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The editorial board of *SAIL* invites the submission of scholarly manuscripts focused on all aspects of American Indian literatures as well as the submission of poetry and short fiction, bibliographical essays, review essays, and interviews. We define “literatures” broadly to include all written, spoken, and visual texts created by Native peoples.

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FROM THE EDITORS

Looking Back, Looking Forward

Reflections on *SAIL*

JAMES H. COX AND DANIEL HEATH JUSTICE

After five years, four and a half volumes, and eighteen issues, these words officially mark our final editorial contribution to *SAIL*. Aside from a few small tasks remaining for us, the co-editorship of the journal now belongs to our successors, Chad Allen (Submissions) and Michelle Raheja (Production); their first issue will follow this one and mark the start of an exciting new phase in the journal's history.

It has been an extraordinary experience to guide the journal these past five years and to work with such incredible people along the way. *SAIL* and the Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures have been foundational to our own growth as scholars in the field; many of our most honored colleagues and good friends came into our lives through opportunities provided by the intellectual community developed through ASAIL. While we move on to other projects, we will continue to read, debate, engage, and learn from the essays, reviews, and commentaries published in *SAIL*. Indeed, under the visionary guidance of its new editorial team (with the fabulous Lisa Tatonetti continuing as Book Review Editor), the journal promises to shape the field in even more provocative, rigorous, and exciting ways.

The creation of a journal issue is a collaborative, collective effort, and we owe our most sincere gratitude to a great many people. Our first thanks go to our home institutions, specifically the Department of English and the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Texas at Austin and the Centre for Aboriginal Initiatives at the University

of Toronto. Elizabeth Cullingford, the chair of UT–Austin’s Department of English, has been especially generous. These academic units supported our labor on the journal and funded our editorial assistants, to whom we also extend our gratitude: Kirby Brown, Lydia French, Laine Perez, Bryan Russell, Alberto Varon, and Kyle Carsten Wyatt. The journal would be much poorer without their dedication, hard work, and critical acumen.

In particular, we wanted to take the opportunity to acknowledge the long service of Kirby and Kyle, who worked on *SAIL* while they finished their PhDs under the supervision of James and Daniel, respectively. We are very proud that *SAIL* continues its tradition of providing editorial, networking, and research experience for another generation of young scholars. Kirby will be joining the faculty at the University of Oregon as assistant professor of Native literature, and Kyle is now the managing editor of Canada’s prestigious cultural affairs magazine, the *Walrus*. Please join us in congratulating these impressive young scholars as they begin their professional journeys!

Our Editorial Board colleagues over the years have made it possible to fulfill the diverse mandate of the journal, and we want to offer our deepest appreciation to Chad Allen, Lisa Brooks, Robin Riley Fast, Susan Gardner, Patrice Hollrah, Arnold Krupat, Molly McGlennen, Margaret Noori, Kenneth Roemer, Lisa Tatonetti, Christopher Teuton, and Jace Weaver. The creative submissions over the years have been carefully and thoughtfully reviewed by Joseph Bruchac and LeAnne Howe. Long-time Book Review Editor P. Jane Hafen finished her service a couple of years ago, and now Lisa Tatonetti continues in that important role.

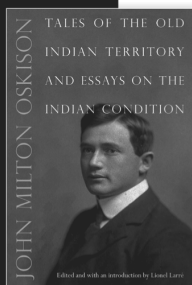
We would be remiss if we didn’t thank the many manuscript and book reviewers who have served *SAIL* over the years. Without your willingness to participate in the review process, we wouldn’t have an astonishing thirty-five-year legacy of scholarship to celebrate and reflect upon. We also offer our sincere appreciation to the many writers who have submitted manuscripts to *SAIL*. Every issue is an opportunity to bring new perspectives, visions, and writers to an ever-expanding (and increasingly transnational) audience interested in the beauty, power, and transformative potential of Indig-

enous literary expression. The editors emeritus of *SAIL*—Helen Jaskoski, Robert M. Nelson, Malea Powell, John Purdy, Rodney Simard, and the late Karl Kroeber—all cleared a good path for us to follow. In this issue LaVonne Ruoff helps us to honor Karl Kroeber with a memorial she wrote especially for *SAIL*. We have included as well an interview with and speech by him. And, of course, we can't forget our readers, without whom none of this would be possible.

In the editorial for our first issue (20.1), we noted that we wanted *SAIL* to “serve not just as a site of scholarly publication but as a space of debate and analysis where readers can take the current pulse of the critical conversations in the field.” Because of all of you—contributors, reviewers, editorial staff, and readers alike—*SAIL* continues to serve the field of Indigenous literary studies in this way. We are humbled by the intellectual and professional generosity we've experienced over these years as we reflect on the journal's editorial genealogy, and we look forward to following *SAIL*'s exciting new era as Chad and Michelle begin their own journey.

The contributions to this issue offer thought-provoking considerations of seemingly familiar writers and texts as well as texts that deserve more critical attention. They range from John Joseph Mathews's literary invocations of Indian internationalism and the problematics of imposing the category of “poetry” on Navajo song traditions, to the interpenetrated significance of sexuality and trickster discourse in Gerald Vizenor's *The Heirs of Columbus* and the interpretive possibilities of the “Midwestern grotesque” in Louise Erdrich's oeuvre. We're also proud to feature poetry by Haida scholar and writer Jeane T'áaw xíwa Breining in this issue, as well as a number of book reviews that offer an impressive snapshot of the current critical and creative work in the field. The issue is a splendid capstone for our editorial term, and we're certain that you will find much to enjoy as well as question in these pages. We're delighted to share this issue with you.

Wado/Thank you.



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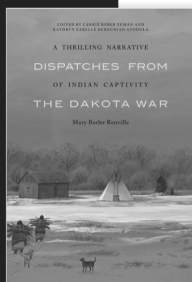
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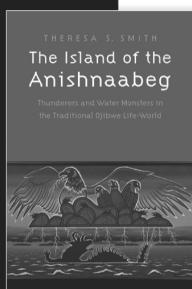
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Turning Tricks

Sexuality and Trickster Language in Vizenor's
The Heirs of Columbus

REBECCA M. LUSH

First published in anticipation of the quinqucentennial of Christopher Columbus's "discovery" of the Americas, Gerald Vizenor's novel *The Heirs of Columbus* (1991) appropriates the European narrative of discovery to privilege a Native perspective that follows "trickster discourse," a mode that rejects the tragic narratives of the European "discoverers" in favor of the comic world view offered by American Indian trickster narratives.¹ The novel follows a group of crossblood Indians, known as the "heirs," who claim Columbus as a common ancestor, and explores questions of tradition, nation, and sexuality through the language games of trickster discourse and a post-modern sensibility, invoking narrative traditions of Western culture alongside those from Native cultural traditions.² Furthermore, Vizenor presents a fictional Columbus who is a "trickster healer" of Mayan descent returning to his American homeland. The novel links Columbus and his crossblood heirs not only through lineal descent but also through their shared connection of "stories in the blood" that have healing properties.

This article examines the roles language and sexuality play in *The Heirs of Columbus's* representation of American Indian traditional stories and trickster discourse to address questions surrounding Native identity. However, instead of lamenting historical cultural losses, the work offers a solution to bridging two seemingly opposed cultures. The novel resolves the conflict between modernity and tradition through the language play and sexual innuendo of Vizenor's trickster, who synthesizes otherwise competing perspectives. The

novel expresses the ability to read or understand a particular language or cultural discourse in sexual terms. Determining who is on the receiving end (literally and figuratively) of a joke reveals which characters and readers know the trickster's language and embrace its multiple meanings.

The attention to genres and intertextuality reflects the text's interest in combining and mixing histories, an interest mirrored by the numerous cross-cultural sexual unions and the "mixed" offspring they produce. Sexual coupling results not just in children, or "heirs," but in children with "stories in the[ir] blood" from Anishinaabe culture that they wish to communicate to others. The stories in the blood come from Anishinaabe traditional stories but also result from cross-cultural sexual unions. Thus, sexual acts and unions become inextricably connected to language and stories, culminating in the reading of "genetic signatures," the novel's term for DNA, linked specifically to Anishinaabe traditional stories. The novel treats language like a scientist who breaks down the components of blood to study cells and genes and even suggests that the two processes are linked.

Much of the critical discussion of the novel has considered language, genre, and even race but has overlooked the place of sexuality. Sexual unions and innuendo, I argue, provide a new perspective on formalist questions while embracing an important thread of the novel's content: how tradition and narratives are transferred between generations and cultures. The relationship between sexuality and language attaches the human body to narrative practices and makes language an embodied object that can be constructed and deconstructed. Previous scholarship has mainly noted the novel's postmodern intertextual play with literary genres and forms.³ *The Heirs* offers a unique representation of language and sexuality that ties it to past literary and historical traditions, a feature of the text that has been a marginalized topic in explorations of nation, race, and blood.⁴ Reimagining the history of early European and Native interaction using a Native narrative tradition enables the text to at once implicitly critique Eurocentric approaches but also find a solution to issues that have previously been approached from an either/or paradigm.

The novel's awareness of the constructed nature of language mimics the formation of nation and, to an extent, race, particularly regarding sexual and technical practices. The acts of reading and understanding language are encompassed within the physical body in the novel's repeated assertion of the "stories in the blood." These stories transfer to other people not only through sexual procreation but also through genetic scientific procedures that impart the Native "genetic signature" of the stories into anyone regardless of tribe, ethnicity, or race. The human body thus functions as a receptacle for reading practices that engender politically charged questions about tradition and identity. The heirs' ability to manipulate language through a trickster's approach utilizes a sexualized discourse and synthesizes competing traditions, histories, and places.

The novel sees traditional stories and practices as the answer to modern problems for all humans, not just Native peoples. The desire of the "heirs" to share the stories in the blood with people from all over the world suggests a move away from Pan-Indianism and toward Pan-Humanism. However, the novel's hyper-awareness of its constructed nature questions the plausibility of synthesis and of Pan-Humanism as a successful solution to today's challenges, and that failure is reflected in the sexual insults and tensions that populate the novel. Rather, the utopia constructed by the heirs through postmodern attention to literary form creates an absurd solution ridiculed by their reservation and the general public who call into Carp Radio. Thus the disjunction between the heirs' claims to language play and the public reception of these same claims reveals the fraught nature of the novel's central concerns.

The Heirs references existing books and publications, thus highlighting its own genealogical relationship to literary traditions. Sexuality activates the language of stories "in the blood" and provides a vehicle to synthesize competing traditions. For example, the novel's first episode portrays Columbus's encounters with naked Native women as an epiphany that "later traced his soul to the stories in the blood," rendering the primal scene of New World encounter as a moment of reunion instead of introduction.⁵ The scene's sensual tones of nudity, physicality, and "hand-talking" make the sexualized human body central to generating the language of its representa-

tion. The novel reverses the sexual violence by describing Columbus's "curse of a twisted penis" that results in his inability "to masturbate or have intercourse without pain" (30, 31). The historical sexual violence of first contact thus remains, albeit from a perspective that makes the colonizer's sexual act one of self-inflicted pain but also a platform for the comic mode where modern readers can critique Columbus's bedroom troubles.

Sexual issues also engage specific aspects of Anishinaabe traditional stories from seducing wiindigoos to cross-dressing Indians in order to bring into comparison how modernity and tradition can coexist. Anishinaabe culture provides the framework for the inclusion of sexuality, which has the result of the Native sexualizing the European, thereby overturning the usual narrative of Western history in which the European casts the cultural other as the sexual exotic. Vizenor deploys the comic mode at the risk of minimizing the brutality of colonization, but his trickster approach of multiple meanings of language play also enables the engagement of some of these important historical concerns.

Language is often thought of as a feature that separates cultures and nationalities, in a manner similar to geographical borders, but the use of trickster discourse to combine language and sexuality in *The Heirs* blurs these boundaries. The heirs demonstrate Vizenor's definition of "survivance," or the "active sense of presence over absence," a concept that is related to "trickster discourse."⁶ Survivance focuses on present-day American Indian cultures and how they have remained rather than emphasizing what has been lost. Yet the heirs' survivance does not mean that they succeed in their global-scale project to share the stories in the blood.⁷ Rather, the heirs provide another example of the post-Indian condition, defined in part as an awareness of the term "Indian" as artificial and European in origin.

"LANGUAGE IS OUR TRICK OF DISCOVERY": THE SYNTAX OF SEXUAL CONQUEST AND RECLAMATION

The distinctions between mimetic representation and figurative associations are blurred throughout *The Heirs* and constitute a sig-

nificant portion of the text's language play and innuendo. In his article "Trickster Discourse," Vizenor posits that the trickster plays a "comic language game" that resists the "hypotragic" conventions imposed on the representation of Native Americans in written accounts.⁸ To Vizenor, previous discourses have created an image of the Indian that is negative and doomed, and ultimately an "absolute fake" (278). Trickster discourse rejects the pessimistic perspective of the American Indian as part of the Vanishing Race, or doomed Noble Savage. Instead, trickster discourse returns to Native discourses that value humor. To recognize the historically imprecise representation of Native peoples is to recognize the limits of language and cultural linguistic frameworks. Columbus's mistaken notion that he had arrived on the outskirts of Asia led him to dub the inhabitants he encountered "Indians," a misnaming that has persisted. However, trickster discourse recognizes the humor behind this continuously used but imprecise word. The imprecision transcends from its place as a poor representation to a metaphor that figuratively encapsulates the history of European and Native encounters, which then infuses importance and meaning to the word.

The novel oftentimes repeats the same word or phrase within a passage to glean multiple uses and meanings, which in turn expose the limits of language through humor and innuendo. The heated exchange between Felipa Flowers and Doric Michéd demonstrates the attention to word use, word correction, and word reuse. They argue over the place of historical objects within the "Conquistador Club," a museum-like space that celebrates imperial oppression and theft; the argument over the removal of tribal medicine pouches begins with her accusing Doric that the pouches were unlawfully taken:

"*Stolen* is the right word," whispered Felipa.

"*Discover* is more accurate," said Doric.

"How much are your discoveries?" asked Felipa. (50)

Each speaker expresses awareness of the different connotations attached to each verb choice. Their divergent opinions become a matter of interpretation linked to narratives of imperial justifica-

tion and rationale. The narrative extends this quarrel over the accuracy of language by recycling the speakers' verbs as its own: "Doric moved closer and invited her to be discovered, to be more personal in their negotiations over the medicine pouches" (50). The language of the narrator obviously exploits the infinitive "to discover" for its colonial history. The narrative's use of "personal" attempts to collapse the distance of ideological difference by closing the gap between bodies. The assertion that Doric "invites" Felipa closer frames the suggested intimacy as a decision of mutual consent. However, the formalities of the language do not sway Felipa, thus making them akin to the rhetorical flourishes and posturings of the Renaissance explorer who asserts his cordiality in his negotiations with indigenous peoples, a process inextricable from the reading of the *requerimiento*—the document explorers voyaging for Spain would read aloud to claim land of the Americas.

Although both characters are crossbloods, Doric privileges a European worldview and justifies the relegation of tribal "artifacts" to museums, while Felipa rejects European imperialism and instead underscores Native right to possession. Doric's interpretation of "discover" remains the same despite the argument, and the narrative emphasizes his perspective in reusing the verb in the infinitive form once more, stating that he "had expected to discover the pleasures of an exotic tribal woman in blue moccasins" (56). This description further alienates Doric from Anishinaabe values, despite his claim of Native blood, since his expectations of Felipa make her an exotic object for his sexual consumption. Doric's expectations to sexually discover Felipa mirror Captain Brink's image of the Brotherhood of American Explorers living in a "building with nude women, exotic animals, and pictures of their discoveries" (60). Doric casts Felipa as an "exotic tribal woman" contrary to his own claim of the same tribal blood and thus sexualizes her on the basis of her racial and cultural identity.

The confusion between the two characters over word choice also exposes an unresolved sexual tension that ultimately expresses loss. Doric's negotiations are futile because he cannot move beyond the limited language of seduction, whereas Felipa subverts the lan-

guage of seduction into the language play of the trickster to emasculate him. She ends their negotiation by shouting "Show me your pouches then," to demand the return of tribal items but also to make a sexual challenge (50). They come to some terms of agreement over the medicine pouches, but Felipa emerges as the winner of their verbal banter, an outcome with which she taunts Doric by exclaiming "Watch out . . . You might lose your pouches to a wild tribal woman tonight" (57). The pun on pouches as male genitalia, and also a symbol of reproduction and genetic inheritance, humiliates him. More importantly, it demonstrates how Felipa has used his own language against him; in fact, her use of the word "lose" echoes her connotation of "stolen" as carrying the weight of imperial atrocities.

The innuendo continues in the court scene when Judge Lord explains that Doric "initiated this proceeding with a criminal complaint that his pouches and bones had been stolen from a vault at the Brotherhood of American Explorers" (66). The narrative emphasizes the wordplay on "pouches and bones," stating "Lord held a thin smile over the double entendre" (66). Doric's emasculation provides amusement to the other characters while also reclaiming stories in the blood for crossbloods who revere them.

Language—and its loss and acquisition—has long been a part of colonial experiences and encounters. However, language in *The Heirs* has the additional function of synthesizing past sexual encounters among multiple nations or cultures by making one's linguistic discourse part of genealogical history. Just as being a descendant of Columbus informs Felipa's crossblood identity and use of language, being a direct descendant of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft makes Doric a crossblood with a very different outlook on the role of language. Schoolcraft, known for his publication of information gathered from his Ojibwe wife Jane Johnston, is referenced in this moment to clearly designate Doric's descent from a white relative who profited from Native peoples.⁹ Schoolcraft, for example, catalogued the number of terms used to refer to bears in Native languages without ever understanding why "bear" in various forms was significant. Indeed, Doric ventriloquizes Schoolcraft to pass moral judgment on tribes based on comparisons that privilege Western

culture. As Doric explains, “Their pagan language and the economic environment of the tribe had fostered moral depravities that resisted the wisest missions. . . . Schoolcraft learned their language and revealed a moral weakness in their own words” (49). Schoolcraft fails to see that instead of the tribes resisting the missions, he is, as Felipa points out, resisting the shamans—a change in meaning that reflects a shift in questions of agency (49). The subject being resisted assumes the position of power. For the tribes to resist the missions suggests that the missions assert power and are aligned with the dominant culture. Felipa’s inversion of the formula places the source of the power with the shamans. The novel attributes the different linguistic allegiances of Doric and Felipa to divergent approaches and embracings of crossblood identity. Felipa’s inversion of subject positions gives her the last word in their argument, leaving her in the dominant position similar to her deployment of alternate meanings of “pouches” to outwit and outmaneuver Doric.

Schoolcraft and Doric both turn Native languages against tribes by using them as the source of cultural criticism. This misappropriation of Native tongues follows the motto of the Conquistador Club, “Explore new worlds, discover with impunities, represent with manners, but never retreat from the ownership of land and language” (50). Thus Schoolcraft and Doric speak a language of possession that turns Native languages into commodities that can be owned in order to turn a profit. This creates an irony when juxtaposed with the crossbloods of the novel’s title. The “heirs of Columbus” refers to a series of actual court cases called the “*pleitos de Colón*,” between the descendants of Columbus and the Spanish crown over their right to the percentage of profits made from the Americas.¹⁰ Vizenor’s heirs are not concerned over their inheritance as it relates to notions of ownership and material wealth. Rather, they seek the stories in the blood, a linguistic wealth, unlike the material wealth sought by Doric. His concerns align him with the historical referent of the *pleitos de Colón*, whereas Felipa embodies Vizenor’s revision of crossblood inheritance.

Trickster language play diagrams the parts of speech and confuses listeners who situate themselves outside the tradition of sto-

ries in the blood. When Felipa and Stone make arrangements to hire Transom the shaman, Felipa feels uncertain over the situation and needs “to hear the curious language games of a trickster to be more secure” (54). These language games include revealing the topic of discussion in terms of the parts of speech. Transom becomes “an intransitive verb at the headwaters” (54). When the heir Memphis the Panther takes the witness stand later in the novel, her trickster language confuses the court’s judge; she testifies to “the nouns and verbs of human existence and the myths of evolution” (72). The novel carefully positions the question of linguistic legibility as independent of ethnicity or race. Doric, a crossblood, and the non-Native judge both fall prey to trickster language games. Likewise, the “heirs” proposal to inject the “genetic signature” that carries the “stories in the blood” into anyone who wishes speaks to extending these linguistic skills more widely.

Issues of translation and interpretation also contribute to breaking down trickster language in the medicine pouch episode. Transom attempts to assemble a tent in the vault of the Conquistador Club for the ritual tent-shake. Yet Transom cannot successfully set up the tent because “the instructions, he insisted, were bad translations” (57). The bad translation forces Doric to help set up the tent, thus establishing filmed evidence of Doric’s assistance and weakening his court case when the pouches disappear along with the shaman. Doric’s help in “translating” the instructions to assemble the tent provides the necessary assistance and reproduces in reverse the original moment of mistranslation, the first theft by the Conquistador Club. Transform performs a ritual translation of the medicine pouches to place them back into their living tradition and take them away from their status as objects of curiosity in the Conquistador Club museum.

The scene takes on a sexual overtone when the defeated Doric talks to police captain Treves Brink about the Club’s medicine pouch “theft.” Brink inquires about Transom by asking, “Now, what about this nude person?” to which Doric immediately responds, “He stole my pouches and a silver casket” (58). The police captain’s confusion over what medicine pouches are highlights the continued

sexualized wordplay on testicles. Brink extends the sexual meaning behind the crime investigation when Doric unsuccessfully tries to direct the blame of the theft to Felipa; Brink laughs and tells him “Mister Michéd, our female officers conducted body searches and they found no pouches on her anywhere,” reiterating the association of pouches with male genitalia (59). Doric’s attempts to construct a narrative about the missing medicine pouches using the language of theft fails because the trickster poetics of the scene do not allow the other characters to see language beyond the bounds of the physical and sexual body. Later, Lappet will testify that “in our tribe the trickster is unleashed with a dash of priapean sexism” (80). Thus, the language play on genitalia unleashes a trickster discourse that obscures the heirs’ reclaiming of their medicine pouches—the innuendo connects to a comic mode that enables the serious business of tribal reclamation of stolen and colonized objects.

INTERTEXTUAL REPRODUCTION: SERVICING SCHOLARSHIP

The Heirs references several different texts, some real and others imagined but all related to discourses about American Indians, using sexual humor, providing another venue for the continued pairing of sexuality with narrative traditions within the novel. Actual biographies of famous historical figures such as Columbus and Pocahontas include trickster-inspired suppositions that enable the figures of the past to be more accessible to the heirs. Intertwining the known facts with the supposed and fictional anecdotes legitimizes the “new” information about these figures. Vizenor blurs the line between reality and fiction, implying that the historical records may not be any more or any less accurate than his suppositions. These suppositions, moreover, provide a guide for how to reread the usual “facts” of a text or event.

Sexualized puns in the marginalia of an imagined copy of Arnold Krupat’s *The Voice in the Margin* reveal a set of competing reading and language practices where sexual innuendo critiques the appropriation of Native cultures. The sexual humor draws attention to the

oftentimes conflicting perspectives of scholars and Native traditions. The antique book collector Pellegrine Treves, an English Jew, informs Felipa of his impressive collection of signed first editions of contemporary Native American novels, including works by Leslie Marmon Silko, Louise Erdrich, James Welch, and N. Scott Momaday. Yet, the most intriguing part of his collection is a copy of *The Voice in the Margin* by Krupat with marginal notes by Momaday. The location of the copy in an English library provides a material representation of trans-Atlantic exchange. This volume represents concretely the language exchanges between the European and Native traditions but is complicated by Treves's concession that the marginal notes were by "another distinguished novelist who pretended to be Momaday . . . so the copy has a double association" (110). The double association that a "distinguished novelist" grants this critical book is part of the trickster discourse Vizenor champions: humorous and multilayered meaning. The voice of Momaday is performed by another writer who offers sexual insults, suggesting again the constructed nature of textual discourse and language. As Treves tells Felipa: "Krupat's discussion of 'racial memory' drew the sharpest marginal responses. . . . The novelist noted, 'Krupat gives head to footnotes, how would he know about tribal memories?'" (111).¹¹

The performed voice and words of the Momaday impersonator draw attention to the imprecision and malleable context of language. Treves argues that his book's value comes from allowing a reader to explore what Momaday might think about Krupat if he were to read his work. The guise of performance lends a sense of plausibility, but not authenticity, demonstrating another language game from the trickster. This absurd anecdote allows *The Heirs* to reference in particular Krupat's criticism of Momaday's blood memories. Chadwick Allen notes that this comment most obviously conveys a sexual insult "by 'servicing' the curricula vitae of other non-Indian academics rather than pursuing tribal knowledges."¹² But Allen also sees this as one of Vizenor's puns that could be read as "gives head-to-foot notes" to critique the number of citations used in scholarship.¹³

Trickster stories very frequently embarrass their victims through

compromising sexual situations in much the way that the unnamed critic says that “Krupat gives head” or Felipa tells Doric he has lost his “pouches.” In both cases the trickster critics deploy language that targets their subjects’ heterosexual masculine identities. The sexual innuendo in Treves’s copy of *The Voice in the Margin* also carries a homoerotic tone that rewrites the hypersexualized masculinity of colonial encounter literature, however, at the cost of doing so as a homophobic aside. Vizenor further complicates this problematic aspect by not providing a specific identity for the novelist pretending to be Momaday. The unnamed critic in the margins uses a homophobic pun in order to place Krupat within a socially marginalized sexual group. However, Felipa follows up the critic’s pun by asserting that “Krupat would be the trickster in the margins” and thus placing Krupat into trickster discourse as well (111).

The discussion of “racial memories” of course can be, and has been, read as the predecessor to the novel’s “stories in the blood.” Vizenor’s stories in the blood are connected to a reproductive sexual history—the “heirs” and their stories are the offspring of cross-cultural sexual unions. By contrast, the faux-Momaday critiques Krupat’s critique of “racial memories” as a nongenerative sexual act, oral sex. This critic’s sexual pun reveals his frustration that Krupat’s “head to footnotes” results in him not knowing tribal memories because they are defined here as dependent on being handed down to future generations.

CODA, BED TRICKS, AND SWAPPING GENDER

The narrative’s description of Columbus’s sexual role places him in dialogue with the trickster stories. Tricksters are typically characterized as incompetent fathers and providers.¹⁴ The novel’s title implicitly evokes Columbus’s position as biological father and thus casts him as the absentee father because it suggests a passage of time and generations. Columbus’s physical absence from the lives of the novel’s protagonists underscores his sexual contribution to the reproductive process by making him a branch of the family tree, not a nurturing parent. The novel describes Columbus’s sexual activities

as both pleasure and burden, a feature reflected by the work's own discussion of trickster sexual anatomy and discomforts. In particular, Columbus's physical affliction of being burdened by an "enormous clubbed penis" relates him to the trickster figure in the *Manabosho Bestiary Codex* text owned by Pellegrine Treves that depicts "the vainglorious trickster posing with his enormous penis" (112).¹⁵ Franchot Ballinger has noted that the trickster's penis is a symbol of licentiousness that simultaneously alienates him from others.¹⁶ Columbus's physical deformity similarly isolates him, and he can only find relief in Samana, the golden hand talker Native woman who discovers the tribal stories in his blood. This sexual encounter is described as occurring in a dream, which invites questions about time and place. More importantly, the encounter addresses questions of gender identity, since he "abandoned the curve of his pain in her hand and thighs and entered her maw to become a woman, a bear, a hand talker" (40). The phrase "hand talker" unites the world of language with the physical body; the body performs a linguistic act, and in this case that act is coded as sexual.

The gender of a trickster is not static, and many times the character will change or disguise genders in what Vizenor refers to as "sacred reversals."¹⁷ Columbus's transformation between genders and species speaks to the power of language to effect changes. Columbus functions in the text to produce crossblood offspring, which makes him not only a patriarch but also a matriarch. Overwriting the patriarchal narrative of Western imperialism, the encounter with Samana activates Columbus's stories in the blood, explicitly connecting trickster sexuality with traditional narratives and texts; the sexual encounter serves to reawaken the dormant stories that can heal his sexual and physical pain.

The sexual activation of Columbus's stories in the blood, however, does not provide a solution to the patriarchy and violence of colonization, but reveals the inherent contradictions between power and sexuality in the Americas: "Overnight his discoveries reduced tribal cultures to the status of slaves; at the same time the stories in his blood were liberated by a tribal hand talker" (41). Additionally, the novel explores the concept of two-spirit people through

the separatist women of Point Assinika, who through “the isolated genetic code of tribal survivance” hope to achieve parthenogenesis (148–49). Tribal survivance without male sexual performance thus becomes the novel’s most extreme reimagining of sexuality in its very denial of it; it disavows the patriarchal past most associated with the historical Columbus.

