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THE STORY IS BRIMMING AROUND:
An Interview with Linda Hogan

In the summer of 1989, while she was in Duluth leading a creative writing workshop sponsored by the University of Minnesota's Split Rock Arts Program, Chickasaw writer Linda Hogan graciously allowed me to interview her, principally about her composing process and her novel, Mean Spirit, which she had permitted me to read in manuscript. The interview was part of my own study of the roles of storytelling and healing traditions in novels by American Indian women writers.

Ultimately, our conversation turned out to be more far-ranging than the focus of my own research. It became an exchange between two mixed-blood women about the complications of identity and personal history, about how writing gets done, how considerations of audience impact (or shouldn't impact) American Indian writers, about continuity and change. Later, Professor Hogan had the opportunity to smooth out the disjunctures and hesitations of the initial transcript, but there were few alterations of the original substance.

My first intention was to use the rich material of the interview only as part of the groundwork of my longer study in progress. The very process of that research has convinced me, however, of the particular importance of first-hand accounts of the experience, resources, and intentions of American Indian writers. We know that American Indian "literature" simply is not always well served by the conventions of established critical perspectives. For those of us who study our literature as critics, point of view needs to shift from the outside to the inside. The best information about what Native American artists are doing and why must come from their own voices.

Carol Miller

Carol Miller: Let's see, maybe you could just talk a little bit about your background, your growing up and the impact of your growing up on your writing.

Linda Hogan: You know, what I think is that I'm going to have to warm up to talking about myself, so I would like to start with the composing processes and go on that way.

CM: Great, that would be fine.

LH: Okay, so you asked about how is writing poetry different than writing a novel, and I'm working on poetry now, and it really is such a different process because in a way I'm hoping that my novel has poetry in the language. But thinking about plot and character development is a much more linear way of thinking than it is to be in a poem. To be in a poem means you drop deeper down into yourself

and your subject. And it's more resonant. I like the experience of writing poetry a lot better than composing fiction.

CM: Do you think of yourself as a poet first? Is that how you define yourself?

LH: I love to do poetry because it's so . . . the experience of it is like a whole body experience and not just an exercise that's mental.

CM: It's an immersion?

LH: Yes, but I think really of myself just as a writer because I also do essays and fiction and I've done some play writing. So I think that whatever the story is that I want to tell finds its own form in my language. When I started working on this particular novel I knew that it had to be a novel because it had so much material in it and because I needed to develop the people inside of it.

CM: How did you choose the material for that novel? How did you come to that subject matter?

LH: The characters are fictional, and the place--I fictionalized the place. It's a story that actually took place in Oklahoma in the 1920s in Fairfax and Pawhuska, then called "Indian Territory." It is a part of my own family history, and part of my own family history were a lot of the land swindles that took place then. So I had grown up a lot with that particular story, with stories of oil, and later of the depression in Oklahoma during the Dust Bowl times, so they were really a part of my life. And then, my friend Carol Hunter, who is an Osage woman, started telling me the details of this particular story, starting with the murder of Anna Brown in Fairfax. Carol had FBI reports. The FBI actually made its reputation on this particular case. The character of Stace is based on a Lakota FBI agent from South Dakota.

CM: And the actual person was really there?

LH: Yes, he went in posing as a medicine man, and he was actually a federal agent. I didn't have any information on the man that did this, I just knew he . . .

CM: . . . had been there.

LH: I also read research on the FBI, and the FBI agents wrote about this event. Anyway, Carol and I talked about the possibility of doing something together on this project; the idea was that she was going to do the historical work and I would do fiction, and she would possibly write an intro or an afterward. Then Carol went on to research the poet Alexander Posey. A few years ago Carol died, and after that an Osage woman who is an actress in New York approached me about doing a screenplay. I was already at work on one story, so I did it in script form as *Mean Spirit* and I wrote in a character for her to play. Nothing's come of it and I'm not sure it

ever will. But she is probably going to take Carol's place and write an afterword to the book.

CM: Are the novel version and the script the same, or are there two versions?

LH: As you work on a story, like the novel, it evolves and grows out of itself in unexpected ways, so I need to revise the script to catch up with it.

CM: The novel has a huge cast of characters, but some of them start to take on a life of their own and come to the fore of the story. Michael Horse is one of those, I thought, and the matriarchal character in the family, Bell, is another.

LH: I love those characters. It's so strange to think about them. You know when I was finished--I've heard people say this, but this is the first time I've really spent years working on one project--when I was finished I missed those people. I'd spent every day of my life for several years with those people, and suddenly they were gone. It's like moving away from your family for the first time.

CM: So you're not going to work on another right away.

LH: For me, working on the novel has been so many years in the making and so much work that I need to take a break from that sustained kind of effort, but I might come back someday. For now I'm anxious to be back with poems and a collection of essays.

CM: How did you know about narrative, about how a novel works, about how to put together the scenes?

LH: I didn't. I still don't. There's nothing that can really prepare a person for a novel. It's not, for me, a static form of writing, but a process of seeing what will unfold, even a novel rooted in history as this one is.

CM: But now that you're done with it, do you think that you learned enough from it so that it would be easier to do it again? Or would every narrative experience be . . .

LH: Well, I tell you if I were doing it again, I wouldn't have so many characters because it's really hard to work through the growth and change of each character throughout the story. I also know more about how stories work. I didn't really understand how, for instance, a plot develops and how a character changes and how people have to respond to events, and how you have to go through the same characters wherever they appear and paint in the details of their life and make visible and concrete any change that person goes through even beneath the surface of the book.

CM: Make them flesh, rather than creatures on a page?

LM: Yes, right. And that's hard to do with a large cast of characters. It would be a lot easier . . . you know, I really admire Marquez's

novel *Chronicles of a Death Foretold*. And one of the things that's so wonderful about the book is that it's very short, and he says a lot with very few words, and the characters show a lot of change. But he's a master, and I think if you're really good you can do it in less space; if you're new and inexperienced it takes longer.

CM: One of the things I admired about your book was that it was historical. And a point that has been made about fiction written by people of color is that almost no one has been able to deal with historical reality in fictional form. There's been a lot of contemporary writing, but the iniquity and the pain and the suffering that people went through historically is just not accessible yet. The exception I was thinking of might be Tony Morrison's *Beloved*, and your novel is the other example of an attempt to get at that historical material. Were you intimidated? Did you even think about it? Did you choose because the story was so strong, rather than choosing, say, a contemporary story?

LH: Well, I knew this story forward and back, top to bottom, and I needed to tell it. It's as if the story chose me instead of me choosing the story. Every time I turned around another piece of it would pop up. One time I went to a ceremony and there was a woman there who told me that she was from Osage County, an older woman, and she added a facet to the story. It's been that way throughout the whole process, through the years I've worked on it and those earlier years of preparation for it before I even knew it was there, that every time I turn around I'm being shown some other part of it.

CM: My special interest is in the story-telling traditions, and I wondered as I read the book and as I read your poetry and Erdrich and Silko and others, I wondered if the story-telling tradition was as potent for you in your background, in your practice, as those writers have said it is for them.

LH: I never really know what that means--"story-telling tradition"--because I think the picture that brings to mind is this sort of old-time person sitting around a bunch of little kids gesturing with his hands. It's always a "him," telling stories of myth, of creation, or coyote stories or something. So, if that's what you mean, no, I didn't have that in my life as a child, and I don't think very many people really do, particularly where we're from. But, my dad was a story-teller, a great story-teller. It's so amazing to me to listen because he makes a complete sentence verbally. He doesn't say "uh" or "um" like most of us do. He just speaks straight out, plain and clear. And he's very visual. The people in my family who tell stories in that way are very imagistic. Also like my Uncle Wesley would say--everybody in my dad's family were all musicians--he'd say he couldn't read any music.

It looked like a bunch of blackbirds sitting on a telephone line. So they always had a way to illustrate the story--the thing that they were saying was really visual--and give examples.

And they all talked about history. They talked about our pasts and when I was young I'd write down everything that they said because I knew, I always felt from the very beginning . . . I knew there was a history to our life that needed to be saved, a history not in books or films. You know, Scott Momaday says that the oral tradition is one generation away from extinction always, and while I don't know if what my dad and family and my grandmother spoke was what you would call the oral tradition, I knew that they were important stories and that they had to be documented. It's our lives.

CM: I think that that is the oral tradition. It's not just the formal storytelling that was somehow connected to ritual or to ceremony. It's also history. It's gossip, too. It's the kind of spinning out of stories about people's lives and placing them into some context of community.

LH: That's good, because I love gossip. I'm glad there's a name for it.

CM: Did you grow up in Oklahoma? Did your family have allotments?

LH: I was born in Denver, but my family, everyone in my family, lived in Oklahoma. When I was a girl my dad joined the military, and we lived in Denver for a while, and we lived in Germany when I was older, so I kind of have a continental childhood, a transient, nomadic kind of childhood. But my family is still in Oklahoma now, so we go back often. In fact, I was just teaching in Oklahoma last month and it was really great because my aunt lived just a few miles away from where I was teaching.

CM: Where were you?

LH: Quartz Mountain, near Altus.

CM: That's the end of the world out there.

LH: My aunt lives in Martha. It was good to be there. I had a lot of emotional recall of being a girl at my aunt's house in Martha, Oklahoma, and waking up in the morning and knowing, remembering the feel of air, the texture of air and the quality of light and the smell of the place.

CM: I have those memories, too, of going to visit my grandmother in Drumwright, and coming over the hill--Drumwright was a serious oil-producing area, and there was this smell of rotten eggs in the air, and those saw-horses going up and down and up and down, and the red clay of that place. It was different from my own place in Muskogee, but it was always associated with my grandmother. And then

when I go back of course she's . . . there's nothing there. Still, it's like it was, the smell and the red clay. And that never changes. It's very strange.

LM: You asked about allotments. Our family allotments are now the Ardmore airport.

CM: How did that happen?

LH: The Depression, land swindles during the oil boom such as are in *Mean Spirit*. That's why almost all the Indians of those five tribes are landless people.

CM: That's true. All across Oklahoma. What do you think about when you write, in terms of audience. Do you compose for a specific audience? Do you compose for Anglo readers, for Indian readers, for some combination of readers?

LH: I'm not sure I ever really think about audience. I hear the story inwardly. I don't think about it that consciously, not until I do the last editing. Then I assume that the reader is smarter than I am.

CM: Do you think about your poetry as story, too, in that way, or is your poetry experiential and emotional?

LH: I do keep my own people, my own family, as part of the audience because I always try to write what would have integrity for the people, and also I don't want to exclude anybody, to not allow access to what I'm working on. I don't want anybody to be damaged or hurt by it. But as far as the wide audience goes, I don't think I'm doing it for anybody, or with anybody in mind. It's what I want to tell or write, urgent things, happy ones, honest ones. You know, I think about that, people ask that a lot. But I think that when you're a writer . . . you just want to do the best job you can. Most of the writers I know just really want to write, they need to write, they need to get it out, and they need to put it into a shape and a form. They want the one that's the most alive and resonant, and they're not sitting around thinking about how the editors in New York would like this line, or thinking, how will a Black or White audience relate to this?

CM: And the converse of that is the danger of thinking, "What are the expectations of that audience about me as, say, a mixed-blood Indian woman? What tone do I have to assume, what subject matter do I have to address, what do I have to include in order to please and attract the audience that has certain expectations about me?"

LH: I'm too old for worrying about that any more. When I was younger I thought about it. But I'm middle-aged now. If someone doesn't like it, if they don't like me, they don't have to like me, that's all. It's not my purpose to please all people. It's my purpose to write the most honest feeling work I can, work with integrity and respect for life.

CM: Well, that's a nice place to be. It must be almost the only place to be, finally. I mean, how long can you sustain the rest?

LH: Ultimately, it is the only possibility for me, maybe for others as well. Or there is silence. Or there is the possibility of taking up an ideology and trying to shape your work and yourself by a belief that could be wrong. What can it do for you if you give in to that kind of concern? There's no freedom in it.

CM: I think in the cosmic sense it can be ruinous, because it falsifies experience, it falsifies your voice if you allow yourself to only write about nature in some predictable way that is imposed by the expectations of a dominant culture. In the immediate sense, of course, it can determine whether you're published or not.

