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FROM THE EDITOR

Revisiting

We complete a volume, 24, and begin a new year, 2013, with four essays that span the North American continent and traverse more than five centuries of Native American representation. Despite their geographic and chronological diversity, these forward-looking essays are linked by a central methodology: each revisits key moments and seminal figures at the intersections of specifically American Indian and broader American literary histories. Indeed, each essay focuses its analysis and develops its argument through processes of return, revision (in the literal sense of seeing again), and reassessment. Their results challenge our scholarship and provoke our teaching in important ways.

Annette Kolodny revisits a Mi'kmaq narrative of first contact with Europeans, published in English translation in 1890, in order to demonstrate how we might better access not only the cultural and historical contexts of transcribed oral traditions, which are essential to their effective use in the classroom, but also their distinctly *literary* complexity. Yael Ben-zvi then revisits Louise Erdrich's and Sherman Alexie's own literary revisits of Mary Rowlandson's seventeenth-century captivity narrative in order to explore how Rowlandson's ambiguous and multivalent legacy was repurposed yet again in the 1980s and 1990s, this time toward distinctly Native ends. Next, Rose Gubele revisits key sources of knowledge and speculation about the nineteenth-century Cherokee intellectual Sequoya and the revolutionary syllabary he developed in order to think through the ongoing significance of both the man and his work, not

only for contemporary citizens of the Cherokee Nation but for all of us. And, finally, Ken Roemer revisits some of N. Scott Momaday's best-known works from the twentieth century and some of his most recent compositions in the twenty-first in order to investigate Momaday's now five-decade long meditation on the need to continually revise ceremony to meet the challenges of extraordinary times and circumstance.

We hope these four examples of focused revisiting will spur readers toward literary revisits, revisions, and reassessments of their own.

Chadwick Allen

“The Coming of the White Man”

Native American First Contact Stories in the Literature Classroom

ANNETTE KOLODNY

1

Over the past dozen years, I have been studying extant Native American stories of first contacts with Europeans. For the most part my focus was the Eastern Algonquian-speaking peoples of the Canadian Maritime Provinces and northern New England.¹ Even within this relatively restricted geographical area, and within related ethnic and linguistic groupings, I found that Native American first contact stories do not necessarily share any commonalities. Some simply report a first sighting of a strange vessel, without further consequences.² Some offer details about the vessel or those aboard, but report no contact. Other stories tell of contact and the initial exchange of gifts. In some instances first contact is reported as benign and followed by friendly relations. In other instances contact quickly disintegrates into some form of treachery by the Europeans, followed by various expressions of hostility and resistance on the part of the Indians. Many of these stories are embedded within a prophecy frame. That is, the coming of the “white man” has been foretold, sometimes ambiguously, often with dire forebodings, and the contact story unfolds the fulfillment of that prophecy. As my research proceeded, I noticed that many of these stories have become the almost exclusive property of historians, anthropologists, and ethnologists, when, in addition, they offer a treasure trove for the Native American literature classroom.³ Whenever I assigned any of these stories in my own classes, for instance, my students always found them rich with nuance and

narrative ingenuity. For us, there was no question that these stories constitute a powerful literary archive.

This essay, therefore, is offered as an exercise in literary analysis that seeks to unravel the full narrative complexity of one particular first contact story.⁴ Needless to say, informing this analysis is the understanding that Native American texts emerge from and incorporate the uniqueness of their specific cultural traditions, and so *any* analytic practice must derive from and be appropriate to those same traditions. But as I hope to illustrate with the reading of a story from the Mi'kmaq of Canada, this understanding still forces upon us the kinds of questions that are always at the heart of our interrogation of any complex literary text: the “who” of the person doing the telling; the attitude of the teller to what is told; the perceived or implied purpose(s) of the telling; the implied or actual audience; the structural progression of the telling; and the relevant social, political, and economic contexts behind the telling. And because the story I have chosen for analysis is a prophecy tale, it also necessarily raises provocative questions about employing the authority of a traditional past for present purposes.

2

The 1880s saw what several scholars have called “an efflorescence” in the collection of stories told by Eastern Algonquian-speaking peoples in the Canadian Maritimes and northern New England (Day 75). For Euro-American folklorists in both Canada and the United States, these peoples were of special interest because, unlike so many of the tribes that had been relocated west of the Mississippi, the Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, and Abenaki peoples still inhabited at least small portions of their former homelands, still told stories associated with those long-familiar landscapes, and still spoke their Native languages. Unquestionably the most important contributor to the collection of Mi'kmaq lore was Silas Tertius Rand (1810–1899), born in Cornwallis, Nova Scotia. Rand, ordained a Baptist minister in 1834, became a preacher in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, in the 1840s and thereafter devoted the re-

mainder of his life to mission activity among the Mi'kmaq. Largely self-taught, but with a gift for languages, Rand learned several Native dialects and began translating Protestant religious materials for the purpose of bringing the Indians into the Protestant fold. As he put it in 1850, he intended to save the Mi'kmaq from the "darkness, superstition, and bigotry of Romanism" (to which the Mi'kmaq had been converted by the Catholic French in the seventeenth century) and introduce them to Protestant enlightenment (*Short* 11).

Even though Rand poured most of his prodigious energies into running his mission in Hantsport, Nova Scotia, and into translating the Bible, hymns, and various religious tracts into the Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, and Mohawk languages, he nonetheless found himself fascinated by the Indian stories he was hearing and increasingly collecting. As a result, between 1847 and 1889 he managed to amass some nine hundred handwritten quarto pages, most of the stories gathered from Native storytellers in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Rand's commitment to recording "the traditionary romances of the Micmacs" derived from his conviction that these stories helped to demonstrate "the intellectual capacity of the Indians" and thereby "the possibility of elevating them in the scale of humanity" (qtd. by Webster xlii–xliii).

As Rand described his method of collecting, the stories were related to him, "in all cases, in Micmac." Rand took notes in English (sometimes using Pitman shorthand) and then would later "write out the story in English from memory, aided by the brief notes I had made. But this was not all; I always read over the story in English to the one who related it, and made all necessary corrections" (qtd. by Webster v). Once Rand was satisfied that he had an acceptable transcript of the story in English, he destroyed his original notes. As Helen L. Webster, his editor and compiler, stated in her preface to *Legends of the Micmacs*, "the translations only have been preserved, in no case the narration in the original language" (Webster v).

The story I have chosen for analysis here was published twice, both times posthumously. Prepared for publication by Rand before his death, under the title "The Coming of the White Man Revealed. Dream of the White Robe and Floating Island," the story appeared

first in the May 1890 issue of the *American Antiquarian*. Webster, the faculty member in the Department of Comparative Philology at Wellesley College who oversaw the publication of Rand's full collection, *Legends of the Micmacs*, and wrote both the book's preface and its introduction, then published the story in 1894 under the title "The Dream of the White Robe and the Floating Island" in the *Legends* volume. Because the story is not widely known and has not previously been the subject of literary or textual analysis, I quote it here in full in the version from *Legends of the Micmacs* (225–27). This version includes two footnotes provided by Rand. In those few instances where the version published in the *American Antiquarian* is different, those differences are inserted in boldface within brackets.

[THE COMING OF THE WHITE MAN REVEALED.]

THE DREAM OF THE WHITE ROBE AND THE
FLOATING ISLAND.

[This account of the coming of the white man, revealed to a young woman in a dream, was related to me by Josiah Jeremy, Sept. 26, 1869.]

WHEN there were no people in this country but Indians, and before any others were known [**before they knew of any others**], a young woman had a singular dream. She dreamed that a small island came floating in towards the land, with tall trees on it, and living beings,—among whom was a man dressed [**and amongst others a young man dressed**] in rabbit-skin garments. The next day she related her dream, and sought for an interpretation. It was the custom in those days, when any one had a remarkable dream, to consult the wise men, and especially the magicians and soothsayers.¹ These pondered over the girl's dream, but could make nothing of it. The next day an event occurred that explained it all. Getting up in the morning, what should they see but a singular little island, as they supposed, which had drifted near to the land and become stationary there! There were trees on it, and branches to the trees, on which a number of bears, as they supposed,

were crawling about.² They all seized their bows, arrows, and spears, and rushed down to the shore, intending to shoot the bears; what was their surprise to find that these supposed bears were men, and that some of them were lowering down into the water a very singularly constructed canoe, into which several of them jumped and paddled ashore. Among them was a man dressed in white,—a priest with his white stole on,—who came towards them making signs of friendship, raising his hand towards heaven, and addressing them in an earnest manner, but in a language which they could not understand.

The girl was now questioned respecting her dream. Was it such an island as this that she had seen? Was this the man? She affirmed that they were indeed the same. Some of them, especially the necromancers, were displeased; they did not like it that the coming of these foreigners should have been intimated to this young girl, and not to them. Had an enemy of the Indian tribes with whom they were at war been about to make a descent upon them, they could have foreseen and foretold it by the power of their magic; but of the coming of this teacher of a new religion they could know nothing.

The new teacher was gradually received into favor, though the magicians opposed him. The people received his instructions, and submitted to the rites of baptism; the priest learned their tongue, and gave them the Prayer Book written in what they call *abootûlooeëgāsik* (ornamental mark-writing); a mark standing for a word, and rendering it so difficult to learn that it may be said to be impossible.

[No new paragraph; no break; no brackets] This [And this] was manifestly done to keep the Indians [done for the purpose of keeping the Indians] in ignorance. Had their language been reduced to writing in the ordinary way, the Indians would have learned the use of writing and reading, and would have advanced in knowledge so as to be able to cope with their more enlightened invaders; and it would have been a more difficult matter for the latter to cheat them out of their lands [lands, etc.] and other rightful possessions.

Such was Josiah's story. The priests who gave them this pictorial writing, whatever their motives may have been, certainly perpetrated one of the grossest possible literary blunders. It is bad enough for the Chinese, whose language is said to be monosyllabic and unchanged by grammatical inflection; but Micmac is polysyllabic, endless [**partly syllabic, 'endless,']** in its compounds and grammatical changes, and utterly incapable of being represented by signs.

1. Like the Egyptians, Chaldees, and other nations.
2. It is needless to say that it was a vessel with masts and yards, and sailors upon them moving about.

As recited by the storyteller Josiah Jeremy, like most Mi'kmaq narratives, this story is multilayered and complex. To begin with, the revelation of the strangers' imminent arrival comes as "a singular dream" dreamt by a "young woman" (later called a "young girl") rather than as a dream that came to any of "the wise men," "magicians," or "soothsayers." And when the young woman related her dream to them "for an interpretation," none of these could make anything of it. In general, among most of the Northeastern Woodlands tribes, "belief in knowledge gained through dreams" was ubiquitous and unquestioned (Phillips 62). Dreams could reveal "future events and the efficacy of courses of action" and dreams came to everyone (62). As the French missionary priest Chrétien LeClercq complained of the Mi'kmaq in 1691, "Our Gaspesians are still so credulous about dreams that they yield easily to everything which their imagination or the devil puts into their heads when sleeping and this is so much the case among them that dreams will make them come to conclusions upon a given subject quite contrary to those which they had earlier formed" (227).

When any individual demonstrated a special capacity for frequent and powerful dreams, that person became a kind of formalized dream practitioner for the group. In the first decades of the twentieth century, anthropologist Frank Speck studied the Penobscot in Maine and reported he was told that in earlier times the duty of these dream practitioners "was to warn of danger so that those who

received the warning could employ means to ward the trouble off or to avoid it. The power of the dreamer was employed not only for individuals but also for the benefit of the community. Before undertaking a hunting trip, parties would induce a dreamer to lie down, go to sleep, and "look around." The hunting party would then proceed in accordance with "the dreamer's revelation. Dreamers, moreover, were often induced to accompany hunting or war parties in order to serve with their gifts of vision" (Speck 269). Such "dream functionaries," as Speck termed them, had also been active among "neighboring tribes (Micmac, Malecite, Passamaquoddy, Abenaki)" (273, 272).

What appears to have rendered the young woman's dream "singular" was that it contained an order of information for which none of the recognized "dream functionaries"—that is, the "wise men, and especially the magicians and soothsayers"—were prepared. For those who could dream and predict all else in the Indians' precontact world, *this* dream was out of their ken. Had a known Indian enemy "been about to make a descent upon them, they could have foreseen and foretold it by the power of their magic." But this was different. This dream had no precedent in their known world, because what the dream portends will radically reconfigure that known world. The dream takes place in that final moment "when there were no people in this country but Indians, and before any others were known."

When the dream becomes manifest "the next day," there are subtle alterations between what was dreamt and what actually appeared. The young woman had reported seeing in her dream, on the floating island, "living beings,—among whom was a man dressed in rabbit-skin garments." But when the "singular little island . . . drifted near to the land and become stationary there," what the Indians saw were "a number of bears" who were subsequently identified as "men." And the man whom the girl dreamed was "dressed in rabbit-skin garments" now appeared, instead, as "a man dressed in white,—a priest with his white stole on." The girl affirms that what has materialized as "the coming of these foreigners" is what she saw in her dream. But the altered descriptors and the symbolic iconology of the story suggest much more.

In Mi'kmaq lore, the rabbit is a trickster figure, a figure whose actions bring disruption either by word or by deed (or by both together). In many stories, Rabbit (as a capitalized character in the story) is also usually a thief. Thus, the appearance of a rabbit figure—here “a man dressed in rabbit-skin garments”—is a warning of some imminent moment of loss, chaos, or disorder.

Additionally, the Mi'kmaq word for *bear* also carries the double meaning of “no one” or “not quite human.”⁵ In one recorded Mi'kmaq story, for example, two young girls get stuck in a tree and appeal to a passing bear to “take us down—even if you are only a sort of man” (see Wallis and Wallis 425). And while bear meat was a delicacy among the Mi'kmaq, bears were also known to be dangerous. Bears are thus highly ambiguous figures in Mi'kmaq lore, at once sources of food, sometimes very human in their movements and actions, and yet capable of easily crushing the unwary hunter with their enormous bulk and strength (35–36). That may explain why the Indians in the story “all seized their bows, arrows, and spears, and rushed down to the shore, intending to shoot the bears”—either as food or as harbingers of danger (or both).

Also symbolically significant is the transformation of “a man dressed in rabbit-skin garments” into the similarly phrased “a man dressed in white.” White is one of the four colors of the traditional Mi'kmaq “medicine wheel” (also sometimes called “the wheel of life”). Among their other meanings, each of the four colors is associated with a direction, and white refers to the east (that is, the realm of the rising sun).⁶ The “man dressed in white” is thereby associated with origins from the east. Even more important, “the man dressed in white” is then further identified as “a priest with his white stole on.” This connected train of association and transfiguration necessarily attaches a potentially ominous meaning to the priest whose original incarnation was as a “man dressed in rabbit-skin garments.” Taken together, the appearance of a trickster rabbit figure in the girl's dream, the *no one* (or “only a sort of man”) bear-beings who turn out to be human, and the final emergence of “a man dressed in white” portray more than just the arrival of previously unknown foreigners from the east. These are all also warning signals of some impending disruption.

As his full title for the version in the *American Antiquarian* (“The Coming of the White Man Revealed”) as well as his bracketed prefatory note above suggest, Rand accepted this as a narrative about the *first* “coming of the white man” whom he appears to have assumed were the French. But the French probably were not the first Europeans encountered by the Mi’kmaq as, even earlier, Norse, Basque, and Portuguese fishing vessels are known to have entered Mi’kmaq waters.⁷ That history aside, what seems to have interested the Baptist missionary most is that Josiah Jeremy’s story provided both him and the storyteller an occasion to criticize the Catholic missionaries sent by the French. In fact, in the paragraph that precedes the break and in the two closing paragraphs, it may be difficult to know just where the storyteller Josiah Jeremy’s voice breaks off and where Rand’s begins. Did Jeremy actually state that the Mi’kmaq “*submitted* to the rights of baptism,” thereby hinting at resistance, or was this Rand’s (perhaps unconscious) editorializing? Moreover, given the historical records that seem to indicate the Mi’kmaq took readily to the hieroglyphic scripts designed for them by various Catholic priests, is it plausible that Jeremy characterized these scripts as “so difficult to learn that it may be said to be impossible”? After all, those hieroglyphic scripts had a long history among the Mi’kmaq, and even in Jeremy’s day they were still in use.

Regrettably, much of what is known today about precontact Algonquian scripts on birch bark begins with the very missionaries who so assiduously attempted to replace the indigenous images with their own. The 1651–52 *Relation of Father Gabriel Druillettes* describes students in his catechism classes “using a bit of charcoal for a pen, and a piece of bark instead of paper” to take down their lessons. Ministering to the Natives of Maine, Druillettes had never instructed his pupils in writing and did not recognize the “characters” they employed (qtd. in Schmidt and Marshall 4). Sebastian Rasle, a French Jesuit missionary who began to work among the Indians of the Kennebec River area toward the end of the seventeenth century, described how one of the locals “took the bark of a tree upon which with coal he drew.” Rasle commented, “This is all the writing the Indians have, and they communicate among

themselves by these sorts of drawings as understandingly as we do by our letters” (267). Persuaded that he was dealing with a preliterate culture, Rasle never pursued the potential implications of his analogy between the Natives peoples’ “drawings” and European “letters.” But his contemporary, the Recollect missionary LeClercq, recognized that the Indians’ habit of “writing” on birch bark might be something he could exploit for the purposes of conversion. What LeClercq developed was something approaching a pictographic (or hieroglyphic) alphabet. Then, on sheets of birch bark, he produced a series of hieroglyphic billets (or leaflets) filled with prayers and Bible passages that he distributed to his pupils as study aids.⁸

A series of missionaries who followed LeClercq then adopted (or sometimes adapted and refined) his writing system. The last of these, Abbé Antoine Simon-Pierre Maillard, a member of the Spiritan order who settled at the Malagawatch mission on Cape Breton Island in 1736, anticipated that the French would not long hold out against British claims to Canada and so took the added step of organizing “a cadre of hieroglyphic-literate [Indian] specialists . . . to serve as lay catechists under the leadership of prayer chiefs” (Schmidt and Marshall 10). In this way, not only did Maillard further disseminate the script among the Mi’kmaq in Canada but, as well, he ensured the continuity of Catholic practices even if the Anglican British eventually took the French colony (as they did) and ousted the priests. Still, there is a certain irony in the fact that none of the missionaries from any of the orders (Franciscan, Jesuit, Recollect, or Spiritan) ever chose to teach the Indians *alphabetic* literacy—*despite the Indians’ entreaties*. But teaching the Indians European letters and thereby giving them direct access to Christian and secular texts alike could prove dangerous. As Maillard himself wrote, “I believe that if they would read and write our language, they would be able to induce a lot of troubles among the nation both at the religious and political levels” (qtd. in Schmidt and Marshall 11). Thus Jeremy had good reason to reject the priests’ scripts and reinforce the story’s identification of the priest with a trickster rabbit figure.