The Heirs of Columbus employs close attention to language, traditional stories “in the blood,” and trickster sexuality to present a new vision of tribal life that is compatible with contemporary technologies. The adoption of traditional stories in printed texts and traditionally non-Native historical figures suggests that the success of maintaining an Indian identity relies on synthesizing multiple cultures. The novel offers a vision of Pan-Tribalism with a shared linguistic and narrative inheritance. The aforementioned Pellegrine Treves, an English Sephardic Jew who joins the tribal community at Point Assinika, observes that “language is our trick of discovery, what we name is certain to become that name” (169). The trickster’s understanding of language unifies the past with the present by interjecting traditional Anishinaabe stories in modern life to share across cultures.

In the epilogue Vizenor recounts a passage from Columbus’s actual journal in which the explorer states, “I will carry off six of them [Natives] at my departure . . . in order that they may learn to speak” (184). Vizenor’s trickster heirs command language in a powerful way, a way that has the ability to heal “the world [Columbus] wounded” (184). Yet instead of learning to speak from Columbus, the heirs reshape the explorer’s own words and attempt to overturn the damage of colonialism. In the curious language game of the trickster, representations can construct realities but can also be exposed as illusions and artifice.

NOTES

1. See Vizenor’s “Trickster Discourse.”
2. The term “crossbloods” also recalls James Fenimore Cooper’s description of Natty Bumppo as “a man without a cross” to describe racial purity. Vizenor uses the term to indicate Native peoples of mixed-race ancestry.

3. See, for example, Elizabeth Blair's study of Vizenor's trickster as detective in "Whodunwhat? The Crime's the Mystery in Gerald Vizenor's *The Heirs of Columbus*"; Alan Velie views the novel in light of stylistic parody that reinvents the historical Indian novel in "The Indian Historical Novel"; Karsten Fitz points out the novel's defiance of common stereotypes in "The Native American Trickster as Global and Transcultural Principle in Gerald Vizenor's *The Heirs of Columbus*." For a discussion of Vizenor's use of pseudo-academic works such as Le Plongeon's theories about the Maya's role in ancient Mesopotamia see Christoph Irmscher's "Crossblood Columbus: Gerald Vizenor's Narrative 'Discoveries.'"

4. Sexuality plays a marginal role in the consideration of race by Arnold Krupat and Chadwick Allen. Arnold Krupat's essay "'Stories in the Blood': *Ratio*- and *Natio*- in Gerald Vizenor's *The Heirs of Columbus*" considers Vizenor's "stories in the blood" as another variant of Momaday's "blood memories," which for him raises troubling questions about race. Chadwick Allen's essay "Blood (and) Memory" also analyzes the concepts of blood memories and stories in the blood and specifically cites the novel's inclusion of Krupat's criticism of Momaday but extends the discussion to include sexual humiliation. Allen connects the novel's debate over blood memories as a trickster tactic that heals with "opposition," forging a reconciliation between competing traditions. Allen does not relate the sexual humiliation to Anishinaabe tradition.

5. Vizenor, *Heirs of Columbus* (4). Subsequent references to this text are given parenthetically.

6. "Survivance" is a term coined by Vizenor that highlights the persistence of Native peoples and traditions despite disastrous historical policies and events.

7. Vizenor, "Aesthetics of Survivance" 1.

8. Vizenor, "Trickster Discourse" 283.

9. See Robert Dale Parker's recent edition of the works of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing through the Sky*.

10. Irmscher 87.

11. According to Chadwick Allen, Momaday has not read Krupat's criticism of blood memories (Allen 95).

12. Allen 109.

13. Allen 109.

14. Ballinger 101.

15. Ballinger writes that "Tricksters' prodigious sexual appetites and energy are hilariously and powerfully dramatized by the gamut of their lusts and the size of their penises" (91).

16. Ballinger 112.

17. As quoted in Ballinger 97.

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Figuring the Grotesque in Louise Erdrich's Novels

Of Ojibwe Play, Modernist Form,
and the Romantic Sensibility

MARY CATHERINE HARPER

Lipsha Morrissey, one of the many Ojibwe characters inhabiting the novels of Louise Erdrich, is obsessed with love, with being a good lover if not a good provider, and especially with being the singular object of another's love.¹ In *The Bingo Palace* his obsession is focused on Shawnee Ray Toose, who dances like a butterfly and has ambition in the area of design. She is also off limits to him, as far as Zelda, one of the reservation matriarchs, is concerned, for Shawnee Ray has had a child by Lyman Lamartine, the charismatic wheeler-dealer of *The Bingo Palace* and an earlier novel of the Ojibwe series. The relationship between Lyman Lamartine and Lipsha Morrissey is strained at times by their competition for Shawnee Ray, but it is a complicated relationship, not without respect and even camaraderie. After all, Lyman is Lipsha's boss. Lyman is Lipsha's uncle. Lyman is Lipsha's cousin. They are family . . . family and tangles of family.

Lipsha is keenly aware of the "tangles" of family relationships. In a scene in which Lyman rescues Lipsha from drug charges due to his possession of a well-smoked sacred peace pipe, Lipsha says, "It's less confusing to decide on one thing to call [family members] and leave out the tangles" (*Bingo* 38). But the tangles are ever with him, and it is such tangled relationships and obsessive characters that Erdrich plays with in her novels, to the extent that several of them exhibit characteristics of the midwestern grotesque novel genre.

For example, in *The Plague of Doves* one of the characters, Marn Wolde, feels the presence of a "stark bird that nests in the tree of the Holy Ghost descend and hover" over her body. She says, "it presses

itself into me, heated and full. Its wings are spread inside of me and I am filled with fluttering words I cannot yet pronounce or decipher. Some other voice is speaking now" (151). That ephemeral voice is given a body, as Marn experiences it, or two bodies to be precise, in the form of two snakes, one a rattlesnake, the other a copperhead. For Marn, snake handling is her way of "getting close to spirit" and "the mercy of spirit, loving me, sending a blood tide of power through me" (160). Marn's compulsive snake handling is a response to life on a midwestern farm with rather inept parents and an uncle named Warren who appears to be a schizophrenic prophet, saying to her, "You're gonna kill. . . . It's on you. You're gonna kill" (158). And indeed Marn does kill. In order to escape her abusive, controlling husband, Billy, who is the charismatic leader of a religious cult, she milks the venom of her rattlesnake, places it in a syringe, and caps the syringe with an apple. In the sexually charged murder scene Marn describes Billy as an "igniting wad" and she the "kerosene." She says, "I took the needle filled with the venom of the snake and tipped with the apple of good and evil . . . and popped off the apple. Then I pushed the needle quickly, gently . . . right into the loud muscle of his heart" (177–78).

Such characters as Marn are common in the novels of Erdrich. They are variously obsessed: one character burning down a lover's house in *Love Medicine*, another retreating into his stamp collection, and still another driven to master a spirit-world violin in *The Plague of Doves*. There is the one trying to outdo Christ as a savior in *Tracks* and her nemesis character, Fleur, willing to do anything to get tribal lands back . . . including marrying the man who stole the land in the first place. There is the sexually charged piano playing by a female passing as a Catholic priest in *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* and three characters spoiling a "Dot" of a child to the point of pathology in *The Beet Queen*. In *The Antelope Wife* an Anishinabe baker is obsessed with finding the secret ingredient of a *blitzkuchen* that saved the life of a German baker by its wondrous flavor. The list of excessive character behaviors could go on for pages, as could the intertwining plots of the Erdrich novels, which ultimately speak of the wonders of

human community in the face of disturbing social, political, and economic behavior patterns.

It could be argued that Erdrich's wide range of Minnesotan and North Dakotan characters—Euro-American, Native American, and mixed in race—test the limits of the American class and ethnicity structures of the Midwest. Her characters reveal deep ironies within the values and lifestyles of more than one midwestern class and culture. But it is the distorted visions, unrealistic expectations, unholy predilections, and obsessive relationships of the characters that interest me, for those grotesque qualities seem foundational to the societal ironies involved. Erdrich's characters freely display elements of the grotesque, which serves the (now familiar) modernist suspicion of bourgeois lifestyle, including patriarchal roles, Euro-American capitalism, narrow religiosity, and sentimental romanticism. At the same time, Erdrich's "Ojibwe grotesque" style complicates what is understood as the midwestern grotesque, for her characters are multifigured: they are developed according to a romantic sensibility and at times enhanced by related Ojibwe cultural features. Literary criticism about the midwestern grotesque may be enriched by examination of Louise Erdrich's multifigured Ojibwe and midwestern Euro-American characters.

Adroitly, in a number of her novels Erdrich leads readers through the territory of the Ojibwe grotesque and its larger cultural context of colonization and abjection. This has invited criticism such as Gretchen M. Bataille's article on *The Beet Queen*, where Bataille asserts that the "aboriginal home of the original inhabitants of this land has indeed become grotesque with the invasion of the Europeans" (279). According to Bataille, the physical and psychological damage that the character Russell Kashpaw, an Ojibwe U.S. war veteran, suffers is a core grotesque of the novel. She sees him as a representative of the "border community of alienated and distraught victims of history" (280).

I would add that Russell's story is not just a critique of the effects of colonial marginalization. In the strictest sense of the literary grotesque, Russell's numerous facial, neck, and bodily war wounds foreground the horrible mind of that creature we call "human being."

For what other creature would imagine, develop, and use technologies of war upon its own species? Russell sits in a wheelchair and is horribly scarred, both physically and emotionally, because of a destructive impulse that exists beyond the political realm, beyond the ritual communal self. There is something depraved, if the Greek tragedians are to be believed, in the very psyche of *homo sapiens*.

And here we are getting close to—but not yet fully on the mark of—the grotesque in its complicated contemporary form in Erdrichian novels. While the depravity of human culture—as played out in modernist culture—may be the ultimate *subject* of the grotesque, it is the *style* of approach that gets to the mark. As Lipsha remarks in *The Bingo Palace* about his family being like “the old-time Greeks”: “If you read about a thing like Lyman and me happening in those days, one or both of us would surely have to die. But us Indians, we’re so used to inner plot twists that we just laugh” (17). Lipsha’s self-reflexivity is what matters here: he imagines his life’s story as the Elijah story and uses phrasing like “I try to recast the whole scene in my thoughts” (190). Such phrasing pays homage to the metadiscursive, ironic element of Ojibwe storytelling. These are performative moments, as in an “Old Comedy” by Aristophanes, where a character on stage might reflect on being in a story destined to ruin him. Lipsha is keenly aware that his is the role of cousin and nephew and rival to Lyman in a very complicated multigenerational plot involving a variety of ethnic configurations and relations. Peter Nabokov, a historian who studies the fluidity between stories of “fiction” and stories of “fact” among various Indigenous American traditions, cites Erdrich for her “daring literary risks with narrative and dialect” that expose the societal reality of “blended racial identities” in North Dakota (214).

Her daring approach includes the alignment of Ojibwe-based self reflexivity and performance with the cluster concepts of “grotesque,” “burlesque,” and “carnival” in the sense used in contemporary cultural studies. To be specific about terminology, a text that engages in “carnival” in the Bakhtinian cultural sense blatantly disrupts the choking, moralistic fear of expressiveness in social, economic, and political life and affirms, as Robert A. Morace describes it, “commu-

nal, egalitarian values" (36). The same is true of "burlesque" except that the disruption is specifically focused on trivializing sacred traditions, values, and socially respected persons while elevating profane behaviors or lowly social positions and abject persons. A burlesque foregrounds the dependence of the sacred upon the profane and can serve to call into question the social values that elevate only one gender or ethnicity or economic group or sexual orientation or only able-bodied individuals, and the like. A burlesque is in effect the first stage of a deconstruction. As such, it gestures toward social reform. But unlike a full deconstruction, unlike carnival, it does not offer the ways and means of reconstruction.

The third form, grotesque, is related to the two other concepts but is more narrowly marked by obsessive, compulsive, paranoid, or otherwise singularly focused behavior of a character. David Wall identifies the antebellum period in America as a time of identity consolidation for the white middle class and says that "the mission to define white bourgeois subjectivity as the core of any legitimate American identity was structurally dependent on the anxious projection" of what is understood as "The Other" onto marginalized groups, including Blacks and Native American populations (516). Referencing the "chaotic urban world" that developed in the 1800s, Wall cites Bakhtin's thesis of a Rabelaisian carnival that calls into question while paradoxically supporting normative social hierarchies, values, and prohibitions (523). According to Wall, the "narrative displacement of the Other formed a discourse of disorder" that "embraced the classificatory regime of high-low structuring [for] all cultural formations and relationships," and in this way "carnivalesque became the default setting for all representations of the 'low Other'" (517).

To illustrate the workings of the grotesque—and corollary carnival and burlesque features—in Erdrich's *oeuvre*, let's return to Marn Wolde of *The Plague of Doves*. She is a character searching for spiritual meaning in a cult that measures religiosity by how much physical pain its members are willing to endure and how much money or land they are willing to contribute. Marn's husband, Billy Peace, subjects their two children to harsh religious discipline. He

has taken over Marn's parents' farm with the help of the cult's treasurer, Bliss. Marn is unable to stand up to her charismatic husband, even when he imposes himself sexually on members of his congregation. In addition, Marn is troubled by her poverty-stricken childhood. She describes drought (149) and the "powder-dry earth," the "sound of black crickets sawing in the cracks of the foundation" of the farmhouse (151), her father's face as "long and tired" (150), and her mother being "wrinkled with sudden age" as she "stoops to the hoe, chopping the earth fine" (152). And then there is her uncle. Not only is Warren's psychosis left untreated, but he becomes a model for Marn. She internalizes his mumblings of being fated to kill. And in her confused state, she binds herself to her serpents. She insists on sleeping with them naked as if they are lovers, calling them her "lambs of god," in a scene where her husband tells her to put them out of the bed (173).

In burlesque style Marn is replacing Billy with a new object of spiritual and sexual desire. It is shortly after this that she kills her husband in a scene that connects killing with spiritual transformation, with food, with self determination, and with protection of and control over the lives of Marn's children. She says in the murder scene just before she plunges the needle into his heart, "I would not let him go until I sank through his bones like a wasting disease. Ate him from the inside, devouring his futility, filling his with a beautiful craving" (178). As Billy dies Marn says that she "got the sight of [Billy] lying still in the eyes of others." She "got the power of it and the sorrow" as she imagines the treasurer of his cult, Bliss, "retrieving Billy's spirit from its path crawling slowly toward heaven." And Marn crows that before Bliss and the other cult members could exact revenge upon her and her children they'd "have scooped up the money and run." She declares, "Oh yes, I got us eating those eggs at the 4-Bs, me and my children, and the land deed in my name" (179). At this point Marn has no sense of shame or fear of consequences. Marn has become a modernist amoral character: isolated, mistrustful, unbalanced in her spiritual, sexual, and communal relations. She has punched through the veneer of Western civilization into the primal land of serpent and apple, has landed on the primal

egg. She has also given free expression to the devouring windigo of Ojibwe tradition.

Such grotesque transgression as Marn's is often positioned within deeply ironic modernist works. Themes of alienation, untenable social strictures, marginalization, abuses of power within family and community, the failure of faith, these are all common themes of novels with grotesque characters. But Erdrichian characters are not that simple. They are not situated only in the modernist "wasteland" of irony, alienation, and human despair, for they often exhibit paradoxical qualities that might be called heroic, or "comic" in that serious, communal, integrative sense that Gerald Vizenor teases out in "Trickster Discourse." There he describes the postmodern style of performative, interactive "dialogism" of trickster narrative (191), specifically pointing to the role that the "woodland tribal trickster" Naanabozho—the Anishinabe model for Erdrich's Nanapush—plays as a "liberator and healer" and as "a language game" (187).

Vizenor's purpose is the critique of both "aesthetic modernism" and "the glorification of isolated individualism" (193) through trickster performance. Interestingly, though from within modernism itself, the grotesque—and its corollary comic carnival performance—reveals a paradoxical element of modernist life, namely, the dual "disgust and desire" (532) that Wall references. On the surface the early grotesque in American literature of the 1800s—think of the three central characters of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, for example—develops into the full modernist sensibility of ironic distrust of both bourgeois social norms and individualistic modes of resistance to those norms. From the novels of Carson McCullers and William Faulker to the later end-of-modernist stylings of Flannery O'Connor, we see the workings of a literary form that is critical of normative social and psychological constructions while also conflicted with its own narratorial voice, a voice compelled to participate in its own norm-supporting abjection.

And here is a point at which Erdrich's works truly distinguish themselves, for in her works the modernist conceptualization of the grotesque itself may be the subject of burlesque. Her grotesque characters not only perform narratorial disgust but also self-reflex-

ive narrational desire for transformed self and community. And they often engage in comic performance to achieve that transformation. Theirs is an urge toward the heroic and, as such, reveals the deep workings of romanticism. Remember Lipsha speaking of Greek tragedy and the Indian comedic sensibility? He represents a complex tangle of modernism, romanticism, and postmodern metafiction in his series of burlesques and displays of self-conscious grotesque obsession.² Like Lipsha, several other characters—including the Anishinabe baker in *The Antelope Wife*, the three overly indulgent parental figures in *The Beet Queen*, and the sensitive second wife of a butcher in *The Master Butchers Singing Club*—display the complexly intertwined workings of both modernist and romantic sensibilities within grotesque behaviors and psyches. Sarah Gleeson-White asserts that “the grotesque is not limited to an alienating modernity” and identifies the “affirming qualities and practices of growth, promise and transformation” (109) in the southern grotesque works of Carson McCullers.

It is precisely this romantic quality that rounds out the Ojibwe grotesque figures in Erdrich’s novels. A caution is in order here, for “romantic sensibility” in its more narrowly sentimental formulation is associated with those genres of Romance (or genre fiction) that amount to flat characters, high adventure, and happy endings. I speak not of these, but of the “high” romantic sensibility that owes its profoundly stubborn vision of an enduring and even transformed psyche to an underlying tragic view of the human condition. That which is fully romantic can’t help but tango with the tangled “knot” of tragedy’s self-deception, self-destruction, and too-late *anagnorisis* (self-aware enlightenment).

Lipsha is one of those characters with a too-late-to-take-back-what-he-sets-in-motion *anagnorisis*. Close to the end of *The Bingo Palace*, he imagines he is the Hebraic scriptural figure Elijah, “dragging Shawnee Ray’s son from water” and thus “saving Shawnee Ray’s son for her.” He reflects on his metafictional daydream even as he engages in it: “The concept is so rewarding that I douse my light and lie down on my bed, in the dark, and I begin to project a career of doing this sort of savior work, which makes Shawnee Ray so grate-

ful that she doesn't just apologize [for rejecting me], she anoints my head with oil and washes my feet with her hair like those long-ago women did" (230). What we have to know here is that Lipsha, as a baby, was saved from drowning by the strong tribal woman Zelda after his mother put him in a gunnysack loaded with stones and slipped the sack into water. In other words Lipsha's daydream of saving a child is tangled up with his own childhood of abandonment and near-death experience. He is obsessed with being wanted, loved, and protected by his mother, June Morrissey, so much so that he cannot control his impulse to put himself and others in physical danger.

Lipsha's low-impulse control plays out in the final carnivalesque scenes of the novel where he is engaged in helping his father, Gerry Nanapush, a convicted felon who has escaped from federal custody. While in a drugstore with his father, Lipsha shoplifts a stuffed toucan because he thinks Shawnee Ray might like it. As he and his father run from the drugstore, they are pursued by the manager and then a growing mob that includes "a policewoman, a few mall-sitters, passersby" (251). Lipsha spots a white car left running by its owner, and he and his father jump in and take off into a snowstorm that suddenly, as all winter storms in midwestern stories are apt to do, turns into a howling blizzard. By the time Lipsha and his father are driving into the middle of a snowy field . . . in a white car surrounded by the white-out of snow . . . they have discovered a small child in the back seat of the car. Suddenly, as is quite usual in a carnivalesque scene, the blue car of Lipsha's dead mother, June, appears. She, it seems, is driving, according to Lipsha's narration, and so Lipsha's father leaves him and is driven off into the whiteout by her (256–58).

And here, as it dawns on Lipsha that the kidnapped child will freeze to death because of his impulsive shoplifting and car theft, he says to his audience, "I think about my father and my mother, about how they have already taught me about the cold so I don't have to be afraid of it. And yet, this baby doesn't know. Cold sinks in, there to stay. . . . There's just emptiness all around, and you in it, like singing up from the bottom of a well, like nothing else, until you harm yourself, until you are a mad dog biting yourself for sympathy. . . . There is no woman, reaching down to take you in her arms." And so

Lipsha decides: "Come what might when we are found, I stay curled around this baby." He pulls the child close as the motor dies and he declares: "at least this baby never was alone. At least he always had someone, even if it was just a no-account like me, a waste, a reservation load" (259). Obsessed with self destruction, yes. Emotionally compromised, yes. But Lipsha finally gets his self and his priorities straight as the novel's ending shifts from carnival to romantic scene of a hero's self-sacrifice. Shawnee Ray gets the news on the radio the next morning: "Gerry Nanapush still at large. A hostage found in good condition" (268).

Lipsha has redeemed himself, just as *The Bingo Palace* redeems its own ironic overtones with its paradoxically romantic, grotesque character. And this goes against the grain of literary expectations, an example of which is teased out in Thomas Matchie's analysis of the grotesque figures in Erdrich's *Tracks*. He addresses the romanticism in *Tracks*, saying, "Erdrich is a true disciple of [Flannery] O'Connor, though more often her grotesques are really genuine characters because they are actually part of the land, as in Fleur—the flower." He asserts that both O'Connor and Erdrich sidestep romanticization and sentimentalism, Erdrich by contrasting the grotesque character Pauline Puyat with the noble character Fleur, who "remains loyal to earth, and through it works to establish a community of people to whom she remains loyal" (76). Matchie also notes that Erdrich's characters are "genuine" even as they are grotesques (76), and here is where a character may "step back" and reconnect to romanticism. However much a grotesque quality may inform a character, an Erdrichian character is still romantically situated to struggle honestly with self-denial, to struggle between relationality and self-involvement, between engendering goodness and spawning degeneracy. For example, in *Tracks* and *Four Souls* Fleur is presented as a passionate, single-minded woman who causes emotional damage to her daughter, Lulu, and distances herself from her own community, but she also mourns the loss of tribal lands even as she seeks revenge upon the man who stole her family's land.

As a grotesque Fleur is an obsessive figure whose single-minded need is to hold onto the Pillager tribal land. As a romantic figure in

Love Medicine, *Tracks*, and *The Bingo Palace*, Fleur is depicted with über-natural powers. Within the tribe and even within the society of Argus, North Dakota, she has the status of a force of nature. But she also has moments of clarity and great frailty, which open her character up in complex, realist ways. Nanapush, the key narrator of the dialogic novel *Tracks*, notices her bravado when she and Nanapush and a local priest, Father Damien, find out that tribal administrators might be planning to trade Pillager land to lumber and development concerns in exchange for "an allotment someplace else" (175). Nanapush comments that Fleur's confidence is "pitiful and false" (175), that Fleur's vision of how to save the land is untenable, that "what was happening was so ordinary that it fell beyond her abilities." He says that even though she "worked past her strength" to set in motion her plan to save the land, "she was a different person than the young woman I had known. She was hesitant in speaking, false in her gestures, anxious to cover her fear." "Power dies," Nanapush says. "Power goes under and gutters out, ungraspable. It is momentary, quick of flight and liable to deceive" (177).

And so it seems with Fleur. But not quite, because by the end of *Tracks*, even though the land is lost, Fleur rallies. In a scene where she curses tribal members who were involved in the loss of the Pillager land, she softens to Nanapush, who has been a surrogate father to her. At that point Fleur's baby daughter Lulu says something nonsensical and, as Nanapush tells Lulu years later, "it made your mother laugh. She laughed out loud so rarely that I didn't recognize the sound of it at first, rich, knowing, an invitation full of sadness and pleasure I could not help but join" (214). This moment of sad yet expressive joy reveals the visionary clarity of Fleur. And she draws on that in the scene where she is forced out of her cabin by the lumber company. She calls forth a sudden wind to fell all the trees on the forest allotment, including the trees next to her cabin. She has secretly made deep cuts into the trees, and all it takes is the conjuring of wind (222). The effect is "biblical," with the forest suddenly crashing, the trees smashing into one another. In the center of it all is the once again larger-than-life romantic figure of Fleur.

In essence, Fleur has both failed and succeeded. She is both ironic modernist grotesque and a figure of persistent romantic striving.³

Throughout the novels that expose Fleur's grotesque qualities, she manages to escape the flatness that one might expect of such figures. This can be explained in part by the technique of applying multiple first-person narratives to the same set of events and characters. Specifically, Fleur is interpreted from the perspectives of various other characters. For example, in the conflicting versions of Pauline's and Nanapush's stories in *Tracks*, Pauline demonizes Fleur, but Nanapush seeks to understand her and explain her to Fleur's troubled daughter. Such postmodern overdetermination of narrative often includes that metadiscursive—specifically metafictional—quality that we saw in *The Bingo Palace*. Like Lipsha, Nanapush is a metafictional figure, ever aware of his role as trickster storyteller within his tribe. In *Tracks*, for example, Nanapush subtly refers to that role in an early scene just after the priest, Damien, arrives to minister to the tribe. Nanapush describes the act of drawing Father Damien into his story: “oiled by strong tea, lard and bread, I was off and talking. . . . The sound of my own voice convinced me I was alive. I kept Father Damien listening all night, his green eyes round, his thin face straining to understand, . . . Occasionally, he took in air, as if to add observations of his own, but I pushed him under with my words” (7).

The metafictional quality in Erdrich's writing has been noted by Kathleen M. Sands, who says that “*Love Medicine* is a metafiction” containing a self-conscious element that pressures the reader to “shift position” among the various viewpoints of the character narrators and in so doing “integrate the story into a coherent whole by recognizing the indestructible connections between the characters and events” of the novel (268). The pressure toward integrative understanding of the complex relations, traditions, and ritual behaviors of the numerous characters is at heart a romantic pressure to “dance.” And this dance draws in romantic sensibility and modernist irony. They intertwine with traditional Ojibwe storytelling—for example, during the snowstorm in *The Bingo Palace* when Lipsha drives into the storm and literally enters the spirit realm where he sees June (256–58) or in *Tracks* when Fleur closes her eyes and

calls a wind to gather, blow across, and fell the forest of trees that surrounds her cabin (222–23)—and metafictional Ojibwe approaches, as in the self-commentary of Lipsha and Nanapush.

At the center of this intricate dance are Erdrich's multifigured romantic grotesques, appearing in novel after novel. An especially good example occurs in *The Antelope Wife*, where Klaus Shawano suffers from an obviously obsessive romantic attachment to his "Sweetheart Calico" antelope wife, who is herself a near-mythic animal figure. When Klaus first sees the woman—the antelope woman—who will become his wife, she has an immediate effect on him. He says this of first seeing the woman and her three daughters at a powwow in Montana: "I breathe hard. My heart is squeezing shut. . . . I must be near those women and know more. I cannot let them alone" (23). Klaus continues as the four women begin to dance: "I sink down on a bench to watch these women and where usually I begin to drift off in my thoughts, this morning I am made of smoothest wood. . . . they are light steppers with a gravity of sure grace" (24). And he's also aware of his growing obsession: "My eyes are too lonesome, my lips too eager to stretch and smile, my heart too hot to please" (24).

The relationship between Klaus and the antelope woman known only as Sweetheart Calico is doomed from the start. Admitting he is "witched" by her (29), he feels compelled to kidnap her, tie her up with calico cloth (30), and take her with him back to Minneapolis. And what is it that has so bewitched this urban Indian? Is she the representative of a natural world for which Klaus yearns? That could be a romantic interpretation, and it would partly be true, for the diction that Klaus uses to describe her is of a romantic style, romantic yet exaggeratedly grotesque at the same time. The high romanticism is most evident at the end of the novel after Sweetheart Calico has pined for freedom for years and Klaus finally lets her go. The narrator describes the scene with this language: "They turned from the water flowing off the edge of the world and started walking west. . . . the sky suddenly and immensely opened up before them in a blast of space. . . . her grace came over her . . . Slowly, reluctantly,

fighting his own need, dizzily, Klaus pulled at the loop of dirty gray sweetheart calico, undid the knot that bound her to him" (229).

The relationship of Klaus and his antelope wife unfolds as a lush-styled narrative that speaks of the sublimity of the romantic quest for love and the equally romantic need for freedom. Adding to the romantic diction is the fact of the woman's antelope qualities, which come from an Ojibwe sensibility. Indeed, the mysterious antelope wife may represent such other-than-human figures as the *manitok*, those Ojibwe "natural forces" with "animate personality" (Ghezzi 45). In *The Antelope Wife* such indigenous, nonrealist phenomena are part of the realist, grotesque, and romantic narrative fabric. Erdrich dexterously works in Ojibwe characterization.

And the fluidity of character is not limited to Ojibwe characters. A case in point is *The Beet Queen*, where characters of Native, European, and mixed descent exhibit both romantic qualities and grotesque behavior. Moving between Argus, North Dakota, and Minneapolis, Minnesota, the novel takes the cousins Mary Adare and Sita Kozka through a childhood of competition with each other, a competition that extends into their adulthood. One of their objects of conflict is Celestine, a girl of mixed Ojibwe/Euro-American heritage. Throughout their childhood, Mary and Sita compete for Celestine's attention and affection.