LH: You mean the worry falsifies? That's correct. It's limiting. That's one of the problems, that's one of the reasons why it is so difficult to teach Indian literature and Indian studies, because of the expectations that the non-Indian audience have. They're so unreasonable, they're so needy in what they want from an Indian person. Some are so uncomfortable with their need that it's impossible for them to be full of even their own lives. A lot of people really have needs that go so deep there's nothing that can ever fill them, it's like a bottomless well. And I don't want to be in that role. I think that's one of the reasons why I don't care what they think of me as a mixed-blood person. I'm who I am. If Indian communities don't like me, if white communities don't like me, that could mean I can have more artistic freedom. But so far the possibility of rejection is only that. My experience is that the readers and listeners are very open, loving and generous.

CM: It's at least liberating.

LH: It is, it is. I think that when you're true to what needs to be said, you don't have that rejection from other people. But I haven't written just to be published. I write because I have to write. I want to and I need to. And I have things I feel are important to say. I learned how to write because of that. I could've made more money doing something different. Years ago I was offered a job working for an American Indian higher education consortium, and it was the most money I would have ever had in my whole life at one time. I did not take that job even though I was living in a little shabby trailer out north of town. It was also the only time in life I would have to see if I could write poetry. It was the hardest decision I ever made, but once I made it, it was the easiest thing. It was just saying "no." And I think that when people want to put me in a category, I want to say no in that way because I want to do what I love doing. I want to be whole as a person and not compromise myself.

CM: The one thing I might want you to talk about a little bit more is

invention, about how you approach invention, about where invention comes from. Is it experiential? Comes entirely from imagination? Or is it some version of memory, of remembered experience that somehow you translate? How do you think about invention? Maybe it's different for poetry and prose.

LH: Invention? By that do you mean form?

CM: Form and substance. About . . .

LH: About how you make a story?

CM: Right, or how do you make a poem, and is invention different for those two things, for those two forms?

LH: Well, I think it is, because I think you have more conscious material for fiction, for a story, than you do for poetry. It must be so different for everyone. I'm sure there are people who work more mentally than I do at it. I bring in my thought processes at the very end, but I really try to tap into that part of myself where the story is brimming around, moving around, and let it develop itself. Then, I watch to see what's happening, and when I see it begin to form, I think, "Oh, this is what I'm trying to say and do," and then I go on with it. It's so hard to explain how that works. In some ways you have to circumvent the thinking part of yourself to get to the rich material and image, and then bring the thinking part back in to edit and to put it in the right order and form. But with working on the novel, it's really hard work. It's labor. I always say it's like women's work. My mother used to say a man may work from dawn to dusk, what was it, dusk til dawn or something . . .

CM: That women's work is never done.

LH: Right, and that's how it is with the novel. Still, right now, I just finished, I think, and it's aside, and I'm not wanting to get back in there and stir things around very much. But it's so amazing to be working. You know, I've worked a lot of it on the computer--to be sitting there typing, working on, say, a scene, or a character, and doing a lot of it and suddenly realizing that it's suppertime, and I thought I had just sat down at one o'clock. I think when you're really doing the work that you're supposed to do, it moves like that. I also think that when you're not, and you suffer at it, then it's time to go take a long, easy hike.

CM: Time to stop.

LH: Yes.

CM: For me sometimes it's the cue of the language that tells me. Somehow it's the sound of the language, or the way the language fits together that gives you the rush so you know that you're in the groove. It's like being a pitcher in baseball! When the language goes together, you're in the groove in some way.

LH: Yes, and the images start. It sort of becomes more natural and organic. One of the things you were asking about, my background too--and one of the reasons I really was happy to have Stace in the book, I was really glad that he was a Lakota--was that I spent so much of my time when I was in Colorado with that community, with members of the urban Indian community from South Dakota. So many of the people in Denver were from there, and my uncle went there and started an organization to help people coming in from reservations to find housing and have their needs taken care of, and so I feel real comfortable in that, creating a person from a different tribe than I'm from. But the tribes throughout the country are all so different from each other. As you know, being from Minnesota, how different the Anishinabe world is from Oklahoma.

CM: Extraordinarily different.

LH: And the Lakota people are very different from either of those two. I feel very fortunate in my life that I've had contact with the Chickasaw people, and traditional people, and politicians from that area, and from South Dakota, and then urban communities as well. I feel that my life's been a really rich life for me, with a lot of different kinds of experience and people and traveling, and it's really good.

CM: Is it a life that you can extend to your daughters? Reproduce for them in some way?

LH: No. I'd like to think you can, like I'd like to think that you can pass on wisdom to young people, but you can't. They will have to have their own lives. It's unfortunate. It's very hard. I come from a really rural family, and a really rural area, and my family used horse and wagon--and for me to think that I can't pass on those kinds of things is difficult, but also we had a lot of poverty, and a lot of difficulty, and I don't have to pass that on.

CM: Right.

LH: One of the things I feel good about is being able to take care of a family. I feel lucky to be able to support a family and do what I need to do and be able to write, too. I sound like I'm selling Amway here, but . . .

CM: It's a miracle though. It's a miracle that those two things . . .

LH: . . . for a woman . . .

CM: . . . are compatible.

LH: I know.

* * * *

THREE VIEWS OF *THE ANCIENT CHILD*

The Ancient Child. N. Scott Momaday. New York: Doubleday, 1989.
315 pp. \$18.95. ISBN 0-385-27972-8.

Planes of Reality: A Review
Charles G. Ballard

The author of the Pulitzer prize-winning *House Made of Dawn*, after more than two decades, returns now to fiction with a novel that explores an ancient Kiowa origin myth--the story of a boy who turned into a bear. Although Locke Setman, called Set, is a successful and socially involved painter on the West Coast, his life is irrevocably changed when he receives word that his Kiowa grandmother will soon be buried on tribal lands in Oklahoma. The journey back puts Set in contact with an extraordinary young medicine woman named Grey who is destined to guide or mediate his "Venture Beyond Time," which is the prophetic title of one of Set's last paintings.

The wondrous blend of characters and events skillfully reflects the story-teller's art. Readers will respond to the exploits of Billy the Kid, to the dangerous schemes of Grey, even to the grand mystery that absorbs the life and will of Locke Setman. This book, however, has the trappings of the western novel only superficially. Momaday watchers will notice quickly that a far stranger game is in progress. And this struggle, I believe, will invite critical and perhaps vexing comment. When the eyebrows are lowered, therefore, the logical opening bid should somehow highlight the theme of the Right Reverend John Big Bluff Tosamah in Momaday's first novel: "In the beginning was the Word." What the center of creation has to do with language seems an absorbing concern of the author--it spills over into *The Ancient Child*.

The theme is also picked up in the opening line of Momaday's poem "Angle of Geese": "How shall we adorn/ Recognition with our speech--." Then, from the shortest chapter in this last novel, there is the key word "planes": "Dancers touch their feet to the earth. A deranged boy glares from the shadows. An ancient woman inhabits the body of a girl. Death displaces the silver, scintillant fish. The bear comes forth. Planes." The final word means, not airplanes, but strata, levels of reality, and the movement between the various planes--transformation, for Set is not the only person in this novel who is being transformed.

The author has sometimes been accused of being a Johnny-One-Note, which is bad only if the note in question is tiring and repetitive.

It is true that this bear keeps hanging around, but Momaday has not reached Dullsville yet because as the planes of reality shift so do the features or rules of the game.

The character of Grey makes this point abundantly clear. She is at once a primordial manifestation and thus somehow Jungian (the Anima), while also being a capable, striking, quick study Muse who reads avidly. Finally, and most importantly, she is a resplendent and very energetic Tai-me who is going about her work. Her identity in the tribal myths had been expressed in different ways. Now she is making another appearance. Now her personality is fully realized.

"And do you see, Loki, this matter of having no name is perhaps the center of the story." It was a remark that Set's father added when he was speaking of the bear-boy dream of long ago. In its *levels*, or in its symbolic structure, it points to moments of inspiration and to times when decisions have to be made. It points also to another plane of reality which must work itself out in the modern age. Locke Setman becomes a part of it, being a culturally specific lifeform that in another season has begun to grow. This book, as a gift to readers and thinkers alike, moves closer to what is, in fact, a poetic process.

* * * *

Alienation and Art in *The Ancient Child* Marie M. Schein

N. Scott Momaday's latest novel, *The Ancient Child*, focuses on the alienation and confusion of the protagonist, Locke Setman, called Set, whose Indian origins have vanished into the world of the Anglos in which he has been living for years. The novel also offers a commentary on art, the world of the artist, and the artist's dilemma when forced to choose between the demands of his agent and public and the necessity to be faithful to his inspiration. The initiation voyage that begins when Set reads the telegram about Kope'mah and that ultimately leads him to accept his Indianness also brings him to an undersanding of his art.

Paula Gunn Allen says in *The Sacred Hoop* that "belonging is a basic assumption for traditional Indians" (Beacon 1986, p. 127), and Momaday's novel places this question at the center of the narration. Set suffers from a malaise that prevents him from having a clear sense of himself. A painter who is enjoying a world-wide reputation and is integrated in the modern world, Set faces two problems. First of all, although he is "in the first rank of American artists" (36), he is

questioning the value of his art and realizes that he is losing control of his work because "those who exhibited his work, who praised and purchased it, and who demanded its proliferation began to determine it" (36). The profit-making side of his work gradually takes a toll on his inspiration, and faith in his vocation conflicts with the "calculations" of "the dealers and critics" (37). Secondly, Set has been raised in the white world since he was seven, after his father's death. When he receives a telegram announcing the death of his Indian grandmother, whom he does not remember, he is confused. At first on the defensive, he refuses to accept his ties to his father's people: "They had nothing to do with him. They were related to him, he supposed, but that was only an accident; they were his relatives, but they were not his family" (51).

The telegram has triggered the mechanism of transformation. To help him through the voyage, Momaday introduces an influencing female character, Grey. Grey represents the "feminine principle"; she helps Set awaken to his Indian self and helps him regain a clear vision of his art.

Set's recovery is put in motion by two events during the trip to Oklahoma. Grey's gift of the medicine bundle establishes the connection between Set and the world of his people; and Grey will progressively rekindle in him the desire to paint. The scene in chapter twenty-two in which Set paints Grey's face foreshadows his eventual understanding of the essence of his art. Grey gives him the tools of recovery, "the paints, the daubs, and a drawing" (112), and lends her face to the artist, as a symbol of the blank canvas. The subject for this painting is basic, a woman's head: the colors are the essential blue, yellow, black, and red. While applying the paint to Grey's face, Set experiences the uneasiness of the beginning artist: "His hand was not steady, but he did a reasonably good job under the circumstances" (112-113). This scene is crucial for the development of the novel, since it represents Set's first direct contact with Indian ceremonies and also a recovered sensitivity of the artist towards the subject.

In a moment of revelation, the first epiphany of the novel, Set discovers in Grey the ideal subject matter: "She was more than beautiful. She was infinitely interesting, and she appealed more than anyone else ever had to his painter's eyes" (114). This first revelation marks the end of Book One, a section of the novel that has established the premises of Set's recovery.

Grey also contributes to Momaday's comment on art and the artist's allegiance to his subject. Not only does Grey serve as the instrument of Set's regained faith in his painting, she also is an artist herself and offers a contrast to Set's depression about his career.

Contrary to Set, whose inspirations diminish, Grey's visions are abundant and continuous: "Never had Grey to quest after visions. They happened upon her irresistibly and all the time" (12).

What really makes the difference between Grey and Set, however, is a question of integrity. In chapter thirteen of Book I, Set analyzes his work and reminisces about a "time in which he had painted for the sake of painting, out of some wild exuberance of the spirit" (38). The loss of that sense of excitement occurs when he begins to devote himself to his public and cater his works to popular taste. Grey does not know how to cater to the public because she does not have an audience. Set is forced to stop painting because his allegiance to popular taste and profitability, brought on by the influence of his agent, is greater than his faithfulness to his artistic impulses. Grey, on the contrary, remains faithful to her subject matter and does not suffer from the advice of an agent whose priority is commercial rather than artistic.

In this version of hero-as-artist novel, Momaday emphasizes the protagonist's awakening to his individuality rather than to his vocation. Locke Setman knows what his vocation is but fails to understand who he is. Although the transformation he undergoes will clarify the meaning of his painting, it is the personal revelation that matters in Set's case. Unlike Stephen Dedalus, who discovers the meaning of his life when he understands the call of art, Set is made to understand and respond to the call of his Indian origins. For Stephen, the most important moment of revelation is the sight of the young girl on the beach, a sight which reveals to him his destiny; he must become the artist of the beautiful. Stephen's experience is ecstatic and religious. For Set, too, the revelation is powerful; painting Grey's face before the ceremonial dance is like a holy experience. Yet, the implications of Set's epiphany transcend the discovery of his vocation. Grey's beauty, a symbol of the beauty of his own origins, penetrates the artist's mind and prepares him to accept himself as an Indian.