Without some knowledge of this history, however, one might suspect that Rand was putting his own words in Jeremy’s mouth.

Yet Rand was careful to insert the sentence “Such was Josiah’s story,” thereby seeming to indicate that everything preceding that sentence actually came from Josiah Jeremy and not from Rand. Any source of confusion, therefore, lies in the fact that in the version of the story earlier published in the *American Antiquarian*, what appears above as the penultimate paragraph was not indented as a new paragraph but was integrated into what still appeared to be Jeremy’s narrative.⁹ Even so, the change of focus in that final paragraph clearly indicates that this is now the voice of Rand the linguist.

In the closing paragraph, with the phrase “whatever their motives may have been,” Rand briefly gave the benefit of the doubt to the Catholic missionaries who had preceded him. But as a scholar of languages—their grammars and their vocabularies—he could not forgive the priests for the *linguistic* blunder of attempting to reduce a language as grammatically complex as Mi’kmaq to “pictorial writing.” And he could not forgive them for having “perpetrated one of the grossest possible *literary* blunders” when they attempted to translate the exalted language of holy scripture into “pictorial writing” for an Indian language that itself was “utterly incapable of being represented by signs” (my emphasis). As both linguist and missionary, Rand wanted the story-loving Indians of the Maritimes to know the stories from the scriptures in all their “literary” glory and complexity—and in the Indians’ own highly nuanced grammar.¹⁰ After all, this was the very task to which Rand had dedicated himself as he translated hymns and Bible passages into Mi’kmaq by using twenty-two characters from the English alphabet.¹¹

But for all his attentiveness to the details of vocabulary and grammar, Rand did not always grasp the symbolic meanings of the stories he was hearing in Mi’kmaq. When he discussed the story of *Koolpejot* in an *American Antiquarian* article published in January 1890, for example, Rand admitted that at first he only understood *Koolpejot* as “a great medicine man; he has no bones, always lies out in the open air, and is rolled over from one side to the other twice a year, during spring and fall.” Rand later learned what the story was really about when “an intelligent Indian . . . suggested to me that this was a figurative representation of the revolution of the seasons”

(“Legends” 8). Similarly, Rand probably did not grasp all the “figurative” meanings embedded in “The Dream of the White Robe and the Floating Island.” And nothing in Rand’s extant papers hints that Jeremy tried to enlighten him.

Nonetheless, we can still hear the encoded expressions of resistance in Jeremy’s narrative. The dream and the arrival of the foreigners took place in some distant past. But their meaning is *his* present. As Jeremy well understood, the symbolic prefigurations in the girl’s prophetic dream eventually took on their real historical meaning: “This teacher of a new religion,” like the trickster rabbit, tricked the Indians out of learning to read and write “in the ordinary way” and thereby facilitated the Indians’ being cheated “out of their lands and other rightful possessions.” The not-quite-human bears proved to be only “more enlightened invaders”—human, but in the Indians’ eyes, dangerous, powerful, and in their guile and deception “only a sort of man.”

We have no way of knowing how attuned Rand was to these symbolizations, and his scrupulous methods for recording these stories suggest that he did not intentionally alter any of the nuances of Jeremy’s narrative. Still, there are certainly word choices and locutions that suggest Rand’s beliefs and predilections more than Jeremy’s. To know that with any certainty, of course, we would have to examine Rand’s early notes taken in English or shorthand. But it is precisely such intermediate jottings that Rand destroyed. And today one cannot even check the manuscripts from which Webster compiled the *Legends* volume because almost the entire Rand collection was destroyed in a 1914 fire that consumed Wellesley’s College Hall where the handwritten manuscripts of his collected stories were held. As a result, there is no way to establish anything even close to what conventional literary scholars would consider an authoritative text.¹²

But then narrowly conventional modes of analysis would not serve here because the notion of a fixed authoritative text would have seemed preposterous to the storyteller, Josiah Jeremy. Mi’kmaq storytelling has always been about maintaining cultural continuity rather than establishing fixed or unalterable narratives. In traditional Mi’kmaq practice, “each retelling of a story, even by the

same person, might be different” (Whitehead 2). According to Ruth Holmes Whitehead, an expert on Mi’kmaq history and culture in Canada, “The structure was fluid, accommodating itself to the teller’s will” (2). Thus, even today “individual story-tellers often transfer elements from one [story] cycle to another” according to their “intent or whim” (2). The object is always to adapt the story to the needs or context of the current moment.

3

Given this understanding of Mi’kmaq storytelling practices, Jeremy’s story is best approached as one stage of what had been an ever-evolving palimpsest of oral texts. That is why Jeremy’s version does not seek specifically to identify the newcomers by nationality or ethnicity. For example, a foreigner “who came towards them making signs of friendship, raising his hand towards heaven, and addressing them in an earnest manner, but in a language which they could not understand” might refer to any number of early arrival moments, with or without priests (Rand, *Legends* 226). We also know that many of the early sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European fishing and exploratory vessels had priests aboard to say mass. But it was not any of these *first* priestly arrivals who “learned [the Mi’kmaq] tongue, and gave them the Prayer Book written in . . . (ornamental mark-writing).” That began later with LeClerc in 1678. Thus Jeremy’s story was hardly about the arrival of one specific priest. Instead, Jeremy’s story conflated into a single unified narrative a series of events that must have occurred in different places within Mi’kmaq territory over many years and involved several different personages.¹³ The Europeans with their priests, including the French, did not arrive just once; there were probably seriatim first sightings and first arrivals at different sites within Mi’kmaq territories. In traditional Mi’kmaq fashion, the purpose of this story was not to chronicle each and every specific event—in the way Euro-Americans write history—but rather to distill the connections between and the shared meanings of these events.

This is true, too, of the physical descriptors in the story, which

were intended to convey not so much the appearance of these strangers but, more importantly, their *nature*. Significantly, it was the nature of the strangers that linked the first arrival with those that followed. “A man dressed in rabbit-skin garments,” men who look like bears, and “a man dressed in white”—all these particular details have been selected so as to identify the strangers with tricksters, bringers of discord, thieves, potential brutality, and, with the white garment, origins from the east. And from Jeremy’s point of view, whether the perpetrators were Basque, Portuguese, French, English, or some other nationality, murderous violence, cheating the Natives in trade, and sowing discord and disruption were the hallmarks of almost all the European contacts, invasions, and settlements. Therefore, in a sense, Jeremy’s story of a supposedly *first* arrival both *foretold* and also *told* all the ensuing European arrival moments to follow. It was all different versions of the *same* story, over and over again.

Which raises these questions: What purpose did it serve to tell such a story and keep it alive? And who was its audience? One obvious answer is that some kernel of the story was probably first preserved as a fragment of historical memory that served as a warning to the Mi’kmaq people. If they appeared again, these foreigners were to be recognized for what they were. They were to be regarded with suspicion. They could be dangerous. And the Mi’kmaq should not be as unprepared as they were the first time, “when there were no people in this country but Indians, and before any others were known.”

But over time, as more and more Europeans invaded and settled, the story grew and changed, preserving several phases in the process by which seriatim Mi’kmaq storytellers systematically reinterpreted and restructured the meaning of contact so as to rationalize, after the fact, their peoples’ current experiential reality. And by Jeremy’s day, the story performed yet another kind of cultural work. It confirmed that there was wisdom in the old ways and that dreams needed to be attended to. They were not delusions that “the devil puts into their heads,” as the priests had preached, but powerful communications that dared not be dismissed. What the young girl’s

dream portended symbolically did eventually play out in reality. The story thereby confirmed the power of the old ways as an important conceptual weapon in the ongoing struggle between Mi'kmaq belief systems and invasive European worldviews.

Thus the primary audience for the story were the Mi'kmaq themselves, and it is not difficult to understand *why* such a story was told and retold. Functionally, it effectively integrated a broken and fractured present into a culturally cohesive continuum; and it thereby helped make sense of the present moment. To put it another way, prophecy tales are not merely the representations of cultural continuity; they are themselves the carriers of that continuity. As this Mi'kmaq story about a girl's dream makes clear, the present is at once the sad fulfillment of her prophetic dream and simultaneously the proof of cultural perdurability. The story thereby maintains a kind of narrative congruence between a traditional past and a postcontact present. And for Jeremy, prophecy not only allowed the present to remain faithful to the past; prophecy also promised that the future, too, would remain faithful to the past.

4

We must not forget, therefore, that the immediate audience for Jeremy's story was Rand himself, yet another religious teacher attempting to bring yet another "new religion" to the Indians. Jeremy was also trying to say something to Rand.

In traditional Mi'kmaq storytelling, as performed by Jeremy, stories were rarely told in isolation. Instead, the teller spun out several stories (or an entire story cycle), and Mi'kmaq listeners understood that the stories were meant to be comprehended *intertextually*. That is, they were meant to relate to, elaborate upon, and comment on one another. And so that same day, Jeremy told Rand another story. This was the story of the culture hero and symbolic ancestor "Glooscap . . . leav[ing] the Indians," carried on the back of a huge whale "across the water, to a distant land in the west" (Rand, *Legends* 228). Pointedly, however, Jeremy made sure to include in this story a reference to Glooscap's promised return by ending the story with the

following: “The Micmacs expect his return in due time, and look for an end of their oppressions and troubles when he comes back” (229).

Understood intertextually, the story about the young girl’s prophetic dream and the story about Glooscap’s farewell—with its embedded promise of return—combined into a narrative not solely of loss but of continuity. This, then, was the subtext that Jeremy may have been trying to convey to Rand: *The prophesied depredations of the white man notwithstanding, the story of the Mi’kmaq people has not yet played itself out in full. There is still more and better to come, an end to current “oppressions and troubles.” That, too, has been foretold. And as the girl’s prophetic dream demonstrated, that which has been foretold does come to pass.*

Given the fact that in the 1860s the provincial governments of Canada continued their policies of enforced assimilation even as the populations of Native peoples continued to dwindle, Jeremy’s choice of stories to tell Rand was tantamount to an expression of defiance. Taken together, these stories projected the Mi’kmaqs’ ultimate survival as a unique people. In short, all by themselves, these prophecy tales proclaimed the Indians’ authority over their own history—past, present, and future. Whether Rand heard that proclamation of resistance, we shall never know. But with sensitive tools of analysis, we can hear Jeremy’s voice of resistance in the literature classroom.

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This essay is dedicated to the memory of my dear and loving friend, the late Patricia Clark Smith, professor of English at the University of New Mexico, who always honored both her Mi’kmaq and her European heritages.

NOTES

1. The fruits of this research constitute part of the subject matter of my most recent book, *In Search of First Contact: The Vikings of Vinland, the Peoples of the Dawnland, and the Anglo-American Anxiety of Discovery*.

2. See, for example, a previously unpublished Penobscot story like this in Kolodny (276–77).

3. A great deal of superb recent scholarship has already begun to open the literature classroom to more sophisticated understandings of Native texts, both oral and written, and to the complex relationship between orality and literacy. See, for example, Lisa Brooks, *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008); Maureen Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography, 1827–1863* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2004); Drew Lopenzina, *Red Ink: Native Americans Picking Up the Pen in the Colonial Period* (Albany: State U of New York P, 2012); Bernd Peyer, *The Tutor'd Mind: Indian Missionary-Writers in Antebellum America* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1997); and Phillip H. Round, *Removable Type: Histories of the Book in Indian Country, 1663–1880* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2010).

4. Please see Kolodny, *In Search of First Contact* (280–313) for a comparative reading of the Mi'kmaq story discussed here and Joseph Nicolai's 1893 prophecy text, *The Life and Traditions of the Red Man*, which describes several different first contact moments culled from Penobscot traditions.

5. A *Dictionary of the Micmac Language* (1902), compiled by Jeremiah S. Clark "From [Rand's] Phonographic [i.e., phonetically marked] Word-Lists," lists *moo* as meaning "not," a prefix "used only with other words"; and *mooin* is translated simply as "a bear" (101). Unfortunately, neither of Rand's dictionaries—from English to Mi'kmaq (1888) or from Mi'kmaq to English (posthumously published in 1902)—indicates whether he *heard* the double meaning of "a bear, Mooin" (*Dictionary* 1888, 32). Clearly, Rand understood the grammar of negation in Mi'kmaq and listed the prefix *moo* as meaning "not" (181). Yet the earlier English to Mi'kmaq dictionary, prepared by Rand himself, translates "bear" as *mooin* (without any alternative dialect spellings such as *muin*, *moo'in*, *mou'een*, or *mu-win*). And it translates "No one" as *moww'een*, again without alternative spellings and with no indication that the two words—*mooin* and *moww'een*—might be interchangeable or, to the ear, almost indistinguishable in some dialects (32, 180). In short, there is no way to check whether Rand was aware of the story's pun. Even after forty years of collecting stories and studying the language, Rand knew that he had not entirely mastered Mi'kmaq. Among the papers in the Silas Tertius Rand Collection held by Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, are many (often undated) miscellaneous notes in Rand's handwriting, reminding himself to follow up on questions of language that he did not yet understand (see Deposit No. D1900.06: 3/17). In that same collection, a notebook in Rand's handwriting dated "Hantsport, August 1885" includes

the following: “This is a scribbling book in which questions are inserted in the Mi’kmaq language and words for examination, before they are entered in the dictionary” (see Deposit No. D1900.06: 3/18).

6. The other colors on the Mi’kmaq medicine wheel, with their directional association, are yellow, to the south; red, to the west; and black, to the north. In Mi’kmaq, the word for “daylight” or “dawn,” *wōbūn*, has the same root as the word for “white,” *wobāe* or *wōbāāk* (see Rand, *Dictionary* 1888: 76, 280).

7. For that history, see my longer reading of this story in *In Search of First Contact* (262–65, 280–95).

8. LeClercq celebrated the enormous success of his experiment, noting that his pupils demonstrated “so much readiness in understanding this kind of writing” that they learned their lessons “in a single day” and even taught the script to their friends and family members (qtd. in Schmidt and Marshall 6). Use of LeClercq’s script spread from one band to another, and—as two Canadian scholars put it—“receiving hieroglyphic leaflets from the . . . priest . . . became a matter of great significance to the Mi’kmaq” (Schmidt and Marshall 7).

9. In the version of the story from the *Legends* volume printed here, both the line break and the paragraph break following the word “impossible” were probably introduced by Webster, Rand’s editor.

10. For a discussion of Rand’s attitude toward and relationships with Catholic priests who continued to minister to the Mi’kmaq, see Virginia P. Miller’s “Silas T. Rand, Nineteenth Century Anthropologist among the Micmac,” especially 240–45; see also Abler, “Protestant Missionaries.”

11. Rand determined that certain consonants—like *x*—had no corresponding sound in Mi’kmaq and so simply omitted them when translating religious texts into the Mi’kmaq language. For these translations, Rand utilized the phonetic spelling system originated and popularized by Sir Isaac Pitman, the English educator who also invented a phonetic shorthand system.

12. Compounding that textual problem is the fact that Webster, Rand’s editor at Wellesley, says that “in preparing this work for publication,” she made “some changes . . . deemed necessary for the sake of greater clearness . . . [and] to remove . . . grammatical inaccuracies.” Webster also regularized “the spelling of some of the Indian proper names” (viii).

13. By 1600 the French were actively engaged in the fur trade along the Saint Lawrence, but it was not until 1604 that Membertou, a Mi’kmaq band

chief, persuaded them to establish the first permanent European trading post in Canada at Port Royal, at the mouth of the Annapolis River along the shores of the Bay of Fundy (the large bay separating New Brunswick from the peninsula of Nova Scotia). The first missionary in Canada was the secular priest Jessé Fleché, who survived less than a year at Port Royal in 1610. There Fleché baptized twenty-one Mi'kmaq, including Membertou and his family. The priest died soon after. He was followed by the arrival in 1611 of the first two Jesuit missionaries to work in Canada, Pierre Biard (1567–1622) and Enemond Massé (1575–1646).

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Up and Down with Mary Rowlandson

Erdrich's and Alexie's Versions of "Captivity"

Yael Ben-Zvi

In 1984 following the tercentenary of Mary Rowlandson's 1682 captivity narrative, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, Louise Erdrich published a poem entitled "Captivity," whose speaker the poem's epigraph identifies as "Mrs. Mary Rowlandson." The next decade saw the quincentenary of Christopher Columbus's first transatlantic voyage and the publication of Sherman Alexie's narrative poem "Captivity," which reproduces the title and epigraph of Erdrich's earlier work. The poems target the Rowlandson legacy, a construct of national memory that owes its cultural intelligibility to the silencing of potentially subversive readings, contexts, and meanings. Like the memory of Columbus, the Rowlandson legacy is composed of recurrent retrospective impositions of illusory semantic stability on a messy past, and Erdrich and Alexie contribute to it critically by complicating the memory, dimensions, and content of that past.