In early adulthood Celestine has a brief affair with Mary's brother, Karl, and the child called "Dot" is born. Much of the novel focuses on the competitive parenting of Mary and Celestine, which it can be argued is as much the result of unresolved attraction on Mary's part for Celestine as any unbalanced bourgeois approach to childrearing. The effect is a spoiled, confused child, and the confusion is deepened by a third fumbling parental figure, Wallace Pfef. This Argus businessman's connection to Dot, her mother Celestine, and Mary Adare is complicated because he is in love with Dot's father, Karl. The novel heaps obsession upon obsession, and much of it is based on the social strictures that both European tradition and indigenous American tradition place on homosexuals.

Through the novel both Karl and Wallace are tortured souls. Karl, after decades of drifting from town to town and job to job,

muses (in 1972) at the age of fifty-four that "most men get to my age and suddenly they're dissatisfied with all that they've accumulated around them. Not me. I wanted everything I'd left behind. I wanted the cars repossessed after fifteen payments, the customer's houses into which I never got past the doormat, the ones I did get past, their rooms and rich smells of wax and burned food." At this point it sounds like Karl has been seduced by bourgeois materialism. But he continues: "I wanted the food itself, burned or not, and the women who had left it in the oven too long. I wanted their husbands" (317). The juxtaposition of food and women and husbands reveals Karl's starvation for love and home.

Wallace is equally starved for love and home. At the end of the novel the community of Argus gathers for a celebration of beet growing, their economic base. After a series of burlesque and carnivalesque scenes in which (1) Sita dies in a bush and is carried to and propped up in a vehicle, (2) the war hero Russell Kashpaw (remember him from the opening of this article) is propped up like a doll on a parade float, (3) Dot slams softballs into the bull's-eye of a dunking booth while wearing a very ill-fitting and ugly "Beet Queen" gown, (4) Wallace gets dunked in that tank, and (5) Karl falls "into the tank with Wallace," the story suddenly falls into coherent—comic—clarity.

Following the multiple-narrator pattern, Dot relates the final scene of the novel, where she comes to understand that Wallace has organized and rigged the "Beet Queen" contest and parade for her, not to humiliate her but because he loves her. She realizes that her crazy aunt Mary, now at the funeral parlor with her cousin Sita's body, has also loved her in her own way. And Dot comes to see something of why her mother, Celestine, has had such odd relationships with Mary and Karl, for her father, Karl, is not "waiting at the house" for Dot and Celestine. Dot reports: "As we pass Uncle Wallace's closed, cool place my mother points with her chin and says, 'That's his car'" (338). Celestine says it matter-of-factly, and Dot accepts her father needing and finally getting to be with Wallace. Back home with her mother she settles into the "old soft T-shirt and cutoffs" that suit her better than frilly dresses, eats dinner with her

mom, and goes to bed, where with great expectation she smells the coming rain (338).

The end of *The Beet Queen* probably has the most noticeably romantic quality of the North Dakota/Minnesota Erdrich novels. It *almost* slips into sentimentality, but the carnival, burlesque, and grotesque features of *The Beet Queen* save it and allow for the tangled play of romantic transformation and modernist irony. The same tangled play is true for both *The Antelope Wife* and *The Master Butchers Singing Club*.

The carnivalesque quality of *The Master Butchers Singing Club* is evident from the beginning, for two of the characters are carnival performers. Cyprian Lazarre, of the Ojibwe/French family that is featured in *Love Medicine* and *Tracks*, performs a circus balancing act with Delphine Watzka, whose father lives in Argus, where the Kozkas of *The Beet Queen* story run a butcher shop. This novel follows the townspeople of Argus, focusing on Delphine as she meets Fidelis Waldvogel and his wife Eva, who are post–World War I immigrants from Germany.

Cyprian, the performance artist who can balance anything, from chairs to animals to himself on a flagpole, must keep his homosexuality secret in the way that Karl and Wallace of *The Beet Queen* do. J. James Iovannone examines Cyprian's passing for straight:

Cyprian is unable to do anything except balance (literally and figuratively) as all his energy must be concentrated on maintaining a particular performance—that of heterosexuality—whether on or off the stage. When he has sexual experiences with men, they take place in liminal or hidden spaces—for example, in parks, concealed behind bushes. (45–46)

The singular focus on performing a balancing act, both on and off stage, points to an obsessive quality bordering on the grotesque, and Iovannone stresses not the revulsion but the transgressive (and potentially transformative) desire: “Balancing is a state of ignoring and acknowledging your desires at the same time, of being both present and absent, and if you upset the balance, you fall” (46).

Even Cyprian's name suggests the transgressive and transforma-

tive qualities of the grotesque and carnival, for as Wall explains, the "dominant tropes of the carnivalesque—deformity, disproportion, oaths and obscenity, and mocking laughter" were a key element of the Cyprianic balls of the antebellum period. To be a "Cyprian" is to be socially transgressive (524), celebrating liminal, marginalized, and abject desire. Cyprian's passionate obsession with his two balancing acts marks the romantic/modernist grotesque, a body that is, as Iovannone explains, ever in a process of becoming through bodily/scatological acts (51). It is a body that balances bourgeois and borderland modes, be they the borderland of sexual orientation or the borderland of ethnicity.

Balanced on the borderland with Cyprian is Delphine Watzka, who keeps his secret because she loves him and because they are emotionally suited as friends. Delphine and Cyprian pass as husband and wife, and it is not until Delphine's friend Eva Waldvogel dies of cancer that she develops into a fully grotesque character . . . and a fully romantic one. It is at this moment that she is now free to admit to herself that while she has pined for Cyprian, she has also been deeply attracted to Fidelis for years. In fact, at their very first meeting the narrator reports that "a field of gravity moved through her body" (80) and "their stares locked" (81). Now, after Fidelis's wife Eva has died, he asks Delphine to care for his four children. After a series of misunderstandings over whether Fidelis is merely interested in providing a mother for his children or truly in love with Delphine, she finally agrees to marry him.

And she falls more and more deeply "under the spell of his singing" (291), for he is not just a master butcher but a master singer. At the same time, she finds it hard to be gentle and loving with him. Part of her hesitation is due to confusion over why Fidelis wanted to marry her in the first place, part due to her difficult relationship with Cyprian, for she had been in love with a man who could love her only in a brotherly way. And part of her hesitation is bound up in the grotesque death of a family that had been trapped in her father's cellar. They starved to death after having entered the cellar and the door accidentally shut and sealed while her alcoholic father was off on a drunken binge. Delphine's sense of guilt and shame for

her father overwhelms her, and she secretly wonders if the deaths were truly an accident or intentional.

After Delphine's father dies, she confides in Fidelis that she feels she is "the daughter of a murderer" (332). Having confessed to him, having made herself vulnerable and confided in her husband, she begins to question herself: "Did she love Fidelis too much or did she love him at all? Her eyes looked hollow with greed. . . . Tears ached behind her eyes" (335). She is troubled and thinks about leaving Fidelis, but instead she goes into the shop, where she breathes in the scent of "spices, hair oil, fresh milk, clean floor." She "breathed in the peace of the order she'd achieved. A powerful wave of pleasure filled her," the narrator says (335). Here the scene shifts from the tortures of the grotesque to a transformative romanticism, and from this point onward, Delphine feels bound to Fidelis. The impulse to love has overcome her compulsive guilt by association.

But the balance between love and guilt, between the grotesque and the romantic, teeters easily. *The Master Butchers Singing Club* ends in a complicated set of scenes in Fidelis's hometown in Germany, where Delphine is again overwhelmed by visions of murder. She has a vision of the Holocaust, interlaced with the singing of men in the town's singing club. She says that "smoke and ash poured out of the mouth holes like chimneys" as they sang. "Their guts were on fire. Their lungs were hot bellows. Yet they kept on singing" (375). Delphine has found the still point between the grotesque and the romantic sensibility in that singing and, thus, may represent well that fine Erdrichian narrational balance.

Except that yet another Erdrichian character exhibits this balance . . . and more. In *The Antelope Wife* one of the many grotesque characters, Frank Shawano, struggles between urban American life and Ojibwe culture and in the process demonstrates the workings of romanticism and Ojibwe self-reflexive humor. The details of the novel tend to focus on family, food, and capitalist excess, and both the frybread of indigenous America and the overprocessed foods of capitalist America are presented as unhealthy. In the midst of this stands Frank, who has been trained in Old World European baking methods in Minneapolis, or Gakahbekong, according to his Anishi-

nabe family. Of course, his bakery is in the business of overprocessed sugars. It is also the site of wonderful homemade goods, and Frank is himself a paradox of emotional health and unhealth.

He is obsessed with perfecting the *blitzkuchen* he first tasted as a child, and he is obsessed with a married woman named Rozin, but he does not fall prey to the excesses of American consumerist capitalism, the control mechanisms of patriarchy, and the hungers of "workout culture," all of which are heavily satirized in the novel.⁴ In the course of the novel Frank unfolds as a spiritual, familial, and cultural touchstone. Julie Tharp's analysis of the contrast between Frank and the starving and devouring windigo *manitok* of *The Antelope Wife* provides a nuanced understanding of Frank's bakery, which, as Tharp says, "offers an antidote to contemporary workout culture" (120).⁵ She points out that Frank "nurtures Rozin" (125) and offers "a generosity of spirit and sensitivity not readily apparent in any of the other characters" of the novel (129).

Why? Because Frank is deeply attracted to goodness, whether it is the goodness buried deep in otherwise very messed-up individuals, like his lover Rozin, or the simple goodness of food. As his brother explains in the scene where Frank first tasted the German cake, "Frank bit into the cake. Before he chewed, he gave a startled and extraordinary squeak and his eyes went wide" (138). Yes, Frank is addicted to good-tasting things, and he stands firmly at the center of this novel of suicide attempts, sexual bondage, a state-sponsored massacre, the death of children, and starving times for tribal peoples. His grotesque form not only affirms romantic sensibilities but also brings the relief of comedic humor, especially in the next to last chapter. Leading to that chapter Rozin's ex-husband has committed suicide on Rozin and Frank's wedding night . . . and done so in the hallway outside of their hotel room. This has left Rozin depressed, angry, and guilty. Through it all, Frank is patient and caring, waiting for Rozin to recover emotional health, ever striving to aid in her transformation.

And Rozin is transformed. In the closing chapter, as Rozin prepares to surprise Frank on their first anniversary with an outfit made only of strategically placed bows on her naked body, he secretly ush-

ers surprise-party guests into their living room. Rozin comes down the stairs in the dark, essentially naked with a sparkler and cupcake in her hand. The moment of “surprise” should have turned to disaster for the already troubled bride, but as the story goes:

Frank with extraordinary presence of mind whipped a starched white apron off the hook behind him and draped it over her. He bent close in concern and horror. Face working, she waved him off. Tears stung his eyes to witness her humiliated loveliness.

And then as “she lifted her face to his, a great bold crack of laughter sizzled out of her” (236).

Interestingly, it is Frank who has cried tears before he laughs. Only after Rozin begins to laugh can he feel the comedic pleasure of the moment: then “his own scratchy, hoarse, unfamiliar, first laughing croak was part of the general roar” (236). Sensitive, caring Frank is simply a quiet romantic hero of sorts, who redeems with tears and carnival play a novel of despair and suicide, anger and guilt, ironic revelations about family history, and horrific clashes between cultures. Maybe it is Frank who best represents the confluence of romanticism, Ojibwe sensibility, and the grotesque.

Or maybe it is in yet another strange and wondrous Erdrichian novel, *Tales of Burning Love*, that characters represent the confluence even better.⁶ But that is an Ojibwe tale of the romantic grotesque best kept for another day.

NOTES

1. I use the spelling “Ojibwe” that Erdrich uses in her later works instead of “Ojibwa” or “Ojibway.” Where characters, narrators, and critics use “Chippewa” and “Anishinabe” (plural “Anishinabeg”), I keep those designations.

2. Kathleen M. Sands explores the metafictional element in *Love Medicine* and asserts the importance of this “ironically self-conscious” mode (268).

3. Maria DePriest asserts the power of the romantic “visionary” quality of *Fleur* (251). More subtly romantic is Nancy J. Peterson’s declaration that “Fleur’s disappearance and tracklessness at the end of the novel functions

as a present absence—her absence become a haunting presence in the narrative, signifying the need for a reconceptualization of history, for a new historicity that both refers to the past and makes a space for what can never be known of it” (987).

4. See Shirley Brozzo's full treatment of the role of food in the negotiations between Ojibwe and colonialist/postcolonialist forces of assimilation.

5. For a full discussion of the use of the “other-than-human class of beings, the *pawaaginaak* or the *manitok*” in Ojibwe storytelling, see Ridie Wilson Ghezzi's “Tradition and Innovation in Ojibwe Storytelling.”

6. The romantic, Ojibwe, and grotesque qualities of Erdrichian characters are strongly evident in John (Jack) Mauser and four of his five wives—Eleanor Schlick, Candace Pantamouny, Marlis Cook, and Dot Adare Nana-push—of *Tales of Burning Love*.

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Tribes of Men

John Joseph Mathews and Indian Internationalism

EMILY LUTENSKI

My coming back was dramatic in a way; [. . .] my perceptive powers had been dulled by the artificialities and the crowding and elbowing of men in Europe and America, my ears attuned to the clanging of steel and the strident sounds of civilization.

John Joseph Mathews, *Talking to the Moon*

I might as well speak of *my* world as I speak of *my* nation; then I would be concerned about my species as it relates to my unit of society and to me.

John Joseph Mathews, *Talking to the Moon*

As an old man, Osage intellectual, writer, and historian John Joseph Mathews recalled his expatriation from the United States during the 1920s. After growing up in Pawhuska, Oklahoma, seat of the Osage Nation, where he had been born in 1894 to a white mother and a banker father, one-quarter Osage, Mathews's travels began when he served as an aviator during World War I and spent part of his enlistment in Europe. After the war he returned to Oklahoma but later departed for Europe on his own. Recalling these years, Mathews described how in the 1920s he "roamed around, toured France on a motorbike—all that sort of thing. I wasn't too proud of myself. I was active physically and mentally, but aimless" (qtd. in Wilson, "Osage" 271). When he describes his experiences, casually, and a little regretfully, he seems to allude that these experiences were not unique.

Indeed, “that sort of thing” was a well-known practice among notable writers of this period. His story parallels those of other modern expatriates, from Ernest Hemingway to Gertrude Stein to Claude McKay. But while the way Mathews’s story echoes tropes of modernist travel and dislocation is clear, the way these tropes are inflected by Indian experiences of location seems opaque. Indians survive—they remain. Yet when his story is contorted as timeless, as out of step with the modern world, and as static, to remain seems irreconcilable with the rootlessness expressed by Mathews’s rueful tale of expatriation, despite long histories of Native travelers. A closer look at his experiences and narratives of expatriation, however, shows otherwise: Mathews’s internationalism is not outside the frame of Osage experience. Instead, it is deeply informed by the particularities of Osage history and indigeneity. And while Osage land and history remains its center, when Mathews travels, both in his life and in his writing, he builds a new architecture of tribal identity; he extends the bonds of tribalism internationally, via gender.

Mathews’s biography is characterized by a tension between being rootless and being homebound. On the one hand Mathews is the consummate cosmopolitan traveler. He served as an aviator. He motorcycled through Europe. He went hunting in North Africa. He rejected a Rhodes Scholarship on the grounds that it was “too restrictive” (qtd. in Wilson, “Osage” 271). Yet he attended Oxford and then the University of Geneva, where he studied international relations. In his freelance journalism he reported on the League of Nations for the *Philadelphia Ledger*.¹ Later he did research in Mexico with the support of a Guggenheim Fellowship awarded in 1939. In all these ways, he led a truly international life. On the other hand, however, his biography demonstrates a deep engagement with the local. His first advanced degree, from the University of Oklahoma, was in geology, and he brought this knowledge to bear on intimate studies of the environment in *Talking to the Moon* (1945), a memoir that documents one year in his life on the Osage Agency, where he resided in a cabin he built among the blackjack trees. His published work focuses almost exclusively on Oklahoma and, even more so, on the Osage Agency. This began with a series of short sketches for

the *Sooner Magazine* focused on hunting and the natural world. It continued with his first book, *Wah' Kon-Tah: The Osage and the White Man's Road* (1932); his 1934 novel *Sundown*; the aforementioned *Talking to the Moon*; *Life and Death of an Oilman*, a biography of oil tycoon E. W. Marland (1951); and *The Osages* (1961), an exhaustive history of the Osage people. Again turning toward the local space and local histories, in addition to his writing Mathews also spearheaded the creation of the Osage Tribal Museum in the 1930s, housed in a building constructed of Oklahoma sandstone, which continues to advertise as the first tribally owned museum in the United States.²

The tension between a presumably Indian local and a presumably modernist international is also evident throughout scholarship on Mathews. Take as an example treatment of Mathews's expatriation. His aimless wandering in Europe and, later, North Africa has easily aligned Mathews with members of the "lost generation," a label coined by an older Gertrude Stein to describe Ernest Hemingway and his cohort in a quotation immortalized by Hemingway himself as the epigraph to *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). This affiliation has not been lost on critics. Louis Owens has suggested the title of Mathews's novel, *Sundown*, is a "bleak reversal" of *The Sun Also Rises* (Owens 49). Terry P. Wilson remembers Mathews as "a kind of Oklahoma Hemingway writing paeans to 'the green hills of Africa,' bullfighting, and war." "The hunting jackets he inevitably wore," he continues, "completed what would have been an irritatingly macho image had not his soft-voiced humor, respect for nature, and tribal education rendered him a wilderness sage, a gentler sort of Hemingway" ("Osage" 284). This description of Mathews as a "gentler sort of Hemingway" is an acknowledgment of the seeming tension between modernist expatriation and indigenous rootedness. In it Mathews's "irritatingly macho" "Hemingwayness" is tempered by an "Indianness" that is constructed via his investment in nature, wilderness, and land. And Mathews's relationship with land is intensely local—it is the land of the Osage tribal community. Although they have other similarities, in this description to be on the Agency renders Mathews decidedly different than Hemingway. To be on the

Agency is to be Indian, unlike Hemingway, who is abroad. But perhaps Mathews's "Indianness"—his "Osageness," particularly—is far more "abroad" than has been previously acknowledged.

"Indianness" has long been identified, in part, through relationships to location, roughly construed. As a result, it makes some sense that critics would have a hard time reconciling Mathews's moments of being "out of place" as a modernist expatriate (like Hemingway) with his moments of being "in place" on the Agency and as a member of the Osage Tribal Council. In addition to indigenous epistemologies focused on land and home, colonizers have focused on land (and particularly, in their view, the ways that Indians misused land by, for example, forgoing yeoman farming) as a way to identify an irreducible Indian difference. From treaties for land cession to removal to reservations, from allotment to termination and relocation policies, from struggles for land restoration to those for sovereignty, Native experience in what is now the United States has long been focused on Indian relationships to location. But Indian locations have long extended beyond the ones privileged in this admittedly oversimplified account. In the 1970s Mathews told a story that would illustrate ways of being Indian in geographically "unexpected places."³ In this story his reflection on "Indianness" and location paints a far different picture than Wilson's contention that Mathews's ties to the Agency are what render him more "Indian" than "Hemingway." Instead of tying his Osage identity exclusively to the Osage Agency, Mathews describes how it was when he was abroad, on a hunting trip in North Africa, that he truly began to identify as Osage, an experience that ultimately led to his return to the Agency. In other words, Mathews becomes Indian at the moment when he is, perhaps, the most stereotypically like Hemingway.

Telling an interviewer of his experiences in the 1920s, Mathews set the scene:

I remember very distinctly one evening, when we were preparing our meal, suddenly it came to my guide and cook that it was time to worship. So they fell on their knees, their faces

toward Mecca, as usual. In this situation you feel so clumsy, so out of things—you feel you are an absolutely sinful person.

When Mathews begins his narrative, he describes his alienation from the Muslim members of his hunting party. He explains how “clumsy” and how “out of things” he is as a non-Muslim. He is alone; he is individuated—the paradigmatic alienated modern. Yet he continues his story and describes a moment of connection:

About this time some Kabyles, a wild tribe of Arabs, came up who were not Mohammedan and who had no known religion at all—wild! They came racing across the sand. I think there were about six or eight of them firing their Winchesters, the model 1894 lever. I thought, here, we’re in trouble. My guide and my cook were prostrate. They surrounded us shooting all the way—on their Arab horses—all mares, incidentally. Then they got off and ate with us, they were very friendly. (qtd. in Logsdon 71)

In Mathews’s story, when the Kabyles, who, he carefully notes, “were not Mohammedan,” surround the party, they relieve him of his alienation. By doing so they form the tentative beginnings of an alliance, a community, with him. The Kabyles are an indigenous people of northern Algeria, whose name is derived from the Arabic word for “tribe.” Accordingly, Mathews’s affiliation with them extends far beyond their ability to ease his estrangement from his Muslim counterparts. Their encounter does no less than resurrect Mathews’s buried tribal and indigenous consciousness, as well as, he claims, bring an end to his expatriate aimlessness. He recalls,

That night I got to thinking about it, and I thought that’s exactly what happened to me one day when I was a little boy, riding on the Osage prairies. Osage warriors with only their breech clouts and their guns had come up and surrounded me—firing. Of course, I knew some of them; they knew me, who I was. That’s what we called joy shooting, you see, just joy. So, I got homesick, and I thought, what am I doing over here? Why don’t I go back to the Osage? They’ve got a culture.

So, I came back; then I started talking with the old men. (qtd. in Logsdon 71)

It is through an expatriate encounter in North Africa—so far removed from Indian Country—that Mathews has the epiphany providing the foundation for his future work with the Osage. It is his modernist expatriation that spurs his interest in recovering and documenting Osage culture—or at least the culture of “the old men.”

Importantly Mathews’s representation of his experience in North Africa has more in common with Hemingway than just travel and hunting. It describes performances of masculinity that unite him with both the Kabyles and the Osage warriors he remembers from the days of his youth. The scene he sets—a male hunting party encountering and ultimately befriending another party of men—is so completely homosocial that even the presence of female horses seems out of place when Mathews puzzles over the “Arab horses—all mares, incidentally.” This is an oversimplified vision of a monolithic masculinity that privileges virility, action, and honor, and a vision of male bonding that has been dismantled by queer studies.⁴ But it also brings together Mathews’s understanding of the Kabyles, an Anglo-normative martial manhood that became prevalent during the Spanish-American War and remained powerful at least until Vietnam, and Native conceptions of masculinity that valorize war-time experience.⁵ Traditional notions of manhood would have been alive not only among older people on the Osage Agency but also among Mathews’s peer group, some of whom were metaphorically going “back to the blanket” during an upsurge in white capitalist encroachment on Native land and tribal integrity during the Osage oil boom of the 1920s (a grappling with traditional roles can be seen, for example, in the character of Sun-on-His-Wings in Mathews’s *Sundown*). At the same time that Mathews would have been thinking through this imperiled traditional manhood on the Agency, he was also immersed in hegemonic white masculine cultures—for example, during his time in the military during World War I and his attempt to reenlist during World War II. Mathews boils these competing masculinities down to their least common denomina-

tor, and in doing so an overwrought masculinity—ever under threat and always in need of maintenance—becomes the unifying characteristic within and across the tribal communities represented in his recollections and writing. It comes as no surprise, then, that when Mathews describes “joy shooting” rituals, for example, women are absent. When he depicts “joy shooting,” Mathews is able to map his own experience onto the Kabyles despite racial, national, and cultural difference because they are united, instead, by gender.

To examine Mathews’s construction of masculine communities complicates the questions surrounding his identity that have dominated scholarship on the author. Issues of tribal belonging are central to the reception history of Mathews’s work, which has tended to focus on assessments of Mathews’s “Indianness.” Reviewers of his texts at the time of their publication insisted upon viewing him within a rather romanticized rubric of Indian authenticity—oddly enough, even while decrying such romanticism. For example, one of these reviews notes that Mathews “has spent most of his life on the Osage reservation and he knows his own people. [. . .] Because he himself is an Osage, he does not, as so many white writers incline to do, romanticize or sentimentalize his material. He allows the facts to speak for themselves” (Walton 155). More recently, scholars of American Indian literature have positioned Mathews in a far different way, remarking upon his distance from full-blooded Osages rather than his proximity to them. To do so paints Mathews more as an “outsider-within” the Osage tribe, a position that has largely been attributed to his mixed-blood status, and which has often driven critical assessments of him. A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff contends, for example, that “Mathews did not grow up within a tribal culture” (5), an assertion supported by critics such as Charles R. Larson, who has gone as far as to suggest that Mathews’s work—particularly *Sundown*—is pro-assimilation.

Mathews’s mixed-blood status has largely been addressed through readings of *Sundown* that focus on its autobiographical content, and which see *Sundown*’s protagonist, Chal Windzer, as emblematic of “mixed-blood” or “hybrid” identities that have more recently been challenged as an outgrowth of a “doctrinaire

postmodernism” in literary studies (Weaver, Womack, and Warrior xx). For example, Louis Owens’s *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel* suggests the novel is a record of “the struggle between old and new—Indian and Euro-American—‘orders’” (52). Christopher Schedler has taken a different approach, suggesting that the liminality characterized by Mathews and his work is due not to his “seemingly insignificant one-eighth Native American blood quantum” (Wilson, “Osage” 264), but rather to his modernism. He contends that *Sundown*’s Chal “develops many of the characteristics of the ‘high’ modernist subject,” who is an “alienated individual—separated from both the dominant culture he desires to be a part of yet is unable to grasp and the tribal community he disparages yet seeks solace in” (Schedler 132–33). According to Schedler, Chal is an alienated subject on the one hand because he is of mixed blood and on the other hand because of Mathews’s adherence to the conventions of modernist aesthetic production. But this alienation can also be seen as a form of detachment—not only a psychic detachment, but also a geographical detachment, a rootlessness exemplified in a form of mobility that has become nearly synonymous with the American modernist experience: expatriation.

While the modernist moment saw plenty of female expatriates from the United States—Gertrude Stein, Djuna Barnes, and H. D., for example—to be internationalist in this context is also to be a proverbial *man* of the world.⁶ While Hemingway provides one model for male modernist expatriation, other examples of masculine internationalism can be found in the work of men of color such as Claude McKay. In his 1929 *Banjo*, vagabondage—an “aimless” expatriation like that described by Mathews when he “roamed around, toured France on a motorbike—all that sort of thing”—is a wholly masculine way of being. Providing what is arguably the center to the exploration of “internationalism” launched by Brent Hayes Edwards’s *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism*, *Banjo* is a useful text with which to put *Sundown* in conversation. To consider Mathews’s internationalism, then, transposes an optic that has been used to describe black writers in the early twentieth century, who had, like

Indians, complex relationships to location and travel derived from histories of diaspora, slavery, colonialism, labor, and war. While Edwards describes internationalism as a caveat to “U.S.-bound themes of cultural nationalism, civil rights protest, and uplift in the literary culture of the ‘Harlem Renaissance’” (3), it also, importantly, does not abandon the kind of self-determination generally ascribed to nationalism. Rather, as he notes, internationalism reveals that “nationalism” often extends transnationally—“discourses of black autonomy,” he parenthetically notes, “played a formative role in the formulation of black internationalist initiatives” (10). The imbrications of nationalism and internationalism are one facet of the “unevenness” suggested by Edwards’s master trope for describing black internationalism—“*décalage*”—which indicates both separation and linkage, difference and sameness (13–15). While not seamlessly transportable to the American Indian context, this concept is useful. As both separation and linkage, internationalism does not undermine the engagement with sovereignty explored by Robert Warrior, for example, in *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions*. Rather, it provides a way to explore how sovereignty is—to gesture toward Edwards’s use of Stuart Hall—“articulated” in response to international experience (11–15); it provides a way to explore the tie between Native nationhood and transnationalism that is alluded to by Mathews’s memoir *Talking to the Moon* when he announces, “I might as well speak of *my* world as I speak of *my* nation” (242).