Set's psychological purification and healing is complete when he is initiated to his first vision quest. During the vision, Set is transformed into Bear, which Paul Shepard calls the symbol of "well-being, with the recovery from spiritual malaise and physical illness, and the rebirth from a spiritual death" *The Sacred Paw*, Viking 1985, p. 139).

In this novel, N. Scott Momaday uses the Bear Son myth to present a commentary about art and the artist's position. Writing and painting are considered in this work; Grey carries out her idea and sees it develop into a manuscript whereas Set's inspiration is subordinate to his agent's decisions. Only by being re-born to his Indian culture is Set able to stop the confusion. The initiation into tribal life

is necessary for Set because it liberates him from the constraints the modern world had placed on him. The artist's creativity can only continue to produce if the artist can locate and be content with his true nature.

* * * *

The Ancient Child: A Note on Background
Helen Jaskoski

Like the Enchanter old . . .
[Who] touched the leaf that opened both his ears,
So that articulate voices now he hears
In cry of beast, or bird, or insect's hum,--
Might I but find thy knowledge in thy song!
That twittering tongue,
Ancient as light, returning like the years.

The lines come from "The Cricket," a poem on which Scott Momaday expended meticulous attention in his edition of Frederick Goddard Tuckerman's poems (*The Complete Poems of Frederick Goddard Tuckerman*, Oxford 1965). "The Cricket," paralleling Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" at many points, turns on the speaker's decision not to gain access to the ancient, wise but in-human language of Nature at the cost of his own, human language; it assumes the unbridgeable chasm, which Momaday has remarked is precisely not a characteristic of American Indian thought, between Man and Nature. The poem is relevant to *The Ancient Child* not only because it has been a significant part of Momaday's education and intellectual formation, but even more because the protagonist of the novel, Locke Setman, faces the same initiation and the same loss as Tuckerman's speaker. The end toward which the novel moves is, finally, away from language--a startling turn for an author who has articulated in every way the absolute and fundamental importance of the word.

The Ancient Child is clearly autobiographical, formulated as the quest for reintegration and spiritual renewal undertaken by a successful, sophisticated artist in his middle age. There are two fathers to be encountered--and reconciled. From other autobiographical writings the reader will recognize echoes of Momaday's relationship with his father and grandfather in the character of Catlin Setmaunt, the protagonist's Kiowa progenitor. The figure of Bent Sandridge, on the other hand, reflects Momaday's friend and mentor, Yvor Winters, whose rumpled appearance and constant intellectual probing are

recognizable to any former students. Momaday precedes the book's second section with a poem from Winters as epigraph, and Locke calls more than once upon this "humane and wise" man to "be my father." Yvor Winters was an Aristotelian realist with a profound mistrust of the intuitive and romantic and emotional, which he (like the speaker in Tuckerman's poem) regarded as chaotic, seductive and most of all dangerous. Winters was committed above all to rational discourse: logos over pathos. Locke Setman struggles in the novel to reconcile two patriarchies, represented by Catlin and Bent: how is the ending, with its retreat from language itself, to be construed?

As Winters did, Momaday greatly admires Emily Dickinson, and has frequently quoted from her poetry in interviews--in particular the poem beginning "Farther in summer than the birds," which affirms the same absolute separation between human beings and Nature as does "The Cricket." The depiction of Grey in *The Ancient Child* gestures toward Dickinson. In her visions Grey makes a point of dressing in white for her romantic encounters, and although she leads a strenuous outdoor life she spends a significant portion of time in Emily Dickinson's--and Scott Momaday's--occupation: writing and putting together books of poems. Grey is more than a Kiowa/Navajo initiator and guide, a sort of sexually active Beatrice to Locke Setman's Dante: she is another alter ego for the author's autobiographical quest.

The outlines of Locke Setman's journey, encompassing California, Oklahoma, Europe and Arizona, locate significant places in Momaday's life. Unseen and yet implicated in that journey there is also the landscape of New England and the language of two Amherst poets. It seems that the novel means to engage the reader in an inner journey of reconciliation among ancestral heritages, formal education and lived experience. The struggle, conflict and even failures of such an enterprise can be more important than the perfection of the final form. Any comprehensive reading of *The Ancient Child* will as a matter of course involve investigation of Navajo and Kiowa sources; it will necessarily, as well, reflect the significance of the American Romantic tradition that has also compelled Momaday's imagination.

* * * *

COMMENTARY

From the Editors

Hundreds of languages, linguists tell us, and nearly as many cultures coexisted in the pre-invasion Americas. The term "Indian" was an invention that obscured the particular, complex structures of individual societies. Newer terms have been tried--"tribal," "Native American," for example--but none successfully comprehends what--who--it is that is being so labeled. Like other generic descriptors ("ethnic," "multi-cultural") these words will never be adequate to the reality, because that reality is polyvocal, many-sided, metamorphic. This issue of *SAIL* represents such a polyvocal spirit throughout, in the dialog between Carol Miller and Linda Hogan, the different views of *The Ancient Child*, letters and commentary from our readers, and multiple perspectives in book reviews.

We are committed to the representation of diverse points of view, and we invite responses, clarifications and rebuttals to the views put forward by the authors represented in *SAIL*. We believe that American Indian literatures deserve the most careful criticism and scholarly investigation, and that is why we also believe it important to air as fully as possible differing methods, approaches and opinions on what that scholarship should consist of and whom it should benefit.

Helen Jaskoski

Robert M. Nelson

On the Creation of ASAIL: Comment and Response

"A little mist-shrouded" they may be, as Jerry Ramsey suggests in his good tribute "For Karl Kroeber" (*SAIL*, Series 2, Vol. 1, no. 1), but the origins of the Association for Studies in American Indian Literatures (ASAIL) and the *ASAIL Newsletter* are clear enough.

ASAIL was founded by Randall W. Ackley, a writer and organizer who taught for a number of years in the 70s at Navajo Community College. The first ASAIL meeting was held at the 1972 MLA convention in New York. About twenty people attended; Ackley served as Chair. He "drafted" Leslie Silko and me, as Co-Chairs; and Wayne Franklin as Secretary. My recollection is that Robert W. Lewis, Ken Roemer, and Per Seyersted were among those who provided much-needed coherence at that first meeting and that Ken Rosen hosted the tea.

I have five issues of the *ASAIL Newsletter* in my file from the days before Karl Kroeber so generously took over the editing of the newsletter. The first issue of the *ASAIL Newsletter* is a three-pager,

dated January 12, 1973. It consists of a one-page report from Ackley in which he called for ASAILers to start an annual publication to publish scholarship and reviews; to convince Norton and other publishers to include Indian material in their anthologies; to push NCTE and other professional organizations to have more Indian-related seminars; to share experiences and bibliographies; and, of course, to plan for the next MLA. In addition, the first issue contains a two-page membership list of forty, those who were at the first meeting and others Ackley hoped to involve (Scott Momaday, Simon Ortiz, Ruth Roessel, John Milton, and so on).

The second issue, a single page dated October, 1973, announces a seminar on Native American Literature sponsored by ASAIL and organized by Wayne Franklin for the 1973 MLA in Chicago. The third issue, dated January 1974, runs eight pages. It reports that some twenty-five people participated in the ASAIL seminar at the 1974 MLA and that Harrison Meserole, MLA Bibliographer, had solicited ASAIL's help in including entries on Indian literatures in future PMLA Bibliographies. The issue also included a bibliographic essay by Evers, "On Anthologies of Native North American Literatures."

Issue four of the *ASAIL Newsletter* is not dated but announces a poetry festival, "Voices Singing," organized by Ackley at Navajo Community College in July 1974, as well as two seminars for the 1974 MLA, one on Traditional Native American Literatures, organized by Evers, the other on Contemporary Native American Literatures, organized by Ackley. The issue also featured "A Review of Indian Bibliographies," a substantial piece written by Wayne Franklin, then at the University of Iowa. The fifth, and final pre-Kroeber, issue of the *ASAIL Newsletter* in my file is a single sheet dated December 19, 1975, announcing an ASAIL business meeting and three ASAIL seminars at the 1975 MLA meetings in San Francisco: "Problems of Context for Non-Indian Students," to be chaired by "Paula Allen or Wendy Rose or Janet Campbell"; "Myths and *Myths* in/of American Indian Literatures," with Ackley and Michael Dorris as discussion leaders; and "Contemporary American Indian Literature," chaired by Mick McAllister. This 1975 issue contains the call for ASAIL members to form an American Indian Literature Discussion Group within the MLA structure, something that happened the following year. The issue ends with the plea: "ASAIL NEWSLETTER EDITOR NEEDED. We need more help. We did want to do much more, but our group seems to vanish between MLA meetings." Kroeber answered the call, took on the *ASAIL Newsletter*, and, ably assisted by ASAIL bibliographer LaVonne Ruoff, began transforming it into the valuable publication it is today.

All of this is probably of local interest and slight significance to most, but let me suggest a connection to a larger and much more important story. That is the story of how the MLA, as institutional home to ASAIL and related groups during the 70s and 80s, has provided increasingly greater opportunities and support for the study of American Indian literatures during the last two decades. About the time Kroeber began to edit *SAIL* a number of other things happened in the context of MLA that are notable. The American Indian Literature Discussion Group was approved and began to offer seminars at the annual meetings. MLA, led by then staff person Dexter Fisher, formed the Commission on Minority Groups and the Study of Languages and Literatures with Michael Dorris and Paula Gunn Allen as early members. The Commission, now tenured in the MLA structure as the Committee on the Languages and Literatures of America, began to sponsor substantial programming each year at MLA. Dexter Fisher, working with the Commission, got an NEH grant for MLA that enabled first regional conferences on "minority" literatures, then such seminars as the 1977 MLA Summer Seminar on Native American Literature which was held in Flagstaff, Arizona. The MLA began to publish some key books on American Indian literature such as *Three American Literatures* (1982), edited by Houston A. Baker, Jr., and Paula Gunn Allen's *Studies in American Indian Literature* (1983). In addition, from at least the mid-70s on, other organizations such as MELUS included American Indian cultural and literary topics as a part of extensive programming at the annual MLAs as well. Many will remember the frustration of trying to attend all the sessions devoted to American Indian literatures at some MLAs during these years.

Arnold Krupat and Brian Swann have recently reviewed the history of the study of American Indian literature in the introduction to their valuable volume *Recovering the Word* (California, 1987). They contend that there has been "virtually no institutional encouragement" for the study of American Indian literature in this country. The activity that I have mentioned in the MLA is just one reason why I think that statement is wrong and dangerously misleading. Looking back on the past twenty years of programs sponsored under the aegis of the MLA I see steadily increasing and significant institutional encouragement for the study of American Indian literature. Reviews of patterns of institutional support in other areas would likely repeat the MLA pattern of steadily increasing and significant support: the emergence of the American Indian Studies Programs at such places as UCLA, the University of California at Berkeley, and the University of Arizona; publication records of scholarly journals and university

presses; funding records of NEH, NEA, and the like; and promotion and tenure decisions involving scholars involved in the study of American Indian literature.

Of course, there need to be greatly increased levels of support from all institutions for American Indian Studies in the 1990s. The support that exists now is not enough. There is still an enormous amount of work to do. One example at the top of any list should be the *absence* of scholars who are themselves American Indians in the *presence* of dramatically increasing levels of study of American Indian literature in institutional settings. Clearly, increasing the amount of study of American Indian literature does not mean we are increasing the number of American Indian scholars participating in the MLA and other professional groups. Still I think it is important to acknowledge the fact that significant institutions like the MLA, the NEH, and many universities have provided significant opportunities during the last twenty years. To deny that the opportunities have been there, as do Krupat and Swann, is to erase the complex question of what we have done with them.

Larry Evers
University of Arizona

Response to Larry Evers

First, I'm happy to learn the history Larry provides. But, second, the phrase he pulls out of context hardly intended or could reasonably be construed to mean anything as "dangerously misleading" as he seems to imagine. Obviously we have again the east-west split here. If you are at Fullerton or Tsailie or University of Arizona or, for that matter, Berkeley or Sinte Gleska, you are going to have a very different sense of what institutional support there is for Native American literary studies--and that was our concern, by the way, not "Indian Studies," a broader category, I think--than you will if you are in New York or Boston.