As William Spengemann shows, "*Columbus*" is an unstable label with various meanings that have "changed continually over the centuries," and while it "always has a referent," each citation of that label emphasizes one of multiple "referents [that] differ markedly from case to case" (120–22, emphasis in text). Similarly, in the Rowlandson legacy repeated citations over diverse contexts and periods have detached its subject from her particular historical circumstances and reattached her to presentist national concerns. Thus, the immediate local success of *Sovereignty and Goodness* pales by comparison to its far wider posthumous appeal, which began in the 1770s when Rowlandson was cast as a protonational heroine.¹ Mid-twentieth-

century scholars returned to Rowlandson to honor her as founder of the original genre of American literature, and later, feminist scholars recovered her again, casting Rowlandson as a founding mother of US literature and culture.²

Recovery efforts subsided by the century's end as exceptionalist national perspectives on the genre, book, and author became outmoded,³ but the Rowlandson legacy hasn't died. In the wake of 9/11, journalist Susan Faludi urged *New York Times* readers to remember Rowlandson as "key to our own experience" in the face of "the fear of home-soil terrorism" ("America's" A29).⁴ Bringing the conflicts that shaped colonial New England to bear on contemporary geopolitics, Faludi classifies seventeenth-century colonization as "our original wilderness experience," King Philip's War as "our original war on terror," and Rowlandson as the "original female captive" (*Terror* 13, 213, 219). In this typology Rowlandson becomes a harbinger of US liberties while the Wampanoag, Narragansett, and Nipmuck anticolonial campaign that subjected her to eleven weeks of captivity is reduced to a precursor of Al Qaeda's attack.

This historical logic fits what Jean M. O'Brien calls "firsting and lasting," the imagination of New England as the absolute national origin that obliterates indigenous histories. As "the 'first' New Englanders are made to disappear," O'Brien writes, "the colonial regime is constructed as the 'first' to bring . . . authentic history to the region" (xv). Since *Sovereignty and Goodness* made a particularly significant contribution to this process (33), I treat the Rowlandson legacy as the literary version of the historiographic dynamics that O'Brien studies. As Rowlandson was thought to have "inaugurate[d] a native American genre" (Stern 378),⁵ her "firsting" helped marginalize early Anglophone Native literature, and historian Jill Lepore locates the "lasting legacy" of *Sovereignty and Goodness* in "the nearly complete veil it has unwittingly placed over the experiences of bondage endured by Algonquian Indians during King Philip's War" (126).

I argue that Erdrich's and Alexie's "Captivity" poems pierce this veil by disrupting the exclusively national functions of the legacy's affective and mnemonic investments. Dean Rader and Robin Riley Fast agree that Native poetry often emphasizes "hybridization" and

"dialogism" (Rader, "Epic" 128; Fast 13), and I foreground Erdrich's and Alexie's respective mobilizations of affect and memory in the service of a dialogic critique of hegemonic firsting that challenges the reproduction of historical identification. The creative power of these poems derives from their intriguing expansions of the intertextual networks that sustain the legacy. In terms of Rader's analysis, they further hybridize an already multivocal tradition, and by doing so in markedly different ways they tacitly reach beyond the specific features of the Rowlandson legacy to demonstrate the inherent vulnerability of any intertextual tradition to the risks and promises of reappropriation. Erdrich appropriates Rowlandson's voice, reworks the legacy's emotional clichés, and reverses *Sovereignty and Goodness's* emphasis on Puritan conversion by imagining Rowlandson's postcaptivity longing to return to her captors' world. While Erdrich rewrites Rowlandson's response to captivity, Alexie abandons Rowlandson's historical circumstances and perspective almost completely in order to critique the cultural impact of the collective memory that the Rowlandson legacy disseminates. Instead of the liberating message that Faludi finds in the legacy, Alexie underlines the legacy's ongoing historical toll on an unnamed Indian reservation.⁶

My analysis begins with the intertextual structures of Rowlandson's narrative and of Erdrich's and Alexie's interventions in its legacy. Then I discuss Erdrich's and Alexie's representations of language as a crucial constitutive element of the legacy and its disruption. The following two sections foreground love and memory as the major thematic foci through which Erdrich and Alexie, respectively, engage the legacy. I conclude by contextualizing this discussion in critical explorations of the roles of trauma and storytelling in Native cultural production. Throughout this article I read Erdrich's and Alexie's poems alongside particular scenes from *Sovereignty and Goodness* in order to explore their interventions not only in the legacy but also in its textual source.

DIMENSIONS OF INTERTEXTUALITY

Erdrich's and Alexie's versions of "Captivity" employ intertextual methods that highlight the significance of retrospective judgment

in the production and maintenance of the Rowlandson legacy. In sixty-nine lines divided into six stanzas, Erdrich focuses mostly on Rowlandson's perception of captivity as she revises and reorders specific details from *Sovereignty and Goodness*. Whereas Rowlandson's narrative represents the return of its first-person heroine to the colonial fold as a happy ending tainted only by posttraumatic insomnia, Erdrich redefines Rowlandson's redemption as traumatic loss. In the poem the "Rescued" Rowlandson is frustrated by her distance from her captors' community and from the nurturing environment within which this community lives (Erdrich 11).⁷ Alexie writes "Captivity" as a sonnet that he narrativizes to disrupt its formal constraints. As Rader argues about Alexie's similarly structured "Sonnet: Tattoo Tears" (1996), "Each stanza is a mini-telling, a mini-history" (Rader, "Epic" 134) in a poem comprising fourteen brief sketches. In eight of these stanzas, various Mary Rowlandsons (some named explicitly, others rendered anonymous) visit a late-twentieth-century reservation and flesh out the dangerous conditions of contemporary colonization. By appropriating citation into storytelling, the poem points to the liberating potential of a tradition that clashes with the destructive effects of the legacy. Both poems "reoralize" Rowlandson's "story and history," as P. Jean Hafen puts it ("Sacramental" 148), and root their own intertextual practices in broader and earlier intertextual dimensions that span oral traditions, written records, and, in Alexie's case, film and TV productions.

Erdrich and Alexie remind us that intertextuality is not an afterthought next to which *Sovereignty and Goodness* stands as absolute original. The narrative itself is a hybrid intertext; Rowlandson negotiates her memories of captivity through multiple biblical passages that help her to measure, interpret, and represent her experiences.⁸ In a seminal scene Rowlandson naturalizes the kinship between these major facets of her text: on February 21, eleven days into her captivity, Nipmuck warriors attacked Medfield (Lepore xxviii), and in addition to "the *Englishmens* scalps" they brought back, Rowlandson writes, one of them "asked me, if I would have a Bible, he had got one in his basket" (76).⁹ Rowlandson uses this literary transaction to fortify what Andrew Newman calls the "literacy frontier"

that distinguishes the "cultural self-definition" of colonial captives from those of their Indian captors (31). Rowlandson's text presents the English Bible as an exclusionary source of authority that facilitates portrayals of Indians as beastlike creatures whose speech is rendered unintelligible or irrational although the narrative shows that Rowlandson and her captors communicated by using English as well as Algonquian words.

Even though the Bible and its English translation fail completely to guard Rowlandson's sense of cultural boundaries (as Newman argues, this is why her narrative is particularly critical of Christian Indians [37–38]), the Rowlandson legacy teaches us to isolate her memory from Indian texts. Apart from the fact that Nipmuck James Printer set the type for the second and third editions of *Sovereignty and Goodness* (Derounian 245; Salisbury 49; Rex 85), the Medfield fight from which Rowlandson got her Bible produced a previous literary transaction that collapses distinctions between literate colonists and illiterate Indians. On their way out of Medfield, having destroyed "some fifty houses" and killed or captured "thirty inhabitants" (Lepore 91), the Nipmuck warriors left a note on the post of a bridge they had just demolished. Stating that the English "provoked" them to war, they declare that "there are many Indians yet" and promise to fight "twenty one years" if the English are interested. "You must consider the Indians lost nothing but their life," they write; "you must lose your fair houses and cattle" (qtd. in Gookin 494).¹⁰ The faded memory of this Nipmuck text reminds us both of *Sovereignty and Goodness's* erasure of potentially unsettling events and of the legacy's continual investment in obliterating them.

The Nipmuck note's ostensible devaluation of Indian "life" has puzzled critics. Hilary E. Wyss and Andrew Newman read the note as ironic appropriation of colonial logic; Wyss argues that it utilizes the English view of Indian lives as less worthy than colonial possessions (43–44), and Newman suggests that it highlights the Puritan view of Indians as "agents of God" who "threaten to deprive the New Englanders of the material prosperity that has made them forgetful of their God" (40). But in the context of the intertextual encounters that the Rowlandson legacy silences, the tenses that qualify the

Nipmuck discussion are particularly significant as the note limits future losses to colonial possessions and confines Indian losses to the past. The Rowlandson legacy encourages us to view this assessment as wishful thinking that the eventual outcome of the war proved wrong, but if we consider the note outside of the genocidal teachings of the legacy, we sense the legacy's erasure of competing historical narratives.

The intertextual complexities that the legacy tries to silence form a significant facet of Erdrich's and Alexie's poetic interventions in it. Erdrich approaches them primarily by manipulating colonial voices right from her poem's epigraph:

He (my captor) gave me a bisquit, which I put in my pocket, and not daring to eat it, buried it under a log, fearing he had put something in it to make me love him.

—From the narrative of the captivity of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, who was taken prisoner by the Wampanoag when Lancaster, Massachusetts, was destroyed, in the year 1676.
(Erdrich 9, emphasis in text)

This epigraphic citation is based on a sentence that Erdrich paraphrases from another captivity narrative, John Gyles's *Memoirs of Odd Adventures, Strange Deliverances, etc.* (1736). Alexie reproduces this epigraph almost verbatim, respelling "biscuit" and slightly revising the attribution (98).¹¹ As Fast states, the epigraph helps Erdrich "destabiliz[e] received history," but Fast, who doesn't trace the epigraph to Gyles, reads it as Erdrich's "intentionally ironic invention" and focuses on its absence from Rowlandson's text (190; see Rader, "Sites" 108, for a similar reading). By tracing the epigraph to Gyles we can begin to appreciate Erdrich's and Alexie's critiques of the hyper-citationality that the Rowlandson legacy facilitates. The epigraph casts Rowlandson as the ultimate captive whose memory does not only erase Indian voices but also colonizes other English captives. Erdrich's and Alexie's misattribution of Gyles's words extends and critiques the citational range of the Rowlandson legacy whose erasure of historic specificity enables it to portray captivity as a transhistoric event and invite their readers to interrogate erased histories. When Erdrich does so in 1984, she destabilizes an osten-

sibly unified legacy. When Alexie reproduces her epigraph in 1993, he carries Erdrich's critique of the legacy's expansionist tendencies further. The more persuasive the epigraph, in other words, the more powerful the legacy.¹²

Gyles's original sentence concerns neither white-Indian relations nor the romantic love that dominates the epigraphs. Abenaki forces had captured the ten-year-old Gyles in Pemaquid, Maine, in 1689, and his captor soon met the Jesuit missionary Louis Pierre Thury, who offered to purchase Gyles (Vaughan and Clark 99n13). The transaction never materialized but led to another offering that triggered Gyles's fear:

The Jesuit gave me a biscuit which I put into my pocket and dare not eat but buried it under a log, fearing that he had put something in it to make me love him, for I was very young and had heard much of the Papists torturing the Protestants, etc., so that I hated the sight of a Jesuit. (Gyles, 99)¹³

Gyle's captured mother told him she would rather see him dead than "sold to a Jesuit" (Gyles 99), and he responds to the intercolonial struggles that shape his fear by rejecting the communion that Father Thury's biscuit symbolizes. He removes the biscuit from hand to pocket and eventually buries its promise of spiritual and physical sustenance in what he still perceives as a foreign space governed by Abenaki-Jesuit relations. Erdrich and Alexie suppress the complexity of the scene by reducing Gyles's multiple conflicts and affects to a tacitly romantic struggle between Rowlandson and a single male captor whose portrayal is far less detailed than Rowlandson's (often appreciative) representations of her Narragansett master Quinnapin. The next section continues this exploration of intertextuality by examining the functions of language in Erdrich's and Alexie's disruptions of the Rowlandson legacy.

LANGUAGES OF CAPTIVITY

In the epigraph and throughout the poem, Erdrich engages captivity narratives by appropriating colonial language, a choice which ampli-

fies a central effect of the Indian captivity narrative genre (and of its role in the creation of a “literacy frontier”)—its elision of direct Indian expression. But in epigraph and poem, as in the original narrative, the communicational boundaries policing this frontier are constantly blurred. Erdrich imagines a Rowlandson who wishes in vain to distinguish her own speech from that of her captor’s and to use Christian speech acts to maintain this distinction:

There were times I feared I understood
his language, which was not human,
and I knelt to pray for strength. (9)

In the epigraph and the poem, verbal communication is confined primarily to the colonial captive’s internal monologue while colonial-Indian interactions are often articulated through nonverbal exchanges of food in relation to the environment.

By contrast to reports in *Sovereignty and Goodness* of Rowlandson’s constant begging for food among her captors (as well as numerous instances in which they offer her food and a few when they deny it), Erdrich revises Rowlandson’s internal voice in the face of nourishing communication:

I told myself that I would starve
before I took food from his hands. (10)

By speaking only to herself, the poem’s speaker creates a crucial analogy between verbal and nutritional exchanges. This promise is a direct negation (and thus a tacit recognition) of the power of what Erdrich calls “love medicine,” which Amelia V. Katanski defines as Erdrich’s “unifying trope,” the “medicine that heals and holds people together,” and “the power that keeps them going” (71). Hafen associates “love medicine” more explicitly with “Forgiveness and reconciliation,” and its offering with the “capacity to love, heal, and forgive” (*Reading* 20, 31).

As the poem unfolds, its imagined Rowlandson accepts her captors’ love medicine, and at the end of the poem she learns to distrust colonial linguistic hierarchies and appreciate Wampanoag food. The end of Erdrich’s poem, like that of Rowlandson’s narrative, focuses

on Rowlandson's postcaptivity trauma. From her colonial home, the Rowlandson that Erdrich creates remembers how her captor "led his company in the noise" (11). As I argue elsewhere, representations of Indian ritual as "noise" is one of the strategies by which colonial captivity writers distinguished their cultural loyalties from the social circumstances into which captivity forced them and insisted that insurmountable foreignness prevented their assimilation into Indian life (Ben-zvi xxi). Erdrich rejects this logic by turning Indian "noise" into an attractive rather than repellant social act into which Rowlandson wishes to be invited. As Rader states, "Erdrich's poems are about desires . . . to unify seemingly opposing ideas, worldviews, and gestures" ("Sites" 102), and at the poem's end, the reconstituted colonist pines for the very unification that colonization renders impossible.

While Erdrich engages the Rowlandson legacy by appropriating and rewriting Rowlandson's voice into desired unification, Alexie responds to Erdrich's poem by accentuating the legacy's distance from any authentic voice that *Sovereignty and Goodness* might preserve and by frustrating plots of unifying love. The speaker of Alexie's "Captivity" is identified ambiguously as an "Indian man" who "has haunted [Rowlandson's] waking for 300 years" (100) in a historical process that replaces the sexual tones of Erdrich's poem with the fatal consequences of colonization. The poem represents Indians as crucial actors in the maintenance of Rowlandson's oppressive legacy and thus also as those who might have the power to end it. Alexie suggests that Rowlandson's voice is either irrelevant or must be silenced in order to enable a critical examination of the effects of the legacy.

Alexie's "Captivity" articulates Rowlandson's voice twice; the third stanza is the first to name "Mary Rowlandson" (who appears nameless in the two previous stanzas) as "The speech therapist who tore the Indian boy from his classroom, kissed him on the lips, gave him the words which echoed treaty: *He thrusts his fists against the posts but still insists he sees the ghosts*" (98).¹⁴ The echo stands for the false promise of colonizing equality, but these words also echo the sentence "He thrusts his fists against the posts and still insists he sees the ghosts," a pronunciation-manual text popularized by Stephen

King's *It* (1986).¹⁵ Alexie twists this ostensibly meaningless quotation by replacing the conjunction "and" with "but," highlighting the tension between the erasing knowledge imposed by the speech therapist who teaches the "Indian boy" the "language of the enemy."

The stanza resists the hierarchies that structure this scene: "Both of us force the sibilant, in the language of the enemy" (98), as if that language is imposed on both; as though Rowlandson is also caught up in the trap of forced colonial performance. Alexie said that his texts' English is tantamount to "using fire to protect yourself from the fire" (Nelson 139); here he uses Rowlandson against the colonial import of her legacy and thus reproduces Erdrich's strategy by foregoing the nourishing love of which the epigraph warns. The next stanza defines the "language of the enemy" through a series of more or less oxymoronic phrases ("*heavy lightness*," "*serious van-ity*," but also "house insurance"), which ends in an ironic denial of the forgiveness that Erdrich's love medicine envisions: "How much longer can we forgive each other?" (99). By putting "the language of the enemy" in Rowlandson's mouth, Alexie signals his participation in a broader Indian poetic tradition. Janice Gould writes that "in the process of transformation and relocation" (such as those that drive both "Captivity" poems), "Native American poetry does just what Joy Harjo says it does: it 'reinvents the language of the enemy'" (Rader and Gould, introduction 18). And Rader adds that Native poets create a "postcolonial genre that not only reinvents the enemy's language but also reinvents and preserves Native American and American poetics" ("Epic" 133). A significant part of that poetic in Alexie's "Captivity" is the silence it imposes on Rowlandson.

The only place in the poem where we get something that might sound like Rowlandson's voice elides its import. Following the reference to the "Indian man" who's been "haunt[ing]" the Rowlandson legacy "for 300 years," the speaker tells "Mary Rowlandson" that he saw her while he was "walk[ing] home from the bar" where that haunting "Indian man" had "left" her "sipping coffee in the reservation 7-11." "But all you could do," he addresses her, "was wave from the window and mouth the eternal question: *How?*" (100). Refusing to attribute any meaningful statement to Rowlandson, the

speaker rejects her voice by confining it behind a "window" that demotes her speech to "mouth[ing]." At the end of the poem, Alexie replaces Rowlandson's muffled voice with the idiomatic English of prohibitive public-space signs (e.g., "DON'T WALK"; "CORRECT CHANGE ONLY"; "NO PARKING ZONE") that he dubs "White man's rules"—particular forms of "the language of the enemy" that police Indian behavior in linguistic continuation of colonizing speech acts such as the Rowlandson legacy (101). The next two sections contextualize these different approaches to Rowlandson's voice in Erdrich's treatment of love and in Alexie's reworking of memory.

