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Editor: Karl Kroeber, Columbia University
Bibliographer: LaVonne Ruoff, Illinois-Chicago

Southwest: A Contemporary Anthology, gen. eds. Karl and Jane Kopp, Bart Lanier Stafford III, fiction ed. Albuquerque; Red Earth Press, 1978. 418pp. \$6.95
Citing an American tradition traceable from Walden through Whitman, Twain, Faulkner, William Carlos Williams, the editors have built this large anthology with poems and prose focusing on place. Rudolfo A. Anaya, in the one major essay, refers to such writing as stemming from "epiphany in landscape." The concept is useful in considering the scope of work included, for many of the pieces are not specifically about place, but evoke qualities of place through characterization, thematic preoccupations, language, etc. Nick Ranieri's story "Headquakes & Hunger," for example, depicting a day in the life of a heroin-addicted Los Angeles truck driver, presents us with an objective correlative for the alienating dissociativeness and pointless speed to be found in that city at the outer limits of both the American Southwest and the American dream. Leslie Silko's fine story "Lullaby," on the other hand, shows us another kind of pacing and observation, one very much related to the Four Corners "epicenter" of the Southwest where the story is set, and where American Indian cultures have flowered and continue to grow in their own way: "She recognized the freezing. It came gradually, sinking snow flake by snow flake until the crust was heavy and deep. It had the strength of the stars in Orion, and its journey was endless." For Anaya, landscape the writer's relation to his or her region is a "taking-off point," or "the place where imagination and the image-laden memory begin their

work, and the three forces -- place, imagination, and memory -- are inextricably bound together." Ranieri reflects the rootlessness and speed of L.A. and Silko the deep-rootedness and slowness of the Four Corners, each drawing on his own particular resources of place, memory and imagination to create his own particular "epiphany of landscape."

American writers have traditionally been preoccupied with discovering both who they are and where they are, and the two issues often merge. In their commentaries the editors point out the closeness of this preoccupation to the older oral literary tradition of the American Indian in which relation to place is central. A sense of indebtedness to Indian literatures is quite conscious in the work of many of the Anglo writers included. Doug Flaherty, for instance, states, "I went to the Indian legends to be led back. . . to a re-affirmation of life -- simple, mythic, spiritual, and physical." Leonard Bird speaks of the need to find a "mythopoeic tradition" native to the American soil, and of the capacity of Indian lore to teach contemporary people how to be "responsible citizens of Turtle Island." John Brandi, in his poem "At Mesa Verde," writes:

Watched a white rainbow
over Montezuma Valley, stoned
I carried myself away
"Ten Winnebagos down"
& 13 centuries back --

To how it was "then"
when America was still
without
Name--

Native American relation to place is developed by the inclusion of work by contemporary writers of Indian blood, such as Silko, Paula Allen, Simon Ortiz, Jim Barnes, Harold Littlebird, Joy Harjo, Gerald Hobson,

and Norman Russell. Many of these writings are among the most successful in the collection.

The text is arranged by geographic sections: Western Arkansas/Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico/southern Colorado, Arizona/southern Utah, Los Angeles and the desert, with a coda of a few works deemed to transcend sectionalism. Each section is preceded by a tour-bookish introduction by a resident writer. Quality of writing within each section varies (I found the New Mexico and Arizona sections most consistently satisfying), but the sub-divisions bring out unique regional concerns. The quality of the fiction seems less uneven than that of the poetry. Notable are stories by Ozarkian Bob Minnick and Japanese-American Wakako Yamauchi. The attempt by the editors to be representative probably accounts for the unevenness of the poetry. One often feels that inferior poems by writers with better stuff in them have been included because they relate in some way to place, and the editors want that writer.

Probably you can't compile an inclusive anthology that is also thematically focussed and be totally successful. An inclusive anthology needs to be open in theme so that the best works by major and minor writers can be brought together and the richness and diversity of the art of a given region conveyed. Lack of diversity, not only of theme but also of style, is striking in Southwest. Everyone, with the exception of Mei-mei Berssenbrugge and possibly one or two others, seems to be writing in a straightforward, naturalistic style. One wonders if this is representative of Southwestern writing or is a function of the thematic limitations. The stylistic consistency does have the advantage of making the text on the whole accessible and well-suited for classroom use, particularly in colleges and high schools in the southwest.

