented Indian,” arguably the book’s most compelling chapter, demonstrates how the superintendent of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, Richard Henry Pratt, used the school’s press to characterize Indians according to the ideology of the social evolutionists. Carlisle’s publications represented students as appreciative, compliant, and accepting of the school’s ultimate goal of eradicating their heritage, language, and culture. If Indian voices were expressed in print at all, they mirrored the assimilationist rhetoric of which Pratt was so fond. Katanski provides strong documentation that some of these writers were actually inventions: “‘paper Indians’ who would speak nothing but the school’s mythological narrative and reinforce disciplinary power without question” (59). This misrepresentation reached its height with the republication of the serialized story, “How an Indian Girl Might Tell Her Own Story If She Had the Chance,” in the form of the novel *Stiya: A Carlisle Indian Girl at Home* (1891), in which author Marianna Burgess—the editor of Carlisle’s *The Indian Helper*—appropriated the identities of Carlisle students and denigrated their Pueblo culture.

Katanski argues that the name of one of the major newspapers, *The Indian Helper*, did not denote support for the Indian cause so much as it reflected the fact that Carlisle Indian students were mere helpers, relegated to the busy work of copy-setting and printing. Editorial control over content remained in the hands of the school's administrators. By co-opting the students in the printing process, if not the creative process, Pratt fashioned "a myth of their consent to their own subjection" (51). At Carlisle, Katanski contends, "education was a process of imprinting, and those who controlled the printing process . . . deeply believed in their power to edit and rewrite Indian identity through the use of the newspapers as disciplinary tools and rhetorical weapons" (48). That argument takes on renewed force when Katanski turns to an examination of the way Pratt used the written word to reinforce relentless surveillance over the student body. Through a regular column titled "Mr. See All," for example, student readers of *The Indian Helper* would become aware that the teachers and administrators were monitoring their daily activities, down to the number of sweeps they made to clean the property. Katanski's analogy to Michel Foucault's modern prison is apt.

Subsequent chapters of *Learning to Write "Indian"* focus on those Indian voices that managed both to resist their assigned roles and to find their way into print. Chapter 3, "Frances La Flesche and Zitkala-Ša Write the Middle Ground and the Educators Respond," explores how Pratt and others in the Indian Service responded to these writers' implicit and explicit accusations of hypocrisy and to their multilayered representations of their own Indian identity, which challenged the school system's creed. Chapter 4, "Repertoires of Representation in Boarding-School-Era Autobiography," extends the examination of Zitkala-Ša's work and adds an analysis of the writings of Charles Eastman. Katanski breaks little new ground here, but the juxtaposition of these chapters with the previous chapter on Carlisle's print industry gives them more impact than they might otherwise have had.

Chapter 5, "Runaways, Rebels, and Indolent Boys in Contemporary Re-visions of Boarding-School Narratives," looks at a num-

ber of twentieth-century works: novels by D'Arcy McNickle and Leslie Marmon Silko, a poem by Louise Erdrich, a short story by Luci Tapahonso, and plays by N. Scott Momaday and Hanay Geigamah. In revealing how the contemporary writings are "self-consciously intertextual" (219) in relation to publications from the earlier part of the century, Katanski succeeds in demonstrating that Indian boarding-school narratives play a central role in American Indian literature. She also launches a valuable discussion of a "tribal cosmopolitanism"—a recognition of the shared goal of retaining tribal land, culture, and identity (202). Of the many ironies arising from the boarding-school heritage, perhaps the most satisfying is that many of the returned Carlisle students who had worked for the school press played leading roles in creating tribal newspapers that expressed the concerns of the tribes rather than of the reformers. It is a "rich literary legacy" indeed (221).

News and Announcements

The Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures announces the ASAIL Emerging Scholars Professional Development Fellowship, which provides travel assistance honoraria of \$300 (U.S.) for graduate students and advanced undergraduates to attend and present at professional conferences. Applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis. Applicants must provide a cover letter, CV, and letter confirming acceptance to present at a professional conference on a topic relating to the study of Indigenous literatures or languages. Awards will be distributed at the discretion of the ASAIL president and treasurer based on funding availability. Send applications and queries to the current ASAIL President, Patrice Hollrah, at patrice.hollrah@unlv.edu.