LOVE

The facility with which Erdrich and Alexie conflate Gyles and Rowlandson through the threatening temptations of "love" mirrors the citational erasures that structure the Rowlandson legacy, where affective binaries popularize a simplistic image of captivity as the ruthless violence of savage men against innocent, God-fearing women and children.¹⁶ In *Sovereignty and Goodness*, the word "love" often fortifies Rowlandson's sense of cultural boundaries. On her first night in captivity, Rowlandson wishes to sleep in a deserted English house and faces her captors' taunting mockery: "will you love *English men* still?" (71). From this point on, most of Rowlandson's references to love reaffirm her ties with Christian English culture although at one point she is glad that her son's captor "loved him" (91) and at another she uses the noun ironically regarding her negotiation with Metacom. Knowing that her release had already been scheduled, she refers to Metacom's false promise to facilitate her redemption in return to her favors: "I thanked him for his love; but I knew the good news as well as the crafty fox" (104).

Erdrich's poem manipulates Rowlandson's policing of "love" in order to achieve the speaker's perspectival and cultural conversion into Indian social norms. Following the epigraph, Erdrich's "Captivity" opens with the revision of a seminal section of *Sovereignty and Goodness*, the "Sixteenth Remove," where Rowlandson sorts her loyalties and orders her affections. Fluctuations between opposite

poles dominate the section; crossing the “swift” and “cold” “Baquag River,” Rowlandson fears that the “stream” would “cut [her] in sunder.” Weak by starvation, she weeps in “distress” but soon regains her strength and cheer at hearing that the colony began negotiating for her release. Then her “heart skip[s] within [her]” at the sight of riders “dressed in *English Apparel*,” whom she later identifies as Indians and insists on the “vast difference between the lovely faces of Christians, and the foul looks of these Heathens” (Rowlandson 94).

The chronology of *Sovereignty and Goodness* supports this distinction by eventually restoring the colonial order that the narrative posits as its historic foundation and telos. Erdrich discards Rowlandson’s chronology and recharges its affective values by opening “Captivity” at the second crossing of “Baquag River,” which Rowlandson had already crossed earlier, when a “Raft” her captors had prepared spared her from its water (Rowlandson 79). Erdrich’s “Captivity” opens with Rowlandson’s reflection on her (second) crossing of the Baquag:

The stream was swift, and so cold
I thought I would be sliced in two. (Erdrich 9)

But the next line positions Rowlandson’s captor as a savior who “drag[s her] from the flood” (9). This revision simultaneously rejects the conventional critical imagination of the route of Rowlandson’s captivity as increasing physical and spiritual distance from a Puritan cultural core and sets the stage for Erdrich’s reversal of captivity into redemption and restoration into loss.¹⁷

Sovereignty and Goodness recurrently links captivity and loss, a process that culminates in the death of Rowlandson’s daughter Sarah eight days following the attack in which both were wounded and captured. Rowlandson emphasizes Sarah’s hunger and her captors’ death threats and elides their offering of food.¹⁸ Erdrich turns this tragic focal point into the origin of nourishing love (or “love medicine”) where a nurturing environment and norms of collective responsibility that Lisa Brooks calls “the common pot” (3–4) preserve both child and community. Erdrich rewrites Rowlandson’s voice as saying,

I could not suckle and my child's wail
put them in danger. (9)

The captor's "woman," "with teeth black and glittering," feeds Rowlandson's "child milk of acorns" (10). Although Erdrich retains Rowlandson's perception of her captors as demonic, she replaces the dangerous "wilderness" Rowlandson sees around her with a nurturing environment where acorns replace lost breast milk.

The next two stanzas further distance the evolving relations between Rowlandson, her captor, and the environment from Puritan conventions. Erdrich revises another significant piece of *Sovereignty and Goodness*, where Rowlandson eats the "young and tender" embryonic "Fawn" of a pregnant "Deer" (Rowlandson 93). In Rowlandson's narrative, eating the fawn affects her moral judgment: "it was so young and tender," she writes, "that one might eat the bones as well as the flesh, and yet I thought it very good" (93). Although Rowlandson tries to distinguish ethically between the bones as savage food and the flesh as civilized nourishment, her hunger and sensual experience collapse this distinction. As Trudy Eden observes, seventeenth-century perceptions of Englishness were closely tied to food—popular fears associated the consumption of anything other than "English foods" with the loss of "English identity" (33).

Erdrich capitalizes on this idea as she rewrites this scene:

It was so tender,
the bones like the stems of flowers,
that I followed where he took me. (Erdrich 10)

By replacing the bone/flesh binary with blossoming love and fertility, Erdrich turns Rowlandson's captivity into voluntary participation; as Rowlandson willingly "follow[s]" her captor, he "cut[s] the cord" that binds her, and captivity produces sexualized liberation (10). The Rowlandson of Erdrich's "Captivity" fears "God's wrath" following her implicit sexual encounter with her captor, but she soon overcomes colonial causality: "this, too, passed" (10). Up to this point in the poem this reassurance is the most direct instance of Rowlandson's gradual adoption of her captors' worldview, and it is followed

by the last two stanzas where this process intensifies as Erdrich reinterprets the ending of Rowlandson's narrative.

In *Sovereignty and Goodness*, the redeemed Rowlandson contrasts the enmity and hunger that dominate her experience of captivity with the nurturing sustenance she associates with the colonial project:

I remember in the night season, how the other day I was in the midst of thousands of enemies, & nothing but death before me: it is then hard work to perswade myself, that ever I should be satisfied with bread again. But now we are fed *with the finest of the Wheat*, and, as I may say, *with honey out of the rock*. (111)

Rowlandson ends this reflection by quoting Psalms 81:16, which contrasts God's promised salvation to his abandonment of the people who would not follow his ways. Puritans perceived King Philip's War as a divine punishment and warning for New England's violations of obedient piety, and at the end of her captivity Rowlandson is reassured of her conversion. Erdrich reverses these reflections on cultural and spiritual belonging. The "night season" refers to Rowlandson's postredemption posttraumatic insomnia, but in Erdrich's poem, insomnia stems from longing rather than anxiety:

I lay myself to sleep
on a Holland-laced pillowbeer.
...
And in the dark I see myself
as I was outside their circle. (11)

Late in Rowlandson's captivity Quinnapi asks her to "make a shirt for his *Papoos*, of a Holland-laced Pillowbeer" (Rowlandson 101).

In Erdrich's rendition, the European commodity reminds Rowlandson of Quinnapi and helps shift her position from "the midst of thousands of enemies" to lamentable exclusion from a Native "circle" to which she pines to return. In the last stanza Rowlandson's memory clashes with her present condition:

I could no longer bear
 the thought of how I was.
 I stripped a branch
 and struck the earth,
 in time, begging it to open
 to admit me
 as he was
 and feed me honey from the rock. (11)

Erdrich deprives the colonists of "honey from the rock" and turns it into the exclusive blessing of Native experience. In the narrative, Rowlandson mentions the colonial hope that "*if their corn were cut down, they would starve*" in order to emphasize that despite such destruction, "strangely did the Lord provide for them," and she lists the foods that her captors often shared with her (105).

In Erdrich's "Captivity," nurturing love is integral to Indian culture and foreign to colonial experience. This dichotomy results, in the poem, in Rowlandson's eventual wish that the "earth" would "admit" her as it did her captor. At the end of King Philip's War, the poem positions Algonquian existence in a separate realm that is no longer accessible to colonists. As Erdrich closes her "Captivity" with insurmountable distance between Rowlandson and her captors, so does Alexie's version deny any direct, successful conversation between Rowlandson or her legacy and Indians. But whereas Erdrich emphasizes the significance of nourishing food in the construction of Rowlandson's postcaptivity longings, Alexie highlights the consumption of toxic contaminants as a powerful symbol of collective memory under colonization. His "Captivity" exemplifies Hafen's statement that Alexie's works "present a fusion of historical sensibilities and grim realisms of contemporary Indian life on the Spokane Reservation" ("Rock" 71).

MEMORY

Following the epigraph, Alexie steers his "Captivity" away from Erdrich's reinvention of Rowlandson's voice by stressing the impor-

tance of mutually constitutive storytelling and memory: "When I tell you this story, remember it may change: the reservation recalls the white girl with no name or a name which refuses memory" (98).¹⁹ Alexie strips the Rowlandson legacy of the iconic name that flattens past events by obliterating the multilayered complexities of the historical relations that produced it. He turns the legacy into a series of retellings and thus tacitly casts himself as Erdrich's follower. Since both Erdrich and Alexie published "Captivity" early in their publishing careers, Alexie seems to cast the retelling of the legacy as a rite of passage for Indian writers, and he refuses to anchor meaningful memory or knowledge anywhere except in the reservation, which becomes the only reference point for appraising the significance of the Rowlandson legacy.

While the poem begins with the reservation as a remembering subject, the next stanza develops the consequences of this construction by considering the impact of genocidal legacy on collective Indian memory. At this point Alexie's "Captivity" gets closer to the import of *Sovereignty and Goodness* as it dramatizes a scene of carnage that affirms Mary Rowlandson's survival, but it twists this central theme of her narrative by questioning Rowlandson's mnemonic abilities on which the credibility of her narrative depends. Recalling a car accident "on the reservation road," Alexie writes: "Five Indians died in the first car; four Indians died in the second. The only survivor was a white woman from Springdale who couldn't remember her name." The next stanza begins with the speaker's declaration: "I remember your name, Mary Rowlandson" (98). Whereas Laura Arnold Liebman argues that the "perilous road trips" motif in Native American poetry "symboliz[es] the antagonism between the American Indians' journey and the damaging influx of white culture and technology" (547), I would like to stress the "genocidal logic" of this math, which "holds that indigenous peoples must . . . *always* be disappearing, to allow nonindigenous people's rightful claim over this land" (Smith 49, 53, emphasis in text).

Sovereignty and Goodness constitutes Rowlandson as surviving witness of a war that transformed the geopolitical landscape of colonial New England. Throughout her narrative Rowlandson tries

unsuccessfully to "count the number" of her captors, who seem to her "as thick as the trees" (79, 80), and her failed counting efforts echo those of her editor, Increase Mather, who keeps records of the fighting, dead, captive, and surrendered Natives (Mather 98, 108, 116, 123, 127, 130, 138). While Molly Farrell emphasizes tensions between Rowlandson's unsuccessful enumerations and Mather's successful ones in the context of early English demographic discourse (60, 66, 67), I find common ground between their mutual interests in a "genocidal logic" that is articulated increasingly through numeracy at this period. Farrell looks at demographic numeracy in the context of internal English developments, but the process she analyzes had significant impact on colonial culture as well. By the time *Sovereignty and Goodness* is published, it matters little that Rowlandson couldn't count her captors, and her efforts at doing so still testify to her colonial loyalties; in the wake of the war the narrative reassures its readers that divine providence has transformed power relations and protected the colonists by repositioning Rowlandson from "the midst" of "the numerous crew of Pagans" to "the midst of tender-hearted and compassionate Christians" (82, 110). As we saw, Erdrich disrupts this process by turning Rowlandson's redemption into loss. By contrast, Alexie translates the "genocidal logic" of *Sovereignty and Goodness* into a twentieth-century reservation where fatalities abound.

The speaker considers ironically "how necessary" "Mary Rowlandson" has become in order to question the historic grounds and telos of her legacy. "Was it 1676 or 1976 or 1776 or yesterday when the Indian held you tight in his dark arms and promised you nothing but the sound of his voice?" the speaker asks, critiquing the legacy's blurring of historic distinctions (98). Whereas Erdrich's focus on Rowlandson's voice disguises her scrutiny of the legacy, Alexie's refusal to reproduce that voice enables him to develop a more direct (yet no less ironic) historical inquiry. In the legacy's literary history, 1676 marks Rowlandson's captivity; 1776 refers to the era's surge in the narrative's popularity; and 1976 may stand for the text's critical recovery, but this is only one part of the multilayered histories that Alexie's question invokes. Two stanzas later the speaker states, "This must be 1876 but no, it is now" (99), and in stanza 9 the speaker

announces, “The 20th century overtook the reservation in 1976, but there we were, stuck in 1975” (100).

Whereas Erdrich’s take on the Rowlandson legacy positions it in mythic time that eventually keeps Rowlandson “stuck” in a colonial present that she longs to replace by returning to an Indian “circle,” Alexie’s pinpointing of specific dates creates a counternational memory. Both poems use the legacy to critique clear distinctions between past and present and both highlight the suffocating weight of ongoing colonization. Alexie’s jumbled, mock centennials resist the ostensibly progressive course of national history from King Philip’s War (1676) through the US Declaration of Independence (1776) and the US Centennial and Battle of the Little Bighorn (1876) to the US Bicentennial (1976). Even the historical origin (1676) lacks authenticity as it reproduces scholars’ conventional updating of Rowlandson’s calendar. Somewhat like the reservation, her capture is “stuck in” 1675 because she used the Julian rather than the Gregorian calendar.²⁰ Unlike the reservation, however, the Rowlandson legacy has survived through citations that have established her continuing relevance or necessity.

Alexie’s rejection of national history shifts from years that oscillate between past and present to backward-moving months: the first stanza’s “white girl with no name” “filled the reservation school” in “October” (98); in stanza 3, the “speech therapist” named “Mary Rowlandson” “visited the reservation grade school” in “September” (98); stanza 9 relates a memorable “summer” when reservation kids kidnapped a “white boy” and “kept him captive” in a chicken coop on “July 4th,” shooting him with a snowball kept frozen “since March” (100); and stanza 12 reminds Mary Rowlandson that in “June,” “the water is gone” and the speakers’ “cousins are eating Lysol sandwiches” (101). In rejection of fixed origins, the text avoids the February beginning of Rowlandson’s captivity although its own October beginning invokes Columbus’s first Caribbean landfall.

Lysol sandwiches are one item on a menu that turns the consumption of food into self-destructive, suicidal, or even cannibal activity. Alexie replaces Erdrich’s nourishing love medicine with oxymoronic staples that include an “Indian in a bottle” that an

anonymous Rowlandson (cast as a "white tourist") may buy at the reservation gas station, and that consists of an Indian whose "beer-belly" was pushed into the bottle "piece by piece" (99); ritualized beer drinking ("Frame 1: Lester reaches for the next beer. Frame 2: He pulls it to his face by memory, drinks it like a 20th century vision") (101); and a half-rhetorical question, half-statement that the speaker offers "Rowlandson" regarding the status of "Tobacco and sugar" as "the best weapons" (99). While Rowlandson "chew[s] salmon strips" and "sip[s] coffee at the reservation 7–11," an Indian "half-swallow[s] a 'white boy' who 'chew[s] uranium' in the mine before he is abused at the chicken coop (100). Since the items that Rowlandson consumes are the only foods in the poem that seem free of the devastating conditions of reservation life, her legacy thrives at the expense of Indians.

Yet Indians constantly monitor the Rowlandson legacy. An "Indian man" has "haunted [her] waking for 300 years" though she might not have noticed him: "Did you see him, Mary Rowlandson," the speaker asks before adding, "I saw you there, again" (100). At this late point in the poem the speaker and Rowlandson become parallel mythic figures who perform and monitor her legacy over various time frames. Stanza 12 further blurs the distinction between early and late, first and last, by returning to the epigraph that explores the haunting function of the legacy and attempts to separate haunting past from haunted present: "It's too late, Mary Rowlandson, for us to sit together and dig up the past you buried under a log, salvage whatever else you had left behind. What do you want? I cannot say, 'I love you. I miss you'" (100–101). It is "too late" in two senses: first, fatal conditions have matured as "the water is gone and my cousins are eating Lysol sandwiches," and second, the speaker vows to end the Indian maintenance of the legacy, stating that his cousins "will never search for you in the ash after your house has burned to the ground one more time. It's over" (101).

Late in his poem, Alexie evokes the originary setting of Rowlandson's narrative—her burning house. *Sovereignty and Goodness* obliterates the history of colonial conflicts that preceded the (second) attack on Lancaster in which Rowlandson was captured, and

Alexie uses that scene to emphasize the ongoing conflicts that still structure the legacy. Ironically, the speaker's engagement with the legacy keeps it alive and subverts his wish to terminate it; toward the end of the poem, Rowlandson may yet survive his "cousins." Still, his "chang[ing]" "story" continues to disrupt the repetition of the well-worn legacy as the poem's end refuses closure. Certainty is limited to "the slow motion replays of our lives" and what the text calls "*the white man's rules*" (101, emphasis in text). While as Fast argues, the most "devastating" effect of Erdrich's "Captivity" on Rowlandson is the dissolution of the "certainties on which she has relied for emotional and spiritual survival" (Fast 192), Alexie portrays a reservation where Indians can "depend" only on the reproduction of colonizing patterns. His "Captivity" ends with the speaker waiting "for the bus to the dark side of the moon, or Oz, or the interior of a drum," ironic utopias beyond colonialism. As these destinations remain open-ended, the possibility of arrival at any of them is deferred by the focus on the bus's scheduled departure "at 3 a.m." (101). Descending from years and months to hours, the poem eventually suggests that one may avoid the oppressive effect of colonial history by focusing on the small-scale temporal frames of a fractured yet pregnant present.

TRAUMA

Erdrich's and Alexie's poems end with unfulfilled wishes; Erdrich refuses to imagine Rowlandson's postcaptivity return to the "Native space" (Brooks) that her own narrative helped obliterate from historical memory, and Alexie subverts his proposal to end the legacy by reappropriating, refashioning, and redistributing historic repetitions. Both texts explore and respond to "Native trauma," which Nancy Van Styvendale argues is characterized by "trans/historicity." Revising trauma theory's focus on a single originary traumatic event, Styvendale highlights the "intergenerational" trauma that results from "performative citations in the present rather than its fixity in the past" and explains that past and present blur by "a return to an unrepresentable past made present through its reiteration" (203, 206, 218).