In other words--and quite simply--the "institutions" we were thinking of were the large research universities like Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Chicago, Michigan, Pennsylvania (Dartmouth is obviously an exception), and so on, and the liberal arts colleges--Trinity, Mount Holyoke, Vassar, Amherst, etc.--where, so far as I knew, there was extremely little if any attention to any sort of Native American literature. And that's all that that remark intended.

Arnold Krupat
Sarah Lawrence College

Hillerman Again

From the *SSILA Newsletter* (IX.2):

Tony Hillerman, whose best-selling detective novels featuring Officer Jim Chee and Lieutenant Joe Leaphorn of the Navajo Tribal Police have been noted here on previous occasions, is now the subject of a biography in the Boise State Western Writers Series (*Tony Hillerman*, by Fred Erisman, Boise State Univ., 1989, \$3.95). Reviewing this work in the current issue (Spring 1990) of *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, Barre Toelken, otherwise praising Hillerman for his "surprisingly accurate depiction" of the modern Navajo (and Hopi and Zuñi), takes him to task for his "persistent variations from standard Navajo orthography in the key words he uses." Toelken wonders if Hillerman in fact knows what the words really sound like. For example, "he uses *hozro* instead of *hozho* (beauty, stability, harmony), *yataalii* instead of *hataalii* (singer, 'medicine man'), *belagana* for *bilagaana* (American, white person)." Well, either Tony Hillerman subscribes to *SAIL*, or his copy editor does, for in his latest work, *Coyote Waits*, off the press last month (Harper & Row, \$19.95), he has cleaned up his orthographic act. *Hozho*, *hataalii*, and *bilagaana* all appear in their proper Young & Morgan orthographic clothes (minus the tone marks, which Toelken himself omits), and even *Yaa' eh t'eeh*, the universal Navajo greeting, is quoted with gratifying accuracy (most non-Navajos assume that it is something like *ya-ta-he*). It is perhaps no accident that one of the principal characters in *Coyote Waits* is a graduate student in linguistics at the University of New Mexico, specializing in American Indian languages (Jim Chee spots a Cherokee dictionary and *Navajo Tonal Syntax* in his bookcase). But our lips are sealed, and you'll have to read *Coyote Waits* yourself (you'll have great fun if you do) to find out whether this fictional colleague is the hero or the villain of the piece.

Ed. Note: SSILA is the Society for the Study of the Indigenous Languages of the Americas, sponsor of the Conference on American Indian Languages. For more information, contact Victor Golla, Department of Ethnic Studies, Humboldt State University, Arcata CA 95521. Mr. Hillerman is, alas, not (yet) a *SAIL* subscriber.

American Indian Studies Series

Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., announces a new book series, American Indian Studies, under the general editorship of Rodney Simard. The series seeks to cover all aspects of American Indian history and culture, with an emphasis on contemporary ideas and issues. The Series is inter-disciplinary, aimed at both the scholar and general reader, with a particular interest in literature and aesthetics; a central concern is the concept of "tradition," and whether it is fixed and static or fluid and dynamic. Monographs from both established and emerging scholars in various disciplines and from various perspectives are welcomed. Serious consideration will be given to revised doctoral dissertations.

Authors are requested to submit a letter of inquiry, a one page abstract, the title and length of the proposed manuscript to the general editor: Dr. Rodney Simard, Department of English, California State University, San Bernardino CA 92407, Tel.: (714) 880-5844.

Returning the Gift: A Native American Writers Festival

Returning the Gift will be a festival primarily *for* and *of* Native American writers, "an act of focussing on the importance of Native scholars and writers themselves as against the accompanying non-Native scholarly community." It will be our turn to speak, as well as our chance to meet, discuss, celebrate and, to some degree, define what that body of work is which has loosely been called "Native American writing."

The main purpose of the festival is to bring together in one place for a period of four days a large number of the contemporary Native writers of North America. Both established writers and those just beginning to find their voices will be included. They will share their work with each other, engage in discussion, offer and attend workshops and seminars which deal with the many deeply related aspects--literary, political, cultural, and ecological--of Native writing in North America. The North American Native Writers Festival will also offer a sweeping view of Native writers and Native writing to the world during the final seminars, performances and workshops open to the general public.

The festival is scheduled for late June 1992 in Oklahoma, with the specific site not yet determined. Funding is being sought to enable approximately 80 writers to attend with all expenses paid and a per diem payment. For more information contact Joe Bruchac, Steering Committee Chair, c/o The Greenfield Review Literary Center, P.O. Box 308, Greenfield Center NY 12833.

Letters to the Editor

I like volume 2, number 2 (Summer 1990) of *SAIL*. Although "an experiment," the first should not be the last. Perhaps one of the four issues each year could be devoted to "New Native American Writing." Joe Bruchac has done a nice job. Perhaps he could--and would--do another one in a year or so.

Bob Reising
Pembroke State University

The last issue of *SAIL* had a note about the collection of poems gathered by Joseph Bruchac. I hate to end on a sour note, but I really think there are better poets in the Indian community. I realize that it is not an easy matter to collect good poems, or even to get the word out into urban areas. Therefore, I would suggest that more time be given to such a project in the future or that a two-year contest be used as "the grim reaper."

Charles G. Ballard
University of Nebraska, Lincoln

I enjoyed the issue, especially for the opportunity to encounter the work of authors new to me. I look forward to more such special issues, and I would also like to see creative work published in all issues of *SAIL* as space permits.

I was interested in Joseph Bruchac's remarks suggesting that the market for Native American fiction "remains glutted." I have to say that as a reader of Native American writing who prefers fiction to poetry, I find myself in a permanent state of hunger, not gluttedness, and as far as the Pacific Northwest, my home place, is concerned, virtually famished.

Perhaps by "market" Mr. Bruchac meant "publishing industry," rather than "readers." In that case, I'd like to suggest that *SAIL* see itself as an alternative to that industry and set itself the special task of discovering and publishing new works of fiction.

Toby C. S. Langen
Western Washington University

Please send me the three-issue set of Volume 1. I will put it in our library. Volume 2, nos. 1 and 2 are *wonderful* reading. I liked the issue devoted to new writers. Thanks!

Ellen Nore
Southern Illinois University,
Edwardsville

Coming Attractions

With this last issue of 1990 it is time once again to renew subscription as well as moral support of *SAIL* by sending in your check with renewal form for 1991. We offer rich fare in the coming year. Two special issues will appear in volume 3. Classical Literature in Translation includes a new translation of a Lushootseed story together with extensive analysis and commentary, and also a lengthy analysis of two of Mrs. Victoria Howard's Clackamas Chinook stories. The issue on Teaching American Indian Literatures will have articles on D'Arcy McNickle, teaching composition with American Indian autobiographies, and an exchange between university and reservation school literature students. Other issues will include a symposium on "Pow Wow Highway" and articles on contemporary poetry.

Call for Papers on Early Written Literature

We are planning a special issue on literature by American Indian writers who published before 1950. We encourage articles on a wide range of genres: in addition to discussion of fiction and poetry we would like to see consideration of other texts, such as histories including autobiographical texts that combine personal, family and tribal history; essays; satire; published letters, diaries and journals; polemical writing; ephemeral and periodical publications; performance scripts and religious treatises. We also encourage a variety of approaches, including (but not limited to) historical or biographical themes, comparative analysis, conditions of production and publication, reader response approaches.

Deadline for finished papers: April 1991.

Please send all submissions and inquiries to Helen Jaskoski, Department of English, California State University Fullerton, Fullerton, CA 92634.

REVIEWS

The Voice in the Margin: Native American Literature and the Canon.

Arnold Krupat. Berkeley; Los Angeles; Oxford: U of California Press, 1989. 240 pp. paper. ISBN 0-520-06827-0.

The Voice in the Margin is a hybrid book with a dual audience. It is not a survey of Native American literatures such as Andy Wiget's or A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff's, nor does it pretend to be a purely theoretical essay. Instead it is a theoretical discussion supported by selected examples of Indian texts. The hybrid nature of the book grew out of Arnold Krupat's concern about two significant and interrelated problems: the exclusion of Native American literatures from the established canon of American literature and the tendency of Indian literature specialists not to use much literary theory. He hopes to demonstrate that interpretations of Native texts that utilize combinations of new historical perspectives (grounded in some of Roy Harvey Pearce's work) and post-structuralist criticism (notably Mikhail Bakhtin's celebration of polyvocality) will help to legitimize Native American literatures for American generalists and theorists and help specialists to see new ways to analyze their specialty.

Ideally, such a book will open constructive dialogues between the readers of *SAIL* and *Critical Inquiry*, dialogues that will eventually move Native American literatures from the margin of the canon to a central position in the study of literary texts and in critical debates. At worst, such a book will convince neither audience, or rather convince theorists that Indian texts are not worthy of serious critical scrutiny and convince Indian literature specialists that the application of post-structural theories is just one more example of how dominant institutions try to appropriate or colonize Native Americans. Whether readers place *The Voice in the Margin* in the ideal, worst, or some in-between category will depend largely upon the degree of sophistication and originality they perceive in Krupat's theoretical chapters (1, 2, 5) and the degree to which they find his specific demonstrations convincing (Chapters 3, 4).

The theoretical chapters examine three important topics related to canon formation: the relative usefulness of various concepts of canon and literature (Ch. 1); the impact of critical perspectives on the selection of canonical texts (Ch. 2); and the necessity of defining boundaries for the literatures from which we create regional, national, and international canons (Ch. 5). All these chapters provide information and ideas that will interest specialists and non-specialists, though I suspect that for both groups Chapter 5 will be the most original.

To anyone who has kept up with the canon debates, Chapter 1 will sound rather familiar. Nonetheless, Krupat's approach is appropriate for someone who wants to mediate between audiences. He tends to support flexible concepts of heterodox canons (52-53) and broad definitions of literary texts ("technically interesting" and "morally and politically admirable" [236]) instead of notions of Great Book worship or total abandonment of canons and distinctions between literary and non-literary texts. Again, there is a familiar ring to Krupat's examination of how critical perspectives--especially New Critical formalism and the New Rhetoric (e.g., deconstructionism)--have and continue to keep Native American literatures out of the canon. But his presentation of modified versions of Pearce's methodologies (69 ff.) does represent an intriguing blend of historical and textual perspectives that should be useful to Indian specialists. Unfortunately, his provocative applications of the method to a Wendy Rose poem and a Ralph Salisbury story (88-91, 229-31) are much too brief to indicate fully the advantages of Pearce's critical perspectives.

In Chapter 5, Krupat offers a series of useful definitions that, if widely adopted, could help to clean up much of the haphazard use of the term "Indian literature." He defines Indian literature (a "local literature") as "ongoing oral performances of Native people" (209); indigenous literature as involving interactions between Indian and dominant (e.g., Euroamerican) literary forms; ethnic literature as such interactions in literature created by minorities who are not historically indigenous to the the United States; our national literature as the sum of local (Indian), indigenous, ethnic, and dominant (Euroamerican) literatures; and cosmopolitan literature as a dynamic interactive process that creates literature from the intersections of national literatures (209-16). If scholars misread Krupat's taxonomy as a hierarchy, with Indian literatures at the bottom, then Native voices will remain on the margin. Let's hope that they instead read the taxonomy as a means of clarifying definitions and of opening centralized places for Native texts, not only at the national but also, as Krupat envisions, at the cosmopolitan level (222-32).

Whether or not theorists and specialists open a place for Krupat's book will depend largely on their responses to his "demonstrations" in Chapters 3 and 4 (parts of both have been published previously). The former is a very useful three-century survey of attempts to include (or should I say appropriate) Indian literature into the canon of American literature. (Krupat concentrates on Native songs.) My only warning to non-specialists is that there are gaps in the overview: for instance, early French and Spanish translations; 19th-century fiction and non-fiction; an influential early 20th-century issue of

Poetry; poetry and American literature anthologies published after 1931; the 1977 MLA/NEH summer seminar on Indian literatures (which, in this context, is certainly as important as the 1968 Johns Hopkins "Languages of Criticism" symposium that Krupat discusses); and videotape series such as Larry Evers' *Words & Place*. To complement Krupat's survey, non-specialists should consult Michael Castro's *Interpreting the Indian*, Evers' "Cycles of Appreciation" essay in Paula Gunn Allen's *Studies in American Indian Literature*, Geary Hobson's introduction to his anthology *The Remembered Earth*, and Ruoff's "American Indian Literatures" (*American Studies International* 24.2 [1986]), soon to be superseded by her forthcoming MLA book-length survey-bibliography. (It is disturbing that of these works, only Castro's book appears in the works cited listing.)