To place Mathews in dialogue with Edwards’s concept of internationalism serves another purpose. It enables further interrogation of the gendered inflections of the term. In his chapter on Paulette Nardal, Edwards recognizes male dominance within black internationalist narratives, asking, “What would it mean to theorize a feminist articulation of diaspora?” (122). Yet his chapter on *Banjo* comprises “men without a country” (199). Like Hemingway, who tends to document the male-centered worlds of bull fighting, hunting, and war, and for whom masculinity and threats to it are ever-present themes, McKay’s Marseilles is largely a single-sex space characterized by what Edwards calls “‘vagabond internationalism’ [. . .] among shift-

ing black male communities” (198). Mathews’s internationalism is similar to both Hemingway’s and McKay’s, whose international narratives of travel evince a jazz-age sensibility, are enabled by wartime enlistment or postwar prosperity and contain twinges of nostalgia for nature. These writers, taken collectively, represent a freewheeling interwar period leisure that seemingly unites bands of men across racial, national, and cultural differences as they travel to their next drink or fleeting sexual encounter. Whether called “expatriation” or “vagabondage,” such internationalism is characterized by oversimplified trappings of hegemonic (white) masculinity that circumscribe men across race.⁷ While *Banjo*’s multiethnic yet homosexual male vagabondage resonates somewhat with Mathews’s “aimlessness,” however, it also displays a significant difference: money. McKay’s characters “bum around”—their mobility is aligned with their poverty. They are driven to vagabondage by economic necessity, even though this vagabondage is simultaneously lauded as freedom—a freedom from work, which, when situated within transnational histories of black slavery, is a significant freedom indeed. Mathews’s mobility, as well as that of *Sundown*’s Chal, is also a freedom from work, but it is one enabled by economic prosperity—a generous income largely due to oil.⁸

After all, Mathews’s relationship with the Osage Agency is not only an affiliation with the land. It is also a connection to the oil that comes from that land. His degrees in geology and the natural sciences are a case in point. These fields of study did more for Mathews than just enable the pastoral descriptions of the blackjacks in his writing; they also would have been lucrative fields to enter during Oklahoma’s “Great Frenzy” (as Mathews called it) for oil in the early twentieth century. Furthermore, Osage sovereignty was inexorably tied to the land—and not only, on the one hand, in sacred ways or, on the other hand, in romanticized ways. Osages were also tied to their land by virtue of the legal ownership of mineral rights that made them one of the richest communities per capita in the world during the 1920s (Hunter 67). Thus no matter where they were, Osage tribal members were connected to the land through the monthly checks they received from their ownership of the oil fields.

The Osage legal relationship to the land was also unique among Native American tribes in that not only did they retain their sub-surface mineral rights during allotment, but they also held these rights commonly, rather than severally (Wilson, *Underground* ix). This manifested a particularly unified Osage experience of location, where oil wealth both tied Osages to Osage County and enabled their increasing mobility within and, indeed, beyond its boundaries. This is epitomized best, perhaps, by the following description:

It was commonly believed that in rural Osage county there were more Pierce Arrows than in any other county in the United States. Whether or not this assertion is wholly accurate, the Osages coveted vehicles powered by internal combustion engines; they bought them in quantity before learning to drive, gladly hiring chauffeurs to guide their luxury cars along the county's dirt roads. (Wilson, *Underground* 129)

These Pierce Arrows, cruising the back roads of Osage County, are a symbol of wealth and luxury and also a symbol of increased mobility. This mobility extended beyond the borders of tribal land. When Charles Eastman visited the Osage Agency in the 1920s in order to study the impact of oil wealth on the tribe, he complained that his study was impossible to carry out because no one was there. Instead of the Osages he hoped to meet, the Agency was populated with, in his phrasing, "luxuriously furnished" homes that stood empty for months on end while their owners traveled (Wilson, *Underground* 130). These homeowners were rooted in the land since it was the source of their wealth, and they were separate from the land when their wealth enabled relocation.

This complex relationship to the land was at the heart of what it meant to be Osage during this period, yet relocation simultaneously called into question the "Indianness" of Native travelers. During the 1920s and 1930s, when Mathews lived there and was, suggestively, employed selling real estate, a wave of Indians relocated to Los Angeles. These early urban Indians were largely Oklahomans, like Mathews, who had become wealthy from oil. They included Jackson Barnett, an Oklahoma Creek who was known as

“the richest Indian in the world.” Barnett, Tanis C. Thorne relays, had adopted the eccentric hobby of directing traffic in his affluent neighborhood. She writes, “People on tour busses would ask, ‘Who is that dippy old black man who thinks he is a traffic cop?’ To this the bus-drivers would reply: ‘He’s not black, he’s red. That’s the richest Indian in the world’” (75). While she leaves this moment uninterrogated, it suggests that in the white cultural imagination, to relocate Indians outside of Indian Country—to expatriate them within the United States—renders them unrecognizable as Indians. In the case of Barnett, “the richest Indian in the world,” to be a man of color in Los Angeles is to be black. Indian spatial relocation, then, is very much connected to Indian racial location.⁹ This is also seen in the introduction of tourism industries to indigenous lands during this historical moment, when, for example, the Fred Harvey Company promoted “Indian detours” in the American Southwest. These tours treated Native people as essentially a component of the southwestern landscape to be gazed upon from the windows of cars and trains like the mesas, canyons, and mountains comprising the physical geography.¹⁰ Mathews pokes fun at such tours in *Sundown*, when a white character tells Chal, “I thought Indian reservations were full of cactus and rattlesnakes [...] and tourists” (234). This suggests that to the dominant gaze of Anglo-American culture, “Indianness” is dependent on being “in place.” To be Indian is to be in the rural West. To be elsewhere—like Los Angeles, or like Algeria—is to be *not* Indian.

But Mathews disrupts this connection between Indian identity and static location in *Sundown*, where Chal is so often at the wheel of a car or the throttle of an airplane. By doing so he suggests an alternative configuration of “Indianness.” In his iteration Indian mobility is reconciled with a tribal identity that is organized through masculine relationships, both on and off the Agency. Chal’s relationship to the Osage is due in part to both kinship and blood relations, but it is also due to his mobility. Like other Osages during the “Great Frenzy,” Chal is tied to the land by oil revenue, but he can leave it for the same reason. The novel refigures this leave-taking as something quite Indian, thus Chal’s ability to travel, to fly away from the Agency, is, like him, tied to Indian Country. In a pivotal

scene, he speaks with his professor—notably a geology professor—about the birds they observe on the Agency (173–74). Suggestively, they discuss the flight patterns of native and nonnative species. At this moment his professor suggests that he is “the type for the air service” (190), and Chal decides to enlist. In doing so, he becomes part of a homosocial male military community.

Although Chal is assigned to an instructorship position within the United States and never travels abroad as an aviator, he still uses his airplane to travel to places that are construed as foreign within the scope of the novel. He steals away to sexual trysts with a white woman who has the masculine name “Lou.” Their interracial encounter is allied with an exotic place. Although he is based in Oklahoma, Chal flies to an unnamed, unlocatable “coast” to meet Lou. The hotel where they convene does nothing to clarify its geographical location. Its name (the Spanish Main) and its architecture (stucco, with a tiled roof) could be at home in California or Texas, or it could belong someplace else entirely. The mention of “Spanish,” however, is significant. On Chal’s first date with Lou, she asks him if he is “Spanish or something.” In so many novels of the period—and especially those of the Harlem Renaissance—“Spanish or something” becomes an indicator of racial ambiguity.¹¹ Racial conflations happen elsewhere in *Sundown* when Chal—like the “richest Indian in the world”—is off the Agency. Even his white college love interest, who *knows* he is an Indian, remarks there is “something Japanese about him when he smiles” (129). When Chal’s interracial trysts occur in an unlocatable Spanish Main, this unmappable yet somewhat foreign geography serves to demonstrate how his Indian identity becomes ambiguous to white observers when he is exterior to Osage County.

Women, however, punctuate the novel only in brief flashes. They appear as Chal’s white, modern girlfriends, as the repressive Victorian morality of his white aunt and his childhood teachers, and—but solely in the case of Chal’s mother—as a tie to the indigenous. This characterization of Chal’s mother is significant, for it reveals another layer of Osage identity. In addition to the relationship to location, and in addition to the blood quanta that have been dis-

cussed often by critics, “Osageness” is also determined by relation—by kinship structures that are based on patrilineally defined clans called “fireplaces.”¹² Accordingly, among women in the Spanish Main, for example, and also in comparison to his mother and through his maternal connection to the tribe, Chal’s “Osageness” is deemphasized. Along this line, Mathews takes great care to chart his protagonist’s family tree by documenting the compilation of the Osage tribal rolls in the early twentieth century, upon which the allotment of land and commonly held mineral rights relied. After being placed on the tribal roll, Chal’s father gloats, “Well, I guess they’re satisfied that I’m Osage alright. The Commission just finished fixin’ the Osage rolls today. [. . .] not only found out that I’m bona-fidy, but by gollys they found out that my grandfather musta been some punkins” (52). Here Chal’s father is referring to his *white* grandfather, Sir John Windzer, for whom he is named. This seeming endorsement of whiteness is the type of incident leading some to read Mathews as pro-assimilation. Such a reading is complicated, however, by his juxtaposition of this apparent endorsement with the evident disapproval of Chal’s full-blooded mother, who meets her husband’s bragging with a stereotypical “Indian silence” (53).

In this textual moment Chal’s much-discussed liminality is revealed to be more by kinship than by blood, since, like his father, he is “bona fidy” according to the strictures of blood quanta imposed by the compilation of the Dawes Rolls. Like his character, Mathews did not have a patrilineal connection to Osage kinship structures, and as a result, his affiliation with the Osage could, at times, come under suspicion. As Wilson suggests,

Mathews [. . .] was fully cognizant [. . .] that his own identity as an Osage, while not tainted with any suggestion of deception, was always suspect in the minds of some. His elections to the tribal council said less about his identification as Indian in the eyes of the Osage and more about their respect for his education, familiarity with the complexities of white society, and devotion to the tribe’s interests. At times even these perceived positive qualities were resented and distrusted. (“Osage” 268–69)

For Chal, read as a representation of Mathews, and for Mathews himself, patrilineal relationships to white men render them outside the kinship group's central "Osageness." The emphasis on interracial and international groups of men in Mathews's work (in *Sundown*, the football team, the fraternity, and the military) and in his autobiographical accounts (of his North African hunting party, for example), is arguably, then, a way for him to imagine a new "patrilineality." Without a place in the patrilineal kinship structures of the Osage, Mathews rethinks tribal identity by turning toward alternative male bonds. Connecting interracially, turning internationally, and privileging homosociality, he creates tribes of other men.

This emphasis on male relationships informs the way Mathews looks back at the Osages after his hunting trip, when he turns to the culture of "the old men." Accordingly, when Mathews commissions paintings of tribal elders to be included in the Osage Tribal Museum, a process he documents in *Talking to the Moon*, only men sit for the paintings. When he creates this archive of Osage history, the only tribal members are male. Furthermore, the presence of women in *Talking to the Moon* is limited solely to these men's wives, who dotingly help their husbands dress in traditional regalia in order to sit for the paintings. In this, his memoir, Mathews himself remains completely unfettered by the feminine—even though he was married twice (first in 1924 to Virginia Winslow Hooper; second to Elizabeth Hunt, whom he married the year *Talking to the Moon* was released) and had a daughter in addition to a son from his first marriage. For him, somewhat tangential to the Agency, "connected only through his Osage great-grandmother to a culture whose clan system is patrilineally determined" (Owens 166), this obsession with preserving the patriarchy for posterity, this creation of an Osage tribe populated exclusively by men, is a way to create an alternative relation to the patrilineal that he cannot claim through his own family history.

Given that the word for patrilineally determined Osage clans means "fireplaces," it seems appropriate to make a connection to Mathews's actual fireplace—and return to a discussion of place. *Talking to the Moon* is tied tightly to a specific location—pinpointed

in the cabin that Mathews builds among the blackjack trees on his allotment. This cabin becomes an idealized space where Mathews turns toward the region as a way to escape the artificialities of modern life with the kind of anti-“Hemingwayness” that Wilson describes. His return to the Agency after his international travels resists masculine cosmopolitanism when he promotes the region as a naturalist’s paradise. Of course, had Mathews not spent time in North Africa, at Oxford, in Geneva, in France, and in Los Angeles, Oklahoma would likely look to him like it does in photographs of Pawhuska and Osage County during this period: crowded with cars, lighted marquees, pulsing with throngs of people, and dotted with oil fields (figs. 1 and 2). Mathews’s anti-modern depiction of Osage County, then, is only made possible when this site is taken alongside his experiences abroad and in cities. In *Talking to the Moon*, he describes how among “the crowding and elbowing of men in Europe and America,” he became

attuned to the clanging steel and strident sounds of civilization, and the range of my sight stopped by tall buildings and walls, by neat gardens and geometrical fields; and I had begun to worship these things and the men who brought them into being—impersonalized groups of magicians who never appeared to my consciousness as frail, uninspiring individuals. (2–3)

He juxtaposes his life in Osage County with these other sites, and in comparison it appears placid, pastoral: “I came to the blackjacks as a man who had pulled himself out of the roaring river of civilization to rest a while” (3), he writes.

But although Mathews’s cabin in the blackjacks seems so tied to the natural world of the Agency, and so disconnected from the international and urban sites he appears to reject when he moves back to the Osage Agency, his masculine internationalism is written in to the very construction of his sandstone house in the northeastern Oklahoma hills—in particular, on his fireplace (fig. 3). His mantelpiece is inscribed, in Latin, with Mathews’s self-designated “motto of my life in the blackjacks:” “TO HUNT, TO BATHE, TO PLAY, TO LAUGH—THAT IS TO LIVE” (194). This mantelpiece is the most



Fig. 1. Parade in downtown Pawhuska, ca. 1938. Courtesy Osage Tribal Museum, Pawhuska, Oklahoma.



Fig. 2. In the oil fields, Osage County, Oklahoma, ca. 1920s. Photograph by Vince Dillon. Robert E. Cunningham Oklahoma History Collection. Copyright © Dickinson Research Center, National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

important piece of his cabin's architecture; early in his narrative, he tells his builder, "This fireplace business is serious," emphasizing, "I want the house sorta built around the fireplace" (6). Although the fireplace inscription is described by Mathews as his "motto of [. . .] life in the blackjacks" of Oklahoma, its internationalism has not been lost on critics. Wilson contends that its Latin is an echo of Mathews's Oxford education ("Osage" 282). Tol Foster builds upon this, noting how the fireplace extends beyond Oxford and to other international sites, encompassing a "densely packed cycle of allusions to ancient classical traditions, from that of ancient Chinese dynasties with their creation of ideograms [. . .] to that of the Stoics" (223). Some of these allusions are present in Mathews's description of the fireplace in *Talking to the Moon*, where he describes his motto as "Painted in Chinese red on the face of my mantel in Roman lettering," insisting that "it was once the motto of some unit of the Third Augustan Legion and was placed over the entrance of the officers' club at a fort in the Aurès Mountains of North Africa, along the Roman frontier of the first century" (194). Although Foster calls attention to the Chinese and Roman allusions in the mantelpiece, he does not acknowledge its gendered components. Clearly, this motto, which focuses on superficial trappings of masculinity such as hunting, perpetuates Mathews's Hemingway-esque image even when he is on the Agency. At the same time, it also recalls the other tribes of men within which Mathews can claim membership, and which he imagined in his written work: As Wilson points out, its Latin alludes to the all-male scholarly community at Oxford. As a slogan on the face of an officer's club, it refers to the military, where Mathews served, and where his *Sundown* protagonist learns to fly. Furthermore, the slogan was found in North Africa, the homeland of the Kabyle tribesmen who stir Mathews's memories of Osage warriors "joy shooting" and inspire his return to document the culture of "old men." Lastly, used to decorate his fireplace, the motto is connected to the patrilineal clans—"fireplaces"—of Osage kinship structures. This seemingly decorative feature is much more than aesthetic; it serves as a confluence of the international and multiethnic male tribes in Mathews's writing and experience.



Fig. 3. [John] Joseph Matthews, Osage council member, author, historian, and Rhodes scholar, seated at home in front of his fireplace, Oklahoma. Photograph by Andrew T. Kelley, December 16, 1937. Courtesy National Archives, American Indian Select List number 82.

At the end of *Talking to the Moon* Mathews turns from the blackjacks and his cabin there back to international sites. He writes, “I might as well speak of *my* world as I speak of *my* nation; then I would be concerned about my species as it relates to my unit of society and to me” (242). When he makes this statement, his “nation” is not clearly identified. It may be the Osage Nation, or it may be the United States. His “species” is presumably *mankind*. His “unit of society,” too, could be any number of groups: the Osages, the moneyed, men, intellectuals. Like his mantelpiece, which connects the center of his home to a variety of international sites, Mathews’s statement eliding “world” and “nation” imbricates many social and geographical locations. It connects the blackjacks of Oklahoma to the sweep of worldly experience, revealing that, indeed, “Indian res-

ervations” are much more than “cactus and rattlesnakes [. . .] and tourists,” as Chal’s white companions in the military are so surprised to discover.

These networks extending from his home in the Osage hills to Oxford, North Africa, Geneva, Los Angeles, Mexico, and beyond support the characterization of Mathews as an “internationalist” writer in a manner similar to those, like McKay, discussed by Edwards’s *The Practice of Diaspora*. Furthermore, to claim that Mathews forges an Indian internationalism via performances of male bonding is also to build upon scholarship that has seen a resurgence of nationalism in Native American literary studies. It is an extension of this project and suggests considering Indian internationalism as part of recent projects in comparative and global indigenities while at the same time recognizing the always already transnational status of Native nations within the United States. Along this line, Foster reads Mathews as a cosmopolitan writer, suggesting,

the great achievement of Mathews’s work is not its clarity as a Native American or Osage oeuvre, but rather the tremendously astute way it maintains a dialogic relation between—let us say, as if they could be easily disentangled—Oxonian, American, continental, scientific, literary, historical, and Osage parts. And this sense of practical dialogue, of bringing Osage thought and history in relation to those other discourses not in subordinate relation but as the center from which to proceed, is Mathews’ primary intellectual achievement. (221)

Notably the intellectual strands that Foster lists here are not only multidisciplinary, but they are also multiethnic and international—and furthermore, they all derive from the homosocial sites in Mathews’s experience and imagination: Oxford, the military, the patrilineal clan, and the hunting party. By forming relations between these sites, Mathews forges a new kind of kinship that ties himself, a mixed-blood Osage from Oklahoma, to other male “tribes” across his “world.” This new tribal identity complicates Mathews’s at times predictable, staid representations of masculinity and in doing so

enables him to be seen less as an “Oklahoma Hemingway” (a displaced, alienated, hypermasculine modernist individual) and more as a participant in a myriad of international, multiracial, and cross-cultural masculine *communities*.

Such an emphasis on gendered community enables a reconsideration of a term coined by Jace Weaver, who compellingly suggests that the communal is “a feature that cuts across various native worldviews” as a tie that binds pan-tribally (*Other* 42). Weaver’s emphasis on the communal is not exclusive, either. It is not applicable to a single tribal community, or to a single reservation. In order to emphasize its inclusiveness he coins a term, “communitism” (derived from both “community” and “activism”), to describe “a proactive commitment to Native community, including the wider community” (49). This “wider community” is a vast network: “reservation, rural, village, urban, tribal, pan-tribal, traditional, Christian” (*Other* 51). And to add to Weaver’s scope, it can also be conceptualized transnationally. Mathews’s tribes of men help to do so. When he hearkens to globalized masculine communities instead of a reserved (i.e., localized to the reservation) coterie, his tribal relations reach across the boundaries of the Agency to sites as far away as North Africa. Reading Mathews as a theorist of “communitism” who bridges racial and national boundaries via gender enables his position within Native American literary history to be reconsidered. To suggest that Mathews’s experience is instructive for Native studies, however, is not to suggest that Mathews can represent modern Indian experience. First, Native women are almost completely occluded in his vision of tribal identity. Second, the Osage history into which Mathews was born and in which he lived differed from many American Indian experiences; as Foster writes, challenging the image of Mathews as an “outsider-within” his tribe, “Mathews was an exceptional Native American, but in many ways we could see he was not an exceptional Osage” (227). Furthermore, his Indian internationalism—when, posed before his fireplace, he is simultaneously embedded in his cabin on the Agency and expatriated in North Africa—defies a distinction between the nationalist and the cosmopolitan. In the end Mathews’s tribal formations resist gener-

alization. The complexities of his internationalism for Native studies, then, are of use not only because they expose some of the field's limitations, but also because they reveal the scope of its possibilities.

NOTES

1. Unfortunately, these articles have not yet been recovered.
2. One comprehensive biographical sketch of Mathews is contained in A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff's article "John Joseph Mathews's *Talking to the Moon*: Literary and Osage Contexts."
3. I take this phrase from Philip J. Deloria's *Indians in Unexpected Places*, where he describes how "most particularly at the turn of the twentieth century [. . .] according to most American narratives, Indian people, corralled on isolated and impoverished reservations, missed out on modernity." Yet, he argues, "a significant cohort of Native people engaged the same forces of modernization that were making non-Indians reevaluate their own expectations of themselves and their society" (6). Mathews's international travel and expatriation serves as one more example of a seemingly anomalous Indian deeply engaged with the modern.
4. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick is the most well-known critic who has "queered" male homosocial bonding by exploring the role of desire in English literature "to hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual" (1). In the context of American literature, critics have already queered the masculinity of figures like Hemingway—Debra A. Moddelmog's *Reading Desire: In Pursuit of Ernest Hemingway* does much to complicate the staid hypermasculinity that dominated prior depictions of the author. The queerness of Mathews's *Sundown* has been discussed recently by Michael Snyder, who has analyzed the novel within a queer frame as a redress to the marginality of sexuality studies within Native studies, to which figures such as Craig Womack have previously called attention. Arguably, internationalism is one area where queer studies and Native studies can continue to come together—a suggestion made by the editors' introduction to a recent special issue of *GLQ*, which opens by suggesting, "at a moment when scholars are scrambling to move beyond 'Queer Nation' to 'Queer Planet,' adopting a transnational hermeneutics in response to the dynamics of globalization, we feel that it is important to remember the radically *international* status of Native America" (Justice, Rifkin, and Schneider 6).

5. For more on martial manhood at the beginning of the twentieth century, see Kristin L. Hoganson's *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars*. Bryan Klopotek, in his essay analyzing how Native filmmakers challenge longstanding cinematic stereotypes of Indian hypermasculinity, titled "'I Guess Your Warrior Look Doesn't Work Every Time': Challenging Indian Masculinity in the Cinema," notes, "In most Native societies, tradition holds that the more experience men gain in war, the higher a status they achieve (though it must be noted that warfare is not the only way for a man to raise his status)" (257).

6. All of these female modernists are notable not only for their expatriation but also for their challenges to traditional notions of white femininity. Their mobility, perhaps, is part of this challenge.

7. Gail Bederman's *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* notes that by the inter-war period, "'masculine,' more frequently than 'manly,' was applied across race or class boundaries; for, by definition, *all* men were masculine" (18). This is a departure from the "manliness" that provides the focus of her study, which was established via white supremacy and which constructed a racially pure vision of Victorian "civilization." By 1917, when her study ends, she notes that this Victorian manliness was increasingly being critiqued as "overcivilized" and was replaced by "masculinity" (17). A critique of "overcivilization" and a simultaneous construction of masculinity is present in Mathews's *Talking to the Moon*, where he suggests his return to the Osage Agency was reinvigorating after his immersion in an overcivilized modern world: "My coming back was dramatic in a way; [. . .] my perceptive powers had been dulled by the artificialities and the crowding and elbowing of men in Europe and America, my ears attuned to the clanging of steel and the strident sounds of civilization" (2).

8. Robert Dale Parker's chapter on *Sundown* in *The Invention of Native American Literature*, titled "Nothing to Do: John Joseph Mathews's *Sundown* and Restless Young Indian Men," explores the connections between masculinity, work, and Osage identity. Parker contends that Chal has an ambivalent relation with homosocial communities, an outgrowth of his ambivalence toward a binary tension between "white masculine work versus feminized Indian passivity," that had been mobilized via colonialism and heightened by the Depression (50). Parker focuses on the homosocial communities in *Sundown* and their "uneasy pondering of their own masculinity" (22), although he does not argue "anything so straightforward as

that Chal is an unconscious homosexual” (36). Sexuality is more centrally addressed by Snyder’s work on Mathews.

9. Oddly enough, contrary to what this racial confusion indicates, Los Angeles did not have a particularly sizeable African American population during this period. It was increasing exponentially during the first waves of the black Great Migration, but in comparison to other minority groups, such as Latinos and Japanese, the black population was fairly small. It was small enough even that Harlem Renaissance writer Arna Bontemps, who grew up in Los Angeles after moving there as a toddler, abandoned it for Harlem because he felt “he could not truly find himself or his heritage” there (Flamming 91). Barnett’s case of mistaken identity, when he is assimilated to the white imagination as a “dippy old black man” rather than as Indian or, say, Mexican American, serves more as evidence of the binary thinking concerning race in the United States (these are, after all, tourists to Los Angeles, not California—or presumably, southwestern—residents) than it does of Los Angeles’s demographics.

10. For more on southwestern tourism and the Indian in the Anglo-American imagination, see Leah Dilworth’s *Imagining Indians in the Southwest: Persistent Images of a Primitive Past*.

11. One example is in Jean Toomer’s *Cane*, where “Spanish” is used to describe the racially ambiguous Paul in “Bona and Paul.”

12. Mathews himself charts Osage gentes in his chapter titled “The Fireplaces” in *The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters*.

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“Unmapped Territories”

The Career of Karl Kroeber (1926–2009)

A. LAVONNE BROWN RUOFF

Jean Taylor Kroeber, widow of Karl Kroeber, has granted permission for *SAIL* to reprint his “Address to Columbia College Students Elected to the Phi Beta Kappa Society, 18 May 2009” and “An Interview with Karl Kroeber.”¹ Conducted by Michael Mallick, the interview was published in the newsletter of the Department of English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University (Fall 2009). Jean Kroeber feels that the two selections “together pretty much said what he needed to say.”² Both were included in the commemorative booklet distributed at the memorial for Kroeber, held at Columbia University on April 8, 2010. They present an overview of Kroeber’s fervent dedication to teaching and scholarship as well as his perceptive responses to the political and educational changes in his lifetime. The quotation in the title of this introduction are Kroeber’s final words to “Address to Columbia College Students.”

Born on November 24, 1926, in Oakland, California, Kroeber was the son of Alfred L. Kroeber, one of the founders of anthropology, and Theodora Kracaw Kroeber, author of the acclaimed *Ishi in Two Worlds* (1961). He grew up in Berkeley with his siblings Theodore, Clifton, and Ursula. In 1930 his father bought Kishamish, the Napa Valley farmhouse that became the family’s summer home. There Kroeber became close to Juan Dolores and Robert Spott, Alfred’s Native American friends who often visited the family home.

As a young man, Kroeber served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. In 1947 he received his BA from the University of California, Berkeley. The next year he worked as a radio announcer in Keokuk,

Iowa, before entering graduate school at Columbia University in New York. He and Jean Taylor, who became a sculptor, married in 1953. Three years later he received a PhD in English from Columbia. From 1956 to 1970 he taught at the University of Wisconsin. During their years in Madison, Jean and Karl Kroeber had three children: Paul, Arthur, and Katharine. In 1970 he became a faculty member at Columbia University, where he was named Mellon Professor in the Humanities in 1987. In June 2009 he retired and died later that year on November 8.

Gene Ruoff, my husband, first introduced me to Kroeber, who directed his dissertation on Wordsworth at the University of Wisconsin. They later coedited *Romantic Poetry: Recent Revisionary Criticism* (1993). Both my husband and I owe our careers to Kroeber, who wrote many recommendations for us over the years.

In the interview with Mallick, Kroeber describes the origin of the Newsletter of the Association for Study of American Indian Literatures. Founded in 1972, it became *Studies in American Indian Literatures* in 1980. Karl edited and supported it from 1977 to 1987. Under his editorship, the Newsletter and *SAIL* became important resources for teachers, who depended on their essays, book reviews, and bibliographies for information about Native American literatures. Kroeber strove to achieve a balance between oral traditions and contemporary written literatures. I worked closely with Kroeber when I was bibliographer (1977–87) and book review editor (1977–82). From 1987 to 1988, Kroeber arranged for *SAIL* to be absorbed into *DISPATCH*, the newsletter for the Center of American Culture Studies, Columbia University. Subsequently ASAIL members resurrected *SAIL* as a separate journal—the only one devoted to Native American literatures. Now published by the University of Nebraska Press, it is edited by rotating members of ASAIL. At the 1999 Chicago convention ASAIL honored Kroeber for his contributions to *SAIL* and to scholarship on American Indian literatures.

Kroeber's own studies have expanded greatly our understanding of Native literatures, especially oral narratives. His edition of *Traditional Literatures of the American Indian: Texts and Interpretations* (1981; expanded edition, 1997) is an important resource in the field.

Among his other significant studies are *Retelling/Rereading: The Fate of Storytelling in Modern Times* (1992), *Artistry in Native American Myths* (1998), and his edition of *American Indian Persistence and Resurgence* (1994). His illuminating interpretations offer readers new ways to approach these literatures.

Enjoy these two examples of Kroeber's wit and wisdom. As I read them, I picture a generous and brilliant man hurling verbal thunderbolts in all directions to arouse his audience to care as much about literature and the world as he did.

NOTES

1. The title of this look at Kroeber's career, "Unmapped Territories," comes from Karl Kroeber, "Address to Columbia College Students Elected to the Phi Beta Kappa Society," 18 May 2009. The address is reprinted in this issue of *SAIL*.

2. E-mail from Jean Taylor Kroeber to A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff, 7 March 2011. Biographical information is based on the "Biographical Note" in the commemorative booklet. See *In Honor of Karl Kroeber, The Wordsworth Circle* (2007) <<http://www.rc.umd.edu/reference/wcircle/index.html>>. See also Gene Ruoff, "Romanticism with a Difference: The Recent Criticism of Karl Kroeber," *boundary 2* 18.1 (Spring 1991): 226–37, available through JSTOR.