But this is only part of the poetics of both "Captivity" poems because "performative citations in the present" characterize not only the Rowlandson legacy (and that of colonization), but also Indian poetry. Hafen explains that "the historical topics of many of Erdrich's poems take the reader into the mythic, fluid past of tribal stories and histories" ("Sacramental" 148), and Rader, who discusses poems by Simon Ortiz and Janice Gould, states that "though each poet manipulates historical realities uniquely, both transform the past into the poetic present" to produce intensive, emotionally charged poems ("Epic" 136). Rader further states that "Native writers seek the poem because of the poem's ability to fuse disparate elements: present and past, poetry and prose, the lyric 'I' and the communal 'we'" (Rader and Gould, introduction 11). Thus, the temporal dynamics of poetic engagements with storytelling can offer resistance to the traumatic effects of the legacy.

On this background we may reread the beginning of Rowlandson's narrative, which Erdrich erases and Alexie revives. *Sovereignty and Goodness* begins with the ostensibly unprecedented violation of colonial serenity: "On the tenth of February 1675, Came the *Indians* with great numbers upon *Lancaster* . . . several Houses were burning, and the Smoke ascending to Heaven" (68). This originary fiction obliterates the complex colonial relations that led to the war. Rowlandson was no stranger to Lancaster's neighbors and original inhabitants, the Nashaway Nipmuck, whose warriors attacked her house that day. A young Christian Nipmuck had worked in her house, and his kinsmen already attacked Lancaster in August 1675 (Salisbury 17, 14, 18, 21). Since Algonquian spies James Quannapohit and Job Kattenanit warned of a second raid on January 24 (Leach 157; Mather 110), the surprise with which *Sovereignty and Goodness* opens is carefully constructed to enable the trauma it produces to draw the clear affective boundaries on which the legacy thrives. By replacing these boundaries with other forms of trauma and by recontextualizing the relations between past and present within storytelling rituals, both poems elaborate the effects of historical trauma, apply them to the voices that *Sovereignty and Goodness* silences, and offer creative resistance to the "genocidal logic" of colonial legacies.

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NOTES

1. For Rowlandson's Revolutionary reception, see Burnham, 63–67.
2. The foundational work in this process is Carleton; subsequent studies include Pearce and VanDerBeets, *Indian Captivity*. For treatment by feminist scholars see, for example, Namias, xiv.
3. See, for example, Snader and Colley.
4. For an earlier association of Rowlandson with 9/11, see Rotella.
5. Numerous writers reproduced this idea.
6. The reservation of Alexie's "Captivity" is linked to Spokane through the reference to "Springdale[, Washington]" in the second stanza (98) and several other tacit references.
7. "Here is the worst of this captive's experience," Fast writes; "she has been rescued into the knowledge of unremitting loneliness" (192).
8. Fast writes that "even the biblical quotations expose heteroglossia and dialogic potential, as Rowlandson struggles to bring her experiences into line with her culture's most authoritative language" (194).
9. Throughout this article, emphases in quotations from Rowlandson's narratives appear in her text.
10. The note has been attributed to James Printer; for attribution sources, see Lepore, 283n96.
11. Alexie's attribution reads: "—from the narrative of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, who was taken captive when the Wampanoag destroyed Lancaster, Massachusetts, in 1676" (98).
12. Rader "suspect[s] that Alexie assumes the passage appears in Rowlandson's *Narrative*" ("Sites" 113n6), but Alexie might have read Rowlandson's narrative carefully. In this case, his interest in "chang[ing]" the "story" (Alexie 98) by removing it from Rowlandson's voice would actually be gratified by the conscious reproduction of a fake attribution.

13. Gyles had remained six years with Abenakis who eventually sold him to a French colonial fur trader. He returned to New England in 1698 after almost nine years of captivity and published his narrative in 1736.

14. Throughout this article, emphases in quotations from Alexie's "Captivity" appear in his text.

15. The oldest version I found in a brief Google Books search is Samuel Niles Sweet, *Practical Elocution* (Albany: Erasmus H. Pease, 1846), 22.

16. Fast similarly states that "if we accept the epigraph at face value (as most readers must), then we have begun our reading by replicating earlier readers' likely acceptance of Rowlandson's assumptions" (190).

17. For readings of Rowlandson's sense of the physical wilderness in these terms see Slotkin, 109; Kolodny, 18–20; and Huhndorf, 173; for views of her perception of the spiritual wilderness in similar terms see Hambrick-Stowe, 259; Ebersole, 21; and Loughheed, 293.

18. Later in the narrative Rowlandson eats "a few crumbs of Cake, that an *Indian* gave my girl the same day we were taken" and that she had then put in her "pocket" (Rowlandson 92). Theresa Lynn Gregor ties Erdrich's and Alexie's epigraphs to this initial rejection of Indian food in *Sovereignty and Goodness* (71n10).

19. On the community-healing functions of storytelling in Alexie's works, see Liebman, 544; and Peterson, 68.

20. Rowlandson follows the Julian calendar to date her capture to February 10, 1675, although the Gregorian calendar puts the same day as February 20, 1676. During her captivity the Gregorian calendar was already used by some Europeans, but England continued to follow the Julian calendar well into the eighteenth century because Puritans perceived the Gregorian one as a tool of Catholic domination.

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Utalotsa Woni—"Talking Leaves"

A Re-examination of the Cherokee Syllabary and Sequoyah¹

ROSE GUBELE

In Armstrong Woods, California, I stood with one hand on a giant sequoia, staring up, straining to see the topmost branches as they disappeared into the vault of the sky. The red bark under my palm felt like coarse prickly hair, and the earth was thick and springy beneath my feet. The sacred silence was broken only by the whispered prayers of countless voices in the wind through the boughs. The scent of spicy soft pine filled the air, and light filtered down through the branches, like sun through stained glass.

From childhood I had accepted as fact that the great sequoias were named for the Cherokee man Sequoyah, who had introduced the syllabary to many of my ancestors. Subsequently my academic training taught verification of all information, so I began an investigation into the history of how the sequoias were named. I discovered that the coastal redwood, *Sequoia sempervirens*, was named in 1847 by botanist Stephen Endlicher. Several authors have varying hypotheses concerning the origin of the name *sequoia*, and one of these theories links this name to Sequoyah, the Cherokee inventor of the syllabary. However, other sources dispute this possibility based upon the fact that nowhere in Endlicher's writings is there any indication that he was aware of the man Sequoyah (Hartesveldt et al. 180). Was Endlicher aware of the existence of Sequoyah and thus named the sequoias after him, or is the similarity between the two words merely coincidence? I realized that it was impossible to discern the truth.

However, that doesn't indicate that I can't discern the Truth; the

use of capital *T* implies a truth that goes beyond facts. In Cherokee, the word *duyugodv* means “truth,” but it also implies righteousness, honesty, and uprightness.² The English word *truth* can also contain these implications, but it can further signify “facts.” Furthermore, the Cherokee word *duyugodv* implies a moral responsibility, whereas the concept of the English word *truth* does not always equate with justice. In Cherokee, *duyugodv* is the kind of truth that transcends facts. Moreover, *duyugodv* is the kind of truth that we hear in our stories, the “moral” of the story, which isn’t dependent on verifiable factual information.

The Truth in this situation is that, whether or not Endlicher knew about Sequoyah, there is something about these trees that makes people think of Sequoyah. I realized that the Truth behind the mystery had nothing to do with the name *sequoia*. Instead, it had to do with the characteristics of the trees themselves. Their Latin family name, *sempervirens*, means “ever-living”; the tree earned this name not only because of its longevity, but also because it survives catastrophic events like floods and fires. Even when the tree is cut down, the trunk will sprout (Becking 2). Knowing this makes the Truth clear to me. Whatever the origin of their name, sequoias are as strong and enduring as the Cherokee people and our language.

In the following pages, I attempt to discern the Truth, the *duyugodv*, about Sequoyah and the syllabary. I do not attempt to discern facts concerning Sequoyah, because “virtually everything about this remarkable man is controversial” (Conley, *Cherokee Thoughts* 167). That is not to say that I won’t look at the details of Sequoyah’s life, or the varying accounts of those details. My goal is to find the Truth by examining the overlapping accounts, comparing to find common themes, to reach the “heart” of the story. In the process, I examine a variety of forms of evidence from oral traditions to written accounts about Sequoyah. I give higher credence to oral traditions, for most of the oral stories were passed down by people who knew Sequoyah or who are his descendents.³ Truth is the central goal of the oral stories, even though the facts differ. They all work to preserve the Truth, the *duyugodv*.

I also examine the syllabary to discern its Truth. The facts con-

cerning the syllabary, beginning from the time of its revelation, are relatively undisputed, especially compared to the details of Sequoyah's life. However, as I demonstrate, the syllabary was, and is, perceived in different ways by Cherokee people and the dominant culture.

I examine written evidence concerning Sequoyah and the syllabary, biographies and interviews, produced by non-Cherokees. These have differing agendas, so I am more skeptical of them. Some European writers were unconsciously racist in their discussions of Sequoyah,⁴ and some demonstrated an agenda regarding the syllabary, while others relied on hearsay. By hearsay, I mean speculation recorded by European writers and then passed on as "fact." I see hearsay as fundamentally different from oral traditions because the goal of the authors differs. Hearsay may be complete speculation with no foundation in Truth or recorded data, but because of the prestige associated with the author's name, this speculation can be repeated as "fact." In short, hearsay is primarily "rumor." Oral traditions, however, may differ with regard to the "facts" and details, but the essence of the story remains intact and True.

The Truth about Sequoyah and the syllabary does not rest on factual information. The only important fact is that no story, oral or written disputes that whether he invented it himself or re-discovered an ancient form of writing, Sequoyah brought the syllabary to the Cherokee people. This act gave us a precious gift, one that has immense cultural implications. The syllabary was used as a vehicle for cultural preservation during the Trail of Tears and beyond; it was, and is, used to transmit and disseminate spiritual texts, and it has been used to create and encourage the production of a body of national literature.

UTIIYVHI (BALANCE)

In the preface of *The Shadow of Sequoyah*, the late Jack Frederick Kilpatrick writes that Cherokees are "the Indians that everybody knows about but that almost nobody really knows" (vii). Kilpatrick's words are incredibly accurate, especially with regard to Sequoyah. I suspect

that Sequoyah's cultural background played a role in the controversies that surround him. Historically we have had to appear to be accommodating to Europeans in order to survive. As Marilou Awiakta argues, there is a long-standing Cherokee tradition that involves "psyching the system" by adapting one's outward form as necessary, while maintaining one's inner integrity (187). The outside of a person can be changed; how a person is perceived can change, just so the inner person remains steadfast. This is a trickster tactic that is often used against a very powerful enemy. As Craig S. Womack points out, "Disguises are necessary against an enemy with more power—one cannot win by means of brawn, so more subversive methods are employed" (152).

This philosophy coordinates well with the Cherokee concept of balance, which emphasizes the need to focus on the inside. According to Cherokee traditions, the world is made up of complementary elements, all of which are interconnected and in need of one another. For example, men and women are opposite, but not in opposition. They both need one another, and both have different strengths and weaknesses that work cooperatively (Awiakta 23). All complementary elements, like male/female, are tied together so that if something affects one, it affects the other. Cherokee poet and essayist Marilou Awiakta uses the symbolism of a web to describe the interconnectedness. She writes:

The Creator made the Web of Life and into each strand put the law to govern it. Everything in the universe is part of the web. Stars, trees, oceans, creatures, humans, stones: we are all related. One family. What happens to one will happen to all, for the Creator's laws function this way. They teach us to cooperate and live in harmony, in balance. (196)

Therefore, maintaining balance involves following the "law" associated with each strand of the web, to use Awiakta's words.

Truth and appearance can be seen within the concept of balance as a complementary pair. In order to survive, many of us have to appear to be something we are not. Our inner Truth, who we really are, is something we need. We have to hold on to our cultural identi-

ties so that we don't lose ourselves. We gain strength from our history, our culture, our stories. However, we have to survive in this world as well, so we need to wear a mask. We don't violate the law of this complementary pair (Truth and appearance) as long as we remember who we are and where we come from. If we remain Cherokee inside, then what we "appear" to be doesn't matter. It is just a survival tactic. Most Cherokees I've known understand this concept and practice it. I practice it. The cultural climate was more acutely tense during Sequoyah's lifetime, so I suspect Sequoyah "psyched the system" as well. In Sequoyah's case he didn't need to "psych the system" actively. The dominant culture during the time had a definite agenda, and they saw Sequoyah through a lens that reflected their own ideology. It was easy for them to see Sequoyah and the syllabary as agents of assimilation. So all Sequoyah needed to do was to remain silent.

SSIQUAYA (SEQUOYAH)

I begin by recounting the "accepted" story of Sequoyah. According to the familiar story, Sequoyah is lauded as an "illiterate Indian genius" who was able to create a system of characters to express words in the Cherokee language (Foreman, *Sequoyah* 3). According to the often-told story, Sequoyah was born in Tuskegee, Tennessee, the son of a Cherokee woman and white man, and was raised traditionally within the tribe, though he did take an English name, George Guess or Gist (3). Sequoyah "realized that there was a magic in the written word that set apart from others those who could read and write it," and he wanted to have a piece of that "magic" for his tribe (4). So, beginning in about 1809, Sequoyah started a project that would take approximately twelve years, the creation of the syllabary, a system of writing for the Cherokee language (5).

Cherokees initially ridiculed his efforts, but eventually they embraced Sequoyah's writing system, and in 1825 Sequoyah was presented with a medal by the Cherokee Nation to honor his accomplishment. The medal was made of silver and inscribed (in English on one side, Cherokee on the other) with the statement "Presented

to George Gist by the General Council of the Cherokee Nation, for his ingenuity in the Invention of the Cherokee Alphabet, 1825.” The medal featured a design of crossed pipes and a likeness of Sequoyah (Foreman, *Sequoyah* 8). The well-known painting of Sequoyah painted in 1828 by Charles Bird King features him wearing the medal and holding a copy of the syllabary in his hands.

Although the above story is often recounted in books regarding Sequoyah, nearly every part of Sequoyah’s story is debatable. The date of Sequoyah’s birth, the date and place of his death, the spelling of his name, and many other elements of his story vary from one account to the next (Giemza 135). In fact, “The scarcity of reliable documentary evidence makes the task of piecing together the facts of Sequoyah’s life reminiscent of the quest for the historical Jesus” (Fogelson, “Varieties” 108). Ironically one of the few facts upon which all Sequoyah biographers agree is that the details of Sequoyah’s life are difficult to discern.

In many of the accounts the ethnocentrism of the authors is apparent. It is difficult to say how much impact the authors’ attitudes had on their accounts. For example, in the 1956 *Sequoyah: Leader of the Cherokees* Alice Lee Marriott and Bob Riger write, “It never occurred to Sequoyah to wonder if he thought of writing in this way—as the most important single thing in the world—partly because his own father had been a white man” (99–100). This is a statement that reveals a great deal of speculation. The authors could not have possibly known what Sequoyah thought. This is clearly a case where the authors arrived at their conclusions because of their own cultural assumptions. Another popular account, George E. Foster’s *Se-Quo-Yah, the American Cadmus and Modern Moses: A Complete Biography of the Greatest of Redmen, around Whose Wonderful Life Has Been Woven the Manners, Customs and Beliefs of the Early Cherokees, Together with a Recital of Their Wrongs and Wonderful Progress toward Civilization* tells Sequoyah’s story dating from the time before his birth, with Foster speaking in the voice of a first-hand witness to events that he could not have seen. Though Foster confirms that Sequoyah’s father was white, most of the book is so obviously inaccurate that it calls each recorded detail into question.

Foster fabricates Cherokee cultural practices, even making wild speculations about Sequoyah's mother's child-rearing practices:

The Good Lord gave to this simple Indian woman, Se-quo-yah's mother, an intuition that half her child's squalls were not from the stomach's ache, but from the evil suggestions of Satan himself; so . . . if Satan did prompt him to an unnecessary squall, she grasped Se-quo-yah's nose between her thumb and forefinger and held on until the little one was nearly suffocated; she then let go, only to seize and smother him again at his first attempt at an outbreak, and thus in the very first month of his life was Se-quo-yah taught that obedience was the best policy and unlike many white children, who are pampered in their early life to their future destruction, Se-quo-yah grew up strong, self-reliant and obedient. Let the life of this barbarous mother teach us this lesson of judicious training. (Foster 28–29)

This account is clearly out of Foster's imagination. No written interviews describe Sequoyah's childhood, especially in this detail, and Cherokee mothers were not in the habit of smothering their children. I can only speculate what family life was like in the Foster household.

Even details like Sequoyah's parentage are open to question. Although "all accounts agree that Sequoyah's mother was Cherokee," various sources identify Sequoyah's father as "a Scotsman, a Revolutionary War soldier named Nathaniel Gist, or a Dutch or German peddler named George Gist" (Lepore 65). In some accounts Nathaniel Gist, who was known to be a friend of George Washington, is named as Sequoyah's father, and George Gist is rejected because "that the amazing genius of this remarkable Indian must have been sired by a man of vastly superior qualifications is obvious" (Foreman, *Sequoyah* 75). In reality, there is no solid evidence that Sequoyah's father was white. Most of the biographical accounts are filled with words such as "probably" and "reportedly" with reference to Sequoyah's parentage. As Susan Kalter points out:

The whiteness of Sequoyah's father has never been documented. It has instead been repeated through hearsay into "probable" fact. This device has allowed incredulous American citizens to swallow the genius-Indian pill and has always been a point of skepticism in an otherwise lovely story. (335)

The earliest account of Sequoyah from the *Cherokee Phoenix* says that Sequoyah's paternal grandfather, not his father, was white (G. C. 2). Moreover, many Cherokees firmly believe that Sequoyah had no white blood. Beloved Cherokee authors Jack Frederick and Anna Grits Kilpatrick noted that many Cherokees reject the notion that Sequoyah was half white.⁵ In *Friends of Thunder*, the Kilpatricks sought out traditional Oklahoma Cherokees and interviewed them, collecting and recording stories from the oral tradition. In one interview with an informant, Anna Grits Kilpatrick asked about Sequoyah. Her interviewee vehemently denied that Sequoyah was racially mixed, claiming he was "All Cherokee" (181). In an explanatory note, the Kilpatricks write: "Without hesitancy the Cherokees admit that their greatest political leader, John Ross, was but one-eighth Cherokee; but they insist that Sequoyah was a full blood" (196n35). So, not only is there no solid evidence that Sequoyah was half white, but some of his people regarded him as a full-blood. Although the people the Kilpatricks interviewed were not Sequoyah's contemporaries, they lived closer to his time and had many oral traditions that had been passed down concerning him.