Chapter 4, "Monologue and Dialogue in Native American Autobiography," is, in my opinion, the key section of the book. Here Krupat hopes to demonstrate how Mikhail Bakhtin and dialogical anthropologists can help Indian specialists to achieve provocative readings of individual texts and to discover the criteria that will help them to identify the best candidates for national, international, and cosmopolitan canons. It is certainly appropriate that Krupat selects autobiographies for his demonstration, not only because he has written a book on the topic but also because of Pearce's focus on relationships between self and culture.

Put simply, Krupat argues that the best literature expresses the polyvocal, heteroglossic nature of speech (135). Placed within the context of his concept of a literary text, polyvocality represents a delightful sense of play and diversity that can be "technically interesting" and represents a praiseworthy democratic temper that is "morally and politically admirable." The worst forms of literature are dominated by an authoritarian voice that subordinates or suppresses other voices.

To demonstrate his position, Krupat offers five-to-ten-page analyses of five autobiographies. He arranges four of them in an evaluative hierarchy ranging from William Apes's *Son of the Forest* (1829; dominated by the Christian voice of salvation) to J. B. Patterson's *Life of Black Hawk* (1833; characterized by the discourse of savagism but allowing room for Native voices of dream and prophesy) to Lucullus Virgil McWhorter's *Yellow Wolf* (1940; incorporating the editor's voice, a sense of field dialog, and Indian voices other than Yellow Wolf's) to Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller* (1981; celebrating a wonderful diversity of written and oral forms while maintaining a deep appreciation for Pueblo traditions).

Krupat's evaluations certainly show how his criteria can help

Indian specialists to read and judge autobiographies. His theories and examples also suggest exciting ways to look at ceremonial and narrative texts, for example the point in the Osage naming ceremony when many clan spokesmen speak at once, the presence of clowns in Hopi and other tribal rituals, and the Zuñi tradition, which Krupat notes briefly, of commenting on narratives. Collections of poetry, like Simon Ortiz' *Going for the Rain*, and individual poems, like Nora Dauenhauer's "How to Make Good Baked Salmon from the River," which was written for Ortiz, immediately come to mind as expressing the many voices of the contemporary Indian experience. Then, of course, there is the genre that Bakhtin praises most, the novel. Bakhtinian analyses would seem particularly appropriate for the kitchens and bars full of voices in Erdrich's and Welch's novels, for the pilgrims of Vizenor's *Bearheart*, for Silko's *Betonie* (the interior of his hogan is a polyvocalist's heaven), and for that polyvocalist supreme, Momaday's *Right Reverend John Big Bluff Tosamah*.

These very suggestions of mine make me wish that Krupat had devoted less of his book to overviews of, by now, familiar debates (parts of Chapters 1 and 2) and much more time to critical interpretations of diverse examples of Indian and indigenous texts. Again, Krupat does not promise a survey; so we shouldn't expect one. Nonetheless, in a 240-page book (excluding works cited and index), we should expect more than relatively short discussions of five autobiographies, page or two examinations of one poem by Wendy Rose and one story by Salisbury, and a few clusters of one- to several-line comments on other texts (e.g., 221-22). I may be wrong (I hope I am), but I doubt that Krupat's few examples will convince non-specialists of the richness of Native American literature, and many specialists will, no doubt, be upset by the scarcity of detailed analyses.

They may be even more upset by premature closure. What about the many Indian and indigenous texts that are not obviously polyvocal? Are they bad literature and poor candidates for local and national canons? Which brings me to what has already become one of the most controversial aspects of Krupat's book: his unrelenting censure of Momaday. In one sense, his attacks are healthy. Too often specialists in "emerging" literatures transform tokens into totems, to borrow Peter Carafiol's phrase. Certainly we should not totemize the highly visible contemporary Indian novelists and poets. That could prematurely close Indian canons and undermine attempts to move Native literatures from the margins. Still, Krupat's harsh reading of *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (the fifth autobiography he examines) raises serious questions about his approach to Indian literatures and canon reform. (In the spirit of polyvocality, a note: Reader be warned.

What limited reputation I have as an Indian specialist is based primarily on my attempts to get *Rainy Mountain* into national and international canons. Krupat's critique of Momaday might have made me just a wee bit defensive.)

In Krupat's reading, Momaday's lyric-epic tone of "high portentousness" (180) is depicted as an authoritarian voice that suppresses other historical and contemporary voices and all but eliminates the possibility of a dialogic autobiography that expresses the "collective self" of Indian life stories. Despite Momaday's attempts to submerge the other voices, Krupat maintains that a couple of voices (James Mooney and George Catlin) remain audible, though Krupat's comments about these voices come closer to mild censures for plagiarism than to reluctant praise for latent polyvocality.

Like most critics, I find it very hard not to read *Rainy Mountain* as a multivoiced text. I think part of Krupat's problem is that he sometimes equates tone and voice. Consider, for example, a section he doesn't discuss but well might have because there is a strong lyric-epic tone throughout and strong subject linkage (images of buffalos). In Section XVI, despite the dominant tone and topic, the nature of the events described--a grand and heroic encounter, a chase involving two old men and a broken-down creature, and the discovery of a new-born calf by a father and son--are so different that the juxtapositions of lyric tone and changing content generate different voices. Of course, as Wolfgang Iser might note, the readers' responses as they fill in the gaps between the three voices would also open possibilities for more voices.

But let's assume, for the sake of argument, that Krupat is right and the other critics have been wrong. Then, if Krupat follows through with Pearce's orientation, he at least owes us some speculations about the relationships between self and culture that encouraged Momaday's authoritarian lyric voice. Can this be related to the way an only child who is male is raised (with much attention) among many Kiowa families? To Kiowa conventions about not mentioning the name of their trickster in certain situations? (The trickster stories would have radically changed the tone of the book.) To his search for identity during his thirties? To a combination of reverence for his grandmother and sorrow about missing her funeral (which may again be echoed in an episode in *Ancient Child*)? to the bicultural, mentor-student relationship between Yvor Winters (who celebrated the lyric) and Momaday? To Momaday's anticipations of readers' expectations about "serious" Indian literature? These types of questions are especially relevant because a year before the publication of *Rainy Mountain*, Momaday had demonstrated that he could write a novel

full of voices lyric, bureaucratic, satiric (including self satiric), visionary, and despairing. They are also relevant because similar types of questions should be asked about the other autobiographies, especially Silko's. Why does she see her self so polyvocally? What are the relations between gender, self, culture and voice in her case?

Despite my obvious reservations, I still believe that Krupat offers much to both his intended audiences. The discussions of canon formation and the influence of critical perspectives will enlighten Indianists who were not fully aware of the impact of theoretical debates on their specialty. The survey of attempts to include Native texts in the canon and the discussions of autobiographies should introduce non-specialists to important characteristics of Indian literatures. And the taxonomy outlined in Chapter 5 should be useful to both audiences. Furthermore, Krupat is asking the right questions at the right time. If Native American literatures are to find audiences beyond students in special topics classes and beyond readers of specialized studies, then we must ask large questions about canon formation and critical perspectives. But in our attempts to reach wider audiences, we should take care to avoid premature closure. Whether we use Bakhtin or not (actually, especially if we use Bakhtin), we should advocate voices, not "the voice" in the margin. A Bakhtin-backed Indian author may look wonderful to some post-structural theorists, but if that backing blocks their appreciation of other forms of Native American literatures that don't appear to fit a Bakhtinian model, we may be generating false backings and distorted canons.

Kenneth M. Roemer

* * * *

The Good Red Road: Passages into Native America. Kenneth Lincoln with Al Logan Slagle. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987. 271 pp. paper, \$10.95. ISBN 0-06-250617-3.

Let us begin by examining what Lincoln and Slagle claim for this book. The word "passages" in the subtitle suggests the hardships of "blazing trails" by land or by sea. "Passages" in this text have as much to do with "rites of passage," as they do with roadways, and the most significant hardships of the journey involve overcoming personal troubles and preconceived ideas about Indian experience--romantic and otherwise. For just as Alfonso Ortiz tells us in his introduction, the book "is a record of contemporary Americans, Indian and

non-Indian, searching for a cultural heritage."

In the Afterword to *The Good Red Road*, Al Logan Slagle declares the authors' purpose in writing it: "Our aim here is to record the effects of real-world events with appropriate literary creativity and humanistic science, to celebrate and reverence the sacred in the commonplace. To lend continuity we have adopted a single narrative voice for both Ken Lincoln's text and mine." The narrative "I" voice (Slagle refers to) says in the Preface: "*The Good Red Road* is autobiographical ethnography, an attempt to go home to the American heartland, seen through the informed 'heart's eye' or Lakota *cante ista*, as Native Americans once felt and still speak about our shared country. The narrative is presented as a literary document that invades no tribe's secrecy nor any person's privacy." The author(s) then goes on to describe the work as "'dialogical' anthropology. . . letting ourselves respond significantly among Native Americans, indeed personally, to what happens around us 'in the field.'"

Travel narratives based on journeys to the "New World" or on adventures in the westering movements into "Indian Country" are nothing new, but why write a travel narrative in the 1980s about journeying into that part of the country where many Indians now live, mostly on reservations? Can such a book be more than looking at Indians or speaking for Indians to an audience located elsewhere, or decidedly "other"? Must America still rely on "reportage" from intelligent, articulate, wandering souls for news of what today's Indians are like, think, want, need? Questions like these guided my reading of the book, and while they may suggest narrow or even ungenerous readerly habits, I would argue that it is crucial to question whether or not looking at and speaking for Indians is justified in terms of serving Indian causes. Such questions should be part of the ethics plumbline at work in deciding what and how we teach about Indian experience. Misrepresentations of Indians, theft of Indian cultural artifacts, and intrusions into Indian ceremonial life are too numerous to mention; all that against a backdrop of federal cuts to Indian programs and horrendous social problems makes ethics central to informed writing and reading on Indian life.

Whether the book is a search for cultural heritage, a record of "the effects of real-world events," or an "autobiographical ethnography," the larger questions which frame the book are not always dealt with squarely. For one thing, one wonders if the search for the "sacred in the commonplace," which Logan's description implies, does not contrast sharply with the aims of "'dialogic' anthropology" and "humanistic science." They not only seem to me to be different enterprises, they seem like purposes and/or descriptions tacked on

retrospectively. That is not necessarily bad--in fact such retrospective shapings of experience into narrative are the stuff of both autobiography and ethnography, not to mention literature--but ethnology when practiced as a science proceeds with a methodology, at the very least a consistent method of recording events. The authors used a tape recorder at least once; however, where the rest of the dialogue comes from is unclear. The defensiveness of the narrator's disclaimer (it is "a literary document that invades no tribe's secrecy nor any person's privacy") further confuses the issue of authority. Maybe the painful truth is that an autobiographical narrative which claims to contain *some* interesting ethnological information can work--if it is on any subject other than American Indians.

The journey embarked upon by a UCLA college professor (Kenneth Lincoln) and five students (Al Logan Slagle, Jay, Kate, and Meghan) took on its own life, became a genuine learning experience. The "elders" who asked them to tell "the story" were as sincere in their desire for "outsiders" to understand what being Indian today is truly like as the travelers were sincere in seeking to get at some essential truths about themselves and about a people whose lives and histories are so wanly represented in books.

Both the Indian people's and the travelers' sincere intentions come across, and that is the absolute strength of the book--a strength that makes it well worth reading. Passages from the book continue to echo in my mind--for example, the group's encounter with Luther Clearwater and his family, and particularly, the depiction of polar opposite emotional responses to the power of Indian medicine from Luther Clearwater and his daughter Charlene, Charlene's response being fear and awe, Luther's being awe, humility, and hope. Mark Monroe's efforts to provide meals and transportation to health facilities for poor, off-reservation Indian people in Alliance, Nebraska, are also memorable. Alliance is the town where Raymond Yellow Thunder died a brutal and senseless death at the hands of white racists, whom the law essentially saw as rambunctious locals exercising poor judgment on a night out on the town. The recounting of the injustices involved in that incident, as well as the restoring of Indian historical points of view at various geographical sites where state tourist bureaus continue to distort the facts, are examples of important background for situating some of the dismal portrayals of alcoholism and despair. Mark Monroe's personal triumph over alcohol illustrates how the effective solutions to Indians' social problems can and will come only through Indian ways and efforts.