I would have preferred an anthology on place that included more writing by fewer writers. Ortiz, Silko, Paul Gunn Allen, Drummond Hadley, John Brandi and others who have much to tell us about place seem under-represented in an attempt to include a piece or two by everybody. Given the conflicting premises of inclusiveness and thematic focus, the editors probably do as good a job as possible. Despite the unevenness, there are many fine pieces in Southwest, and it is interesting to read so many different "takes" by writers on who they are/where they are.

Michael Castro

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Kirk Robertson. Shooting At Shadows, Killing Crows:
Workings from Plains Winter Counts. Marvin, S. D.,
Blue Cloud Abbey: Blue Cloud Quarterly, 1976. pp.15
\$1 Pb.

First you choose one event out of a whole year. In 1787-7, for instance, in the Blue Thunder Winter Count, the event is described thus: "They killed some Crows in the winter time. They shot at shadows." A bracketed gloss on this description goes: "Perhaps the Dakotas found some of their enemies camped in tipis and shot at their outlines on the tipi walls as they passed between it and the fire." What we have now is a simple historic event (killing Crow Indians) with an ambiguous comment (they shot at shadows), which the glossator tries to clarify as also a simple historic event; the shadows were those cast by the Crow on tipi walls, so attacking Lakota shot at shadows and killed Crows.

Kirk Robertson has taken a good number of such events-with-glosses and "turned" them into poems. How he did this is evident from what he did to "work" the example above into the title of his chapbook. He used all capital letters for his title, so immediately the CROWS become supernatural: either

birds or people. Now the two sentences of the original are reversed to "They shot at shadows. They killed CROWS." Suddenly there comes to life a "poetic" relation between shadows and crows, a magical possibility of killing either Crows or crows by shooting your arrows (guns) into shadows. One kind of history has become one kind of poetry.

Is the poetry fair to the history? Not an easy question. It is fair in one way: whatever we can do to recover the sense of supernatural order within the natural will help pass through us the sense of newly being on a continent, still native peoples, not yet denatured. And yet one does perhaps feel that the people who kept this series of winter counts meant them to be history and not poetry. They had ways of fitting these events into their cosmos that were very different from Robertson's way.

It is not much of a dilemma. I am glad for the winter counts, and I am glad for Robertson's workings of them into a short collection of closeups that remind me of both the difference and the luminous encounters between history and poetry, earth and spirit. Robertson has drawn on a considerable collection of different counts, and has rearranged the events into his own sequence, from a group on ORIGIN (NAMING) to one on DEATH. His two center-pieces (pp. 8&9) are WINTER and HEYOKA. For WINTER he used about six different pieces from James Howard's "Dakota Winter Counts as a Source of Plains History" (U.S. Bureau of American Ethnol. Bullet. 173, pp. 335-416), the six being on pp. 353, 363-4, 371-2, 378, 367. Robertson has stayed close to them, but has arranged them into a crescendo of statements of how cold the Plains winters were, beginning with

so cold/ we got water/ only/ from beaver holes

and ending with

so cold/ starving around the kettle/eating each other. Perhaps it is worth a gentle complaint here that the whole collection is focused on the grim and the stark. Is this a result of the fact that when any human group reduces its choice of memorable events to one per year it will be a painfully memorable one, either painful to those remembering or to those with whom the rememberers were in conflict (such as the Crows who were shot)? The moments of humor in Shooting at Shadows tend to be sardonic, or fierce and grim. Maybe it would be a good idea for those reading this chapbook to read along with it something like Gene Weltfish's The Lost Universe (Univ. of Nebraska (Bison), 1977, \$6.95Pb) Here the sense of a communal life, a life of working together, with dances and storytelling and buffalo hunts that were more than a series of deaths and painfully funny moments, comes through strongly. Those who have been in the Dakotas in the winter do not need to be told, of course, that it can be murderously cold and grim; nor do we need to be informed that whisky, white-eyes, and winter require their own comment. Yet without romanticizing, one can keep steadily in mind that a people do survive with dance and song and story, as well as with rifles and scalps and anger.