Some of the disagreement concerning Sequoyah's blood quantum may have been the result of misunderstandings that came from translations. Sequoyah spoke no English, and so all interviews were conducted through the aid of an interpreter. However, other factors may have been at work. As Jill Lepore argues, "since Cherokee society is matrilineal, Sequoyah's mother's heritage mattered more, at least in the world in which he lived, but white writers had a stake in how they described his father" (65) Lepore goes on to cite two sources written during Sequoyah's time that lend validity to her claim. In a review of volume 1 of Thomas L. McKenney and James Hall's *History of the Indian Tribes of North America*, which appeared

in the *North American Review* in 1838, the authors write: "Sequoyah, the inventor of the Cherokee Alphabet, is a most interesting personage, but would be still more so, were he a full-blooded Indian. He is the son of a white man and a half-breed woman, and this circumstance essentially detracts from the wonderful character of his discoveries in arts and letters" (Sparks and Felton 146). This account even questions Sequoyah's mother's bloodline; it is the only account that suggests that Sequoyah's mother was not a full-blood. Another similar sentiment can be found in the December 1831 issue of *New England Magazine*; here, an anonymous author dismissively states that since "See-quah-yah is not a full Indian," it follows that the syllabary "is not Indian" ("Literary" 466).

To entirely dismiss the validity of Sequoyah's syllabary because he was not 100 percent Cherokee, and to suggest a person is not fully Cherokee if he or she has some white blood, is absurd. To make such statements could be a product of the mindset of the time. However, it is also clear that the syllabary itself was perceived as a threat to European dominance (Kalter 335). Before the introduction of the syllabary, Europeans had been attempting to create non-Latin characters to represent Indian languages so that they could be used for missionary purposes. One such missionary was a recreational linguist named John Pickering. He began to work with the Cherokee language in 1823, and the language he developed was ready to go to press in 1825. When the syllabary was embraced by pro-assimilation Cherokees, Pickering's system was abandoned (Kalter 333). Pickering writes about Sequoyah in the following excerpt:

I should inform you that this native, whose name is Guest, and who is called by his countrymen "The Philosopher," was not satisfied with the alphabet of letters or single sounds which we white people had prepared for him in the sheets of a Cherokee Grammar formerly sent to you, but he thought fit to devise a new syllabic alphabet, *which is quite contrary to our notion of a useful alphabetic system*. . . . This is much to be regretted as respects the facility of communication between these Indians and the white people; and the plan seems to us to be

very unphilosophical. . . . So strong is their partiality for this national alphabet that our missionaries have been obliged to yield to the impulse, and consent to print their books in future in the new characters. (27 November 1827, quoted in Kalter 334, emphasis added)

Pickering's annoyance with Sequoyah, for ruining his years of work, is apparent. However, Pickering's claim that the syllabary was "quite contrary to our notion of a useful alphabetic system" betrays something else at work. Kalter suggests that the goal of the missionaries was to find a system of writing that was similar enough to English, employing "a limited number of sounds specific to European languages," to facilitate missionary work (334). In other words, the missionaries wanted to employ a system that not only made their work easier but also encouraged literacy in English. If the goal was simply to create a system that allowed communication in Cherokee, it seems odd that the syllabary was not more readily accepted by missionaries. The syllabary is a medium of communicating in writing. It is also a system that was easily learned by native Cherokee speakers.

The syllabary made the work of white missionaries more difficult. Cherokee was considered "one of the most difficult Native American languages" to learn (McLoughlin, "Two" 67). In order to convert Cherokees, many white missionaries were forced to learn Cherokee after the introduction of the syllabary and were upset by this. Even beloved missionary Samuel Worcester, who worked with Elias Boudinot on the *Cherokee Phoenix*, initially was against using the syllabary, because he believed it "would perpetuate the dying Indian tongue" (Worcester to Evans). Though Worcester eventually changed his position on the syllabary, he wrote the following advice to other missionaries and published it in the *Missionary Herald*:

Whether or not the impression of the Cherokees is correct, in regard to the superiority of their own alphabet for their own use, that impression they have, and it is not easy to be eradicated. It would be a vain attempt to persuade them to relinquish their own method of writing. (qtd. in Perdue, *Cherokee Editor* 63n37)

It is interesting to note that the Cherokees themselves brought about this change. They simply would not accept another form of writing, so the missionaries had to comply with their wishes.

Shortly after Sequoyah revealed the syllabary to the Cherokee people, white missionaries began to use it for the purposes of conversion, and the Bible was translated using the Cherokee syllabary. However, as William G. McLoughlin points out, "at the grass roots level the Sequoyan syllabary played a crucial role in creating a nationalist identity" and in encouraging "antimission sentiment" (*Cherokees and Missionaries* 185). Cherokees turned the push to "civilize" Indians back against Europeans. The syllabary inspired the Cherokee Nation to grow and develop, but not in the ways the United States wanted. Many Cherokees abandoned the idea of attending missionary schools, believing it was no longer necessary, since they had their own method of writing. In fact, McLoughlin argues that Cherokees were "a dying culture" that "sprang to life again" as a result of the national pride that was inspired by the syllabary (185). Whether or not McLoughlin's claim that Cherokees owe our survival to the syllabary is correct, the syllabary certainly transformed the Nation in ways that supported and preserved Cherokee culture and traditions. It is difficult to imagine who Cherokees would be now if the syllabary had never been introduced.

Perhaps this is why the syllabary was perceived as a threat by the dominant culture. Europeans may have realized the syllabary's nationalistic potential. Some authors first tried to discredit the syllabary by discrediting Sequoyah's lineage, claiming he wasn't a "real" Indian because he was half white. Next, the syllabary was embraced (albeit reluctantly) by missionaries, but it was presented as a tool of acculturation. European writers deliberately created a Sequoyah legend that twisted the story to suit their own purposes. In this legend, Sequoyah becomes an ignorant simpleton, inspired by his white blood to lift his people by their collective bootstraps out of savagery. Many of Sequoyah's biographers, especially Grant Foreman, write about Sequoyah in a tone that betrays this mentality.⁶ In the very first line of his biography of Sequoyah, Foreman writes, "Sequoyah is celebrated as an illiterate Indian genius who, solely

from the resources of his mind, endowed a whole tribe with learning" (*Sequoyah* 3). Foreman is clearly suggesting that the syllabary was an agent of civilization, a contention that is simply incorrect. Perhaps some of the white authors who wrote about Sequoyah were merely victims of the prevailing notions of the time. Maybe some even believed they were being supportive. However, I suspect that there were also authors who deliberately twisted Sequoyah's image to foster governmental "civilization" programs.

Whoever the "real" Sequoyah was, he was much more complex than history has portrayed him. Whichever portrait of Sequoyah is factual, one fact about his life is clearly revealed in all the sources: he had a strong connection to his culture. Accounts of Sequoyah as a transmitter of European civilization are inaccurate. Though there is much controversy about Sequoyah, no account of him portrays him as someone who favored acculturation. Sequoyah demonstrated no desire to adopt European civilization. Most accounts describe a man who remained connected to his tribe. In fact, the account from the *Cherokee Phoenix* says that Sequoyah decided to create a system of writing because of nationalistic intentions. After finding letters on a white war prisoner, Sequoyah began a discussion about the nature of literacy with other Cherokee soldiers. Many of Sequoyah's companions thought of literacy as a gift from the Creator, but Sequoyah saw it as an invention, something the whites had figured out. Sequoyah knew that if the whites could invent a system of writing, the Cherokees could as well (G. C. 2). As Margaret Clelland Bender suggests, "Sequoyah was not an assimilationist; the sketchy data available about him suggest that he disliked the changes whites and some Cherokees were trying to bring about in Cherokee society and felt that his system could be used to make the Cherokees more independent of whites" (35).

Theda Perdue argues that Sequoyah "projected the image of a relatively traditional Cherokee" ("Sequoyah" 123). The well-known portrait of Sequoyah painted by King depicts him in traditional dress, wearing a turban.⁷ In 1841 Ethan Allen Hitchcock met Sequoyah and described him as a man who "habitually wears a shawl turban and dresses rudely," also noting that the missionar-

ies made no impression on Sequoyah (Foreman, *Traveler* 241–44). Sequoyah was not in favor of European civilization or religion, and it is difficult to imagine that he intended his syllabary to be an agent of acculturation.

Whoever Sequoyah was, he was traditional; he had close ties to his culture and his people and wanted nothing to do with European culture. Perhaps this detail reveals the Truth about Sequoyah's parentage. The traditional Cherokee people the Kilpatricks interviewed claimed Sequoyah was a full-blood. The Truth is—he was; culturally he was Cherokee, and that is what is most important. Whether he had a white father or grandfather is irrelevant; he was "All Cherokee" (*Friends* 181).

ATSILV (FIRE)

After the syllabary's introduction, according to Elias Boudinot, editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, literacy in the syllabary "spread through the nation in a manner unprecedented" (Perdue, *Cherokee* 58). A census taken in 1835 suggested that there were people literate in the syllabary in 43 percent of all Cherokee households (Indian Affairs). Clearly, the Cherokees embraced the syllabary readily, whereas they had been resistant to the forms of writing invented by the missionaries. Most authors have assumed that this acceptance of the syllabary indicated the willingness of Cherokees to acculturate. If this were true, though, it seems likely that the Cherokees would have been more receptive to the missionaries' alphabets. In addition, as indicated by Worcester's comments above, missionaries were not pleased with the syllabary and only agreed to use it reluctantly, in response to widespread acceptance of the syllabary among Cherokees. Some elite Cherokees, who favored assimilation, also were reluctant to embrace the syllabary (Perdue, *Cherokee* 63n37). Clearly, the syllabary was not, initially at least, linked to acculturation or to anyone in support of acculturation.

Theda Perdue argues that "the Cherokee elite and subsequent historians may have misinterpreted literacy's appeal" ("Sequoyah" 116). Perdue suggests that the rapid acceptance among Cherokees of

the syllabary is the result of their perception of Sequoyah as a person of great spiritual prowess and argues that the Nation's endorsement of the syllabary indicated, not their acceptance of European civilization, but their desire for revitalization, both national and spiritual (116). Perdue notes that looking at the syllabary as unconnected to acculturation and in fact connected to spiritual and cultural preservation suggests that a "nativistic rather than an imitative impulse may have prompted [the Cherokee] acceptance of [Sequoyah's] syllabary" and this reinterpretation "places Cherokee literacy within the context of other early nineteenth-century native revitalization movements" (116).

Literacy in Cherokee became, in itself, a nativistic movement, an act of resistance. As Perdue suggests, there is ample evidence that Cherokees saw the syllabary as linked to spiritual regeneration. She cites examples from Samuel Lorenzo Knapp, who said that while Sequoyah was working on the syllabary, he was "abstracted from his tribe" and that former friends "mentioned his name as one who was practicing improper spells, for notoriety or mischievous purposes" (Perdue, *Cherokee* 55). Perdue rightly sees this record as an indication of the spiritual significance Cherokees placed on the language, though she doesn't describe the implications in their complete complexity.

In reality, Sequoyah was suspected of witchcraft by his contemporaries, and even by his wife (Bender 30–33). In Cherokee religion a medicine person, called a, *didahnvwisgi*, "curer of them, he," speaks incantations over a patient to cure a sickness.⁸ However, there are also practitioners who use incantations for purposes that the Kilpatricks characterize as "evil ends." These practitioners are called *didahnnesesgi*, "putter-in and drawer-out of them, he," and they are commonly called witches (*Walk* 9). When a Cherokee refers to a person as a witch, he or she means that the person uses spells and incantations to perform magic against the will of others, magic that harms people. Such individuals are secretive about their behavior, and they are beyond the control of the society within which they live (A. Kilpatrick, *Night* 11). Conversely, a *didahnvwisgi*, a medicine person, works within the bounds of society helping the members

of the group and is often the society's counselor as well as healer (J. Kilpatrick and A. G. Kilpatrick, *Walk* 9).

If we look at Knapp's account while keeping Cherokee medico-magical traditions in mind, it seems clear that Sequoyah's contemporaries initially regarded him as a witch. They feared he was "practicing improper spells" (Perdue, *Cherokee* 55). "Improper spells," from a Cherokee perspective, are ones used not to heal, but to harm, spells that are not used within the accepted bounds of the society. It originally appears that Sequoyah's friends feared that he was doing something magical that would harm them, and so they dissociated from him and regarded the syllabary with suspicion.

However, after Sequoyah demonstrated the syllabary, the views of his contemporaries changed. At first Sequoyah tried to demonstrate that the syllabary was not magical; he gave them "the best explanation of his discovery that he could, stripping it of all supernatural influence" (Perdue, *Cherokee* 55). Other accounts of Sequoyah support the notion that he regarded the syllabary as an intellectual endeavor; he regarded it as a skill, something that the white men did; he saw no reason that Cherokees could not do it as well. However, it seems that desperation to have the syllabary recognized by the tribe caused Sequoyah to bow to the popular opinion. He demonstrated the use of the syllabary, and Knapp says that "Sequoyah then proposed, that the tribe should select several youths from among their brightest young men, that he might communicate the *mystery* to them" (Perdue, *Cherokee* 55, emphasis added). Theda Perdue looks at the way the word *mystery* is used here, suggesting that Sequoyah "was now appealing to his people in terms they understood" ("Sequoyah" 121). In other words, Sequoyah gave up trying to introduce the syllabary as a purely intellectual undertaking and allowed his people to think of it as connected to spirituality. The conclusion of Knapp's account seems to support this reading. He says that once the Cherokees accepted the syllabary,

Sequoyah became at once school-master, professor, philosopher, and a chief. His countrymen were proud of his talents, and held him in reverence as one favored by the Great Spirit. (Perdue, *Cherokee* 56)

Even though Sequoyah only regarded the syllabary as an intellectual invention, his contemporaries considered it very differently. The fact that they elevated Sequoyah's status is significant; the public reaction to Sequoyah suggests that he became lauded as a medicine man.

The fact that the Cherokees linked the syllabary with spirituality is not surprising. According to some Cherokee oral traditions, Sequoyah didn't invent the syllabary; it was a writing system used by "an ancient priesthood called the Ani-Kutani" (Teuton 3). Sequoyah was a surviving member of the Ani-Kutani, and he reintroduced the syllabary to the Cherokee people. According to the story, the Ani-Kutani were an ancient hereditary priestly clan that became overly powerful and corrupted by power and pride. They were finally killed for their actions, and as an act of vengeance, they cursed the Cherokees, so that "to this day, an ever present temptation to control others through spiritual medicine" exists among the people (3). This explains why Sequoyah's contemporaries were so initially suspicious of the syllabary.

The connection between traditional Cherokee spirituality and the syllabary was the main rationality that the missionaries employed in their rejection of the syllabary. As John B. Davis writes, missionaries "objected to Sequoyah's alphabet because of its Indian origin and the fact that it was being used by conjurers in heathen incantations" (169). So Sequoyah's story was doctored, and he was portrayed as the creator of a writing system that was as an agent of civilization.

But also at work during this time was a recent spiritual revitalization movement that intensified the connection between writing in the Cherokee language and spirituality. Between 1811 and 1814 a movement began among the Cherokees that focused on spiritual regeneration. The timing of this movement is crucial, because it coincides closely with the time period within which Sequoyah was working on and introducing the syllabary. This revitalization movement was classified by James Mooney, who saw parallels between it and the Creek Ghost Dance movement and called it "Cherokee Ghost Dance Movement" (*Mooney's History* 89; *Ghost-Dance* 670–77). The basic report of the "Cherokee Ghost Dance" was based on a

few accounts, including one that Major Ridge recounted to Thomas L. McKenney. The story tells of a Cherokee prophet whose name was Charley (spelled "Tsa-li" in Cherokee) who spoke to groups of Cherokees about a vision he had been given by the Creator. Charley said he had a dream, and in that dream the Creator told him that the Cherokees had become too much like the Europeans. The Creator said that Cherokees must give up everything that they had adopted from whites (Christianity, increased use of slave labor, European notions of agriculture, Western clothing, guns, animal husbandry based on European techniques, etc.) and go back to their traditional ways.⁹ It was particularly important that the Cherokees revive their traditional spiritual practices, their dances, and their festivals. Charley was told that the Cherokees who didn't do this would be punished, and some might even be killed (McLoughlin, "Cherokee Ghost Dance" 113). Charley also predicted dire consequences for Europeans and prescribed actions to save those Cherokees who listened to the prophesy.

Most stories of the Cherokee Ghost Dance claim that the resistance movement ended abruptly when Charley's dire predictions didn't come to pass (McLoughlin, "Cherokee Ghost Dance" 114; Mooney, *Mooney's History* 89). According to Mooney, many Cherokees heeded the prediction and went into the mountains at the appointed time, there to await the catastrophe. When the time passed with no event, "slowly and sadly then they took up their packs once more and turned their faces homeward, dreading the ridicule they were sure to meet there, but yet believing in their hearts that the glorious coming was only postponed for a time" (Mooney, *Ghost-Dance* 677).

The above account, largely disseminated by Mooney, is misleading, however. In actuality there were several prophets, not merely a single one between 1811 and 1814, and each prophet had different predictions. Some predicted hailstorms, while others predicted other types of natural disasters. Some prophets predicted that all Europeans would die, but others said that some "good" white people would be allowed to live. There were also a series of earthquakes in December of 1811 that intensified the movement. In short, the

movement was one that developed gradually but gained momentum after the earthquakes, which were probably seen as a clear sign that some of the predictions were about to come to pass (McLoughlin, "Cherokee Ghost Dance" 114). So rather than ending in disappointment and ridicule, the movement received confirmation from natural phenomena that were occurring.