Slagle tells a moving story of a Navajo man's healing from alcoholism: during a sing the dog he had killed in front of his children

when he was drunk returns to offer his forgiveness to the man, so that the dog's spirit may pass on in peace. I know first-hand Indians' experience with alcoholism that way, as a violation of peaceful being. Other passages in the book dealing with alcohol also ring true, but I wonder whether, in saying I was touched deeply by parts of the book, I do not speak more for myself as an "inside" reader, an Assiniboiner who grew up in the very parts of the country the book tours. The larger questions about the audience for this book haunted me throughout my reading of it.

A creative writing textbook popular in the 1970s, *How Does a Poem Mean?*, impressed on me that there must always be attention to "how" a poem means, as well as to "what" or "what for?" *The Good Red Road* is a book about the "how" of making cross-cultural meanings. For that reason, it's extremely valuable. But when it comes to the "what" and the "what for?" I balk. Readers far removed from the particular time or the experience can enhance their understanding of a specific people's struggles and human struggles in general; however, this book is for readers who already understand the tough issues involved in Indian cultural survival. To hope, as the authors do, that this book will be taught across the curriculum suggests to me that they are either more optimistic or naive than I am about that readership. In the most ideal of classroom situations, teaching about Indian life past and present is complex and difficult. Classes on Indians or which have Indian content need to rely upon the plentiful primary sources available, documents where Indians speak for themselves. I look forward to the book Mark Monroe should write.

Kathryn S. Vangen

* * * *

The Singing Spirit. Ed. Bernd C. Peyer. Tucson: U of Arizona Press, 1989. 175pp. ISBN 0-8165-1114-4.

The Singing Spirit, as a collection, deserves applause. Peyer has assembled sixteen stories and two pieces of political humor by eleven North American Indian writers and has provided an introduction that aims at putting the works in historical perspective, biographical headnotes, and brief bibliographies for each writer. One story is published here for the first time; the remaining works were published between 1881 and 1936, some in obscure sources that are now accessible only through a great deal of effort. Their collection in an

anthology makes it a valuable addition to the library of the student or scholar of Indian literature. The close reader and scholar, however, will find much that is disturbing about the volume.

One troublesome aspect of the work is the editor's basis for selecting the works. Peyer admits to flexibility in his choice, including "autobiographical as well as satirical sketches that may not stand up to an overly strict definition of fiction" (vii). Two works "that may not stand up to an overly strict definition of fiction," and certainly *no* definition of the short story, are Alexander Posey's *Fus Fixico* letters.

To suggest, as Peyer does, that the letters can be read "like a short story" is to misconstrue Posey's intent (he, in fact, disliked fiction as a literary form). The letters were conceived as humorous commentary upon Indian Territory and Oklahoma society and politics. They were a substitute for extended editorials, which Posey also disliked and refused to write. Their purpose was to call attention to such matters as greed, graft, political posturing and maneuvering, injustice, and materialism and the Indian's need to change in the face of them. People named in the letters, such as Alfalfa Bill and Boss Haskell, were real people, whom Posey's readers knew a good deal about. They knew as well the events he spoke about, such as statehood legislation and the Oklahoma constitutional convention. Posey used dialogue between Hotgun and Tookpafka Micco (as Posey consistently spelled it, not *Tokpafka* as Peyer does, p. xv) as a way to make editorial comment on the people and events. Their dialogue takes on meaning for the present-day reader only insofar as he understands the context for each letter. In form and purpose, the *Fus Fixico* letters read little like short stories.

As a second criterion for selecting works, Peyer says that he intends the collection "to be a book by Indians about Indians" and that "the selection is limited to stories with Indian themes" (vii). There is ample evidence that the works are "about Indians": dark skin, broken-English dialect, high-flown romanticized English of the noble savage, native language terms, etc. Commentary about Oskison, however, raises questions about Peyer's definition of Indian "subjects" and "themes." He writes, "Nearly all of Oskison's fiction is set in western frontier towns or eastern industrial cities and only a few stories have an Indian subject" (xvi). The "western frontier towns" were mainly in the Indian Territory, especially Vinita, Cherokee Nation. In fact, eight of the first nine stories Peyer lists by Oskison are set in Indian Territory. Most have Indian characters: Tookh Steh in "Tookh Steh's Mistake" (1897); Hanner, the physically deformed half-blood Cherokee cowboy in "Only the Master Shall Praise" (1900); Jinnie Jake in "When the Grass Grew Long" (1901); Venita Church-

field in "The Quality of Mercy" (1904); Harjo in "The Problem of Old Harjo" (1907).

Most of these and other stories deal with the cattle industry and outlawry in the Cherokee Nation and other parts of the Indian Territory as does some of Oskison's long fiction, produced later in his career. Texas cattlemen, with the aid of prominent Cherokees, imported thousands of head of cattle that simply overran the rangelands of the Cherokee Nation proper. The Cherokee national elections of 1891 and 1895 were dominated by the issue of the cattlemen and their intrusion into the Cherokee Nation. Such intrusions contributed significantly to the demise of the Cherokee Nation. Oskison simply drew on his knowledge of ranch life during his youth and wrote into his fiction most of the social, economic, and racial groups of Delaware and Cooweescoowee districts: the full-blood and mixed-blood Cherokees, white "do-gooders," adventurers, cowboys, desperadoes, and true friends of the Indians. In short, he depicts life in the Cherokee Nation on the verge of its dissolution. The unravelling of an Indian nation seems as legitimate an Indian "subject" as old Harjo's conflict between Christianity and polygamy.

Peyer's statement concerning Oskison's fiction reflects a lack of understanding of Indian Territory matters that pervades the introduction and headnotes. For instance, he relates the Dawes Act of 1887, off-reservation boarding school policy, and reservation experience to the development of Indian literature. In reality, none of these applied to the Five Civilized Tribes, which produced a great number of writers during the period covered by the anthology. Peyer says, for instance, that Posey produced the *Fus Fixico* letters at the "time the Dawes Act was beginning to affect the Five Civilized Tribes" (119). The fact is that those tribes, the Osage (Mathews' tribe), the Sac and Fox (Jones's tribe), and others were exempted from the provisions of the Dawes Act. Allotment for the Five Civilized Tribes was conducted under agreements which they negotiated with the federal government after the Curtis Act of 1898. Their lands were not reservations but constitutionally governed nations. Posey and Oskison received their early education in common schools and colleges within their own nations. Peyer also reflects a lack of understanding of the readership of Indian Territory newspapers and magazines, in which Posey first published nearly all of his works, when he makes Posey an exception to his statement that most of the writers included in the anthology wrote "almost entirely for a non-Indian reader" (xii). At the time Posey began the *Fus Fixico* letters in 1902, non-Indians outnumbered Indians in the territory by as much as seven to one. A casual reading of Posey's own *Indian Journal* (1902-1903) shows clearly who his

audience was.

While an introduction must by its purpose be general, Peyer's seems overgeneralized. Matters such as reservation experience, the Dawes Act, and boarding school education must be considered in a separate light in relation to the eastern part of the Indian Territory. And, of course, little that is said of these matters in the United States has to do with Pauline Johnson, a Canadian Native.

A good deal of incorrect or misleading information appears in the introductory and headnote materials relating to Posey. Peyer lists Posey's mother as "Pohas Harjo, or Nancy Phillips," a "full-blood Creek" (119). Nancy Phillips was the daughter of Pahosa Harjo, who had added Phillips to his name before removal from Alabama. Nancy Posey's mother was Thlee-sa-ho-hee, a Chickasaw. Posey did not graduate from Bacone Indian University in 1895 (119); he left Bacone in 1894 at the end of his junior year. Peyer also states that Posey's field work for the Dawes Commission "was to appraise the land held by the tribes in preparation for determining allotments" (119). Posey worked as a field agent to the Creeks only. By the time he entered the field in the fall of 1904, allotments had for the most part been determined, most Creeks having already received their deeds. Posey had nothing to do with the appraisal; his task was to enroll those Creeks who had refused to do so, to enroll newborns and minors, and to investigate cases involving questions concerning enrollees.

Besides their questionable inclusion in this volume, Posey's Fus Fixico letters as reprinted pose editorial problems. Neither letter has an indication of the source for the text. Both appeared in the *Indian Journal*, which had reprinted them from the *New-State Tribune* and the *Muskogee Phoenix*. Both contain typographical errors that might well have been transferred into the present text from the copy text, especially if the latter came from the Mitchell Collection at the University of Oklahoma, to which Peyer refers (120). The Mitchell transcripts have not been verified and contain some letters not written by Posey but by his imitators (he had several).

A second editorial problem is posed by the need for annotations. Few of the Fus Fixico letters can stand alone today. Posey's commentary concerned current events, and its meaning for present-day readers depends on an understanding of its historical context. Peyer supplies annotations for the second letter, but unfortunately the principal one is misleading. It indicates that Murray, Haskell, and Asp were proponents of statehood for Oklahoma; in reality, Murray and Haskell had supported separate statehood for Indian Territory until the spring of 1906 and became involved in the joint statehood effort with Oklahoma only after separate statehood efforts failed. They were elected to the Oklahoma constitutional convention, which Posey

criticizes in the letter. The annotation reflects a lack of understanding of Indian Territory and Oklahoma politics. Peyer writes that the letter ridicules "the repeated and drawn-out conventions held between 1906 and 1907 in preparation for Oklahoma's statehood" (xv). There was only one convention in that period--the Oklahoma constitutional convention--which had been in session since November, 1906, and had made little progress toward drafting a document. Instead, the delegates wrangled over such matters as how to address the deity in the preamble, the subject of the letter. Henry Asp had little influence in the convention, being one of only twelve Republicans present. As president, Murray was influential, but the convention was dominated by Haskell. Hence Posey's reference to the one-man powwow.

Factual and typographical errors distract the discerning reader in other parts of the collection. Susette LaFlesche and Francis LaFlesche are called stepsister (1) and stepbrother (67); they were half sister and half brother, both the children of the same father, Joseph LaFlesche. Fannie Reed Giffin is cited as *Griffin* (2). The title of Francis LaFlesche's opera is given as "Da-Oma" (68); the copy of the libretto in LaFlesche's papers reads *Da-O-Ma*. Matthew K. Sniffen is cited as *Mathew* K. Sniffen (76). The Indian Organization Act (76) should be Indian *Reorganization* Act. Oskison received his degree from Stanford University in 1898, not 1889 (125). Chemewa (159) should be *Chemawa*.

The sixteen stories and two pieces of political humor that comprise this anthology speak for themselves. The introduction and headnotes should be rewritten to ensure historical accuracy.

Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr.

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The Droning Shaman. Nora Marks Dauenhauer. Haines, Alaska: The Black Current Press, 1988. 93 pp. paper. ISBN 0-938975-18-8.

Alùx the sea,
a droning shaman,
puckers spraying lips
cleansing St. Paul
with mist. (3)

In the opening poem of Nora Dauenhauer's first volume of poetry we find a distillation of many of the key themes of her work. Alùx, an opening note informs us, is the Eastern Aleut word for the Bering

Sea. Virtually in five short lines, Dauenhauer announces her volume will be deeply rooted in a sense of place, will weave indigenous languages and English together, and finally will be concerned with what might be termed a sense of spiritual renewal.

The title poem identifies "The Droning Shaman" of the title with the Bering Sea. In the first of the seven sections of the book, the sea is embodied as a generative force. In "Fur Seals" (5) the pups are "carried in the arms of/ standing waves" and finally break "through the frothing mouth." Her image of the seals surfacing in the sea is heightened by her use of personification. The sea here is a woman, a life force, and in the final line of the poem she gives birth to the seals. But it is not only the sea. Dauenhauer's universe is trembling with life. In her "Seal Rookery" the earth, too, is a mother: "Under its brown fur/ the beach twitches to life" (6). And finally this generative force is made most sensuous in the three short lines of "Lukanin Beach":

Waves' hands caress the body:
beach and sea
sign in unison. (8)

The "droning" of the sea, its constant rhythmic chant is not the only "droning shaman" in the volume. A shaman is often a mediator, one who lives in two worlds and provides connections between them. Often the shaman provides links between the spiritual world and the physical world, between the past and the present. As well the shaman is often the keeper of old ways, of knowledge, of words. Dauenhauer's work is a poetry of mediation. In "Talking to Guardians--Shageinyaa" she writes, "Flowing into my pen,/ please give me a mind/ to make your songs/ my songs/ singing praises to you . . ." (23).