“Art, Imagination, Storytelling”

An Interview with Karl Kroeber

MICHAEL MALLICK

This interview with Karl Kroeber was originally published in *English Department Updates* (Fall 2009), a semiannual alumni newsletter of the Columbia University Department of English & Comparative Literature. Mallick is coordinator of the newsletter.

Although Kroeber did not want a memorial service after his death, he asked that this interview and his “Address to Columbia College Students” be assembled in a pamphlet for distribution. Jean Taylor Kroeber, his wife, and their children combined these with a short biography in “Karl Kroeber, 24 November 1926–8 November 2009,” which was distributed at his commemorative service, April 8, 2012, in St. Paul’s Chapel, Columbia University.

MICHAEL MALLICK (MM): You taught your first class at Columbia in 1952 and your last this spring—any changes in fifty-seven years?

KARL KROEBER (KK): A scholarly answer: yes and no. In the early fifties the students were all male, all white, everybody wore a tie, and you addressed each by his last name prefaced by Mr. A high percentage of students were from the twenty or so excellent Catholic high schools in and around New York; a smaller but solid percentage were Jewish—in those years the other Ivies had harsh quotas, which meant we got a lot of wonderful boys from Bronx Science and Stuyvesant; almost nobody from New England prep schools. Probably 80 percent were from New York City and environs and the “Middle Atlantic States,” a euphemism for New Jersey. Essentially these were the same kind of students—sons of immigrants—who entered Columbia College with my father, son of a German immigrant, in 1892. Probably 70 percent of my students entered wanting

to become doctors, another 15 percent lawyers, the rest various kinds of professional men. They wanted to make a decent living, most of them came from non-affluent circumstances, but their primary aim was not money but to become fully educated so they could, as trained professionals, effectively contribute to improving society, making it a better place for themselves and their children. Teaching such students—especially the ones who were the first in their families to attempt higher education—was to me profoundly exciting and rewarding.

Today's classes, besides including two genders shading into earth-tones away from zinc, never using last names (just as well, many are hyphenated), and dressing as sloppily as possible, come from all over the world—many foreign-born and those not seeming to have lived in fourteen exotic countries before coming to Columbia. They all appear to have four-figure IQs, take far too many classes, and have absorbing extra-academic interests. Teaching such students is profoundly exciting and rewarding.

So I see vast shifts; but all I remember from my actual teaching is one year after another filled with fascinating students, every one unique, from whom I learned most of what I know, and whose individuality provided continuous stimulation and pleasure. I've always worked hard at teaching; I held long office hours, assigned a lot of writing and took pride in getting the papers back very fast, heavily annotated, and, at the other end (too often forgotten in discussions of teaching responsibilities, which don't finish with a final exam), written many thousands of recommendations. I enjoyed doing these things as the central part of academic life, all of which (even some committee work) I have found exhilarating. Maybe, I've reflected, a little too much so for being the husband and father I might have been.

mm: To me, and I know others, the most remarkable feature of your teaching is the extraordinary range of classes you have taught—can you explain that?

kk: Well, maybe I'm scatter-brained. Maybe I get bored easily. But also, I suspect that that if you look closely you'll see I've been teaching the same three things disguised as different topics. All my

courses are at root about art, imagination, and storytelling, always inflected by a persistent fascination with natural science.

MM: I can live with the three topics, but the science puzzles me.

KK: Well, it is tricky, and I'm not confident about my powers of self-comprehension. But as I've thought back on my career, especially why I probably have taught more different courses than any other professor in the entire history of the Columbia English Department, the science inflection kept intruding. Partly it is family history; after all, my father was a member of the National Academy of Sciences. More important, although my mother and father were both profoundly interested in art, music, and literature (they even published in *PMLA*!), my father enjoyed translating Housman into German, and, of course, my mother wrote one of the great books of the twentieth century, *Ishi in Two Worlds*. But the guests in our house when I was growing up were almost all scientists, often quite distinguished, people like Oppenheimer and the geographer Carl Sauer, or polymath historians like Leonardo Olschki. I learned then that excellent scientists are often deeply interested in the arts and respond to them with insight and originality, whereas few humanists have the slightest intellectual interest in any science, and nowadays sometimes little in actual works of art.

Both at Wisconsin and Columbia I often found scientific colleagues more intellectually stimulating to talk with than humanists. Most humanists have little curiosity; they want to tell you what they know, which they regard as philosophic truth. Scientists are curious; they want to find out what you might know that they don't—and if it can stand up to criticism.

Also when I was a graduate student here two of the professors who were very helpful to me were Joe Mazzeo (who wrote a history of biology), and Marjorie Nicolson, whose most important work is about the relation of science and literature. Also I was lucky in that the two colleagues I admire most and to whom I owe the greatest debts over many years (I met both at Wisconsin), Carl Woodring and Martin Meisel, challenge the rule that humanists are arrogantly ignorant of the most important sector of intellectual accomplishment of the past four hundred years. Martin was originally trained

as a scientist and has a wonderful, I'd say unparalleled, grasp of its history, combined with an indecently detailed knowledge of G. B. Shaw and Victorian melodrama. Carl is so profound a humanist scholar that early on he perceived more clearly than any other professor I know that without in-depth understanding of what modern science has done and is doing you're bound to misinterpret the cultural history of the past 250 years. This made him the most diversely successful of dissertation directors anywhere in our field in the mid-twentieth century. It is no accident that Carl and Martin have the solidest and widest knowledge of modern European literature, painting, and music of anyone I know in our profession.

My own scientifically oriented research, beginning in the early seventies, has been primarily pioneering in relations between literature and ecology, which has gained me some credit among environmentalists. I'm suspicious, however, of environmentalism that doesn't ground itself in solid, high-level science (I'm dubious about Thoreau) or doesn't follow Aldo Leopold and grow out of long-term *working* in [the] natural world and with plants and animals. Visiting a western desert to report sensitive feelings is just another form of our lousy contemporary me-culture. What's really turned me on over the past two decades is the amazing developments in neuroscience, the basis of my book *Ecological Literary Criticism*. The two purely literary studies I hope to be granted life enough to finish will investigate the biology of the mind.

Inadvertently, you've just had an experience painfully familiar to my students—they ask a simple, sensible question and get buried in an avalanche of my rhetoric. Sorry about that. Have we time for something more, or did the bell ring while I was orating?

mm: Could we squeeze in something about art, imagination, and storytelling, and still leave a little room for your interest in American Indian literatures?

kk: No problem if you can listen as fast as I talk. Always my interest has been focused not on aesthetics but on specific works of art. Whatever the title of a course, I always teach specific poems, plays, novels, or specific paintings or specific movies. In the jargon of our profession I do nothing but "close reading," because that is the only

way to enter deeply into works of art which are the most complicated, and enduring, artifacts—the only things man makes which approach the dynamic intricacy of nature. Great works of art are endlessly fascinating, challenging you to figure out how they were made and why they are made the way they are, and the different ways in which they can grab and hold other people's attention. Every work of art worth studying exhibits a high level of human skill and embodies significant ethical value, and nothing is more difficult, but also more rewarding, than learning to appreciate that particular manifestation of skill and the worth of its ethical form.

I teach that Percy Shelley was right when he said every great work of art is “a fountain forever overflowing.” Every student gets something unique to himself or herself from whatever work we study, and if I can provoke each of them to articulate their experiences, I learn a lot. My part of the conversation—and the best criticism is always conversation, never monologue; discussion, not lecturing—is expressing what I am getting from my latest encounter, perhaps my fiftieth, with the work we're examining together. I scribble notes in the texts I teach from, and almost always when I teach from a book I've used before I wonder, “who was the dope who wrote these comments?”

Works of art are works of imagination, the amazing human faculty that should be, but isn't, the central focus of all study of art. Imagining is not daydreaming or fantasizing à la Emma Bovary, and [is] the very opposite of dreaming. Imagining is reality-oriented, the deliberate exploration of possibilities that may help us discover the greatest dangers and the most beautiful complexities of real life (what Flaubert did with blood, sweat, and tears in creating *Madame Bovary*), which is still far beyond anything we have so far learned. Imagination develops slowly—an infant has no use for possibilities; in our childhood we learn mostly by imitation, as with language. Imagination matures only after we have physically matured—there's never been a great work of art created by an immature person. But it is imagination that enables humans, the only creatures who possess it, to go on learning, growing mentally, and being creative far, far into old age—Sophocles and Titian.

The primary form of the imaginative exploring and discovering is storytelling. Sometimes it is scientific storytelling—Einstein observed that in science imagination is more important than knowledge. One sunny day Copernicus asked himself, what if, despite what I and everybody else sees, we're moving, not the sun—and the story of modern science began to unfold. But the purest and longest-lasting forms of storytelling appear in art: Mycenaean culture vanished long ago, but Odysseus coming out of the wine-dark sea toward Nausicaa, his hands torn and bleeding from jagged rocks by which he saved himself from the cruel sea, is just as alive today as he was three thousand years ago. Hundreds of years after their death Rabelais's and Shakespeare's words can make us explode with laughter. So you see, as I'm doing right now, whatever I teach I'm talking about art, imagination, and storytelling.

MM: And I'm guessing that explains your interest in Native American literature.

KK: Literatures, Michael. When Columbus got his continents mixed up, there were over five hundred distinct native cultures in North America alone—distinct languages, social structures, religions, economic practices, etc. That had something to do with what happened to me. In the early 1970s I dropped into a meeting of ASAIL, Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures, the acronym expressing hostility aroused by the recent FBI mess at Wounded Knee. Native Americans wanted to start a journal about their literature, but although they all disliked whites, their deepest distrusts were of "traditional enemies." So they asked me to be editor because I was not Indian, free of hereditary feuds. So I became first editor of *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, a pretty poor one, in part because nobody at Columbia—president, vice-president of arts and sciences, provost, dean, or chairman—was willing to give the project the least support. None of the Americanists were interested, except Jack Salzman, who against all odds made a success of the Center for American Studies, until they rode him off campus on a rail.

It is hard to believe now, but then it was almost impossible for a Native American to get published; none of the big anthologies included anything literary, contemporary or traditional, from

natives. I'm proud of having contributed a little to changing that—all the anthologies now carry native material, the Library of America includes a big section of native poetry in the first volume of their *American Poetry*. By 1990 the best way to get your novel published was to pretend you were a native. I was helpful also in getting a dozen or so junior English faculty, mostly west of the Mississippi, who were interested in Native American literatures promoted to tenure, although LaVonne Ruoff (wife of a student of mine) at University of Illinois–Chicago did more, and the American historians, who were miles ahead of American lit people, were crucially helpful. Native American studies are now big everywhere, except Harvard. Yale, Princeton. I'm delighted that joining our department this year is John Gamber, himself a Native American, and I think the best young scholar in the field today. That's happened, let me say very loudly, because of Jean Howard, who did a spectacular job as a provost charged with increasing minority faculty at Columbia. She didn't miss a beat when she shifted to chair of our department and has worked tirelessly and skillfully to put us ahead in the Ivy League in this area—now supported by our terrific colleague Frances Negrón-Muntaner. For me, it is like a wonderful going-away present.

After the first few years in this field all my teaching, and writing, focused not on the contemporary but traditional native literatures. The point is that these were all oral literatures—none of the native North American cultures had writing. This was a tremendous revelation to me—especially because I entered the field just when American anthropological linguists, like Hymes and Tedlock, were beginning to publish revolutionary analyses of the formal qualities of texts, some contemporary, but most from the vast collections made by Boas, my father, and Sapir and their students of traditional tellings. Most professors of literature know zilch about oral literatures (even though in the total history of literature probably 96 percent has been oral), and the few exceptions know only something of the fine work of Parry and Lord with the Homeric epics, which are part of an atypical Mediterranean tradition. Native American oral literatures have, I believe, much more ancient roots and never use

the formal devices we are familiar with, such as rhyme, repetitive meter, fixed stanza pattern. Their literary form is entirely different from ours. In part this reflects that oral cultures are for us almost unimaginably different from cultures founded on writing. If your culture exists, is enacted, only when you or others speak, you attend to what you say and listen to others in a fashion different from the way we listen or read, not least because when every utterance is recognized as the primary means by which one's culture is manifested, you are much more careful and conscious about what you are doing with language and its astounding capabilities for linking people's inner lives.

This is what made teaching traditional native literatures especially exciting for both me and the students. The oddity of the subject drew a broad spectrum of applicants (I had always to limit enrollments)—students of literature, of course, but also of different sciences, from the biological to computer people, and, of course, students in anthropology, psychology, and religion. For the first three weeks everybody was baffled, but as I kept hammering away at close readings of short texts, forcing students to write about what they weren't understanding, they became intrigued by the very difficulty and began to make discoveries, and class discussions became steadily richer. I learned a tremendous amount about the material in every class, and by the end of the semester almost everyone was taking pleasure in having attained some understanding, but more in realizing that they'd just begun to scratch the surface. In that sense I think these classes were consistently the most successful, in the Socratic sense, that I taught, because we all learned how ignorant we were, that is, how wonderfully rich the world is in things to be discovered.

MM: Karl, thanks very much.

KK: My pleasure—love to talk about myself.

“Give It Your Best Shot!”

Address to Columbia College Students
Elected to the Phi Beta Kappa Society

KARL KROEBER

The address, which Kroeber delivered on May 18, 2009, and retirement interview were originally published in *English Department Updates* (Fall 2009), a semiannual alumni newsletter of the Columbia University Department of English & Comparative Literature.

Although Kroeber did not want a memorial service after his death, he asked that this address and “An Interview with Karl Kroeber” be published in a pamphlet for distribution. Jean Taylor Kroeber, his wife, and their children combined these with a short biography in “Karl Kroeber 24 November 1926–8 November 2009,” distributed at his commemorative service, April 8, 2012, in St. Paul’s Chapel, Columbia University.

I begin by apologizing to the parents of today’s honorees, because some things I say may distress you. If it helps, I am a parent of three children, so I understand the financial sacrifices you have undergone for the past four years. I am also aware that these splendid young adults, whose accomplishments we celebrate, you knew just a few years ago as adolescents—and adolescence has been described as extended familial suffering for no discernible reason. Finally, as a teacher I have one overriding commitment: to speak only the truth as I see it to your children—and I think you deserve the same respect.

To you splendid students I say: bravely done! You richly deserve the honor bestowed on you today. You have achieved more than success—you have met the highest standards of intellectual accomplishment of one of the world’s most distinguished universities. You today join in a larger fellowship with women and men of many universities and colleges bound together solely by merit of four years of

outstanding intellectual performance that required more than the gift of intelligence—including the courage often to resist the seductive temptation of not doing your very best. You remind us that in any serious work of the mind only excellence is adequate.

When Cathy Popkin invited me to give this talk, she suggested I say something about my work that might interest you—which I interpreted as a challenge: just *try* to make *that* stuff interesting! Well, I have two kinds of work, interlocking, yet distinct: teaching and scholarship. As to the latter, I've published a raft of books and a lot of essays over the years—none of which, except for some about Native Americans, would I suggest you read. They are all out of date. Throughout my career, I've enjoyed going into new fields, and as soon as I get the lay of the land, I start looking for other unmapped territories. A less heroic way to put this might be to say I'm like a cuckoo bird—I lay my eggs in other birds' nests and let them do the hard work of hatching and rearing.

My first book was on narrative at a time when no critic thought storytelling worth talking about, although now everybody babbles narrative theory. Later in the 1960s—long before there were laptops—with a big government grant I investigated the possible effect of the computer on literary analysis. My conclusion, borrowed from the programmers, made nobody happy but remains, I believe, fundamentally sound: garbage in, garbage out. In the 1970s and 80s, besides my interest in Native American literatures, I focused on parallels and differences between visual and verbal art. This carried me into analyses of representations of the natural world. Apparently I was the first to talk about artistic landscapes in terms of ecology. It certainly is ecology and biology that brought me to my principal research of the past decade and a half—the relation of artistic imagining to neuroscience, investigations into how the brain operates, the physical basis of imagining. This is why I'm especially pleased to speak to you smart people: some of you are humanists and some are scientists—but nobody just by looking can tell which is which.

The explosion of knowledge created by the life sciences of the past fifty years, climaxing the nineteenth-century discovery of evolution, the practical and ethical significance of which was first

envisioned by poets two hundred years ago, is the most exciting intellectual event in human history. Neuroscience, for example, has transformed our understanding of how the brain comes into being—through specific historical processes that are unpredictable—the result being that every face I see before me is distinct, different, unique. Not only is each of us in essence absolutely singular, but as we reach physical maturity, the end point of development for all other creatures, imagination, a purely human psychic capacity that starts to develop only after infancy, comes into full efflorescence. It is imagination that endows us with the power to go on learning after reaching physical maturity, to go on growing psychically. Imagination even enables us to enhance the physical functioning of our brain as it ages. Consider the factual evidence: all significant art and science has been produced by mature humans, and some of the finest art and science by elderly people. Although I bet nobody's told you this before—what you've been doing here at Columbia is learning in various ways to exercise your imaginative power—shaping yourselves to go on learning throughout your lives, so that for you—even in your now-far-distant old age—both the physical and social worlds will remain fascinating because ever changing, self-transforming into what is exciting because unpredictable.

You have been learning at Columbia how to keep on learning all your lives. You are fortunate to be young today, because we are just beginning to comprehend how human beings really function and how they have the power to improve themselves and their world. I make a prediction—I won't live to see it fulfilled, but you may perhaps remember it three decades from now when you return for a class reunion. In 2034 I predict the intellectual center of all leading universities will be the cooperative work of scientists and humanists, studying and thinking collaboratively, jointly refining and expanding our understanding of psychosomatic human life—the dynamic interplay of physical body and mental energy—and thereby opening up new problems and mysteries today undreamed of.

Despite this scholarly enthusiasm, from the time I taught my first course in literary humanities as a graduate student, my primary passion and commitment has been to teaching. This makes for a

peculiar life, because the teacher-student relation is a paradoxical one. It is intensely personal—one does not teach classes, one teaches individuals in classes. Yet simultaneously a responsible teacher is required to sustain an austere detachment as he drives each student to confront truths of nonsubjective reality, and pressures each to accept the often distressing duty to examine with unrelenting critical severity both his or her deepest ingrained presuppositions and most exhilarating new insights, most of which turn out to be fallacious. I as teacher can help you to learn only by continually demanding that you challenge yourself—and me as well—good teachers tend to be compulsive masochists. Yet learning is also a strangely collaborative process, for in successful teaching instructor and pupil mutually learn and grow. Any class in which *I* have not learned something I regret as unsuccessful.

There haven't been a lot of such classes for me at Columbia, and I cannot explain how much I owe to you. I come to every class with butterflies in my stomach, because I'm sure that what is going to happen will be fascinating because unpredictable. I can best express my thanks by using the simple words of Lou Gehrig, a fine Columbian who, when wasted by a terrible disease, could say, "I have been a very lucky man."

Because I owe you young people so much, I must sound a warning about the world we elders are bequeathing to you. No Columbia graduating class has ever faced such a god awful mess as we are handing off to you. I offer a short, nasty, and brutish summary of that mess, in which the economic turmoil created by baby boomers' greed may be the least of your difficulties. More dangerous is an ethical collapse that in the last thirty years has debased primary ideals of our national civic life and perhaps destroyed some forever.

No impartial historian, I believe, would dispute that the national administration of the past eight years has been both the most systematically corrupt and the most consistently incompetent in our history. I sympathize with those who despise Bush and Cheney—especially the latter, because I was on the faculty at the University of Wisconsin in the 1960s when he was there as a fake student slimily evading military service. But it is a mistake to blame these mean-

spirited, fear-mongering men for the disasters over which they have presided. They only made apparent the moral failure of their generation. It is not easy to find anything charitable to say about Bernie Madoff, but he would have remained a penny-ante crook if hundreds of affluent and supposedly sophisticated investors had not insisted on giving him their money so he could magically increase it without their doing a lick of work, not even asking for an accounting. The subhuman rapacity of Wall Street's subprime mortgage scams simply makes conspicuous baby boomers' destruction of one of America's finest traditions—that every family, humble as well as grand, could possess its own home on its own plot of land. That ideal was created here—by Americans who first built their homes with their own hands. That ideal we've seen degraded into the concept of home as monetary investment, something that doesn't require a heap of living, just the quick fix of a securitized credit swap.

But perhaps the most fateful change was the decision made in the late twentieth century that we would no longer ourselves fight to defend our freedoms. With a mercenary army things are so much easier: patriotism becomes sticking a fifty-cent yellow decal on a \$30,000 SUV. And I wonder if it is not a cause for turning our optimistically courageous national temperament into groundless fearfulness.

In the early forties, when I was just a little younger than you people, every American male youth was terrified of one thing—that he would be classified 4-F, physically unfit to be drafted for military service. More than four hundred thousand of those who served, including relatives and friends of mine, were killed, and to me their sacrifice becomes more impressive when I remember how many of these young men had also peeled potatoes, picked up cigarette butts, scraped rusty decks, cleaned out latrines, and performed dozens of other menial tasks, without feeling themselves diminished, doing their duty on the dirty little jobs just as they did when they gave their lives.

Gave their lives for what? The Second World War and its Korean aftermath were fought to defeat Fascists, Nazis, and Korean Communists committed to the ideal of a state that was always right

because all powerful, able and eager to do whatever it chose to any individual without redress or remorse. These governments imprisoned innocent citizens on the mere suspicion of subversive thought, often for years, without ever charging them with a specific crime. And they brutally tortured both military and civilian prisoners—defending these atrocities with the false rationalization that the end justifies the means, a doctrine that destroys the possibility of any coherent ethics. Again I say, however, that it is evasive of us to blame our government for turning us into our enemies. We did that to ourselves. The American people have been indifferent to violations of habeas corpus and remain eager not to condemn but to conceal evidence that we have become vicious torturers. What strikes me as most disturbing about this self-degradation is that it has not been driven by any real necessity, that we have for eight years *chosen* to live fearfully rather than hopefully—uncompelled by any genuine threat—9/11 shocked, but never has our country or its way of life actually been endangered by terrorism.

Perhaps this is why for me the epitome of our self-chosen shame is popular acquiescence in dishonoring those, mercenary or not, who have died in combat, by concealing the return of their bodies, even to censoring pictures of the flag-draped coffins, too familiar in my youth, that always evoked the sorrow that properly accompanies the honor of personal sacrifice. I now feel that the term “Ivory Tower” has become absolutely false when applied to a university such as Columbia. In my classroom, and those of my colleagues, we insist on the healthiness of confronting realities, including ethical realities, and I know you students want and deserve nothing less. It is only in the classroom today that there seems genuine resistance to the popular change in America’s motto from *e pluribus unum* to “Don’t ask, don’t tell.”

I don’t apologize for speaking so harshly on a day that is and should be for you so justifiably happy, because I hope to see you refuse the bequest I have described. I hope to hear you to say, loudly and clearly, we reject fear, we desire to engage with reality, however difficult and uncertain, never to evade it. I say I hope, but in fact I’m confident I will hear you so speak, because most of you have already

spoken—you and your age-mates have worked to produce something unprecedented in American history—the first president of the United States who is graduate of Columbia College.

And you were right. Of the fifteen presidents in my lifetime, he already seems the best. But even Barack Obama can't do it all by himself. So the responsibility falls to you to use your impressive intelligence to help him lead our nation back to the realistic idealism that made it a beacon and a haven for all people on this earth who have cherished decency and freedom. A good place to start helping, I suggest, is the place you'll leave the day after tomorrow.

I've been illustrating how I teach—which is not to pass on old prejudices but to press irritating and provocative inquiries so as to raise new questions and unexpected possibilities. I think this helps you to learn, and learning is very different from getting educated, because learning only occurs when the intelligence and emotions are fired up, self-energized to leap forward. My approach originated in my first experience teaching literary humanities, and it seems to suit my cheerfully abrasive personality, but from time to time I've wondered if it might not be just a little perverse. But now when I am about to retire I discovered confirmation from a surprising source—Gertrude Stein. In 1934 she was invited by the president of the University of Chicago, Robert Hutchins, to teach one class in a course taught by him and Mortimer Adler, who had created the predecessor to our literary humanities—although to say that in Low Library borders on blasphemy. The class Stein taught was on Aristophanes and epic poetry, and afterward Hutchins said to her: “You made the students all talk more than we make them talk—and a number of them talked who never talked before.” Stein replied: “You see why they talk to me is that I am like them I do not know the answer, you say you do not know but you do know if you did not know the answer you could not spend your life in teaching but I really do not know, I really do not, I do not even know whether there is a question let alone having answer . . . anything for which there is a solution is not interesting, that is the trouble with governments and Utopias and teaching.”

So I urge you to believe, if not me, Gertrude Stein and put her

view to practical use by improving Columbia College. In two days you will graduate, and that will produce a momentous change in your life. Two days from now Columbia will stop taking money from your parents and start asking you to give money to Columbia. I warn you that this university begging will persist to the end of your life—and that President Bollinger has the biggest Styrofoam cup you've ever seen. I hope you will be generous, but I also hope you will be skeptical and questioning and concerned, not with where the university has been, but where it going. Columbia alumni have a pernicious habit twenty years after graduating: they fall into nostalgic hallucinations about the wonders of the core curriculum, of which in fact they have forgotten almost everything, especially the rigor of its ethical severities. These blurred fantasies probably originate in a vague sense that it was more fun to be twenty than it is to be forty, but they make keeping the core curriculum alive and flourishing very difficult, for they block the innovations, experiments, and explorations that maintain the unique intellectual center of the Columbia undergraduate experience as a ferment of questioning, challenging, and seeking for the unpredictable and as yet un-attempted. I urge you as alumni to return to the campus, to keep in touch with what is really happening to it in a changing world, but not to open your wallets until you are persuaded that the college is enabling its students to learn in a fashion equivalent to how you were trained to learn for yourselves—which means that what is being taught and the way it is being taught *ought* to be upsettingly different from what *you* experienced in your years here. Return, be generous, but ask, ask, ask—and don't stop questioning until you are satisfied that the College continues to flourish because it is continuing to transform itself. Don't forget that in 2008 you voted for change. And you more than anyone else have earned the right to demand that Columbia keep advancing by changing. After all, it is now possible for one of you to develop a new tradition—by becoming the second Columbia College president of the United States.

Give it your best shot!

It's Not a Poem. It's My Life

Navajo Singing Identities

KENNETH M. ROEMER

We
must remember the worlds
our ancestors
traveled.

Always wear the songs they gave us.

Luci Tapahonso, "We must remember," *A Radiant Curve*

I

Possibly nowhere have the challenges of Indian literatures to conventional concepts of genre been more obvious than in discussions of poetry and autobiography. From Jane Johnston Schoolcraft in the early nineteenth century (e.g., see Parker, *Sound the Stars Make* 151) to well-known poets such as Scott Momaday, Simon Ortiz, Joy Harjo, and Luci Tapahonso, Native poets have used progressive repetition-with-variation forms that blur distinctions between written poetry in English and English translations of traditional songs, prayers, and chants. The translations themselves have challenged genre concepts. Especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as open verse became acceptable, and then later as ethnopoetics gained recognition, editors presented individual translations or "recreations" of songs and whole collections of translations or recreations as "poetry"—witness, for example, the titles of well-known anthologies such as Cronyn's *American Indian Poetry* (1918), Astrov's *American Indian Prose and Poetry* (1946), Day's *The*

Sky Clears: Poetry of the American Indians (1951), Rothenberg's *Shaking the Pumpkin: Traditional Poetry of the Indian of North America* (1972), and Soen's *I, the Song: Classical Poetry of Native North America* (1999).

One obvious problem with the "poetry" designation is that in many Native cultures the concept of poetry as defined and produced in the "Western" world is foreign to their linguistic systems. For example, Esther Belin, a Navajo poet, commented in a recent *SAIL* review of another Navajo poet, Luci Tapahonso, that a "Navajo-language speaker would readily disclose that the English word *poetry* does not exist in the [traditional] Navajo world view" (125). During the past three decades perceptive scholars, including Susan Hege-man and Robert Dale Parker (*Invention* 80–100), have acknowledged the appeal of labeling song translations as poems; this makes the texts more familiar and, to some teachers, more legitimate as "literature." They also acknowledge problems other than the linguistic one mentioned by Belin. They emphasize how a poetry designation can fundamentally misrepresent traditional song, especially if the translation is inaccurate and no performance or cultural contexts accompany the text. If the printed translation is bilingual and accurate and excellent contexts are provided, the impact of the performance experience is lost, and as Parker reminds us, even if the performance is filmed, the viewer receives the song through several levels of mediation (Parker, *Invention* 97–99).

Turning to autobiography, it's common knowledge among specialists that there are more than two hundred years of single-authored examples of life writing in English, beginning with Samson Occom's brief narrative, many of which fulfill some of the expected characteristics of conventional autobiographies, including an individual's life story organized by the "chronological imperative," to borrow David Brumble's term. There are also numerous examples of single-authored life narratives that mix genres and emphasize family, clan/band, and tribal identities as much or more than individual identity, thus rendering the "auto" part of an autobiography label a lead-in misnomer. In a 2007 *SAIL* article, for example, Tyra Twomey reminds us of the genre complexities represented

by a narrative like Sarah Winnemucca's *Life among the Piutes* (1883), complexities that invited fundamental questions from major scholars like Brumble and Arnold Krupat about using conventional genre labels for single-authored Native autobiographies and even inspired questions about "whether Native autobiographies should be considered a different literary genre entirely" (30–34, 22; see also McClure).