Carter Revard - Washington Univ.

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Gary Witherspoon. Language and Art in the Navajo Universe. Ann Arbor, U. of Michigan Press, 1977. pp214
As a graduate student in anthropology with special

interest in aesthetics and plans to do fieldwork among the Navajo, I was excited to read this book. Dr. Witherspoon, now a professor at Michigan, first encountered the Navajo at the age of 19, when he was serving as a Mormon missionary. Since then he has lived more than ten years with them, been in their employ as a teacher, community worker, and school administrator, has married a Navajo woman, and studied their language and culture intensively. Witherspoon's assumptions include a definition of "culture" as "a set of conceptions of and orientations to the world, embodied in symbols and symbolic forms" (p5). His goal is "thick description" of Navajo culture through their own conceptions and beliefs about the world. The description seeks to be so complete as to allow discrimination of statements which are "literal and logical" from those which are "metaphorical and analogical" (86).

Witherspoon sees in all Navajo symbolic systems the operation of a few assumptions which provide the Navajo with fundamental orientations to the world. One of the most crucial of these is a basic dualism of all phenomena into static and active phases, with emphasis on the active world of motion. Also there is a belief in an "unbreakable link between the worlds of thought and speech and the worlds of matter and energy" (75): Navajo believe that thought is the creative power behind speech, and speech (especially ritual language) is a compulsive power which makes events happen. Related to this is the assumption of the operation of a kind of "willful determinism" in the universe, in which events can be controlled and gods can be compelled by humans through proper ritual action and speech.

In the first three chapters Witherspoon shows how these assumptions are reflected in Navajo conceptions of the creation of the world, the control of the

world and the classification of the world through language. Using mythological texts, he shows that it was through speech that the gods (holy People) created the present world of "Earth Surface People." The importance of knowledge is seen in the ritual tradition of the Navajo, a tradition in which the compulsive power to cure illness or purify from evil or danger lies in exact repetition of a huge amount of oral literature. Knowledge is the prerequisite to the perfect speech which can compel the gods.

In his chapter on classification Witherspoon presents an interesting analysis of Navajo kinship terminology, in which he shows how terms such as mother, father, sister, etc. are based on how people treat one another, rather than on blood relationships. He also emphasizes the polysemy of Navajo terms, with specific reference to terms of kinship, sex, color, and direction. I think that Witherspoon is at his best in these chapters and that his discussion of the role of language in Navajo culture is truly impressive.

In the chapter on art there is a discussion of the term hozho, which means "beauty"; however, like many Navajo terms, hozho has several other meanings inseparable from "beauty" including good health, happiness, harmony, and moral good. Hozho is used to describe the world when it is working properly through controlled motion and action, and art products are made to make the world hozho. Witherspoon emphasizes that the Navajo don't find their world beautiful, they make it so. Art is not something to keep and preserve, but something to make and do, and artistic production is a large part of the compulsive rituals. This chapter, which presents a formal and symbolic analysis of Navajo art with examples of songs, weavings and sandpaintings, concludes by describing the art tradition as one of

"dynamic symmetry" stressing repetition rather than balance and based on the device of similar but inexact pairing(200). Witherspoon categorizes Navajo concern with art as more a "conceptual" than "perceptual" experience(151). I have doubts about the validity of this suggestion. While a sandpainting does serve as a way of conceiving the ritual patient's relation to a certain god or mythological hero, this would not seem necessarily to preclude, or even to overshadow, the perceptual, sensual or affective experience of the art form. I think Witherspoon fails to explore the affective and sensory dimensions of Navajo relations to their art, although his own perceptions are vividly evident. Questions as to why the most powerful ritual language is poetic, or why the climactic moment of curing or purifying, when the patient is "identified" with a particular god or hero whose power is then transmitted to the patient, necessarily involves the elaborate production of a huge sandpainting remain unanswered. The chapter concludes with a comparison of Navajo art with American action or field painting exemplified by Jackson Pollock. Here the author violates his own standard, which specifies that non-Western cultures should be understood in terms of their own conceptual categories, and I feel the discussion fails to elucidate either Navajo art, or Pollock's.