The revitalization movement, up until recently, has been merely a footnote in the history of the Cherokee Nation, but its importance is being reexamined. Stephen Brandon argues that the revitalization movement's importance was intentionally downplayed by the progressives—elite Cherokees who favored acculturation and who were at the time in the minority, making up about 10 percent of the Cherokee Nation. Brandon suggests that the revitalization movement, fueled by the introduction of the syllabary, provided a political voice for the majority of the Cherokee Nation, who had remained traditional. Prior to the introduction of the syllabary, the traditionalists' voices had been overshadowed by those of the progressive elites, who had access to English. In actuality, not all Cherokees believed that acculturation was the answer; in fact, Brandon argues, the majority of the Nation was opposed to assimilation. But in an effort to portray a united front against removal, the progressives portrayed the Nation as far more assimilated than it actually was. The revitalization movement and the introduction of the syllabary came at this crucial point. Fueled by the combination of the revitalization movements and the invention of the syllabary, the traditionalists used their newly acquired literacy in the Cherokee syllabary to make their voices heard. This revealed areas of contention within the nation that were never sufficiently addressed and resulted in "a dual consciousness which helped shape the social order and the sense of Cherokee identity that emerged during and following the removal crisis" (110).

The syllabary was introduced just as the revitalization movement was beginning to die down, so Brandon sees the Cherokee Nation's acceptance of literacy as a compromise of sorts. He points out that prophets associated with the revitalization movement argued that the Creator was upset at the Cherokees' acceptance of many forms

of European goods, and "worse still, [the Cherokees] had books"; the prophets said that the Creator wanted Cherokees to "return to the customs of their fathers" and "abandon the use of any communication with each other except by word of mouth," predicting that those who didn't heed these words would be cut off "from the living" (McKenney and Hall 191-92). Brandon continues by arguing that the acceptance of literacy in Cherokee was consistent with the spirit of the revival, even though it involved violating some of the prophets' warnings:

In terms of the traditionalist revival, the essential point is that Sequoyah's invention furthered the renewed pride and strength traditionalists had during the revival. Hence, acceptance of literacy, at least in Cherokee, offered traditionalists a paradigm that allowed the adoption of some Anglo beliefs and technologies, that is, as long as they were remade in a manner that was consistent with their users being Cherokee and being "straight in their hearts." Learning to make a place for literacy was, hence, a watershed for traditionalists, as its acceptance into what it meant to be traditional allowed technological transfer from Anglo society while maintaining a sense of being true to one's self and to one's heritage. (133)

Although Brandon's assessment is accurate in part, he fails to consider the way the syllabary was perceived by Cherokees. As previously discussed, the syllabary was closely linked to spirituality, in part because of oral traditions concerning the Ani-Kutani. Christopher Teuton argues that Sequoyah's genius was to make the syllabary open to all members of the community. Originally, the Ani-Kutani were the only ones who had access to writing. Cherokee people, though originally suspicious of the syllabary, accepted it only after Sequoyah made it available to the people (53). In short, the traditional majority Cherokee population was given an ancient form of writing that had been abused by the Ani-Kutani, and they were able to use it to combat a new equally prideful and destructive force: the United States government and, in some cases, pro-assimilationist Cherokees. It is more likely that the acceptance of literacy by Cher-

okees was viewed less as a compromise than as the acceptance of a gift from the Creator—a gift that, if used wisely, could help the Cherokees to both maintain traditional spiritual beliefs and combat removal. And that is exactly how Cherokees used the syllabary.

After the introduction of the syllabary, a dichotomy developed between “real” Cherokee literary practices and what was perceived by the dominant society.¹⁰ Cherokees used the dominant culture’s misunderstanding to their benefit. While the syllabary was being heralded as a tool of acculturation, Cherokees were writing down incantations and keeping them in “medicine books,” in small ledger books, or on any available scrap of paper (A. Kilpatrick 3). Thousands of sacred texts were preserved, written down in the syllabary and saved during times of persecution. Rather than an assimilationist tool, the syllabary is an agent of cultural preservation. Cherokees have enacted survivance not only through their use of language and images but also through literacy itself; literacy in the syllabary became an emblem of Cherokee pride, and more.

DUYUGODV (TRUTH, JUSTICE, RIGHT)

Empowered by the syllabary, Cherokees fought relocation both in print with the *Cherokee Phoenix* and in the courts (Perdue, *Cherokee* 25).¹¹ Although results of this war of words were mixed, the Cherokee people continue to use words as arrows. The ways in which Cherokees have used rhetoric has caused some scholars to view us as assimilationist. For example, regarding the *Cherokee Phoenix*, Theda Perdue argues, “For many native peoples, physical survival has seemed to dictate cultural destruction” (*Cherokee* 3). Such views posit Cherokees in the role of victims of a much larger force, a force that they couldn’t hope to resist. This view is inaccurate, though. In reality the syllabary, and the use of writing both in the syllabary and English, have facilitated cultural survival and preservation.

For example, Cherokee healers use incantations in their medicinal rituals. Before the introduction of the Cherokee syllabary, these incantations were memorized, but after Sequoyah’s revelation, Cher-

okee healers began writing down their incantations in the syllabary (Fogelson, "Change" 216). These incantations were kept in "medicine books," small ledger books, or were written down on any available scrap of paper. They have even been found on "white spaces of a letter from President U. S. Grant's secretary of the interior" (J. Kilpatrick and A. Kilpatrick, *Run* 3). Some authors have suggested that the implementation of the syllabary facilitated cultural preservation:¹²

One of the aspects of Cherokee culture that has been most resistant to change is the medico-magical practices of the conjuror. While it is generally assumed that the more covert aspects of culture embedded in a people's belief system are less likely to change than overt items are, such as material culture, the survival of the Cherokee medico-magical beliefs and practices has been aided by a special mechanism—the Sequoyah syllabary. Although Sequoyah's invention (1821) was popularly hailed as a tool of "progress" enabling the Cherokee to publish their own newspaper, laws, and constitution, as well as to translate the Bible, hymnals, and other religious tracts, the syllabary was also a powerful instrument for cultural retention. The conjuror was now able to transcribe into his notebook sacred formulas and other lore that had formerly been dependent on oral transmission. (Fogelson, "Change" 216)

Clearly the syllabary did make it possible to record these texts for future generations. Under the stress that was involved during the forced relocation, it would have been easy to imagine these valuable spiritual texts being lost.

The incantations of Cherokee medicine people first came to be acknowledged by non-Cherokees when anthropologist James Mooney collected approximately six hundred incantations written in the Sequoyah syllabary from the Eastern Cherokee in 1887 and 1888. Mooney called these incantations "sacred formulas," and published the texts (written phonetically, in accented Latin characters) with English translations and commentary.¹³ Mooney's informer, a Cherokee medicine man named *Ayuini*, or "Swimmer," provided him with the bulk of this collection (*Mooney's History* 307, 311). Later,

Jack Frederick and Anna Gritts Kilpatrick collected an enormous number of incantations, and other religious texts written in the syllabary, from Western Cherokees. The Kilpatricks translated many of these incantations in published works,¹⁴ but the entire mass of their collection was purchased by Yale University after their deaths. Since then their son, Alan Kilpatrick, has translated and published some of these incantations (xiv).

The syllabary established a link between memory and experience that was, and is, crucial to the tribe's cultural survival. The importance of the land to the cultural and spiritual survival of Indian tribes is well known. After the forced removal, the landscape was not easily accessible, but the people continued to practice their religion—and wrote down medical texts in the syllabary. The syllabary became the link between the people, their memory, and their spiritual beliefs.

The preservation of these incantations definitely contributed to spiritual and cultural preservation. Also, these texts represent portions of a national literary tradition. Jack Frederick Kilpatrick once wrote:

Recently I read in the Encyclopedia Britannica that no native American society north of Mexico had produced a literature; yet during the past five years alone I have collected from attics, barns, caves, and jars buried in the ground some ten thousand poetical texts, many of which would excite the envy of a Hafiz or Li Tai Po. ("Buckskin" 85)

Kilpatrick considered the incantations to be more than spiritual documents; to him, they were literature, poetically beautiful. But even more than that, he saw them as "precious gifts" that he wanted to share with the world (quoted in Hartley vii).

Thus, Cherokee people have an enormous body of literature written in Cherokee, some of which has been translated, and some of which is waiting to be translated. But the Cherokees also have written copious literary works in English. In an account of Sequoyah in *A New Literary History of America*, Lisa Brooks writes:

Whether Sequoyah's syllabary was a completely new invention, the return of ancient tradition, or an innovation based on a writing system that had recently arrived, it played an essential role in the emergence of Native American (and American) literary traditions. Amid a rising chorus of Native American authors, Cherokees have been among the most prolific. (163)

As Daniel Heath Justice argues, "Written words have particular resonance among Cherokees, as so much of our cultural expression explicitly invokes the generative powers of language" (46). From broken treaties to boarding schools, literacy in English has been harmful to Cherokees, as it has for most American Indian tribes, but Cherokees have a different relationship with literacy than many other American Indian groups, and the reason for this is the syllabary.

The Truth concerning the syllabary is that it has helped Cherokee people retain our religion and culture. The syllabary served as the ultimate strategy for "psyching the system" because it made Cherokees appear more acculturated to the dominant society, but in reality it helped Cherokees hold on to cultural practices during a time of great turmoil (Awiakta 187). Today, the syllabary is still widely used. Several books have been composed in the syllabary, some with English translations.¹⁵ Contemporary poets, such as Qwo-Li Driskill and Ravel Hail, have written verse in the syllabary. The *Cherokee Phoenix* is still published by the Western Cherokee Nation, and issues of it are available online.¹⁶ The Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma created a syllabary keypad, and the syllabary is now available on iPhone and iPod Touch.¹⁷ It is still, as it has been since Sequoyah revealed it, a source of National pride. The Truth about Sequoyah is closely linked to the syllabary.

Although the details pertaining to Sequoyah's life are disputed, two Truths concerning Sequoyah emerge: Sequoyah was "all Cherokee," meaning he was culturally linked to the Cherokee people, regardless of his blood quantum. Whether he created the syllabary or rediscovered an ancient system of writing, Sequoyah made the syllabary available to the Cherokee people. By the act of revealing

the syllabary Sequoyah gave us a precious gift. Ultimately, the Truth is that Sequoyah and his gift, the syllabary, have helped us to survive.

NOTES

1. *Utalotsa woni* in the title means “talking leaves.” The original version of this manuscript used the Cherokee syllabary each time a Cherokee word or phrase was introduced, but for technical reasons we have opted to transliterate.

2. When Cherokee words are spelled in roman letters, the letter “v” is used for a nasal “uh” sound.

3. The oral stories I examine are published versions recorded by Cherokee authors.

4. I am giving them the benefit of the doubt by assuming that their racism was “unconscious,” meaning that they fell victim to the prevailing notions from the time period within which they were writing. Perhaps some authors even thought they were being racially inclusive or open-minded.

5. Anna Grits Kilpatrick was “a descendant of Sequoyah” (Conley, *Cherokee Encyclopedia* 136).

6. Foreman’s text is “the most frequently referenced” biography of Sequoyah (Giemza 146).

7. It is said in Cherokee country that Sequoyah didn’t really pose for King’s portrait. Regardless of whether this is true, the clothing that the subject of the painting is wearing is consistent with the kinds of clothing Sequoyah reportedly wore. Bryan Giemza argues that in King’s portrait Sequoyah is “wearing a tignon more commonly associated with blacks and the Caribbean fringe, but perhaps a more generic signifier of racial otherness” (143). Giemza misunderstands the context. As Perdue argues, “Most southern Indians, whether ‘mixed blood’ or ‘full blood,’ expressed their identity through the clothes they wore, which were a mixture of Native and European styles but exhibited remarkable unity across the South”; turbans were among the accepted “Indian” clothes for southern tribes at the time the portrait was first produced (“Race” 714). In reality, rather than signifying Sequoyah’s “racial otherness,” his turban confirms his Indianness.

8. I am using Jack Kilpatrick’s translation of the term *didahnvwisgi*, but technically there is no gender designation linked to this term in Cherokee. So, the translation could just as easily be “curer of them, he or she.” A Cherokee medicine person can be either male or female.

9. Cherokees had agriculture, clothing, slaves, and domesticated animals prior to contact; however, after contact they began to adopt European styles and practices. For example, between 1809 and 1824 the number of slaves owned by members of the Cherokee Nation increased by 119 percent. The number of slaves continued to increase, and by 1835, there were a total of 1,592 slaves living within the Cherokee Nation (Perdue, "Clan" 565). Agriculture was utilized by the Cherokees before contact with the Europeans, but Cherokee agriculture was different in many fundamental ways. Europeans tended to plant only one crop per individually owned field, but Cherokees aggregated multiple crops in communal fields so that they wouldn't deplete the soil (Brandon 82). In addition, women maintained the farms, while the men's duties involved hunting; this was contrary to the common European social framework where men were the farmers, and the women's duties were domestic (Conley, *Cherokee Nation* 11). Guns fundamentally changed hunting techniques for Cherokees. Also, the influx of new trade goods caused Cherokees to hunt more than they would have normally hunted to acquire furs to trade for goods that were now seen as necessities. Through the fur trade European traders and Cherokees began to overhunt game (Wilms 2). Food became scarce, so in order to survive many Cherokees began to practice agriculture and animal husbandry using techniques that they learned from the Europeans (2).

10. It is true that most American Indian tribes experience this, that the popular perceptions of Indians in general vary widely from what they are actually like. However, I'm suggesting that this dichotomy is even more pronounced with regard to Cherokees and is especially true concerning the topic of literacy in the syllabary.

11. The court cases that the Nation fought were significant, though ultimately unsuccessful. Two landmark cases, the *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (to re-establish the Nation's sovereignty over Georgia laws) and *Worcester v. Georgia* (to secure Worcester's release from prison), went to the Supreme Court. Both of these court cases had favorable outcomes, but as Scott Lyons points out, the ultimate result of both cases proved disastrous to all Indian tribes, because the cases (especially *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*) redefined Indian Nations as "domestic dependent nations." This ultimately eroded Indian sovereignty by placing the United States in a paternal, caretaker-like position over tribes (Lyons 451).

12. The cultural impact of the syllabary has not been universally seen as positive. It is impossible to tell, of course, what would have happened if the syllabary had not been introduced. However, Raymond D. Fogel-

son suggests that the syllabary brought about cultural change, at least with regard to the Eastern Cherokees, because although “the syllabary enabled the Eastern Cherokee to set down and retain much esoteric knowledge,” it also “seems to have affected medical and magical practices by discouraging some of the flexible empiricism hypothesized for the earlier conjuring”; thus the Eastern Cherokees possess a stricter adherence to formula than Western Cherokees (Fogelson, “Change” 217). It isn’t clear, however, whether the greater rigidity of the Eastern Cherokees resulted from their recording of the incantations in the syllabary or from their unique historical circumstances. The Eastern Cherokees hid in the hills when the majority of the Nation was forced along the Trail of Tears. As a result, “The Removal separated the remaining Cherokee from most of the creative and spiritual leadership of the Nation” since included in the “18,000 or so who emigrated West were most of the highly esteemed medicine men, as well as other guardians and interpreters of traditional belief” (217). It is entirely possible, given the history of the Eastern Cherokees, that these historical circumstances were more influential with regard to cultural change than the introduction of the syllabary.

13. I am choosing to call these texts *incantations*, rather than Mooney’s term, *sacred formulas*, because, as Jack Frederick and Anna Gritts Kilpatrick have pointed out, the term *sacred formula* is not an entirely accurate one. As they indicate, the incantations are not necessarily formulaic, though perhaps they seemed so to Mooney, who was working with texts from the more rigid Eastern Cherokees. More importantly, though, the texts cannot all be seen as sacred. The typical medicine person can have medicinal texts, as well as love spells, spells to kill a witch, and even spells to do harm to an individual. The Kilpatricks prefer the Cherokee term *igawesdi*, which the Kilpatricks translate as “to say, one” (*Walk* 4; *Run* 6). The term *incantation* seems closer to the Cherokee word than *sacred formula*, so I use it throughout.

14. The works done by the Kilpatricks that feature translations of Cherokee incantations include *Walk in Your Soul: Love Incantations of the Oklahoma Cherokees* and *Run toward the Nightland: Magic of the Oklahoma Cherokees*, as well as numerous journal articles.

15. Books in the syllabary include *Cherokee Vision of Elohi*, edited by Howard Meredith and Virginia Milam Sobral, and children’s books such as *Na Usdi Gigage Agisi Tsitaga: The Little Red Hen* and *Na Tsoi Yona: The Three Bears*, by Ray D. Keeter and Wynema Smith, and *Awí Uniyvdi Kano-helvdi: The Park Hill Tales*, by Dennis Sixkiller.

16. See <http://www.cherokeephoenix.org/>.

17. See "Cherokee Nation Creates Syllabary Keypad," *Indian Country Today*, 16 Mar. 2010; "Cherokee Language Available on iPhone and iPod Touch," by Jami Custer, *Cherokee Phoenix*, 24 Sept. 2010.

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Making Do

Momaday's Survivance Ceremonies

KENNETH M. ROEMER

I think she was trying to carve the souls of her children into the birds. She was making do.

Linda Hogan, "Making Do"

I

One of the most powerful and beautiful episodes in one of the most influential works of American Indian literature finds the protagonist, Abel, broken down and depressed, atop a hill in Los Angeles. The drums, singing, flute, and alcohol don't relieve his anguish. His closest friend, Ben Benally, who sincerely wants to help Abel, starts to sing, "all by himself" in the "old [Navajo] ways," the Beautyway and Nightway, and then he begins to pray quietly so only Abel can hear his words: "Tségihi. / House made of dawn, / House made of evening light, . . ." (Momaday, *House* 146–47)—words from the Navajo Nightway—beautiful and powerful and—wrong, wrong, wrong.