Then there are, of course, the hundreds of published collaborative life narratives that blur boundaries between Native speaker and non-Native editor, tribal and nontribal worldviews. More recently there are films that blur distinctions between fact and fiction and between individual and collaborative autobiographical media productions: for example, Sherman Alexie's *Business of Fancydancing*; Valerie Red-Horse's *Naturally Native*, which presents three sisters who represent three stages of Red-Horse's life and personality; and Spiderwoman Theater's *Sun Moon and Feather*, which depicts the Red Hook, Brooklyn, childhoods of the three sisters in vignettes reminiscent of vaudeville (and Monty Python). Preliterate forms of self-expression are possibly the most provocative and radical challenges to conventional concepts of autobiography. The most frequently analyzed examples of these include naming ceremonies and serial naming; the coup narratives, informal autobiographical oral performances, "self-examinations, self-vindications, educational narratives," and accounts of visions and quests discussed by Brumble; and graphic forms of life expression such as wampum belts, quillwork, and pictographs, including the ledger art, analyzed by Hertha Wong ("Native American" 127–28; Brumble; Wong, *Sending My Heart*).

My aim is not to untangle all the blurring and genre crossings of Native poetry and autobiography but to further complicate the blurrings and to make a plea. My general "complicating" genre claim is that an overlooked but absolutely essential form of Native identity expression—that is both preliterate and contemporary—is the traditional song, especially songs that from a non-Native viewpoint don't seem to express autobiographical "content." In most of this essay I focus on a particular example that is readily accessible to teachers and scholars. My plea expands upon my comments in a 1997 *SAIL* "Retro-Pro prospective" essay: more work needs to be done

with traditional songs, and oral literatures in general, by more scholars specializing in American Indian literatures.

To someone outside the field, it might seem strange that we would accept ledger sketches and pictographs or brief coup tales as important forms of Indian identity expression and place little emphasis on traditional song. But most of us within the field are all too aware of all the obstacles to writing and teaching about oral literatures. Ethical considerations are crucial. Two decades ago my prime teaching tool in classes focusing on oral literatures was a Time/Life film, *The Navajo: Fight for Survival* (1972). The director of the American Indian Film Project, Samuel Barnett, had obtained approval from the Navajo tribal council and signed releases from the patient and others involved in a Nightway ceremony (Norvick); the narration portrayed Navajo healing ceremonies as complex, sophisticated, and effective, and the footage of the ceremony helped my students to visualize the well-known Washington Matthew's translation of portions of the Nightway. But there were some strong negative feelings among the Navajo about the 1963 filming of the ceremony (Faris and Walters, 14–15n11; Roemer, "Nightway" 824–25). Abandoning my primary pedagogical tool was definitely the right thing to do, but literature teachers are often accustomed to having relatively free reign in selecting their texts and teaching tools. Having to consider tribal perspectives as part of the selection process might seem, to some teachers, an infringement on their academic freedom.

Comparative literature scholars are used to teaching texts in translation and offering cultural contexts. But the challenge becomes more daunting with Native narratives and songs, because so few English teachers, including Indian literature specialists, are fluent in a Native language; hence they are at the mercy of the translator. Oral literatures, especially song, also may seem simultaneously too simple and too complex to scholars trained in traditional English programs. Certainly Whitman used repetition with variation in many sections of "Song of Myself," but—especially if the scholar still has a touch of a New Critical orientation in his or her system—the persistent formulaic use of repetition in many Native songs may render them inappropriate objects for serious literary analyses unless the

professor takes the time to reveal all the intricacies of the references, progressions, directions, and numbers, which could make the texts too “foreign” and complex in an introductory literature class.

Considering all these obstacles to teaching and writing about oral literatures, especially songs, it is not surprising that many non-Indians “retreat into silence,” to borrow Sam McKegney’s phrase (58). Many Native scholars are also understandably sensitive about this issue, especially with regard to sacred songs. At the 1977 NEH/MLA Summer Seminar on Indian literatures, I distinctly recall Delilah Orr’s (Navajo) reservations about teaching ceremonial prayers and songs in literature classes (Roemer, “Retro-Prospensive” 21). It is easy to understand why teachers, scholars, and editors of anthologies incline toward fiction and poetry, and to a lesser extent nonfiction and drama, instead of oral literatures.

These preferences (especially the concentration on fiction) were clear in the survey of *SAIL* articles put together by Alberto Varon and reported by Jim Cox in his and Daniel Heath Justice’s editorial debut in the Spring 2008 issue. Silko and Erdrich claimed more articles than any others. They and Alexie, Allen, Hogan, Momaday, Vizenor, Welch, and Owens accounted for “more than one hundred articles.” Certainly, as Cox emphasized, there was diversity, especially with the “recovery” scholarship of early twentieth-century and nineteenth-century authors and analyses of Native intellectualism (x–xi). But there was no mention of oral literatures. In part this was due to Varon’s understandable decision to organize his spreadsheet based on “author, work, and historical period” (x). That made it difficult for *SAIL* articles about “authorless” oral literatures to break into the statistical count. But the fact that he chose these familiar categories and that Cox didn’t question these categories (and neither did I when I first read Cox’s overview) is yet another sign of how familiar ways of organizing our thoughts about Indian literatures can render centuries of oral literatures invisible. This article claiming that traditional song is an overlooked but absolutely essential form of Native identity expression joins a relatively small group of *SAIL* articles (thirty-eight, six focusing on song) that make oral literatures a bit more visible and encourage *SAIL* readers to responsibly and enthusiastically study and teach oral literatures.¹

II

Obviously not all traditional songs should be viewed as autobiographical or as identity expressions. But there are many that do fulfill standard expectations about autobiographical expressions. These songs have identifiable composer-lyricists and focus on important life episodes. Two excellent and readily accessible examples in English translations appear in many editions of the first volume of *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*: “Widow’s Song” and “My Breath” (Lauter, 93–96). The editors identify both of the composer-lyricists, Quernertog (Copper Eskimo) and Orpingalik (Netasilik Eskimo), and both songs focus on significant life experiences: the former on the grieving of a widow after the murder of her husband (93–94); the latter on the contrasts between past acts of bravery and strength and the current weakness and embarrassment of a terminal illness (93–96). A more subtle but intriguing well-known example appears in A. Grove Day’s *The Sky Clears*. In this case an Ojibwe woman uses a haiku-like opening to capture her recollection of surprise and sadness when her lover departed from her traveling in a canoe: “A loon I thought it was, / But it was my love’s splashing oar” (151, 1–2).

Some of the most interesting examples of identity expression in traditional song don’t fit as neatly into standard concepts of autobiographical expression. They have no identifiable human author, and they don’t depict particular life episodes. Instead they express fundamental concepts of identity formation and maintenance that guide traditional individuals through their days and years. In his keynote address to the Canadian Comparative Literature Association, reprinted in *SAIL*, J. Edward Chamberlin sums up the importance of these songs by referring to Pueblo corn songs:

like a genetic code, these songs determine destiny; and in them the Pueblo people realize themselves as *chosen*, bound into a covenant of words and ceremonies that fortify them in a world filled with conflict and confusion. (67)

Of the thousands of possible examples, I have chosen to focus on Navajo traditional song and one song in particular, “By This Song

I Walk,” that goes beyond specific autobiographical moments to express in a covenant of generative words fundamental identity formation traits in beautiful and fascinating ways.

Before and after Clyde Kluckhohn and Dorothea Leighton’s classic 1946 study of the Navaho, Navajo and non-Navajo commentators have noted the complexity and comprehensive nature of traditional Navajo song systems (Kluckhohn 203–6; Evers, “Transcript”; Evers, “Introduction”). There are songs for major life events—birth, female puberty, love, marriage, moving into a new hogan, death—and many for healing ceremonies. But there are also songs for grinding and even weeding that connect traditional Navajo to Holy Beings even as they are performing seemingly menial tasks. “By This Song I Walk” functions in-between these extremes of major and mundane events. As the late Andrew Natonabah, the former head of Navajo Studies at Diné College, states in the *By This Song I Walk* film segment of the *Words & Place* series, “This song is for traveling. / When one travels, he should sing this” (Evers, “Transcript”).

One of the several reasons I selected this song is its accessibility. A 1976 filmed performance of the song by Andrew Natonabah with his commentary was originally published by Clearwater in 1981 and subsequently by Norman Ross. Approximately in 2005 Larry Evers and the University of Arizona made the performance along with other performances available without charge on the *Words & Place* website (<http://parentseyes.arizona.edu/wordsandplace/>).² The “By This Song I Walk” section of the site includes three versions of the filming (with or without English subtitles and audio only); an excellent introduction by Evers; a transcript in English, which includes the opening and closing songs and Andrew Natonabah’s commentary; excellent supplementary materials and a “For Comment and Discussion” section by Evers; a bibliography prepared by Evers (limited to pre-1976 titles); and an e-mail address for questions and comment. Not included on the website is an unpublished appendix that includes an interlinear Navajo/literal English version of the song “By This Song I Walk.”

Ethical considerations also influenced the selection. “By This Song I Walk” is not a sacred song, although it can be sung as one of

the many songs performed during the nine-day Nightway healing ceremony (Evers, "Comment"). As Andrew Natonabah indicates in his commentary in the "Transcript," the song is for Navajo travelers; it does not have to be sung by a trained medicine person at a certain time of the year. The film, commentary, and background materials also enable teachers to follow all of the recommendations for introducing recorded traditional songs in the classroom offered by Andie Dian Palmer, who based her comments on the practice of her professor and Upper Skagit Elder, Vi *taq*^w*šəblu* Hilbert. For example, Natonabah makes his audience aware that this and other traditional songs were gifts of Holy Beings. By implication we should be grateful (albeit indirect) recipients of this gift and to Andrew Natonabah for offering it. Evers's comments also enable teachers to give a brief portrait of the performer and his audience: in 1976 Natonabah was head of Navajo Studies at Navajo Community College (now Diné College) and was in training to become a Nightway singer. Teachers should add that he competed that training (Faris 19) and has since passed away.³ The filmed members of the audience were Andrew Natonabah's sons Loren and Richard; obviously there were film crew and others behind the scene. Natonabah fulfills the expectations of Palmer and Hilbert by identifying the location (Canyon de Chelly) and its significance (origins of many songs) and the song's function (for traveling), and the introduction to the website clarifies the goals of the Words & Place project. Palmer advises teachers to request that students listen respectfully. I also prepare the students by telling them that the range in pitch and melody is limited in this song and that Andrew Natonabah's delivery is low key, which could reflect his personality or the understandable tensions caused by the filming.

My primary reasons for selection were the insights offered into concepts of traditional Navajo self. I base my comments on the "literary" or "poetic" version of the translation of the opening song available on the website (see below), as well as relevant quotes from the Navajo and the literal translation from Evers's appendix. (The literary is close to the literal translation, though there are some significant differences.⁴)

BY THIS SONG I WALK

As performed by Andrew Natonabah

Translated by Nelson Begay and Martha Austin

By this song I walk.
By this song I walk
By this song I walk.
By this song I walk.

By this song I walk.(45)
By this song I walk.
By this song I walk.
By this song I walk.

I am walking by it.(5)
By this song I walk.
I am Talking God.
By this song I walk.
I travel with Dawn.
By this song I walk.(10)
I travel with White Corn.
By this song I walk.
I travel by Hard Goods.
By this song I walk.
I travel by Hard Rain.(15)
By this song I walk.
I travel by Corn Pollen.
By this song I walk.
Bluebird sounds before me.
By this song I walk.(20)
Corn Beetle sounds behind me.
By this song I walk.
I talk with this song.
By this song I walk.
One listens to me.(25)
By this song I walk.
One is by this song.
By this song I walk.
He knows me by the song.
By this song I walk.(30)
He exists by the song.

I am House God.
By this song I walk.(50)
I travel by Sunset.
By this song I walk.
I travel with Yellow Corn.
By this song I walk.
I travel by Soft Goods.(55)
By this song walk.
I travel by Soft Rain.
By this song I walk.
I travel by Corn Pollen.
By this song I walk.(60)
Corn Beetle sounds behind me.
By this song I walk.
Bluebird sounds before me.
By this song I walk.
I talk with this song.(65)
By this song I walk.
One listens to me.
By this song I walk.
One is by this song.
By this song I walk.(70)
He knows me by the song.
By this song I walk.
He exists by the song.

By this song I walk.
 By it Beauty before me.
 By this song I walk.
 By it Beauty behind me.(35)
 By this Song I walk.
 By it Beauty above me.
 By this song I walk.
 By it Beauty below me.
 By this song I walk.(40)
 Beauty all around me.
 By this song I walk.
 Now Long Life.
 By it I am Beautiful.

By this song I walk.
 By it Beauty behind me.(75)
 By this song I walk.
 By it Beauty before me.
 By this song I walk.
 By it Beauty below me.
 By this song I walk.(80)
 By it Beauty above me.
 By this song I walk.
 Beauty all around me.
 By this song I walk.
 Beauty from my mouth.(85)
 By this song I walk.
 Now Long Life.
 By it I am Beautiful.

By this song I walk.
 By this song I walk.(90)
 By this song I walk.
 By this song I walk.
 (From Evers, "Transcript," 1–92)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge famously defined poetry as "[t]he best words in their best order." "By This Song I Walk" not only suggests the "content" of a healthy traditional Navajo self, but it also indicates how this self should be ordered. The opening line, "By this Song I Walk" (Evers, "Transcript": 1) ("This, that one, that one, by it, I walk"; "*Díí éiyá díí éiyá bik'eh naashá*" [Evers, "Appendix," 14: 1]) repeats four times at the beginning and end of the song, thus framing the song in a sacred number repetition, and, after the opening, follows every other line of the poem, creating an internal refrain that emphasizes the generative supportive function of the song for the traveler. (Citations of "Transcript," or "T," list line number, and citations of "Appendix," or "A," list page number and line number.) The song divides equally into two sections, each initiated with identification to a significant Holy Being, one male, "I am Talking God" (T: 7)

(“Now, Talking God, I am”; “*K’ad Haashch’ééltí shí nishlít*” (A, 1:7), the other female, “I am House God” (T: 49) (“Now, Female Talking God, me, I am”; “*K’ad Haashch’éégaan shí nichleif*”) (A, 17:44). There is an obvious balance of gender and temporal, tactile, and geographical characteristics among the identities the singer proclaims and the elements with which he or she travels: Talking God is associated with dawn and the east; House God (or Female Talking God) with sunset and the west; White Corn and Yellow Corn are associated with the births of First Man, Áłtsé hastiin (white corn), and First Woman, Áłtsé asdzáá (yellow corn) (Zolbrod, *Diné bah-ane* 47–51); Hard Goods (e.g., precious stones) and Soft Goods (e.g., blankets, rugs); Hard Rain and Soft Rain; Corn Pollen (one connotation is male regenerative powers) and Corn Beetle (female regenerative powers). Preceding the final four-line frames of each section, the singer voices a version of the familiar lines of the Navajo Blessingway that surround the singer and his travels with beauty (*hózhó*). Thus the very shape of the song literally *reenacts*, indeed *generates*, the harmony, order, and balance of the Navajo creation stories at the point when things were as they should be. Thus much more so than written paragraphs of an autobiography, this song merges form and content to create the desired shape of a traditional Navajo self—the desired complete self. Focusing on the crucial male-female balance, for instance, Herbert Benally observes that this type of “duality is understood to mean male and female complementing each other to obtain completion” (136; see also Zolbrod, “Navajo Poetry” 81–85).

And that self is in motion. To non-Navajo, the theme of the song—travel—might seem rather inconsequential compared to some of the other identity characteristics presented in the song. But as Larry Evers makes clear in the background material for the film, “motion is a major theme in all of Navajo culture”; the verb “to go” is “somewhat equivalent to our verb ‘to be,’” (“Introduction”). It is one of the linguistic cores of the Navajo language. William Overstreet indicates that “there are some 356,200 distinct inflected forms” of the verb (59). Motion is also central to Navajo stories. In many of the Navajo traditional narratives, including the creation

narrative, Holy Beings and humans find their identities by making a journey or several journeys (Zolbrod, *Diné bahane*; Faris 177–233; Matthews 159–268). Thus it is not surprising that the preferred English translation for ceremonials is not “chant” (e.g., Night Chant) but “way” (e.g., Nightway). But this motion can’t be random and chaotic. In the emergence narrative the motion toward the earth surface through four levels progresses from a confusing disorderly dark world to one of balance and harmony. The Nightway and other important healing ceremonies use a geographic ordering that moves from east to south to west to north and progresses toward an all-inclusive balance and harmony similar to the Blessingway evocations of beauty (*hózhó*) at the conclusion of the travel song. Thus it is appropriate that in the travel song the singer does not emphasize a simple transversal from point A to point B, but a two-part recursive cycle that instead emphasizes the *creation* of balance, harmony, and beauty. As Gary Witherspoon stresses, “the Navajo does not look for beauty; he generates it within himself and projects it onto the universe” (151). This combination of motion and beauty helps to explain why praises such as “On the trail of beauty” or “walking in beauty” appear frequently in Navajo ceremonial language.

In a more condensed and imagistic form than in prose the song also demonstrates the communal, transbody, transgender, trans-temporal, and transhuman dimensions of this self. Even though the singer uses the first-person pronoun throughout the repeated refrain of “By this song I walk,” the fact that he or she is participating in a performance tradition that uses words and melody handed down over many generations links his identity to a centuries-old yet contemporary community of traveling singers.

The literary or poetic translation of two of the early lines presents a self differentiated from its environment, although this self is moving in parallel with those surroundings: “I travel with Dawn”; “I travel with White Corn” (“T”: 9, 11). But in the rest of the song, the singer uses “by” instead of “with,” suggesting much less of a differentiation and more of a supportive generative relationship of physical self to time and space. He or she travels *by* Sunset (the time

encompassing balance to Dawn), *by* Yellow Corn, *by* Hard Goods, *by* Soft Goods, *by* Hard Rain, *by* Soft Rain, and *by* Corn Pollen. (In the literal translation even those initial lines indicate a closer relationship: “Dawn, by it, I teach”; “Now, White Corn, by it, I teach” (“A,” 14:9, 11). And, of course, in the most repeated line of the song, “By this song I walk,” (“by it, I walk” in the literal translation) the singer stresses support and generation rather than differentiation.

The most obvious examples of expanded identity are the pronounced merging with male and female Holy Beings: “I am Talking God”; “I am House God” (“T”: 7, 49) (“Now, Talking God, I am”; “*K’ad Haashch’éélti’i shí nishlî’*”; “Now, Female Talking God, me, I am”; “*K’ad Haashch’éégaan shí nishlî’*” [“A,” 14:7,17:44]). These lines suggest an identity expansion similar to the moments in the Nightway and other healing ceremonies when the patient is on the sand-painting and, with the guidance of the singer’s motion and verbal directions, identifies with Holy Beings whose experiences parallel in some way his or her experiences.

Because non-Navajos might not be accustomed to the idea of humans and deities merging identities, they might perceive the identifications with Talking God and House God as the most striking examples of identity expansion. But just as important, or possibly more important, is the merging of the identity of self and song, a concept that is repeated throughout the song in the alternating-line refrain “By this song I walk” and in the adaptation of the Blessingway song (“*By it* [the song] Beauty before me” (“T”: 33, italics added); “*By means of it*, in front of me, Beauty” (“A,” 16:33, italics added). Even more dramatic instances of song-self merging appear in both major sections of the song. For example, the song enables the singer to “talk”; people “listen” to him or her because of the song; he or she is “known” by the song; and most profoundly, “One is by this song” (“T”: 27); “Now, by it, one is” (“A,” 16:27).

This concept of self and song can help us to understand why a traditional Navajo cultural leader like Andrew Natonabah believes it is so important for younger generations to learn the songs. In his filmed commentary he tells his two boys, Loren and Richard, to respect the songs because of their origin as gifts from Holy Beings:

When one talks about the Holy People,
 He should sing their songs.
 Then they [the Holy People] will say,
 "It is good to hear our songs again"
 The Holy People know you by the songs.
 So, learn the songs.
 When one has even one song,
 He will live a long time. (Evers, "Transcript")

Another obvious reason for learning the songs (or as Andrew Natonabah says, "even one song") is that the songs are the means of existence. If "One is by this song," then if one has no songs, one isn't.

III

If we witnessed the performance of this Navaho travel song, we would probably be able to know the gender and guess the age of the singer. If we simply read the text in English or Navajo, and the editors failed to identify the singer, we wouldn't even know that basic information. And whether experienced in performance or on the page, the song would not reveal the singer's date of birth, name, clan, places of residence, education and occupational training, spiritual temperament, personality, physical appearance, or whether he owned an iPad or didn't even have a phone. There is no hint of which relatives, nonrelatives, and events shaped who he or she is. These are the types of insights provided by book-length Navajo texts such as *Son of Old Man Hat* (1938) and *Miracle Hill* (1967). We don't even know the geographic details of from where and to where he or she is traveling or when the journey is occurring. In these senses "By this song I walk" is a poor source of autobiographical information that offers little detail about the specifics of a particular identity. It could be argued further that if the singer didn't really believe or understand the words he or she was singing, then he or she would not be representing or enacting any significant aspects of his or her identity. The performance would instead be insincere or uninformed lip service to a tradition that was detached from his or

her identity, a veneer that could, in opportunistic or required ways, be adopted for specific audiences.

But if the song were performed with sincerity by a singer informed by a traditional Navajo worldview, “By This Song I Walk” invites viewers of the filmed performance and readers of the text to learn concepts of traditional Navajo identity in a powerful compact form, concepts that might not be as accessible in other forms of Navajo written or nonwritten self-expression. The singer voices an identity that blurs boundaries between elements of his or her self and the environment, including those that recall the origins of First Man and First Woman. We can see and hear fundamental concepts that link being with motion and a communal concept of an individual’s voice that reaches back through many generations of singers connecting the individual singer to significant male and female deities (Talking God, House God) and by implication other deities who are the original “authors” of the song. And possibly most important, we are invited to see and hear these identify concepts on screen and text in ways that perform, indeed generate, the concepts as the singer frames the song with a sacred number of repeated lines and then moves the singer’s identity incrementally in two parallel word journeys into a realm surrounded by the balance of directional motion and the consistency of a sacred word that recreates the essence of what life should be. We don’t learn particulars of the singer’s individual background, but—to borrow Brumble’s observation about coup tale orators—the singer “*is* telling us something essential about his personality. That we *are* being allowed a glimpse of the way this [individual] sees himself” (qt. in Twomey 46).

“By This Song I Walk” is only one of thousands of traditional American Indian songs that invite us to move beyond the details of conventional autobiographical expression to discover fundamental concepts of identity formation that have shaped daily lives for centuries and, in many cases, have given singers the strength to adapt to changing worlds. Considering the potential of these songs, it is not surprising that Andrew Natonabah believed that even having one powerful song could maintain existence. Nor is it surprising that the young Navajo poet Esther Belin is fond of quoting an elder

who proclaimed that Navajo philosophy “is basically one long song” (“Art of Narrative”).

NOTES

The opening epigraph contains lines taken from Luci Tapahonso’s *A Radiant Curve* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2008). Copyright © 2008 by Luci Tapahonso. They have been reprinted here by permission of the University of Arizona Press.

I presented an early version of this essay at the “‘Making Places to Live’: Native American Poetry Past and Present” symposium, Montpellier, 22 May 2010. I’d like to thank all who commented on the paper and especially thank Simone Pellerin, who organized this international symposium.

1. In this informal (and I hope relatively accurate listing) I have indicated the articles that include significant discussion of oral literatures. The *Newsletter* beginnings of *SAIL* and the early issues of *SAIL* were heavily oriented toward bibliographies and reviews, including books about or collections of oral narratives (e.g., 9.3 [1985], reviews of Hopi and Navajo Coyote stories). But there were several articles on oral literatures: 8.2 (1984), Ojibwe creation narratives; 10.1 (1986), Coyote stories, Omaha Sweat Lodge rituals including brief mention of songs, Columbia University collection of Tsimshian narratives; 10.3 (1986), a bilingual narrative in Dennis Tedlock’s *Finding the Center*; 11.2 (1987), two articles focusing on translation of the Colville Golden Woman narrative. In 1988 *SAIL* appeared as part of the Columbia University publication *Dispatch*. One of the issues, *Dispatch* 6.2 (1988), included an article on Yaqui Coyote songs. The early issues of series 2 of *SAIL* did include articles on oral literatures on a fairly regular basis; recently there have been a few more: 1.1 (1989), Estoy-eh-muut narratives; 1.3/4 (1989), bird songs of Southern California; 2.1 (1990), contact stories, creation stories to modern ‘49 songs; 3.1 (1991), special issue on oral narratives: seven articles; 3.2 (1991), part of an essay on teaching oral literatures; 3.3 (1991), Zuni oral narratives; 4.2/3 (1992), Mayan Popol Vuh; 5.1 (1993), special issue on Silko’s *Storyteller* in which three of the essays offer significant discussion of Pueblo narratives; 5.2 (1993), reprint of one of the narrative and translation essays from 1st series 11.2; 5.4 (1993), Trickster figures; 6.4 (1994), Navajo poetry (creation narrative); 7.1 (1995), Laguna Coyote stories; 8.3 (1996), dialogue with an Okanogan storyteller; 8.4 (1996), Popdoc Riddle, Plains Cree and Métis storytelling; 9.3 (1997), part of one essay: a plea for study oral liter-

atures; 12.1 (2000), Cinderella variants; 12.4 (2000), Trickster stories; 18.4 (2006), Zitkala-Sa's bilingual narratives; 19.2 (2007), approaches to teaching songs; 19.3 (2008), contemporary song writers (Trudell, Secola, Robertson); 21.3 (2009), part of an essay on corn songs; 22.2 (2010), on publishing Sámi oral literature; 23.4 (2011), early sections of an essay on constitutions.

2. In a 6 July 2010 e-mail to the author, Evers estimated that the site has been available for "about five years." I would like to thank Larry Evers for permission to reprint the text of the song and excerpts from the unpublished "Appendix." The "By This Song I Walk" website was a collaborative project. Besides the assistance of the translators Martha Austin and Nelson Begay, Andrew Natonabah and Larry Evers were assisted by Andy Peterman and Richard Pauli (engineers), Dennis Carr (director), and Michael Orr (post-production supervisor). The filming was carried out in cooperation with the University of Arizona Radio-TV-Film Bureau and was supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

3. Larry Evers has not received any negative feedback from Andrew Natonabah's family or the Navajo Tribal Council for making Natonabah's image and voice available after his passing.

4. For example, line 9: "I travel with Dawn" vs. "Dawn, by it I teach" ("Hayoolkáál bik'eh na'nishtin"); line 15: "I travel by Hard Rain" vs. "Criss-cross River, by it, I teach" ("Tooh Alná'ashchíní bik'eh na'nishtin"); line 31: "He exists by this song" vs. "By means if it I plan" ("Bee haanahashne") (Evers, "Appendix," 14, 15, 16).

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POETRY

For Channa

JEANE T'ÁAW XÍWA BREINIG

They found you sitting upright in your chair,
head slumped over,
back erect,
those steady, serious eyes were closed.

You were alive
when horses pulled buggies,
when man first walked the moon.

Straddler of two cultures.

You were a man who raised totem poles,
raised sons and built them boats.

You were a shopkeeper, a seller of goods,
a storyteller, a speaker of two tongues.

You lived with us in the winter,
slept on our tattered, blue couch
pulled close to the warm, wood stove.

But always you returned to the village each spring,
to chop firewood,
to catch fish,
to bathe in the icy stream.

I was twelve when you died at ninety-two.

Your memory is fading.

I hold close what is left:
old brown photographs,
faded, curling at the corners.

I hold close your great-grandsons,
my sons.

Tall boys, strong, and slim.
Like the cedar trees behind your home,
the one you built with your steady, sure hands.

S'taast, firstborn son, he carries your Indian name.
The night before he was born I dreamt of you,
predicting your return.

Seegaáy, the fierce one,
named for that long ago noble man.
Stories say he survived heavy seas.
His canoe, torn in half,
cracked by mountainous waves.

Only Seegaáy survived.
Like you, surviving the storms of your life.

I remember now:

You sitting on the faded blue couch,
your legs wrapped in Ace bandages,
near the big picture window,
facing the stormy straights,
the hard wind blowing,
rain cracking against foggy panes.

Reading the Bible,
humming under your breath.

Like your memory, I hold these words close now.

Your blood runs through my veins,
your spirit is close to my heart.

Book Reviews

Brice Obermeyer. *Delaware Tribe in a Cherokee Nation*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2009. ISBN 978-0-8032-2295-3. 340 pp.