The book is perhaps weakened by its overwhelming concern with Navajo thought and belief to the exclusion of action. I get little sense of what Navajo do, and my final impression is of a culture of extremely thoughtful individuals whose actions and feelings remain mysterious. Perhaps my dissatisfaction results from the definition of culture used by Witherspoon, which does not include behavior or action. Only speech acts are discussed in detail.

The author's model is presented as a universal, and apparently unchanging, description of Navajo world view. He is unconcerned with variations among individuals' beliefs, or changes in beliefs over time. So the role of the individual artist is disregarded, and there is no attention to artistic production itself, which in the ceremonies involves many people in an unfolding process of interaction and aesthetic performance which may last as long as nine days. Finally, I can't say the book has enabled me to separate the "literal" from the "metaphorical" in Navajo statements. I am not even sure from this material that Navajos make metaphors, though they obviously make poetry. These criticisms, however, do not seriously undermine the value of this book. Witherspoon has sensitively documented his respect for, involvement with, and knowledge of Navajo culture. His work is rich in insights for any reader interested in the Navajo.

Judith Pearce - Columbia University

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Elizabeth Cook-Lynn. Then Badger Said This. New York: Vantage, 1975 \$4.95Pb. vi + pp41.

Most readers will approach this book from a particular "angle of vision," because most interested in contemporary Native American writing have encountered Momaday's The Way to Rainy Mountain, and the temptation to read Then Badger Said This as a Sioux version of Momaday's creative Kiowa history is almost irresistible.. Both are short and divided into brief sections; both are illustrated with traditional line drawings; both focus on specific tribal heritages and landscapes; both offer versions of similar stories (the arrow-maker and the enemy, for instance); the cadences of the prose, especially the short closing sentences, are similar; both mix literary genres and explore a variety of historical perspectives; Cook-Lynn even quotes, or answers,

The Way to Rainy Mountain. Thus section IX begins "It is true that women have always had a very hard time," which echoes the second voice of Momaday's XVII, "the lives of women were hard. . ." and IV begins "Not everything in the world had to have a beginning," echoing Momaday's first line of I, "You know, everything had to begin."

But Cook-Lynn does more than "borrow." She also tackles some of the most difficult paradoxes dramatized in Way to Rainy Mountain: the continuity of Native American experiences in spite of drastic changes the last two centuries have brought to Kiowa and Sioux; the relations between private perception and cultural "myth"; the paradox of a dead culture still very much alive -- and how a 20th century Native American can face the paradox with both cold realism and the delight of a child's fresh perceptions. For Cook-Lynn, as for Momaday, the keys to bridging these contradictions are memory and creative acts of imagination: on the dedication page she warns that "if you do not believe that memory and imagination are components of history, do not read this little volume."

To demonstrate how well the keys work is to isolate and, related, to select from a myriad of tribal, family, and personal memories combinations of experiences illuminating the paradoxes and their resolutions or at least their creative transformations. Thus in IV we find the pre-creation Sioux narrative of "Inyan, the rock. . .the ancestor of all beings and all things," who existed before the beginning and was "soft," shapeless, and "all-powerful until he opened himself and bled and then he became hard." Then in V Cook-Lynn recalls a story about a remarkable Sisseton woman who could speak to rocks. This power enabled her to find the body of a drowned boy after all other efforts had failed. Suddenly a reservation event lives with precreation. In XI

we hear legendary and cultural information about the meadowlark and then witness a poignant event: "Chunskay and I were riding with Old Man in the wagon." The narrator "drowns" and dangles her "brown stockinged legs. . . in the dust." Chunskay took potshots with his slingshot. "Suddenly and without warning Chunskay "got luck" and felled a meadowlark with his pebble; mid-song, the little bird dropped to the earth. The leather reins fell from Old Man's hands, and when I looked into his eyes I knew that there had been another sound in the air. After that, I listened for it."