Dauenhauer's poems celebrate traditional life, yet they also embrace the accommodations Native peoples have made to change and "progress." In the classic piece reminiscent of Simon Ortiz's chili poem, Dauenhauer playfully instructs us on "How To Make Good Baked Salmon from the River."

It's best made in dry-fish camp
on a beach by a fish stream
on sticks over an open fire,
or during fishing
or during cannery season.

But in this case, we'll make it in the city
baked in an electric oven on a black fry pan. (11)

At times the playful tone is replaced with a more bitter tone. In

"Genocide" we are given the image of "an over-fed English girl" picketing the Eskimo Whaling commission clutching her sign, "Let the Whales Live" (26). Dauenhauer does not romanticize her world; if at times it is evoked in serene beauty, these views are tempered with concrete images of a native youth sitting in handcuffs on his way to jail as well as bulldozed grave sites. The voice of the poet "drones" on, and what finally braids all the images together, the kelp, the sea birds, the old ones, the family circles, and the images of the change and dissolution, all are held together with a fierce attention to language.

Nora Dauenhauer has spent most of the last two decades working with her husband collecting and transcribing Tlingit oral literatures. She and Richard Dauenhauer have co-authored Tlingit language primers for classroom use, and she has worked as a translator and cultural resource specialist. Her fascination with Native languages and culture is very much apparent in this volume. The sixth section of the book consists of a cycle of poems which take images of the Tlingit language itself as departure points for poems in English. Words, names, relationships become part of a tightly structured cycle of work. The final section of the volume provides a number of Dauenhauer's experiments in translation into Tlingit. Her sources include Basho, Gary Snyder and Reinhard Dohl. *The Droning Shaman* presents a forceful, compelling and articulate voice. In her highly distilled language, Nora Dauenhauer celebrates her land and her people. When Alûx the sea puckered his lips, he cleansed the land and the people. Dauenhauer has puckered her lips as well, and the voice that emerges is ultimately one of rebirth, of spring. If we think of these poems as a journey, we might liken the experience to that of her Canada geese on Mendenhall tide who "eat their/ way through ice to spring" (53).

Andrea Lerner

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The Witch of Goingsnake and Other Stories. Robert Conley.
Norman: U of Oklahoma Press, 1988. 184 pp. ISBN 0-8061-2148-3.

Robert J. Conley has written a unique collection of short stories which portray aspects of Cherokee Indian lifestyle and cultural beliefs that have not previously been explored or expressed. Robert Conley is a Cherokee Indian, and his perspective comes from an insider's point of view and first-hand knowledge and experience with the belief system of a group which remains intact under surface changes of modernization. *The Witch of Goingsnake* is a fascinating collection. It

is interesting and enlightening reading for the non-Indian reader, and it also provides a sense of recognition and acknowledgement for the Indian reader, especially the Cherokee.

The title of the book is also the title of one of the stories, which is based on a newspaper account of an actual event: a murder at Goingsnake and the explanation for it. Goingsnake is a familiar name in Cherokee country, currently a nine county area in northeastern Oklahoma. Before Oklahoma became a state in 1907, Cherokee landholdings were much larger, and Goingsnake was an area east of Tahlequah, Oklahoma, south of Siloam Springs, Arkansas, east to Evansville and Caney Creek, Arkansas, then back west to Park Hill, Oklahoma. It was one of the major Cherokee landholdings, but as such, it no longer exists. Goingsnake is also the current name of a major street in Tahlequah, the capital of the Cherokee Nation. Goingsnake is an interesting and unusual word, but also is symbolic of a way of life that continues to exist in a modern setting.

The stories vary greatly in type, style and story line. Some of them are vignettes, brief glimpses which illustrate aspects of Cherokee culture. There are a number of fictionalized accounts of actual events. Conley researched early editions of the *Cherokee Advocate*, a local newspaper published 1844-1851 and again from 1877 to the present. Provocative newspaper accounts of events which captured his interest resulted in expanded story versions in his collection. In addition to several stories set in the late 19th century, there are stories with modern settings as well. In fact, the collection is apparently arranged chronologically to demonstrate continuity of community lifestyles, belief systems, and Cherokee values.

Conley has included stories dealing with full-bloods and mixed bloods, and the conflicts between and within these individuals. In a largely acculturated, modern Cherokee society, these conflicts are an everyday fact of life, and these stories provide insights into the situations. Many demonstrate the acceptance of the Cherokee value and understanding that the larger group, and in particular the family, is all important, while the individual is only significant as a small part of a larger whole. The extended family provides a cohesive support system.

Some of the stories deal with current sociological problems such as racial prejudice, alcoholism, and unemployment. Some generalized "typical" attitudes toward these situations are expressed in the stories. Conley does not suggest remedies or solutions to the problems, but simply tells the stories in a dispassionate, "This is the way it is," manner.

Conley carefully provides authenticity with the inclusion of

numerous Cherokee words but smoothly provides adjacent English equivalents for the unfamiliar reader. The historical basis for the stories also provides an authenticity and contrasts with the often seemingly bizarre, non-material, mystical content to provide a taut literary tension. The reader may not be sure where reality ends and fiction begins. A reader may well ask "Are there really Cherokee witches who make medicine to change behaviors/events?" "Do these people really believe material objects can be affected by the power of human thought?" "Do they seriously believe humans can change shape to animal/bird forms?" Whatever answers the reader accepts, the questions are thought provoking.

Read from simply a "pass-the-time-of-day" attitude the stories are fun to read. They may, however, be read more seriously as a portrait of a continuing belief system: publicly denied, perhaps, but privately accepted by many. It might be helpful in understanding some of the stories for the reader to be familiar with the remote areas in the Cherokee hills of northeastern Oklahoma where many Cherokees still speak Cherokee as their first language, and believe in and live the traditional ways. However, on any level, the stories are well written, and easily read. Conley is a captivating storyteller.

Margaret Nelson

* * * *

***Chainbreaker: The Revolutionary War Memoirs of Governor
Blacksnake as Told to Benjamin Williams.*** Ed. Thomas S. Abler.
Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 1989. \$29.95 cloth. ISBN
0-8032-1446-4.

At the time of his death in 1859, the Seneca chief "Chainbreaker" was 106 years old. Some time after his ninetieth year he dictated his memoirs to Benjamin Williams, a considerably younger Seneca who was able to write in English. This collaboration is especially noteworthy because both participants were Native American. The resultant manuscripts present a Native viewpoint on the 18th and early 19th century transition from the relative autonomy of the Iroquois Confederacy to the early reservation system.

Both warrior and diplomat, Blacksnake's activities during the American Revolutionary War brought him into contact with prominent Loyalists Sir William Johnson, Sir John Johnson, John Butler, and Joseph Brant, the famed Mohawk who allied with the British. After the Revolutionary War Blacksnake became acquainted with

George Washington. Along with his uncles Cornplanter and Red Jacket, prominent Seneca leaders, Blacksnake participated in multiple battles, skirmishes, treaty negotiations, diplomatic delegations, and councils.

Blacksnake also had a role in the spiritual history of the Seneca. A nephew of the Seneca prophet Handsome Lake, Blacksnake was present during the 1799 vision which resulted in the Code of Handsome Lake. The visions and teachings of Handsome Lake have had political as well as spiritual ramifications which are evident in Iroquoian communities today. Blacksnake was an active participant in what has come to be early American history.

Almost a century and a half elapsed between Governor Blacksnake's decision to collaborate with Benjamin Williams and the publication of his memoirs by Thomas Abler, yet in *Chainbreaker* those years fall away. It is as if it were always intended that Abler would provide the extension to the Williams document which makes it accessible in the twentieth century. The Williams manuscripts are presented as a single text divided into six major sections. Each section includes a substantial introduction and notes which provide historical and cultural information.

Certainly the comprehensive sources, including multiple appendices, plates, and maps used to corroborate and augment the Williams text provide a sense of historical perspective and shed light on happenings in other areas of the Confederacy extending into modern times. It is in the cultural information, however, that Abler becomes the third collaborator. Beginning with a commentary on Seneca orthography, Abler methodically provides the cultural background which makes the document, and therefore the people, accessible to those unfamiliar with the languages, customs, and ways of Iroquoian people. Of particular note are the explanations of the kinship system with regard to Blacksnake's relationship to Cornplanter, Red Jacket, and Handsome Lake; naming customs; the role of gifts in diplomacy; and the metaphors commonly used in oratory, which were in turn used by representatives of other nations in communication with the Iroquois.

Chainbreaker is a powerful work, one which should be in all collections containing Native American personal narratives, American Revolutionary history, New York State history, and Iroquoian, especially Seneca, history and culture.

Nadine Jennings

Another View:

Not a speaker of English, Blacksnake dictated his memoirs in Seneca when he was at least ninety. Abler refers to Williams' English as "somewhat individualistic" (3) and admits that reading this text is therefore trying. For example, Williams does not use a period until the eighth page. But this difficulty subsides as the reader gets used to decoding Williams' particular usage and idiom. Abler's notes (for example, that "blackvest" means "breakfast") help the reader along. Abler also gives examples of the varying interpretations that scholars have made of Williams' translation.

One of the most valuable and unusual aspects of this account is that it was gathered by a native Seneca. But the record of the conditions under which the narrative was gathered is limited. Abler states that "Williams appears to have written the story with a view to publication, and it is at least probable that Blacksnake had similar motivations in dictating the manuscript" (3). Although Williams was not white, he was hardly pre-Columbian, so it would be interesting to know more about his values and motivation, and the extent to which the colonial culture influenced the construction of these memoirs. As Abler states, such narratives were of great interest to people of the dominant culture who were "constructing their national myth" (10), and Williams or Blacksnake or both may have, to some extent, constructed a text so as to make it appeal to the dominant culture's interest in the American Revolution.

The veracity of Williams and Blacksnake is sometimes questionable. Williams claims that Blacksnake was born in 1749, but one informant states that Blacksnake told him he was two years old when William Johnson defeated the French at Lake George (1755) and twenty-two at the time of the Battle of Bunker Hill (1775), thus indicating that Blacksnake was born in 1753. Blacksnake or Williams might have wanted Blacksnake to appear not so youthful during the events in question. In fact there are many unclear points about the narrative. We can't be sure when Blacksnake took the name of "Chainbreaker." The place and date of some of the battles described is so ambiguous that we can not be sure which battle or council it was. As Abler states, "It may be that Blacksnake was describing an event he did not personally witness but was told about later" (66), and "Blacksnake's narrative of combat during the revolution reflects errors either in his own memory or in Williams' rendering of the account" (81). The appendix includes transcriptions of various important diplomatic documents framed by both Indians and the Washington administration.

Darryl Hattenhauer

Sacred Feathers: The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) and the Mississauga Indians. Donald B. Smith. Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 1987. ISBN 0-8032-4173-9.

Peter Jones (*Sacred Feathers*) is remembered as one of the first Indian missionaries to work with Indian people, the Mississauga of Ontario. Though his primary mission was the spiritual welfare of his flock, he was equally concerned with establishing a sound land base for them and working for equitable treatment for aboriginal people. He is also remembered for his vivid descriptions of European lifestyles and values, which he observed as he travelled in Britain to raise funds for the Methodist missions in Canada. He was puzzled by the inequities he saw. On the one hand he was hosted by wealthy churchmen who ate so much of roast beef, plum pudding and turtle soup that they "get very fat and round as a toad" (129), but on the other hand, just outside on the streets was "the poor man who knows not where he may get his next meal" (129).

Donald Smith used Jones's letters, diaries and sermons to compile his book. Other similar sources are used to compile information about him as he was perceived by contemporaries during that time period. The meticulous footnoting makes this one of the most interesting Canadian histories that utilizes every opportunity to present information from a Native perspective.

Peter Jones was the son of a white surveyor and a Mississauga mother. He lived with his mother until he was 14 years old so his language, world view and cultural identity was that of a Mississauga Indian. In 1816 he was taken by his father to Grand River where he attended school, learned to farm and eventually converted to Christianity at age 21. Jones then began a career devoted to the spiritual welfare of the Mississauga as well as other Ojibway bands in present day Ontario. More than any other individual he was responsible for the Mississaugas' adjustment to European culture and acted as a link between the two societies until his death in 1856.