Meredith Coffey, *University of Texas at Austin*

In 2001 ethnographer and cultural anthropologist Brice Obermeyer moved to Delaware County in northeastern Oklahoma to do research and to serve as a tribal employee, focusing his efforts on the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. An unanticipated project began, however, when he witnessed the judicial termination of Delaware federal recognition in 2004, as a result of which the Delaware Tribe was legally subsumed within the Cherokee Nation. Inspired by the impact of this decision (and the thorny history from which it arose), Obermeyer's 2009 book *Delaware Tribe in a Cherokee Nation* explores the Delaware Tribe's legal and political relationship with the Cherokees. Although federal recognition was restored to the Delawares the year of *Delaware Tribe's* publication, the Cherokee Nation still maintains "all authority over the administration of Delaware programs and services provided within Cherokee Nation," which includes the region considered Delaware Country (265). In this book Obermeyer traces Delaware history and ultimately makes the case that the Delawares should be considered a unique and sovereign tribal nation—that is, one that should not have to submit to Cherokee authority.

The 2009 restoration of official Delaware recognition seems to have occurred when *Delaware Tribe* was already nearing publica-

tion, and it somewhat fulfilled the goals toward which Obermeyer's project was directed. Nonetheless, the book remains important for several reasons. First, although a substantial body of ethnographic work makes evident the cultural separation between the Delawares and the Cherokees, *Delaware Tribe* is the first book specifically about the Delaware effort to gain federal recognition. Additionally, on a broader scale, scholarship has so far insufficiently addressed the phenomenon of Indian communities existing legally as "constituent parts of larger, federally recognized tribes" (11). Obermeyer mentions the Yuchi, for example, who are primarily enrolled in the Creek Nation but are in actuality a "distinct Indian tribe" lacking federal recognition (12). In this way *Delaware Tribe* forges new ground in exploring a particular tribe's efforts toward federal recognition but also proves relevant to other unrecognized tribes' legal situations.

One of the book's most convincing moments lies in a personal anecdote drawn from the author's own experience working for Delaware interests. In 2009 Harvard's Peabody Museum contacted Obermeyer, offering to allow the repatriation of Delaware remains—a proposal exemplifying the success of Obermeyer's years-long project. Because of the Delawares' enforced subordination to the Cherokees, however, this effort could only move forward with official Cherokee approval. As Obermeyer sees the issue, in order to proceed, the Delawares would need to submit to Cherokee authority—an act that would risk implying their desire for this formal affiliation with the Cherokees. If, on the other hand, the Delawares refused to work with the Cherokees as an act of resistance, then the museum could not legally permit the repatriation. The means of meeting immediate needs thus conflicted with a powerful means of protesting Cherokee control. This dilemma underscores that Delaware recognition is not simply a bureaucratic formality but instead has meaningful consequences for Delaware people and communities.

Though Obermeyer demonstrates the urgency of this issue in the present, he locates the origins of the difficulty in negotiations that took place shortly after the U.S. Civil War. By the middle of the nineteenth century a series of relocations had moved the majority of the Delawares from the mid-Atlantic region to present-day

Kansas. In 1866 the federal government gave these Kansas Delawares two options. If they relinquished their tribal affiliation and accepted American citizenship, they could remain on their land in Kansas. Alternatively they could agree to yet another removal to northeastern Oklahoma, where they would live within the bounds of the Cherokee Nation. In this scenario they would have to pay for both the right to Cherokee citizenship and for the land they would thereby acquire. In order to preserve the sovereignty of the Delaware Tribe, the majority of the Delaware people agreed to the second option.

The resulting 1867 Cherokee-Delaware Agreement led to complications that obfuscated the Delaware Tribe's legal status. Obermeyer explains both sides of the issue: the Delawares "expected to be made Cherokee citizens and landowners while also sustaining their own tribal sovereignty in a new Delaware homeland," but the Cherokees held that "a separate tribe asserting independent sovereignty" in Cherokee Country was impossible within Cherokee law, which the federal government had guaranteed to hold inviolate (63). Essentially the Delawares believed they would become dual citizens, and the Cherokees believed the Delawares would become only Cherokee citizens. Over the past century and a half, the debate has maintained roughly this same form. Because each tribe's position reflects only its own self-interest, Obermeyer argues, the antagonist here is not the Cherokee Nation but instead the U.S. policies aimed not at logical consistency but rather at consolidating tribes (and therefore tribal land claims) for the American government's benefit. Obermeyer thus frames the situation primarily as a critique of federal policy, not as a conflict between indigenous peoples.

After explaining these legal origins, Obermeyer embarks upon his argument as to why the Delaware Nation should be considered entirely separate from the Cherokee Nation. Aside from their living as neighbors since 1867, Obermeyer argues that the two tribes lack any meaningful historical or cultural connection. He also reveals a history of the Delawares working directly with (and in some cases, directly combating) the federal government, independent of Cherokee mediation. This point is particularly salient, since the 2004 deci-

sion that terminated Delaware recognition relied upon the wording of the 1867 agreement and did not take into account this “government-to-government” relationship that prevailed in the twentieth century. Although in many ways the benefits and damages that incurred from these interactions paralleled the experiences of other recognized tribes, the 2004 ruling ignored this history and instead relied upon a particular interpretation of the document that, ironically, the Delawares had once understood as the best means of preserving their sovereignty.

Delaware Tribe in a Cherokee Nation culminates with its explication of the single enrollment debate within the Delaware community. One of the central criteria for full federal recognition under the Federal Acknowledgment Process (FAP) is single enrollment; that is, a “substantial portion” of the tribe petitioning for recognition cannot be enrolled in another federally recognized tribe. The continuing prevalence of dual enrollment makes this FAP requisite a clear obstacle to gaining Delaware recognition separate from the Cherokee Nation. Obermeyer explains that a significant number of Delaware people remain citizens of both tribal nations, but he repeatedly emphasizes that their dual enrollment does not necessarily indicate a desire for continuing Cherokee authority over the Delaware Tribe. Rather, he contends, the primary factor at work is the need for the superior health care and other social services available to Cherokee citizens. According to Obermeyer, if holding only Delaware citizenship were a viable financial option, a large percentage of those dually enrolled would likely drop their Cherokee citizenship. The key issue, then, lies in the balance of real material and economic needs with ideological and political efficacy. What Obermeyer implies is the tremendous impact of the federal government’s policy upon the possibilities for Delaware people to meet their practical needs today. Based on this careful equilibrium, he concludes that the compromise inherent in the 2009 recognition will weaken the push to separate fully from the Cherokee Nation, and consequently the current Delaware status will likely remain in place for the foreseeable future.

Throughout the book Obermeyer’s numerous personal anecdotes and interviews provide persuasive insights unavailable else-

where. Alongside these moments, however, is a level of bureaucratic and political detail that seems to deter the progress of Obermeyer's largely compelling narrative, as when he explains each of the "eight hypothetical options available to the Delaware for tribal enrollment" (some of which are not even legally possible) and each of the different cards and federal services available to holders of each "hypothetical option" (227). By the same token, however, Obermeyer's exposition of these complexities contributes to his implicit case against the U.S. government's inconsistent and convoluted policy-making strategies.

In the final analysis the attainment of recognition seems to have detracted somewhat from the vitality of Obermeyer's argument, but this development does not undermine the book's importance in exploring this insufficiently explored aspect of Delaware history, its relevance to arguments about the Delawares separating further from the Cherokee Nation, or its applicability to other communities—like the Yuchi—that remain in a similar situation. In fact, these moments of comparison are among the most convincing of *Delaware Tribe*; a further investigation of such parallels would have extended the book's argument and perhaps made the 2009 recognition less of a shock to Obermeyer's project. Such comparative work is perhaps beyond the scope of this study, though, and *Delaware Tribe* still provides an important starting point for conversations about both the Delaware case specifically as well as larger questions surrounding the recognition of American Indian tribes.

Paula Gunn Allen. *America the Beautiful: The Final Poems of Paula Gunn Allen*. Albuquerque: West End, 2011.
ISBN: 978-0-9816693-5-9. 100 pp.

Sandra Cox, *Shawnee State University*

Nine days before her own death, Paula Gunn Allen sent her last volume of poems to her publisher; this manuscript is not a musing upon the poet's own impending end, but rather an evocative representation of the cultural landscape that she spent her life

studying, representing, and analyzing. Time, for Allen, is more like a wheel than a line; she writes in the poem “America the Beautiful IV” that “time is a rhyming thing / which i suppose in the algebra / of wisdom means / space rhymes as well” (10). This last collection, crafted by Allen in her final illness, expresses a conviction that every life passes, but is never truly past, and that every place changes, but remains essentially constant.

Even before this collection of poems, Allen’s writing might be understood as speaking in two voices: one voice addresses the immediate material conditions of her audience, and the other voice uncannily imagines how the invocation of those immediate conditions will echo in posterity. For instance, her 1997 poetry collection, entitled *Life Is a Fatal Disease*, presented a darkly comedic rumination on the contemporaneousness of history. Likewise, her 1983 roman a clef, *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*, traces several cultural histories in order to chart its protagonist’s progression into an ever-widening future. Additionally Allen’s critical monographs both pioneered an expressly Native feminist episteme and, at the same time, asserted that Native women’s roles in shaping an epistemological discourse were possessed of an a priori presence to which Euro-American feminism was silently or unconsciously indebted.

America the Beautiful, then, is Allen’s ultimate work in its finality and its thematic scope and artistic crafting. The volume is bifurcated into two parts. The first, which shares its name with the volume at large, employs a narrative voice that is both collective and individuated. The speaker presents observations and introspections with a testimonial quality. The second half, entitled “There Is Another Shore,” contains poems that seem at once more removed and more personal than the thirty-six poems in the first half.

In the “Note to the Reader,” which serves as the introduction to the volume, Patricia Clark Smith makes note of Allen’s “myriad-mindedness.” The ways in which Smith’s thoughtful reflection on her friend and colleague’s life and work seems to suggest that what makes *America the Beautiful* a rich and compelling collection is that it reveals its writer’s broad set of interests, all of which, though disparate, coexist quite naturally on the pages of the book. The second

through thirty-sixth poems in the volume share with one another the title the volume has taken, followed by a sequential number. Some of these poems play with the aural qualities of English, Spanish, and words that both of those European tongues borrow from indigenous languages. Others, like the one quoted above, simultaneously ridicule and celebrate poetry as medium for sharing meaning.

Almost all of these poems examine the ways nature is entwined with culture. For instance, the third poem in the sequence begins with a conversation between the speaker and various natural forces—the “soft wind” (line 1), the “summer surf” (line 5), the “deep night stars” (line 9)—about whether or not the earth is capable of conscious thought. In the last two stanzas of the poem the speaker is questioned by “quasar songs” that suggest that the earth is aware, is moving and dancing and dreaming. Allen’s choices of diction unify two ways of understanding the universe; the empirical study of nature and the physical forces that move it cannot be separated from the philosophical, spiritual, and theological questions about whether that motion is the result of some higher power, who is acutely aware of the small lives it shapes. Not all of these explorations of the natural world’s interaction with human ambitions are this expansive. There are also poems that consider the exploitative labor practices that produce well-manicured flower beds, and the ways that an acculturating influence constrains and redeploys natural beauty. Poems that explore this influence through palatable floral metaphors—noting how the “well-bred roses here are grown / in pens to keep out deer” (15)—appear alongside more gritty examinations of how suburban sprawl encroaches on wild spaces—“a furry bit of blood smearing the asphalt. / rabbit? chipmunk? squirrel?” (20). The poems in the volume’s first half are a wildly inclusive, stylistically varied amalgam of the profane and the sacred.

The poems in the volume’s second half are equally thought-provoking and complex, if a bit less tightly sequenced and more loosely developed. Some of the poems pose responses to current events and employ an informal voice that reprimands mass media and popular culture. Others seem to memorialize tiny moments of experience. Whether the scope is large or small, whether the mood is ranting

or elegiac, each of these poems works to probe impressions formed from within a subjectively defined space. For example, “Wayward Girl’s Lament” uses a closed formal structure, the villanelle, to examine a character who rejects the same sort of constraints the verse form imposes upon the poet. The content and the form are at odds with one another, an affect that is best manifested in the tension between the first and second refrains. The poem enacts a progressively heightening tension between the titular girl, referred to in the second person, and the third-person “they,” who would restrain her waywardness to keep her safe. However, just as the repetition of the first refrain, “how bogus are the locks,” is the correlatory response to the second, “think outside the box,” so too is the recursive chiding of the “they” to “you.” The illusory qualities of safety the locks protect is only revealed to the girl brave enough to open them. “They” cannot ever see the sense in the wayward girl’s critique of “their” haven, because “they” are unwilling to view it from her vantage point. Later in the book the poem “Self-Portrait and a Wish” seems to present the poet (who intentionally encourages the conflation between herself and the narrator here) as envious of this sort of outsider subject position. The poem, written in a free verse shaped by the copious use of the em-dash and wonderfully weird enjambment, has a much more open form than the villanelle, but the speaker finds herself unable to occupy the outsider perspective sufficiently. The poem ends with a desire that is also a lament: “I wish I was action-packed, loaded for bear, / right on kind of girl” (80).

Many poems in both sections of the volume are riotously funny, like “Coyote rhymester on the lam.” This poem revisits a trope from Dineh culture that Allen made her own in many iterations. Like the Coyote poems in her second collection *Coyote’s Daylight Trip* (1978), this poem’s speaker is a trickster who begins by “jacking all tradesters / mastering none” (84). Like the earlier Coyote poems this poem amuses readers and redeploys cultural traditions from a specific Native national history. As always, the joke is on Coyote, but this time it is not entirely funny. When Allen writes “it’s not matter of what it means / a poem shouldn’t mean but be / life is meaningless thank the lord / I think and so i’ll never be,” there is a poignancy

that comes from the reader's knowledge that Allen's life has ended. Her critique of the Cartesian model of identity is political and personal in that moment. By opposing the division of mind from body intrinsic to her revision of Descartes, Allen also reminds readers that her body of work—her thoughts—will outlast the material evidence of her being—her body.

Allen's death, even two years before the collection's appearance, also colors interpretations of the book's last poem "How Near, How Far." The poem begins:

A fine spring day in the East Bay.
The first this year. I am preoccupied
realizing exactly that what slouched
toward the White Sands
to be born is grown, already
getting old. (97)

The allusion to Yeats here is somehow frightening and sad. On a historical level the ways in which potential for annihilation was cultivated on the Trinity site at White Sands are resonant for all Americans, but none no more so than Allen's family and people, many of whom live in Cubero, directly downwind of Los Alamos. It is important to note that Allen wrote the poem in Berkeley, California, in 1999, almost a decade before her death, but the ways in which she considers her personal history—"a young married in Grants, New Mexico / a generation and a half ago"—seems to participate in a nostalgic reconstruction and a grotesque representation of the land of her birth. She fled the historical and systemic subjugation that is emblemized by the degradation of Mesa Verde only to find new emblems elsewhere. The poem's ending is a reminder that things are always and never what they seem; this duality, in all of its complications and contradictions, seems appropriate as the final offering from a poet whose work has always lamented and celebrated the significance of the multifaceted aspects of her own identity and history with mingled fear and pride.

Scott Richard Lyons. *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent*. Indigenous Americas Series. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2010. ISBN 978-0-8166-6677-5. 248 pp.

Lauren Grewe, *University of Texas at Austin*

In *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent* Scott Lyons powerfully foregrounds the Native treaty signature of the x-mark as a sign of Native assent to modernization and nationalization. “The moment of treaty,” Lyons writes, “was literally the invention of the modern Indian nation” (126). This focus on the political and cultural formation of Indian nations and nationalism situates Lyons’s work in conversation with American Indian literary nationalists—such as Robert Warrior, Craig Womack, Jace Weaver, and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn—as well as scholars like Michael A. Elliott. Polemical at points, Lyons nevertheless makes a compelling case for rethinking American Indian nationalism in ways that deemphasize essentialism in favor of Native diversity and, above all, Native choice. A key component of Lyons’s discussion is his reconsideration of traditionalism and its role in the modern Indian nation. *X-Marks* employs the figure of the x-mark to “symbolize Native assent to things (concepts, policies, technologies, ideas) that, while not necessarily traditional in origin, can sometimes turn out all right and occasionally even good” (3). Focusing on American Indian diversity and social issues, Lyons argues for the practice of a “realist nationalism” that would emphasize how Indian nations can improve their citizens’ lives through historically informed modernization and economic justice (140).

In an introduction that ranges from the Ojibwe Great Migration to the disruption of the modern/traditional binary, Lyons introduces the symbol that proves the driving force of his book: the x-mark. Though he acknowledges that Native people made these x-marks “in a context of coercion,” for Lyons, the x-mark is a sign of consent (1). Crucially, the x-mark signifies Native agency and, with that agency, a commitment to modernization in the form of Indian nations. Identifying three conceptual x-marks, identity, culture, and nation, Lyons builds his analysis of these concepts around

“the larger project of developing functional modern institutions in Native America” (12). Within this project, Lyons links modernization and nationalization with the ultimate goal of developing a socially conscious, inclusive indigenous nationalism.

The first three chapters of *X-Marks* center on these three concepts—identity, culture, and the nation—with a fourth chapter offering a more detailed examination of citizenship. Each chapter first engages with the current debates surrounding these terms and relies on Ojibwe and English etymology to shed light on them as historically situated concepts and, significantly, modern constructions. Indian nations became nations when Indian nationalists decided to “modernize their *ethnie*” through the signing of treaties (122). These acts transformed Indian *ethnies* into modern, sovereign nations recognized by and engaging with other nations. Though his analysis covers any tribal nation with a treaty relation to the United States, Lyons also takes a tribally specific approach, drawing many of his examples from Ojibwe language (*Ojibwemowin*) and sources. In his second chapter, for instance, Lyons examines the controversy surrounding the Sweetgrass Road drummers. Citing a customary ban on female drum singers, the powwow committee rejected this group of six Ojibwe women from the annual powwow at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota due to their gender. The women subsequently filed a discrimination lawsuit against the university, and to avoid further litigation, the university shut down the annual powwow for good. According to Lyons, this action produced “a reduction of Native culture—one less powwow, a little less culture in the world . . . segregating cultures at a time when exchange possessed real benefits” (95). Using tribal specificity, Lyons interrogates cultural policing within Indian nations, revealing the wider political and social consequences of such acts.

In the first chapter, “Identity Crisis,” Lyons redefines Indian identity as fluid and multiple but, importantly, always political. Taking a cue from the abundance of verbs compared to nouns in *Ojibwemowin*, Lyons argues, “Indian identity is something people do, not what they are, so the real question is, what should we do?” (40). Turning to Eva Marie Garrouette’s “radical indigen-

ism”—or reclaiming the root of Native identity—Lyons rejects this methodology for its reliance on kinship and essential traits, which he finds incompatible with *Ojibwemowin*. Compared to English, *Ojibwemowin* relies on observable categories—including dress, habitation, music, religion, and language—rather than blood or biology to constitute acts of recognition. Moving away from the lure of an identity crisis, Lyons relies on the work of sociologist Manuel Castells to posit that “all identities are ‘political’” (61). Rather than refereeing “the question of what an Indian is,” Lyons suggests we ask “what *kinds* of Indian identities are in production during a given historical moment and what is at stake in their making” (60). This not only decenters essentialism but also conceptualizes American Indians as political and historical agents, ultimately underwriting Lyons’s redefinition of Indian identity through citizenship.

In the second, and most polemical, chapter, Lyons builds upon these reformulations of identity and traditionalism to provide a closer examination of the current indigenous cultural revival. While praising this revival’s positive aspects, most notably language revitalization, Lyons condemns “culture cops,” his term for “cultural elites” who “relentlessly ‘correct’ their peers or decry certain cultural forms as ‘inauthentic’” (76). As in the case of Sweetgrass Road, this criticism arises from concerns about oppression within Native cultures, particularly Native women and Christians. Although quick to state, and repeat, that not all culture cops are bad, Lyons questions what he views as their inflexibility and distrust of hybridity. Such qualities, he contends, run counter to “the cultural expressions of the majority of actually existing Indians” (100). Implicit in this argument is an ongoing debate about orality and literacy in Native studies that draws on an outdated model of cultures as either oral or literate. Lyons’s larger point here is confounded by an aging methodological framework; it might gain force from engagement with the way scholars like Lisa Brooks and Christopher Teuton have handled questions of identity and culture in frameworks that go beyond the oral/literate conceptual vocabulary.

In the third chapter these discussions of identity and culture culminate in an examination of American Indian nationalism. Relying

on the work of Ernest Gellner and Anthony D. Smith, Lyons argues that the nation is a “modern construct” that, for Indian nations, arose through the technology of treaties (123). While Lyons ultimately joins American Indian nationalists in their support of Indian nations, he questions what he calls a “*conceptual separatism*” in the work of scholars such as Taiaiake Alfred (136). Rather than discarding concepts like sovereignty, Lyons contests that Indian nations should use the nationalist language of citizenship not membership, nation not tribe. To this end, Lyons proposes a revision of nationalism that he terms “realist nationalism” (140). Viewing cultures as rhizomatic rather than root based, realist nationalism prioritizes Indian diversity as well as the desires and needs of Indian citizens. Lyons sees tremendous potential in American Indian nationalism. Nevertheless, he emphasizes that recognition of diversity and class differences within Indian nations remains paramount to the successful functioning of Indian nations and nationalism.

Lyons’s final chapter, appropriately titled, “Resignations,” calls American Indians “to *re-sign*—to affirm an x-mark that was already made in one’s name long ago” (169). Shifting the language from culture to citizenship, Lyons challenges citizens of Indian nations to ask important questions about what kinds of nations they want. Citizens, Lyons contends, make the nation, so the most effective way to improve Indian nations is to “*require what you want to produce*” (171). Herein lies Lyons’s most radical—and perhaps also most significant—intervention in Native studies: citizens of Indian nations should change their citizenship requirements to reflect the kinds of nations that they want to produce. Lyons is careful not to be too prescriptive in this recommendation; however, he does suggest several directions this reform could take, including language revitalization, naturalization, and a hierarchy of memberships. Most importantly, Indian citizens should decide for themselves what revisions would best suit their particular needs and lead to greater economic justice within their nations.

A highly charged book, *X-Marks* makes many vital contributions to the field of Native studies. Employing legal, philological, historical, and anthropological discourses, Lyons examines how vari-

ous forces have shaped our contemporary understandings of identity, culture, and nationalism. Moreover, Lyons makes many crucial cross-cultural comparisons; for instance, asserting that indigenous nationalism can learn from the history of black nationalism. While this ability to span multiple discourses allows Lyons to address many audiences, just how far his proverbial “we” reaches remains unclear. Nevertheless, Lyons’s most important interventions clearly extend into the political lives of American Indians, as he proposes solutions to many longstanding problems in Indian nations. These ideas have potential social implications that merit discussion among Native communities. Among these ideas the rewriting of tribal nation citizenship stands out as the most interesting, and perhaps the most controversial, concept in Lyons’s book. Deeply concerned with the diversity as well as the social and political realities of American Indians, *X-Marks* is a book that challenges its Native readers to make their own x-mark.

Brajesh Sawhney, ed. *Studies in the Literary Achievement of Louise Erdrich, Native American Writer: Fifteen Critical Essays*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellon, 2008. ISBN 978-0-7734-4911-4. 295 pp.

Linda Lizut Helstern, *North Dakota State University*

As Brajesh Sawhney observes, the preponderance of scholarship on Louise Erdrich centers on her earliest published works, notably *Love Medicine* and *Tracks*. His recent collection, *Studies in the Literary Achievement of Louise Erdrich, Native American Writer: Fifteen Critical Essays*, seeks to expand the range of available scholarship through its focus on the seventeen prose texts Erdrich published between 1988 and 2005, including some eight novels for adults, three books of creative nonfiction, and six works for children and adolescents. Three novels, however—*The Last Report of the Miracles at Little No Horse*, *Four Souls*, and *Antelope Wife*—garner the lion’s share of critical attention. The project grew out of Sawhney’s 1999 Fulbright Fellowship appointment to the American Indian Studies Center at UCLA, and its contributors include both emerging and well-es-

lished scholars of Native literatures in the United States and Canada, among them Peter Beidler, Gay Barton, and Connie Jacobs.

The collection is notable for the range of scholarly approaches represented, from cultural and gender studies to trauma theory and considerations of intertextual connections with dominant culture works often dubbed “writing back to the center.” One of the most enjoyable essays is not scholarly in the classic academic sense but more akin to a Native honoring ceremony. “‘The human heart is every bit as tangled as our road’: Six Memorable Characters in the Fiction of Louise Erdrich” brings together the reflections of Barton, Beidler, Jacobs, David McNab, Debra Barker, and Uta Lischke in a multivocal collaboration, foreshadowing a new trend in Native criticism, though the critical voices here are presented in sequence rather than in dialogue. The six scholars are eloquent in articulating reasons for their surprising and unsurprising choices. In honoring Fleur Pillager, June Kashpaw, Lulu Lamartine, Kit Tatro, Mary Kashpaw, and Omakayas, they clearly honor the power of the writer who created these characters.

Alan Velie’s essay, “Louise Erdrich and American Indian Literary Nationalism,” is a singular contribution to Erdrich criticism and to this collection, addressing an issue now central to Native criticism. Velie understands that Native writers claim not only tribal but pantribal identity and emphasizes the importance of the bond with tribal homeland in Erdrich’s work. Far from upholding Weaver, Womack, and Warrior’s contention that such work be viewed as separate and labeled “Native,” however, Velie defends Erdrich’s stated preference to be considered an American writer, agreeing with David Treuer that there is nothing intrinsically Indian about the Indian literature. Without using the term *essentialism*, he suggests that any racialized definition of Indian literature, including his own expedient definition based on tribal ancestry, however distant, is simply irrational. Velie’s essay left me wondering about the notable absence of one Erdrich novel—*The Master Butchers Singing Club* centering on her German American heritage—from critical consideration in a collection that explicitly labels the author *Native American* in its title.

Two very different cultural studies yield some of the freshest insights into Erdrich's work. In "Plenty of Food and No Government Agents": Perspectives on the Spirit World, Death and Dying in the Writings of Louise Erdrich," David McNab explores the development of this theme from an Anishinaabe perspective in six different texts, including short and long fiction, creative nonfiction, and adolescent fiction. Peter Beidler, meanwhile, uses a "white studies" approach in "Mausers's Illness: Medical Humor in Erdrich's *Four Souls*," revealing once again that truth is stranger than fiction. He demonstrates how Erdrich deploys the facts of early twentieth-century medicine to reverse stereotypes associated with Native healers and healing as Fleur Pillager makes use of commonsense tribal knowledge rather than supernatural power. Harry Brown's essay on the power of names and naming in many Erdrich novels might have been grounded in Native ontology and cultural studies. Although it is not, it remains a useful compendium of Erdrich's statements on the subject.

How Erdrich uses reversal in *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* to help dominant culture readers shift from a Eurocentric perspective and become receptive to a tribal worldview is the focus of Annette Van Dyke's essay. In this instance it is a gender reversal as Agnes adopts the male identity of Father Damien. Dee Horne focuses on this novel as well, seeing in its central character a model of "creative hybridity" that is both religious and personal. Melanie Hanson is concerned with bisexuality in Erdrich's texts within the framework of Helene Cixous's *l'écriture féminine*, which understands women's speech as necessarily bisexual. Hanson sees the image of sewing—more properly, beading—in *The Antelope Wife* and *The Birchbark House* as women's language with its ability to connect all of life. Rachel Lister, too, focuses on the power of the in-between as she explores dialogism in the fragmented stories that comprise the plot of *The Antelope Wife* and *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*. Uta Lischke, meanwhile, focuses her attention on the unresolvable tensions inherent in mixed-blood identity as manifest in the relationship between Fleur Pillager and the European/American Polly Elizabeth Gheen in *Four Souls*.

Debra Madsen and Barbara Mesle both explore the issue of trauma in Erdrich's novels. Madsen focuses on the treatment of historical trauma in the mass-market *Crown of Columbus* and several adolescent novels by Erdrich and Michael Dorris. Initially delineating how classic Western trauma theory, which locates trauma in the subject's past, may not fit Native experience, she ultimately argues that Dorris's work exemplifies what Stanley Fish has termed *boutique multiculturalism*. Mesle explores trauma and healing, variously personal and collective, in *The Painted Drum*, viewing Erdrich's characters through the lens of posttraumatic stress disorder and recent findings in neurobiology. Acknowledging the importance of ritual expressions of grief, including potentially both storytelling and drumming, she ends with the eloquent words of Blackcloud, spoken on the death of Sitting Bull. It is our only hint that the beat of the drum is the very heartbeat of life.

Thomas Matchie, Holly Messit, and Gretchen Papazian address the relationship between Louise Erdrich and such varied dominant culture writers as Flannery O'Connor, Mary Rowlandson, and Laura Ingalls Wilder. *The Birchbark House* and *The Game of Silence*, Papazian argues, are rewritings of the Little House books intended to help young readers re-envision the history of Native and white relations in the American West.

While Sawhney's collection remains a useful contribution to Erdrich scholarship, it is unfortunate that the book suffers from so many production defects, most serious among them the omission from Debra Madsen's essay of a significant portion of the reference list.