Contributor Biographies

VANESSA HOLFORD DIANA is an associate professor of English at Westfield State College in Westfield, Massachusetts, where she teaches courses in multicultural American literature and women's studies. Her research focuses on fiction by nineteenth- and twentieth-century women writers of color in the United States. She earned her PhD in English from Arizona State University in 2000, an MA in English from Lehigh University, and a BS in secondary education from East Stroudsburg University. She has published critical essays and book reviews in such journals as *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, *MELUS*, *Cimarron Review*, and the *Annual Review of the National Association for Ethnic Studies*, as well as in recent collections *Scribbling Women* and *The Short Story Form* and *19th Century Black Feminism and the Legacy of Feminist Theory*.

JILL DOERFLER (White Earth Anishinaabe) earned her PhD in American studies from the University of Minnesota in 2007, with her dissertation work on twentieth-century Anishinaabe identity and tribal citizenship: "Fictions and Fractions: Reconciling Citizenship Regulations with Cultural Values among the White Earth Anishinaabeg." She is currently an assistant professor in American Indian studies at the University of Minnesota Duluth.

BECCA GERCKEN (Eastern Band Cherokee descent, currently not enrolled) is an assistant professor of English and American Indian studies at the University of Minnesota Morris, where she teaches courses in American, Native American, and multicultural literatures.

CATHERINE KUNCE received her PhD in English literature from the University of Denver. Currently teaching for the Program for Writing and Rhetoric at the University of Colorado, Boulder, she has published on and taught about a variety of subjects, including Zitkala-Ša, contemporary American Indian writers, early American Indian writers, American satire, slave narratives, Cervantes and Nabokov, F. Scott Fitzgerald and vaudeville, and Willa Cather. Former president of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association, Kunce is also a novelist, poet, and musician. She lives in Denver, Colorado.

JEANETTE PALMER is a graduate student in the Department of English at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Her work focuses on American Indian and Western American literature.

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 Pearce 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). He is now in the process of completing that book, *Women in Ledger Art / Women Ledger Artists*.

BETH PIATOTE is an assistant professor of Native American studies at the University of California–Berkeley. Her research interests include Native American/Aboriginal literature, law, and culture in the United States and Canada; indigenous feminisms; Native American and American cultural studies; and Niimiipuu (Nez Perce) language and literature. She has published short stories in the anthology *Reckonings: Contemporary Short Fiction by Native American Women*.

RUTH SPACK is a professor of English at Bentley College. Her scholarly work includes *America's Second Tongue: American Indian Education and the Ownership of English*, which was awarded the 2003 Mina P.

Shaughnessy Prize by the Modern Language Association and named a CHOICE Outstanding Academic Title by the Association of College and University Research Libraries.

FRANCIS ZICHY teaches Canadian, English, American, and European literature in translation at the University of Saskatchewan. He is the author of *Leo Kennedy and His Works* and of a number of articles on Canadian and American novelists, poets, and dramatists, published in Canada, the United States, and Europe.

Major Tribal Nations and Bands in This Issue

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

We make every effort to provide the most accurate and up-to-date tribal contact information available, a task that is sometimes quite complicated. Please send any corrections or suggestions to *SAIL* Editorial Assistant, *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, Department of English, 1 University Station, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX 78712, or send an e-mail to klbrowne@mail.utexas.edu.

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PO Box 477
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Canada 59434-0477
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Web site: <http://www.blackfoot.org>

Central Council of the Tlingit and
Haida Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA)
Tribal Operations
9097 Glacier Highway
Juneau, AK 99801
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Fax: 907-463-7316
Web site: <http://www.ccthita.org>

Cherokee Nation
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Web site: <http://www.cherokee.org>

Chickasaw Nation
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Ada, OK 74821
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Fax: 580-436-7297
Web site: <http://www.chickasaw.net>

Nez Perce/Niimiipuu Nation
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Fax: 208-843-7396
Web site: <http://www.nezperce.org>

Oglala Sioux Nation
PO Box 2070
Pine Ridge, SD 57770
Phone: 605-867-5821
Fax: 605-867-6076
Web site: <http://home.comcast.net/~zebrec/>

Pascua Yaqui Tribe
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Standing Rock Sioux Tribe
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