The book is organized chronologically beginning with Jones's boyhood, the lengthy process that led to his conversion to Christianity, his fund raising efforts for missionary purposes, his marriage to Eliza Field Jones, an English woman, and it deals with the troubled times in Jones's life as he realized that the Mississauga would never be viewed as equal to European settlers. Even within the Methodist church they would never be treated as equals. The book accurately documents how people like Jones were used by the establishment and how Jones persevered because he saw cooperation as the only means of survival for his people. That he despaired at times was not

surprising. In the final chapter, "Peter Jones's Legacy," Smith summarizes the accomplishments of this outstanding man and pays tribute to him when he says,

I end this study of this remarkable man with the thought that others today fight the political battles that Peter Jones began. Through their views his message still reverberates. (249)

Interspersed with the personal history of Peter Jones are chapters on the history of the Mississauga Indians and meticulous examination of social and political views of the time. Smith has drawn together many sources of information to recreate this era and at times the reader becomes somewhat impatient with the many digressions, as when Eliza Field's childhood environment is described. Appendices include a discourse by Peter Jones on the Ojibwas, and Europeans' "Creeds and Practice," a description of her husband's character by Eliza Field Jones, and a discussion of Mississauga place names by the Ojibway linguist Basil Johnston. Maps and illustrations enhance the book.

This book is a major contribution to information on Ojibway Indians. It is the only book written on the Mississauga specifically but it also serves to illuminate Indian/White relationships in Canada, providing an Indian perspective which has been ignored by most historians.

Agnes Grant

* * * *

Long Lance: The True Story of an Imposter. Donald B. Smith. Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 1983. 304 pp., \$8.95 cloth. ISBN 0-8032-9141-8.

The Life of Okah Tubbee. Ed. Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr. Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 1988. 159 pp. ISBN 0-8032-2870-8.

The question of identity looms large in the biographies and autobiographies of Native Americans, especially in those of people who lived in the last hundred and fifty years. Often in these works, the quest to discover one's identity is paramount. The resulting conflict (as well as the choices inherent in the struggle) often are the very meat of these narratives of American Indian and Alaska Native lives.

The principals in the two works considered here were on a quest

for identity as well, but instead of trying to discover who they were, both were trying to establish their identities. Both created and developed new personas for themselves by clever manipulation of the facts surrounding their early histories and by deliberate fabrication. Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance and Okah Tubbee, "son of the head chief, Mosholeh Tubbee, of the Choctaw Nation of Indians" were a pair of confidence men who were able to maneuver their ways into positions of fame and even respect that, given their humble beginnings, could not have seemed possible when they started on their careers.

Donald B. Smith's biography of Long Lance is a fascinating account of a great impostor who succeeds in pulling off his scam for a number of years. This is the story of Sylvester Long, the son of parents who claimed to be white and Indian but who were regarded as "colored" in their hometown of Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Sylvester was able to escape an almost certain bleak future in that racially stratified city by playing an Indian in a travelling Wild West show, an experience that opened his eyes to the realities of a society divided along racial lines. Quickly, he discovered that being an Indian did not limit him to the degree and in the same way as being black or "colored" did. After his short time with the show, he attended Carlisle by claiming to be Cherokee. He later served in the Canadian army in France during World War I and was mustered out at Calgary, Alberta. It was here that he began his writing career for the *Calgary Herald*. He was a successful journalist, writing not only for local newspapers but for large circulation magazines like *Cosmopolitan* and *McClure's*.

His writing success helped him to develop his new identity, too. In a short time, his local readers in Canada came to know him as "Long Lance," mostly through autobiographical accounts published in conjunction with his articles. According to these accounts, he had been born a Plains Indian and raised in the traditional manner. At Carlisle, he had been the training partner and best friend of Jim Thorpe. After continuing his education at West Point, Sylvester says he enlisted in the Canadian army, fighting valiantly in France and Italy and rising through the enlisted ranks to become a highly decorated captain. His biography, *Long Lance*, published in 1928, is a compilation of his flights of fancy concerning his own "life." The book was a smash hit. Long became the darling of New York's café society during the 1920s and early 1930s and even starred in a film; but as his fame grew, so did the chances for detection and exposure. Using his prodigious verbal skills, Long was able to stave off the inevitable for a long time.

Smith's account is meticulously researched and well documented. This is not to say that it reads like a dry piece of academic writing; on the contrary, the book is fast paced and reads almost like the adventure story that was, in fact, Long Lance's life. This work is a valuable one for what it tells us about this historic figure, but it is more. It is a chronicle of racial attitudes and segregationist practices in North America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Another thoroughly researched yet entertaining work is *Okah Tubbee*, edited by Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr. Littlefield gives us the last edition of Okah Tubbee's life published in 1852 with carefully edited and annotated text. The original, which appeared in four versions, was dictated by the subject himself to his wife, Laah Ceil Manatoi Elaah Tubbee, and like Long Lance's autobiography it is full of embellishments and misinformation concerning Okah Tubbee's origins and life. Fortunately, Littlefield has provided the results of his painstaking research on the man in the form of an informative introduction that uncovers many of the subject's claims and misstatements.

As the editor's research clearly shows, not only was Okah Tubbee not the son of Mosholeh Tubbee, the Choctaw leader, but he was probably not even an Indian. According to the records, Okah Tubbee was the son of a slave woman in Natchez, Mississippi, and was known locally as James Warner or Warner McCary. But mystery surrounds his early life. When his purported mother, brother, and sister were manumitted in their owner's will, Warner was singled out to remain a slave. From an early age he was determined to escape from servitude; because of Natchez's proximity to the Mississippi River and its position as a busy port, Warner was able, in time, to effect that escape. By the time he was able to leave Natchez, Okah Tubbee had become an accomplished musician. He used his talent to get employment as a musician on the Mississippi river boats. Soon he was able to lose himself on the busy waterway and the numerous towns that lined it.

Okah Tubbee was able to cover his tracks as he left Natchez and servitude behind by claiming a new identity as the son of Moshulatubbee, a chief of the Choctaw Nation. Under this guise, he was welcomed throughout the Midwest and East as a talented Native American. He appeared on stage in Indian dress along with Laah Ceil, who claimed Delaware and Mohawk descent. In addition to his career as a showman, Okah Tubbee also practiced medicine, a skill allegedly developed from his knowledge of Indian herbal cures. The first publication of his biography in 1848 added to his growing reputation. Okah Tubbee eventually made his way to Canada and

lived there until around 1856, when he dropped out of sight.

The stories of Okah Tubbee, both the fictive and the real, are fascinating. But there is more to this book than an account of the adventures of Dr. O.K., to use one of the various names he gave himself. Littlefield's work also provides us with a look at race relations in pre-Civil War America. We get a glimpse of the practice of enslaving non-black minorities and an idea of the status of "mulattoes." In addition, we see the fascination of many whites for "the vanishing American." Of course, one of the most important themes of both these works is how race almost automatically determined social status, and the impact of this state of affairs upon individuals.

James W. Parins

* * * *

A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison. James E. Seaver. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse U Press, 1990. 167 pp. ISBN 0-8156-2491-3.

Mary Jemison was born at sea, about 1742, while her Scots-Irish parents were en route to America. When she was about 16, a band of Shawanos captured her family in western Pennsylvania and took them off to the Iroquois settlement at Sandusky, on the Ohio. After her parents and younger siblings were killed, she was adopted by a Seneca family living on the Ohio, to "replace" a brother whom they had lost in a war. Her Seneca sisters treated her with kindness and dignity, taught her to speak Seneca, to work, and, in a few years, told her whom to marry--a young Delaware, by whom she had two children.

When her Seneca sisters moved back to western New York, she went with them, her Delaware husband having been killed. She walked the whole 500 miles, carrying her son, Thomas Jemison, in a cradleboard--an event commemorated in the statue of her which stands today in Letchworth State Park in the Genesee River Valley. There she remarried--a noted Seneca warrior, Hiokatoo, with whom she lived 50 years and raised five children.

Through the turmoils that were the French and Indian War and the American Revolution, she lived as a Seneca, developing a reputation as a friend to both Indian and white. During the war, when there were efforts to capture and ransom her, she hid in the woods. After the war, her Indian brother gave her the opportunity to be repatriated. She refused, because her home and family were among

the Seneca. "If I should be so fortunate as to find my [white] relatives, they would despise my children, if not myself; and treat us as enemies" (77-8). She became well-known in her time as the "White Woman of the Genesee."

In 1823, when she was about 80 years old, Dr. James Seaver arranged to interview her for about a week, wrote her *Narrative*, and published it the following year. The book rapidly became a classic in captivity literature. And now, Syracuse University Press has given us a handsome, quality paperback edition, part of a continuing series called "The Iroquois and Their Neighbors." It is well worth having in your library.

Seaver is consciously literary in his style; he cultivates balanced sentences and euphonic phrasing in his first-person voice of Mrs. Mary Jemison, which is certainly a falsification, for Mary had been to school only a few years and learned to read "tolerably," but forgot it all in her long years of captivity. But we also have to give Seaver credit: for the most part, he lets Mary tell the detail of her own story, blanching neither at the violence in her life nor her chosen values, suppressing neither her fulfilling life nor her travail. What we get is a happy amalgam: a quotable self-portrait of a remarkable woman.

One of the things that attracts us to Mary (and makes her story important) is the fact that she lived and was an observant witness during a time when our professional histories are deficient. She tells us much about Seneca life and customs, about Seneca, French, and British roles in frontier battles, about the fate of prisoners and the processes of ransom, about land grants and reservations, about personalities of her times, including Red Jacket, Corn Planter, and others. Her memory for places and dates has proven to be quite accurate.

Moreover, her realism is a camera-like honesty for the bloody conditions of her life. Her captors roasted and peeled the scalps of her parents in front of her. She was made unwilling witness to many burnings and other tortures of prisoners, though she often succeeded in interceding on behalf of Indian and white alike. Her oldest and youngest sons were murdered in drunken quarrels with her middle son; and when that son was also killed ("they caught him, and with an axe cut his throat, and beat out his brains, so that when he was found, the contents of his skull were lying in his arms"), she "could not mourn for him as I had for my other sons, because I knew that his death was just" (114-15).

Mary Jemison does not spend any time flailing her soul, as did Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, who wrote one of the other classic accounts of Indian captivity. Mrs. Rowlandson, captured in Massachusetts

during the Pequot War, suffered greatly on the trail, saw one of her children die, saw Indians killed, and recounts it all with a mixture of bloody realism and Puritan theology. But Mary Rowlandson is so concerned with all her experience as a sign of her Election to the realm of the Saved, that she never really sees what is before her; she sees only her projections of her own mind. Mary Jemison admits that, though she remembered to repeat her catechism for a time, she forgot it all when she came to understand Seneca religion, which she found a religion of comfort and support, rather than torture and damnation. Seneca religion encouraged one to be honest, chaste, self-reliant, respectful of others. In her old age, she regretted being unable to read the Bible, but felt it would make her no more moral a person than she had been all her life as a Seneca.

Nor did Mary Jemison have the unthinking Indianness of Cynthia Parker, who was captured on the Texas frontier when she was about seven years old. When she was "recaptured" at about age 34, she knew no English but her own name. She was forcibly returned to her white family, but was a profoundly unhappy captive; for she was, just as Mary Jemison had feared, regarded as an enemy. Cynthia tried to escape several times to go back to her son, Quannah, and their Comanche people. Soon after her baby died, she, too, died--died of a broken heart, if that ever were possible.

With knowledge and understanding, Mrs. Mary Jemison chose to be a Seneca; that is what attracts us to her most and sets her narrative apart within captivity literature. She chose, not out of ignorance, for she had been in almost daily contact with English speaking people from about the age of 19, when she and her sisters moved to western New York. She knew at first hand their avarice for land; their disregard for others, even their own families; their contempt for anything that was not a reflection of themselves.

In spite of the brutality around her, Mary Jemison keeps her life focused on other, enduring values. In Seneca community, she found a way to live through others and to offer herself as a path for others to live through her. She is fulfilled in her sisters' honesty, industry, and kindness; she fulfills her Indian brother's sense of continuity and belonging; and she offers us a life of pacifism and simpatico humanitarianism.

Charles Brashear

* * * *

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