Cary Miller. *Ogimaag: Anishinaabeg Leadership, 1760–1845*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2010. ISBN 978-0-8032-3404-8. 314 pp.

Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair, *University of Manitoba*

In recent years an unparalleled wave of work by Anishinaabeg and non-Anishinaabeg scholars studying and defining Anishinaabeg cultures, communities, and lifeways has emerged to push Native

American studies in exciting and provocative directions. Academic texts such as Michael D. McNally's *Honoring Elders: Aging, Authority, and Ojibwe Religion* (Columbia UP, 2009), Scott Lyons's *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (U of Minnesota P, 2010), and Leanne Simpson's *Dancing on Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-creation, Resurgence, and a New Emergence* (Arbeiter Ring, 2011) and edited collections such as A. Irving Hallowell's *Contributions to Ojibwe Studies, 1934–1972* (edited by Jennifer Brown and Susan Gray, U of Nebraska P, 2010), Richard Wagamese's *One Story, One Song* (Douglas & McIntyre, 2011), and Basil Johnston's *Think Indian: Languages Are Beyond Price* (Kegedonce, 2011) are just a few examples. This is not to forget the important oral and written intellectual work being done in Anishinaabeg lodges, living rooms, and board rooms—much of which illustrates a diverse and expressive culture invested in social, spiritual, and political sovereignty and syncretism. Indeed, these and other critical and creative works by Anishinaabeg authors, speakers, and leaders have joined to create a field now known as *Anishinaabeg studies*. Anishinaabeg studies adopts as its predominant tenet the notion that Anishinaabeg are a dynamic and enduring *set of people*, nouns, characterized by an equally complex *set of actions*, verbs. Anishinaabeg are “spontaneous people,” historian William Whipple Warren writes in his 1885 book *History of the Ojibway People*, people who have traditionally defined and will continue to define themselves.

This is evidenced brilliantly in *Ogimaag: Anishinaabeg Leadership, 1760–1845*, a sharp and complex study by University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee historian Cary Miller. In this book spanning some of the most tumultuous years in Anishinaabeg history, Miller paints a remarkably rich and nuanced picture of Anishinaabeg existence from the Seven Years War to 1845. Focusing on the community processes and traditions that created *ogimaag*, leaders in Anishinaabeg society, Miller challenges anthropological and social science theories that Anishinaabeg communities were “marked by weak and/or fluid leadership,” instead arguing that they were “highly organized and deliberate” (3–4). This is predominantly due to the “the symbiotic nature of religious and political authority in Anishinaabeg life,”

she argues, which created resilient, multidimensional, and interconnected cultural systems of selecting leaders across spectrums of Anishinaabeg life—and particularly in the civil, military, and spiritual spheres (5–6).

Miller's book is as a virtual encyclopedia of Anishinaabeg cultural traditions, taken from a plethora of published and unpublished historical sources, meticulously cited in order to show how Anishinaabeg inherited, accepted, and self-identified themselves as leaders (her endnotes, in particular, are worth a read on their own). Focusing on the village, the "largest and most meaningful social, political, and economic entity" in Anishinaabeg communities (40), she describes how Anishinaabeg notions of power combined cultural, spiritual, and political elements and embodied facets of everyday life. The first chapter, "Power in the Anishinaabeg World," examines how self-determination and self-reliance was understood by Anishinaabeg to be a marker of power: "In the Ojibwe world the clearest demonstration of power was lack of dependence for food, safety, health, and material goods" (23). While animals, plants, and other relations of the Anishinaabeg illustrated this ability, it was *manidoog*—spiritual beings and the incorporeal plane of reality they inhabited—that Anishinaabeg sought to emulate, form relationships with, and receive blessings from. This formed a platform in which ogimaag sought and gained power, as connections with *manidoog* resulted in strength and autonomy not only for the individual but for one's community as a whole. The relationships between ogimaag and *manidoog* therefore formed a model in which Anishinaabeg asserted power, shaping the ways they interrelated, forged ties with the environment, and devised societal systems (such as the clan system). This communal system of leadership making therefore involved not only men and women of all ages but also nonhuman entities, resulting in power being thought of as something shared, universal, communal, and reciprocal. This chapter features some of Miller's best work, as she shows how processes such as gift giving, storytelling, and horticultural activities made Anishinaabe leadership an inherent form of relationship and community building.

The next three chapters all fascinatingly examine a different facet of how Anishinaabeg became leaders in specific spheres of Anishinaabeg society: *ogimaag*, or hereditary leaders, primarily administered communities, dealt with foreign powers and adjudicated intervillage conflicts; *mayosewininiwag*, or military leaders, followed the direction of communities in their disputes with others but also acted as community protectors, peacekeepers, and initiators of youth; *gechi-midewijig*, or Midéwiwin leaders, led ceremonial rites of the ancient Grand Medicine Society, maintained traditional stories and histories, and initiated community citizens into the Midéwiwin—therefore sharing specific and sacred medicinal, literary, and educational practices. The final chapter is a divergence from the rest of the book, “The Contest for Chiefly Authority at Fond du Lac,” and explores the specific ways Anishinaabeg leadership and community unity was challenged at Fond du Lac after a mission station was built there in 1834 and leaders clashed with—and eventually expelled—a missionary. Here, Miller’s description repeats some of the field of history’s most discomfiting tendencies in her assumptions of the particular psyche and mindsets of her subjects, and she sometimes defaults to claims that undermine the complexity her research suggests. Still, her research is extremely impressive, and she succeeds in locating the work of *ogimaag* in tangible, concrete ways for the reader.

This final chapter also highlights an issue with the text as a whole (and indeed an emerging issue within Anishinaabeg studies): a primary focus on Anishinaabeg communities south of the forty-ninth parallel. The book, in fact, might be better subtitled: “Anishinaabeg Leadership South of the Great Lakes.” Anishinaabeg leaders and communities north and east of her focus (in what is now Ontario and Manitoba) are peripherally mentioned, and while Miller does make use of some work that references these areas (specifically by George Copway and John Tanner), for the most part areas outside of her focus areas are neglected. One wonders how the complex experiences of Anishinaabeg in these different contexts would challenge, diversify, and perhaps even illustrate better points of her study. I imagine, for instance, that the life of missionary Peter Jones,

Kahkewaquonabay, who became one of three ogimaag for the Mississauga at Credit River in 1829 and spent his entire life dedicated to Anishinaabeg (and who was crucial in advocating for and stabilizing his community after decades of colonial invasion and forced land secession agreements) would make for an excellent examination. Or a study of the complex leadership abilities of the ogimaag Peguis at the Red River settlement throughout the early nineteenth century would be very interesting, as he made many controversial choices (including selling allotments to settlers, permitting alcohol in his community, baptizing into the Anglican church, and rejecting the Midéwiwin) but still maintained popularity and power in his community his entire life.

Overall, however, no book can do everything, and Miller's *Ogimaag* is a powerful and dynamic portrayal of Anishinaabeg life and leadership at a critical time in North American history. It is, simply, a must read for historians, Native studies scholars and students, and anyone interested in Anishinaabeg culture and history. It sets a new standard for Anishinaabeg studies and is a fascinating illustration of the makeup of nouns and verbs that encapsulate Anishinaabeg existence. Miigwech for this landmark contribution.

Margaret D. Jacobs. *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880–1940*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2009. ISBN 978-0-8032-1100-1 (hardcover); 978-0-8032-3516-8 (paperback). 557 pp.

Cristina Stanciu, *Virginia Commonwealth University*

Margaret D. Jacobs has written a monumental comparative study of child removal policies in the American West and Australia between 1880 and 1940, zooming in on the cross-cultural relations between white women and American Indian women in the United States, as well as white women and Aboriginal women in Australia. A winner of several prestigious awards, including the Bancroft Prize, *White Mother to a Dark Race* engages not only scholars of Ameri-

can Indian, indigenous, and Aboriginal studies but also scholars of empire, education, women's studies, and comparative ethnic studies. Jacobs starts from a paradox she noticed in her preliminary archival research—that white women in the United States and Australia, while upholding the sanctity of motherhood, ultimately supported devastating policies that led to the removal of indigenous and Aboriginal children through Australian absorption policies and U.S. assimilation policies.

Jacobs begins her study by showing how the child removal policies in the United States and Australia had a similar goal: the dispossession of indigenous people of their ancestral lands. She shows how government officials, missionaries, and reformers alike broke “the affective bonds that tied indigenous children to their kin, community, culture, and homelands” (xxx). Furthermore, the very persistence of Indian people in the United States after the Civil War and of Aboriginal people in Australia after its federation in 1901 posed a threat to nation-building efforts. Invoking the gendered dimension of both the protection and assimilation policies in the two countries, Jacobs shows how white women reformers—often seeking to legitimize their public authority at the expense of indigenous women's rights—colonized the intimate spaces of indigenous families. This invasion of Native intimacy also aimed at creating new loyalties (to new institutions etc.), making white women's projects of “saving” the indigenous children complicit with the larger goals of settler colonialism. Jacobs, therefore, demonstrates throughout that white women's maternalism not only transformed the indigenous body and home in which they intervened but was also complicit with the settler colonial project through what anthropologist Anne Stoler calls “intimacies of empire.” By developing personal relationships with indigenous and Aboriginal families in the United States and Australia—or through what Jacobs calls “intimate invasions” (227)—white women reformers were, therefore, agents of empire.

Tracing the parallel histories of indigenous child removal, the first two chapters examine the relation between gender and settler colonialism in the American West and Australia. Looking at the violent histories of European settlement of Australia and the United

States, Jacobs shows that settler colonialism and child removal ultimately pursued the same agenda: acquisition of land by dispossessing indigenous people. At the same time, the violence over the land extended to the violence over the intimate lives of indigenous people, who became “the Indian problem” in the United States and “the Aboriginal problem” in Australia for the settler colonial state. By carefully comparing the “protection” policies in Australia with the “assimilation policies” in the United States, Jacobs finds that officials in both countries used similar rhetoric to justify child removal, often invoking humanitarian reasons. Although the rationales of these policies were often similar in both countries, Jacobs claims that there is no conclusive evidence that the two governments were aware of each other’s policies. Unlike the U.S. model, focused primarily on cultural assimilation, the Australian model of “protecting” Aboriginal children promoted their “biological absorption” that aimed at “breeding out the color” (26). Australian girls were therefore the main target of absorption. If the American child removal policies targeted *all* Indian children, Australian officials, who were proponents of biological determinism and eugenics, insisted on Aboriginal child removal as “a means to breed the Aboriginal problem out of existence” (73). As we can see from Jacobs’s powerful archival evidence, racial ideologies informed the ways in which each country imagined itself at the beginning of the twentieth century; like the quota acts restricting nonwhite immigration to the United States, the “White Australia policy” (1901) also controlled its white citizenry. However, as Jacobs shows, Aboriginal Australians faced other exclusions such as the denial of citizenship until 1948 and exclusion from the census and from voting in general elections until 1968 (63). Furthermore, whereas many U.S. tribes had treaty rights and lived on reservations administered by the federal government, Aboriginal Australians had no such treaties and were at the mercy and under the jurisdiction of state laws.

In the next chapters Jacobs shows how white women reformers in both countries shared a “pathological view of indigenous women” (88), which led them to support the removal of indigenous children. Using the rhetoric of American middle-class motherhood, along

with evangelical Christian rhetoric, white women reformers in the United States often portrayed Indian women as “unfit mothers” (136). Jacobs offers several persuasive case studies where she looks at the work of Amelia Stone Quinton, Alice Cunningham Fletcher, and Estelle Reed in the United States, as well as Constance Cooke, Bessie Rischbieth, Edith Jones, and Mary Bennett in Australia. Comparing the work of women reformers in both countries, Jacobs finds that Australian women activists were often excluded from real influence in their state governments’ policymaking; they often objected not to official policies—unlike their American peers—but to the ways in which their male peers carried out such policies. At the heart of a chapter on practices of child removal, the historian brings to life myriad voices of indigenous parents opposing the removal of their children. She shows that both in Australia and the American West indigenous families “rarely sent their children to institutions voluntarily” (150). Invoking some heartbreaking scenes of separation—more common in Aboriginal oral histories and memoirs, where the separation was perceived to be permanent, than in American Indian accounts—Jacobs shows the toll this removal took on the parents and the children’s extended families. These scenes of removal, the historian argues, “cruelly traumatized indigenous people with methods that were akin to the forcible seizures of land” and previous removals (192). As Jacobs’s case studies show, American Indian and Aboriginal families soon learned that white women’s interest in their lives was not always genuine, especially when the “great white mothers” sought to replace the indigenous mothers.

Jacobs finds striking similarities between the American and Australian ways of initiating indigenous children into the rituals of their institutions (and she rightly refers to the children as “inmates”): “in both countries indigenous children [. . .] had to endure the same conditions: overcrowding, poor sanitation, an inadequate diet, a high incidence of disease, and often brutal and dehumanizing abuse” (229). In both countries the institutions of education prepared the “inmates” to become unskilled manual laborers and domestic servants (262). The colonization of children’s bodies through confinement, regimentation of the most basic daily routines, and the impo-

sition of what Jacobs calls a “new sensory regime” (where children’s bodily and sensory habits were slowly broken) aimed at changing indigenous children’s worldviews. Jacobs also finds similar coping strategies that the children used inside and outside these institutions. However, due to the imposed lack of contact with their families, Jacobs shows that many Aboriginal children grew up believing that their mothers had abandoned them. These children negotiated troubled identities; for some Aboriginal students who were removed from their families as babies, the institution run by white workers (who were often women) was the only home they knew. Ultimately, Jacobs argues, the students expressed mixed feelings about their white women teachers (299); although “white women often portrayed them as lacking voice and agency, indigenous children were not pawns [...] on the stage of maternalist drama” (327).

One of the many contributions this study makes is to look at how indigenous women—witnessing the maternalist tactics of their white middle-class peers as well as “assaults on indigenous gender systems”—started to articulate “an alternative maternalism,” aimed at restoring “the dignity of indigenous women, honoring indigenous mothers, and asserting indigenous women’s desires for and rights to the custody of their own children” (282). She considers the work of Indian women in Indian service (zooming in especially on the work of Angel DeCora) in the context of rising indigenous women’s activism. Jacobs suggests that like white women, Aboriginal and Indian women used “a politics of maternalism as a basis for their political activism.” At the same time, they emphasized the “right of indigenous women to raise their children as they saw fit within their own homes” (326). But Indian and Aboriginal girls were often placed in domestic service, where the “white mothers” could teach them (again) the virtues of white motherhood. The employment of indigenous girls as servants, however, tends to contradict white women’s mission of “uplifting” their protégées both in the United States and Australia; indigenous girls nonetheless aspired to different professions, often as they were “mothering” the children of white families employing them. And like their U.S. peers, “many Aboriginal servants resented the tight control that both the state

and their employers had over their wages, labor, and leisure” (350). Jacobs offers a useful case study of American Indian girls in outing programs in the San Francisco Bay area. Drawing on memoirs and oral histories by indigenous women in outing programs in the United States and Australia, Jacobs concludes that U.S. indigenous girls had “greater individual and sexual freedom” than their Aboriginal counterparts, who were more often abused by their employers and strictly controlled not only by white women reformers but also by the state. The examples of brutality, exploitation, and sexual abuse of these girls point to the failure of white women’s maternalist agenda.

Jacobs ends her study by looking at the growing opposition to indigenous child removal both in the United States and Australia, tracing some alliances white women formed with indigenous women to withstand further damage and comparing the political outcomes (or lack thereof) of these alliances. The example of Mary Bennett’s work in Australia and, especially, her staunch opposition to further Aboriginal child removal points to the changing tide of maternalist rhetoric. White women activists’ and school teachers’ testimonies against the removal of indigenous children were more vocal in the United States, Jacobs shows, where they sometimes charged the federal government with kidnapping and mistreating Indian children, often linking child removal to economic dispossession (403). In the United States this agitation against child removal and the failures of federal Indian policy led to further investigation and a harsh critique of child removal policies in the Merriam Report (1928). In Australia, Jacobs points out, none of white women’s or men’s campaigns against Aboriginal child removal had a clear impact on Australian state governments and their policies toward Aboriginal children. White women activists like Mary Bennett continued to condemn Australian colonial practices in public forums (like the British Commonwealth League in London), but their voices had little impact in changing policies, and the “assault on indigenous families” continued in Australia after the 1930s (421).

White Mother to a Dark Race draws on a wealth of archival materials, historical documents, oral histories, letters, interviews, and

autobiographies from both the United States and Australia. The images Jacobs uses throughout her story supplement visually the voice she gives to indigenous and Aboriginal children by bringing together their stories. The comparative method allows Jacobs to scrutinize closely American Indian policy and Australian Aboriginal policy through a critique of the settler colonial state. To readers of boarding school histories, the book is a useful model of comparative work (see also Michael Coleman's recent excellent study, *American Indians, the Irish, and Government Schooling* [U of Nebraska P, 2007]) that opens up new possibilities for comparative work in United States and global indigenous studies.

Mat Johnson. *PYM: A Novel*. Spiegel and Grau, 2011.
ISBN 978-0812981582. 336 pp.

Jace Weaver, *University of Georgia*

Mat Johnson, a writer of African, Black Muscogee, and Irish ancestry who identifies himself as an "octoroon," has written the most wildly inventive comic novel in some time, taking as his source material Edgar Allan Poe's only completed novel, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*. At first blush, the task of wringing humor out of the Poe text might seem a Sisyphean one: *Arthur Gordon Pym* is decidedly irony-challenged and may be the most racist novel ever produced by a major American writer. Yet in Johnson's sure hands, the stone rolls easily up the comedic slope.

The author's alter ego is Chris Jaynes, an English professor at a small northeastern liberal arts college, who is denied tenure because he insists on teaching Poe in a course entitled "Dancing with the Darkies: Whiteness in the Literary Mind" rather than African American literature and because, as the college's only male African American faculty member, he refuses to serve on the institution's diversity committee. He is replaced by Mosaic Johnson, "Hip-Hop Theorist," a brother who is more than happy to "represent."

Jaynes is obsessed with Poe generally, and *Arthur Gordon Pym* specifically, because, as he states, "If we can identify how the pathol-

ogy of Whiteness was constructed, then we can learn how to dismantle it.” “Horrors from the pit of the antebellum subconscious,” he calls *Arthur Gordon Pym*.

Published serially in 1837 and 1838, Poe’s novel deals with the adventures of the eponymous Arthur Gordon Pym, starting on the whaleship *Grampus*. For its first two-thirds, it is a rather conventional novel of the sea, spun with Poe’s peculiar view of human nature and imbued with a vague sense of racialized dread. It is filled with mutinies, piracy, shipwrecks, and storms. Just as Herman Melville (who was inspired by *Pym*) drew upon the real-life story of the 1820 sinking of the *Essex* in writing *Moby Dick*, Poe draws on the wreck of the brig *Polly* in 1811, whose crew drifted for six months and over two thousand miles before being rescued.

In the last section of the novel, Poe’s story takes a hard colonialist H-Rider-Haggard-like turn, as Pym and his new shipmates aboard the *Jane Guy* reach Tsalal, a tropical island near Antarctica. The Tsalalians are a people so black that even their teeth are black. Their souls are so black that they are terrified of anything white. When the captain and crew of the *Jane Guy* decide to exploit the resources of this newfound land, using Native labor to do it, the Tsalalians do the unthinkable and fight back. The novel is an allegory of white southern planter fears of slave insurrections.

Other writers have parodied Poe or written in his idiom (notably George Stade in his underappreciated 1979 novel *Confessions of a Lady-Killer* [Norton]), yet few have achieved a result as successful as here. Johnson’s novel mimics the structure of Poe’s work, and Jaynes’s journey mirrors Pym’s but inverts it.

Jaynes’s life changes when his rare book dealer sells him an odd, unpublished manuscript entitled “The True and Interesting Narrative of Dirk Peters, Coloured Man. As Written by Himself.” Peters is the sole Native American character in *Arthur Gordon Pym*, a Crow who ends up accompanying the title character to Tsalal and beyond. Jaynes’s research leads him to Peters’s one living relative and winds up leaving him in possession of not only Peters’s manuscript but his human remains as well.

In one of the novel’s best scenes Johnson skewers the obsession

of Henry Louis Gates and others over the discovery of ancestry through DNA. Jaynes finds himself at a meeting of the Native American Ancestry Collective of Gary, Indiana (NAACG), a group made up of African Americans with Native blood. His attendance coincides with a momentous event for the NAACG, the day the members get their “proof.” A professor from the University of Chicago is going to present the results of his DNA testing. One group member says, “DNA testing isn’t just for criminals trying to get out of jail free; it’s for decent Indians trying to prove their heritage.” “I’m going to send my baby to college on this evidence, just you watch. We tried to join the Sioux Nation a few years back, and they had the nerve to turn us down. We’ll see about that now,” another says. Unfortunately for the members of the NAACG, the test results turn out to be hilariously unsatisfying.

Johnson reimagines Peters as a black man (or at least a person of mixed African and Native ancestry). He correctly notes the similarities between Poe’s description of the Native and those of enslaved Africans in his other writings. Racial minorities for Poe are marked by ugliness and characterized by physical deformity, in these instances particularly bowlegs.

Jaynes decides that if Peters really existed, and if his narrative parallels Poe’s supposedly fictional tale, then Poe’s account must be true in its entirety, plagiarized from Peters’s manuscript. With an all-black crew, the former college literature professor sets out to find Tsalal, toting along Peters’s remains.

Whereas the trajectory of Poe’s story was a journey to whiteness that must first pass through the blackness of Tsalal, in their effort to reach the black paradise of Tsalal, Jaynes and his companions must pass through the brilliant, endless whiteness of Antarctica. Just as Pym and the crew of the *Jane Guy* are attacked by the Tsalalians whom they would seek to enslave, Jaynes and his friends are captured and enslaved by a race of ice-dwelling “snow honkies.”

To say more would be to spoil the fun. Among the targets of Johnson’s sharp-edged humor are the schlock art of Thomas Kinkade (“The Painter of Light”), snack-food deliciousness and American overconsumption, and right-wing survivalists. As in the

best stories, you the reader spend a few days with the characters, and when the novel ends, you wish you could share more time in their company. Poe's book inspired Herman Melville and H. P. Lovecraft. Jules Verne wrote a sequel to *Arthur Gordon Pym* entitled *Le Sphinx des Glaces*. If there was a future for Arthur Gordon Pym, perhaps there is one for Chris Jaynes, too.

Linda LeGarde Grover. *The Dance Boots*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 2010. ISBN 978-0-8203-3580-3. 152 pp.

Michael Wilson, *University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee*

Winner of the 2009 Flannery O'Connor award for short fiction, Linda LeGarde Grover's *Dance Boots* is an elegantly written and often deeply moving collection of short stories. Like O'Connor's fiction, these stories are regional, focusing on members of an Ojibwe community in northern Minnesota. And like O'Connor's fiction, very little in these stories is untouched by the history of racism in America. For members of the community in these stories, and for Indian people all over America, racial hierarchies were institutionalized most visibly and perhaps most influentially in Indian boarding schools. In Grover's stories Indian boarding schools create a profoundly disruptive legacy not only because they are structured around an irrational calculation of Indian inferiority, but also because the schools erect a looming figure of Old Testament judgment that sometimes haunts characters for their entire lives. Hennen (Helen), for instance, is a highly accomplished and well-mannered young woman at a Catholic boarding school, but then she becomes pregnant and is banished from the grounds. For the rest of her life she lives as a fallen angel in the city of Duluth, maintaining only vestiges of a ladylike demeanor as she frequents the bars at night.

Whatever the motivations of boarding school administrators—whether they desired to assimilate Indians, to convert Indians to Christianity, or to make money—the actual effects of the boarding schools in Grover's stories are highly diverse and unpredictable. As destructive as the boarding schools were to people from this Indian

community, they also created the occasion for making lifelong friendships and sometimes for finding love. In “Maggie and Louis, 1914,” an unlikely love affair begins between Louis Gallette, the resident hard case who constantly attempts to run away from school, and Maggie LaForce, a recent graduate of a Catholic boarding school now employed at the Indian boarding school. While Louis spends many nights in the foul basement lockup, Maggie makes sure the young Indian girls sit up in their chairs, darn socks properly, and stay awake while they attend to their work. By all appearances Maggie is a perfect example of successful boarding school assimilation: she is on a first-name basis with the matron, dines with other members of the staff, and receives deference from the men at the school. But Maggie, unlike other members of the staff, is not so wedded to the boarding school rules that she loses her willingness to treat Louis with kindness and respect when she takes his dinner to him in his basement cell. Although Louis had planned to push Maggie into the locked room and to run away, Maggie’s small gesture makes a deep impression on him. He senses a profound connection with Maggie, and perhaps an inkling of possibility, even from the fetid confines of his cell.

In *The Dance Boots*, good manners are more than domestic niceties: they reflect an indigenous philosophy of comity and equality among peoples that runs counter to colonial hierarchies found in Indian boarding schools or to gender hierarchies that appear in several relationships in the book. The crucial consideration in these stories is the abuse of power, not exclusively the guilt and innocence of different “races” of people, as is the case with most fiction about indigenous peoples. While boarding schools are, of course, a prime mover of racial and gender hierarchies in Indian communities, this collection of stories is mostly concerned with how people from the Mozay Point Indian Reservation accept or resist these structures of power. For example, an Indian staff member at the fictional Harold Boarding School, known only as McGoun (he is one of the few flat characters in the book), is single-minded in his desire to punish and humiliate children at the school. What is perhaps most disturbing about McGoun is not his cruelty but the long-term effects

his acts have on the tortured boys, who many years later continue to carry anger and mental scars from McGoun's abuse. In the story "Four Indians in the Mirror," McGoun, now an alcoholic who is completely down on his luck, happens upon Louis and other former students in a dive in Minneapolis. Immediately the former students, now ex-servicemen, recall McGoun's brutality as if no time had passed at all. One of them even kneels in front of him, a gesture McGoun demanded from the boys at boarding school before he whipped them. Louis, however, is not cowed by the appearance of his former tormentor: he drags McGoun behind the bar and beats him, almost to death. Louis exacts a measure of long overdue justice for himself and others who suffered from McGoun's abuse, and yet it is difficult to ignore how his actions replicate the use of power and violence over the helpless, even if the helpless is a figure of such moral depravity. What is certain is that the Harrod Boarding School planted the seeds of anger in a generation of children, and long after its doors are closed, its tree of distinction continues to bear a cancerous fruit.

Other abuses of power occur in the book—in bad marriages, for instance—but ultimately the community in this collection triumphs over the legacy of Indian boarding schools. In the first story of the collection, "The Dance Boots," Artense describes to her aunt Shirley how her university instructors discuss indigenous peoples in condescending (Orientalist) and self-serving ways. But Artense also indicates that she will have none of it: she rejects the institution's representation of Indians with considerable insight and humor. Furthermore, Shirley offers a far different educational experience for Artense with her example of love, generosity (the gift of the dance boots), and beautiful manners. In the final story of the collection, "Bingo Night," the community has completely reclaimed the formal education of its children, having created its own school next to the Mozay Point Indian Reservation. The school is funded by a Friday night bingo game in the school's gymnasium, which also provides employment for members of the community and a way for the community to come together, socialize, and admire the children's school work that teachers have hung on the walls. The two main characters

of the story, Earl and Alice, attended Indian boarding schools when they were children, and now, near the end of their lives, they are also part of the new era of tribally centered education. The duration and strength of their marriage is unusual in this collection, and it offers an important counternarrative to the abusive relationships in other stories. And yet even now their boarding school pasts will not let them go. Driving home from the bingo hall, Earl puts them both in danger by getting lost and stuck on the side of the road. Because of his mild dementia, he believes he is able to show off his girlfriend Alice to his pals at the boarding school, even though the now-closed Harrod boarding school is hundreds of miles away and his friends are likely dead. For Alice, every strange face is a reminder of her boarding school past: she became pregnant at boarding school and continues to search for the baby that was taken away from her. Furthermore, for reasons that are not clear, she and Earl do not have children who can look after them in their old age. Yet Alice is fortunate that her life did not spin out into ruins after boarding school, as happened to Hennen. And as the story shows, Earl and Alice are not alone: they are watched over by both human and spiritual communities in this indigenous universe.

The Dance Boots treats almost every character in the book with similar measures of understanding and even tenderness, especially Maggie, whose strength and selflessness create a moral center for the book. Grover is particularly gifted at unveiling the fullness of her characters with their understated but meaningful acts of recognition and affection: kindness in a basement cell, for instance, or the gift of the dance boots. Grover's language, too, exact and often metaphoric, evinces beauty throughout the book, even in the most unlikely people and circumstances, suggesting that all characters, regardless of their backgrounds, deserve our full attention and care. When it comes to fiction, this is not just good manners—it's good art.

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

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JACE WEAVER is the Franklin Professor of Native American Studies and director of the Institute of Native American Studies at the University of Georgia. He is the author or editor of eleven books. His most recent book is *Notes from a Miner's Canary* (U of New Mexico Press, 2010).

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MAJOR TRIBAL NATIONS AND BANDS

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

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

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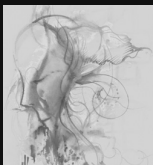
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