Momaday was certainly an influence upon Cook-Lynn (she is working on a critical study of him and other Indian authors). But from another "angle of vision" Then Badger Said This is a "collection" loosely held together by the remembered heritage of the Sioux and the perceptions and imagination of one Sioux woman. The book lacks the evenness of tone and compelling epic qualities of Way to Rainy Mountain -- the unity of the journey motif and the emergence drama. But Cook-Lynn probably never intended such scope and unity for her "little volume," so we shouldn't force such expectations upon it. And we should be alert to the voices and experiences that range beyond the unities of Momaday's journey and the "traditional" boundaries of Sioux experience: the modern forty-niner-singing voice of the poem "Jesus Saves or Don't Ask Me to Join AA and Be a Fool," the quiet concreteness of the poem "Simile," the incorporation of modern social and economic issues in the tale of Joseph Shields, who lost his "middle son" in World War I before he was a U.S. citizen, and the wonderful opening prose piece that mixes realities of a legendary landscape and a 1950s power project.

This section is impressive, particularly for me, since I visited the project as a boy. It begins by

associating the Missouri River country with the legendary place "where the earth first recognized humanity." Then the legend is humanized with the memory of old women carrying firewood from river trails. Next we see the river in 1952; the timber by the Missouri is trapped and rotting under the flood water of the Missouri River Project, wood that had "nourished a people for all generations" was dying. "Yet, as your fingertips touch the slick leaves of the milkweed and roll the juicy leaves together, it is easy to believe that this vast region continues to share its destiny with a people who have survived hard winters, invasions, migrations, and transformations unthought of and unpredicted, and even easier to know that the mythology and history of all times remains remote and believable."

Again echoes of Momaday. But Cook-Lynn's experiments in looking, wondering, and dwelling upon "a particular landscape" from "many angles" is no mere copying. What Then Badger Said This demonstrates is an encouraging characteristic of much contemporary Native American writing: the ability to use sources -- whether they be tribal oral narratives, recent stories and "gossip," or modern classics such as Way to Rainy Mountain -- as touchstones for the examination of landscapes and experiences beyond the visions of the original sources. In this light, Silko's Tayo and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn's Missouri prairies are exciting expansions of territories initially opened up in other traditions. I hope the expansion continues; and I hope Badger speaks again.

Kenneth Roemer Univ of Texas, Arlington

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MEETINGS AT THE MLA CONVENTION, NEW YORK, 1978

Spec. Session 367: Friday, Dec 29, 10-15-11:30 a.m.
Room 551 Hilton

Interdisciplinary Approaches to American Indian Literatures. Presiding: A LaVonne Ruoff; Speakers: Dell Hymes, Marcia Herndon, Inés Talamantez.

Sponsored by the Discussion Group on American Indian Literatures

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From Oral to Written: The Literary Artist as Story-teller, A Forum. 10:15-noon, Thursday, Dec 28, Grand Ballroom West, Hilton. Moderator, Robert B. Stepto; Speakers: Irving Howe, Scott Momaday, Ernest Gaines.

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Spec. Session 171. Thursday, Dec 28, 1:00-2:15,
Bryant A, Hilton

Contemporary Native American Literature: Poets on Poetry. Discussion leaders, A. LaVonne Ruoff & Carter Revard; Panelists, Paula Gunn Allen, James Welch, Maurice Kenny. * * *

Session 291, Thursday, Dec 28, 9:00-10:15 p.m.
Madison A, Hilton

Presiding: Paula Gunn Allen; Speakers: A LaVonne Ruoff, Gretchen Bataille, Inés Talamantez, Patricia Clark Smith. The Influence of Tradition in Modern Native American Literature.

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Spec. Session 331. Friday, Dec. 29, 8:30-9:45 a.m.,
Rotunda, Hilton

Teaching Modern American Indian Literature. Discussion Leader, Gretchen Bataille; Panelists, Galen Buller, Jarold Ramsey, R. D. Theisz

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Spec. Session 591. 9:00-10:15 a.m. Room 551 Hilton,
Saturday, Dec. 30

Strategies for Survival of Ethnic Studies Programs: Native-American Studies.

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