It's the wrong place and atmosphere. Instead of Chinle or some other part of Diné Country during a Nightway ceremony, it's on some nameless hill in L.A. populated by some less-than-sober celebrants. It's arguably the wrong time. True, it's in the winter, and the Nightway is supposed to be performed in fall and winter after the first hard frost, but how many hard frosts were there in L.A. in February 1952? It's the wrong chanter. James C. Faris's detailed study of Nightway *hataalii* (singer/medicine persons) revealed that the average apprenticeship period was "just over seven years" to learn to

lead this complex nine-day healing ceremony (98). There is no evidence that Ben has undergone such training. He simply begins with a prayer from the middle of the ceremony, not the beginning. The nature of the patient is suspect. It's true that there are cases when non-Navajo are sung over; furthermore, Abel's father may possibly have been Navajo, but he certainly was not raised Navajo. The ceremony is primarily for the Navajo. And, of course, Ben's performance of the prayer is in the wrong language. It's in English, not Navajo, which most traditional Navajo would argue robs the prayer of its healing power (Tsosie).¹

Still, we need to remember that one of the main criteria of Native American ceremonies and Navajo ceremonies in particular is, does it work? N. Scott Momaday is familiar with Navajo ceremonialism.² He would know this. And in this case there is evidence of it working, especially during the concluding run when, in and through his pain and anguish, Abel merges the images of the canyons and mountains before him, his memories of the dawn's progression over the mesas as identified by his just-deceased grandfather, and Ben's Nightway prayer to give him "words to a song"; there is, as yet, no sound, no voice, but he has words (*House* 212). And as St. John, John Big Bluff Tosamah, and, over and over, Momaday proclaim, "In the beginning was the word" (91). The word is the beginning of creation, so at least there is some hope for a re-creation of Abel.

Of course, it's not only in *House Made of Dawn* that we discover ceremonies that are not quite right or even seem all wrong but are still "alright" because they may be working. Probably the best known contemporary Native fiction example is Betonie's ceremony for Tayo—a hybrid mixture of, among other ceremonies and encounters, the Navajo Red Antway and a quest for Uncle Josiah's cattle—in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (Bell 47–48). But there are numerous other examples: In Ella Cara Deloria's *Waterlily* Blue Bird is distraught over her infant's illness. From memory and intuition she creates a ceremony and prays: "Right or wrong, that was her prayer" (18). *Waterlily* survives. There is Bush's Chickasaw "mourning feast" grieving ceremony in Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms*. Many in this non-Chickasaw community "doubt" its authenticity (17, 72).³ But they

respect her: "She's gone the old ways. The way we used to live. From the map inside ourselves. Maybe it reminded us that we had to make our own ways here" (17).

Consider Lipsha's rather unusual skunk visitation during his vision quest in Louise Erdrich's *Bingo Palace*; Rosa's ceremony to restore her eyesight in Anita Endrezze's "Humming of the Stars, Bees, and Waves"; Roberta James's transformation of family skills in making ceremonial masks into a skill to carve birds that embody the souls of her deceased children in Hogan's "Making Do"; Ree-va's ritual of creating complex color charts that tame the trauma of child abuse in Kathleen Shaye Hill's "Taking Care of Business"; Harley Wind Soldier's classroom performance of a made-up oral narrative in Susan Power's *Grass Dancer*; Hope Little Leader's pitching rituals in LeAnne Howe's *Miko Kings*; the ceremonies, dreams, and visions of the pilgrims in Gerald Vizenor's *Darkness in Saint Louis Bearheart* and of Nellie and Mabel in Greg Sarris's *Grand Avenue* and *Mabel McKay*; and, of course, the nameless narrator's final gesture, "I threw the pouch into the grave," in James Welch's *Winter in the Blood* (176). And these are just a tiny sample of the making-do ceremonies in American Indian fiction.

The great frequency and variety of depictions of making-do ceremonies is a response to five hundred years of disease, military defeats, forced religious and secular assimilation programs, relocation, world wars, destructive legislation, dysfunctional family life, and rapidly changing cultural contexts that have joined forces to undermine or even destroy the transfer and development of traditional ceremonial life. The variety of these responses is indeed great. In broad terms they can represent powerful healing forces, or forced forms of mimicry, as in the case of Power's Harley Wind Soldier's re-creation of himself as a *heyo'ka* ancestor. At their worst they can be destructive and blasphemous; witness Pauline's misuse of twisted concepts of love medicine to undermine Fleur's love for Eli in Erdrich's *Tracks*. In more specific terms the positive healing ceremonies can range from long (one could argue life-long) ceremonies conducted by trickster visionaries like Vizenor's Proude Cedarfair and highly trained performers like Silko's Betonie to par-

tially remembered once-in-a-lifetime rituals like Blue Bird's curing ceremony or Rosa's self-cure for her eyes, to repeated acts of creation that transform crafted objects into sacred representations like Roberta's carved soul birds, to rituals that transform secular acts into transcendent phenomena, Hope's pitching rituals, for example, to on-the-spot improvisations by rank amateurs who hope to alleviate immediate tensions, performances that ironically end up taking on meaning far beyond the initial acts, as in the case of Harley's made-up story in *Grass Dancer*.

Although there is great variety of the healing making-do ceremonies, they are all ceremonies of survivance, to borrow Vizenor's well-known concept. They embody "an active sense of presence, the continuance of Native stories" and "renunciations of dominance, tragedy, and victimry" (Vizenor, *Fugitive* vii; see also *Manifest*, esp. chs. 1–3, epilogue). They are survival performances that embody resistance to exterior (social, economic, cultural, legal) and interior (physical, psychological) forces. They also represent the survival of tribal concepts, stories, rituals, and skills modified to meet changing circumstances and to reflect the particular presence or absence of traditional knowledge and skills of the performers.

II

One of Momaday's major achievements is his contribution to the ongoing representations of significant making-do survivance ceremonies. We discover a few examples in his essays and poetry. For example, in the 1967 "The Way to Rainy Mountain" essay, which was revised for inclusion in *House Made of Dawn* and *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, Momaday notes the year when no buffalo could be found. The Kiowas made do with the substitution of "an old [buffalo] hide" instead of the head of a buffalo in a Sun Dance (42). In one of his new poems, "A Cradle for This Child," Momaday adopts the voice of a mid-nineteenth-century Plains Indian, who, in her desperation about the survival of her people, creates cradle boards, "beautiful beaded works of art," for the unborn children of the future, a performance art that she hopes will bring new life. As Momaday imagines

in an explanatory note, for her and other women who performed this ceremony, "it was their way of vesting one last hope for a future, for survival itself" (*Again* 116). The poem opens with this stanza:

This child who draws so near,
Who has no name, who cannot see,
Who waits in darkness to be born
Into an empty world,
I make a cradle for this child. (1–5)

Most of Momaday's representations of survivance ceremonies appear in his fiction, mixed genre autobiography, and drama. As scholars, most recently Joanna Hearne (250), have observed, in addition to Ben's performance of a Nightway prayer, there are other powerful examples in *House Made of Dawn*—for example, the impromptu funeral rites for his grandfather performed by Abel with the items available: the water and yarn that helped him "fashion" Francisco's hair into a queue; the clothing in the room that enabled him to dress the body in "bright ceremonial colors," "white trousers," and "soft white" moccasins; the "sacred feathers," pollen, and colored corn to place by Francisco's side; the meal to sprinkle in four directions; and the blanket to wrap the body (209–10). The final performances of these rites mix Christian and Jemez traditions: the request for the priest to bury him and the entry into the dawn run, which is foolish considering Abel's wretched physical condition, but entirely appropriate, since, before he died, Francisco shared stories of his days as a powerful, though not always wise, runner (209–12).

My aim in this essay is to demonstrate that Momaday's contribution extends far beyond examples in his essays, poetry, and *House Made of Dawn* and is especially evident in three very different works: the novel *The Ancient Child* (1989); the mixed genre *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969); and the screenplay *The Moon in Two Windows* (2007). I've selected these because they suggest the impressive variety and complexity of Momaday's approaches to adapting ceremonial performance and perspective to a changing and often hostile world.

III

In *Ancient Child* the wedding ceremony for Set, the artist protagonist, and Grey, whose ancestor Kope'mah was a close friend of Set's great-grandfather Agabai, is a moving hybrid ceremony drawing upon the Navajo Blessingway and the Native American Church's peyote ceremony. But the most important example of a survivance ceremony in Momaday's second novel is Set's curing ceremony, which, like Betonie's cure for Tayo, extends through much of the book. It represents survival in at least two senses: Set's psychological and physical survival, as well as the continuity of adaptations of Navajo healing ceremonies. The ceremony also represents a strong resistance against the seductions of a capitalistic art market that transforms art into reproducible commodities and the artist into a self-centered celebrity. As with Ben's performance of a Nightway prayer, Set's and his helpers' ceremony draws heavily on a traditional ceremony; but, again as in *House Made of Dawn*, the performance must make do for radical changes in place, time, people, and circumstances.

The primary traditional source of the ceremony is the Navajo Mountainway. Momaday calls attention to this ceremony in a prose epigraph preceding "Book One." He quotes "An Ethnographic Dictionary of the Navajo Language" that details the "equipment" attached to and contained in the ceremony's medicine bundle, which includes a bear claw and bear food (5). The Mountainway is designed, among other functions, to address mental illness caused by improper contact with mountain animals, including bears (Wyman, *Mountainway* xi, 17). Except for the fact that Set is not Navajo (he is mixed-race Kiowa), he is an appropriate patient for this ceremony. Even before Set appears, Momaday sets up a bear connection. The novel's prelude is the Kiowa story of the boy who turns into a bear; a story, in a slightly different form, familiar to readers of *Rainy Mountain* and other works by Momaday.⁴ Set's name is Kiowa for *bear*, and he definitely has a mental illness in part characterized by feelings of being overcome by bear power. In particular he is fascinated, frightened—obsessed—with a bear medicine bundle presented to him by Grey. Gladys A. Reichard notes that

the Mountainway addresses "symptoms due to the contemplation of supernatural things too strong for the patient" (717). Set's obsessive contemplations threaten to destroy him.

Despite his mixed Kiowa identity, the nature of Set's illness may make him an "alright" patient for a Mountainway. But significant characteristics of the ceremony and its participants come close to being "all wrong." Set does not initiate the process by seeking the help of a traditional Navajo diagnostician, which is typically the first step in the process. There is a character who performs the role of a Navajo diagnostician: she perceives Set's bear sickness and guides him to a medicine person. But Lola Bourne is not a Navajo hand trembler or stargazer; she is an independently wealthy piano teacher and cataloger of rare books who admires Set's paintings (149–50) and the painter. They are lovers.

The singers/medicine people and aspects of the ceremony would also strike a traditional Navajo as being familiar but also very strange. Consider the primary *hataalii* Grey. Grey's mother is Navajo, and a powerful medicine woman trained Grey. Grey chants in Navajo (195), and there are parallels between her life story and the story of the Elder Sister Bispáli in the Mountainway: elder sacred people taught both of them, and bear men seduced both (Roemer 107).⁵ In the Mountainway singers use emetics to induce vomiting in purification rites, and there is a shock rite in both Navajo Mountainway and Red Antway, as well as the Jicarilla Apache Holiness Rite (Wyman, *Mountainway* 23; *Red Antway* 56–58). In Set's ceremony there are purification rites, and a Keeper of the Bear Claw rides after Set on horseback and strikes him on the throat with the claw.

But Grey is of mixed race, and her teacher Kope'mah was Kiowa, not Navajo. A Jicarilla Apache administers the shock rite; he was also the bear man who seduced Grey. As with Betonie's hybrid ceremony for Tayo, the ceremony must continue long after the specific ceremonial performance, involve other healers (in Tayo's case T's'eh), and include traditional and nontraditional acts. For Set these include not only sweat baths and running, but also painting and lovemaking with Grey.

Set's "cure" is more ambiguous than Tayo's. He certainly moves

beyond his midlife crisis, abandons the celebrity-art-for-profit lifestyle, and returns to physical and mental health. But during the final run of the novel in the shadow of Devil's Tower (Tsoai, Bear Lodge), he feels something is "terribly wrong." He loses his "human voice" and experiences a "loneliness like death" as he becomes a reincarnation of the bear boy in the Kiowa narrative and moves into "a shadow receding into shadows" (314). If we read the name Koi-ehm-toya as Grey's name (her Kiowa name), then the epilogue suggests that the curative effects of the ceremony can transcend and proceed into the future manifested in her great-grandson's life. But even this positive reading must deal with the concluding words that depict this heir's final dreams of the children of the Kiowa myth receding into the darkness of the woods (315).

Despite ambiguities, Set's survivance ceremony, like Tayo's, emphasizes the need for pan-Indian, multicultural ceremonies in a multicultural world and the realization that ceremony has to evolve beyond any one specific ceremonial performance and become a series of life experiences that, in Set's case, resist the destructive pull of the commercialization of his art. This is a concept of ceremonial life that does, nevertheless, represent a continuation of the traditional Navajo belief that human existence is always susceptible to sudden imbalances and dangers that must be addressed in holy ways (Kluckhohn and Leighton 303–5).

IV

Momaday's multigenre *The Way to Rainy Mountain* seems like an unlikely candidate for inclusion in a discussion of making-do ceremonies that sustain identity and survival and express resistance to a hostile modern world. In *House Made of Dawn* and *Ancient Child* there are explicit descriptions of ceremonial practices in a modern world. In *Rainy Mountain* there is a brief and general description of a peyote ceremony (sec. 11, 39), and there are many references to the Kiowa Sun Dance. But all of these references place the Sun Dance in the past. The narrator offers few details about specific rituals, and there is little evidence of modification of the Sun Dance, with the ex-

ception of the previously mentioned necessary substitution of an old buffalo hide for a buffalo head when the depletion of the herds made it nearly impossible to obtain a buffalo (10). Ceremonially, the Kiowa were doing everything right. But the scarcity of buffalo and then the legal decree in 1890 that the Sun Dance was all wrong (it was banned) ended the performance of that ceremony. In three sections of the precursor to *Rainy Mountain*, *The Journey of Tai-me* (1967), the Gourd Dance appears (59, 61, 63), and in three Gourd Dance poems, "The Gourd Dancer," "Carnegie, Oklahoma, 1919," and "Rings of Bones," Momaday suggests how that ceremony reinvigorated ceremonial life after the banning of the Sun Dance and thus represents a grand manifestation of replacement survivance responding to the ban on the Sun Dance. But *Rainy Mountain* offers no mention of the Gourd Dance.

The Way to Rainy Mountain does, nevertheless, offer one of Momaday's most interesting contemplations on the power of the making-do survivance ceremony, though, at first glance, the ceremonial perspective may seem all wrong. By the time readers reach section 23, they should be aware that the Tai-me bundle and the ten grandmother bundles are the most sacred ceremonial objects for traditional Kiowa and are still revered today.⁶ By section 23 Tai-me appears in an early twentieth-century context and in association with Momaday's grandparents. Aho and Mammadaty have taken on an almost legendary stature by this point in the book, and each paragraph reveals the continuing powers of these sacred objects—the small Tai-me makes "an awful noise," as loud as a tree crashing, as it falls to the floor of the Tai-me keeper's home where Aho is visiting; and Mammadaty wore one of the little grandmother bundles, which "Aho remembered" could become "extremely heavy" if not respected properly (80–81).

In the third voice of Momaday's three-voice structure, the narrator juxtaposes these sacred objects with an iron kettle "used to catch rainwater with which we washed our hair" (81). To a Christian today, this might seem similar to juxtaposing a revered crucifix from the catacombs and an old stainless steel mixing bowl. But the placing of that kettle at this point in the book and in this section is

a form of sacred play, a type of ceremonial inventiveness that in an interview with Charles L. Woodard Momaday identified as being “a central part of Native American attitude towards life” (“Center” 31).

Physical characteristics, a certain “angle of vision,” the landscape, family memories, storytelling and ceremonial contexts, and an active sensitivity to perceiving the sacred in the mundane transform the kettle. When struck, the kettle rings and sings through “the tips of your fingers.” The narrator presents the kettle as seen by a small child; thus it is “huge and immovable.” It gathers precious rain in the dry summer landscape and is part of his grandmother’s home, the epicenter of his family memories. Most importantly, the kettle takes its place near the end of a procession of stories and ceremonies that celebrate transformed objects, a procession that continues into the next section in which a buried dress and Aho’s moccasins are sanctified by a narrator whose imagination, in the introduction, can transform a cricket on a porch railing into a powerful image of “a small definition made whole and eternal” (12), a transformation, to quote Chris Teuton, “of that which is momentary, small, and inconsequential into something whole, meaningful, and eternal” (69).

These transformations of the ordinary demonstrate what Teuton has identified as one of the major contributions of *The Way to Rainy Mountain*: “*Rainy Mountain* offers its readers a ‘way’ of reconciling the apparent contradictions of modern Native life” (52). A modern world packed with too many things highlights the apparent contradictions between a modern mundane present and an unreachable sacred past. These contradictions can undermine reverence for traditional objects that once invited awe, and the five hundred years of destructive forces previously mentioned certainly limit access to and undermine shared knowledge of a Native nation’s sacred objects. Momaday’s transformations of the ordinary offer imaginative ways for a contemporary Kiowa (or, by implication, any Native or non-Native person) to resist modern reality’s pressure to obscure the sacred in the present. The transformations can enable readers to discover sacred objects within the reach of family and individual memories, thus opening cognitive and affective spaces that invite an appreciation of how the sacred lives in their present material world.

V

Momaday's screenplay *The Moon in Two Windows*, which first appeared in published form in his 2007 collection *Three Plays*,⁷ focuses on the Carlisle boarding school experience in several different time periods, but primarily in 1912 (when Jim Thorpe led the football team to victory over Army) and the very early stages of the school's history. For the latter Momaday drew heavily upon Luther Standing Bear's *My People the Sioux* (1928). Momaday obviously has a strong sense of sympathy for the children who attended Carlisle. He was a speaker for a gathering of "a couple thousand" who in May 2000 gathered near the school's cemetery to pay tribute to those children (Naedele B1).

Unlike Set in *Ancient Child*, the Native characters in this play are familiar with the ceremonies, language, and customs of their tribes. But like Abel, they are suddenly removed from their cultures. They are too young to take on ceremonial leadership roles, and there is no evidence that any of them were apprenticed to medicine people. Yet, in their strange and often hostile new environment, they develop ceremonies that appropriated, re-invented, and expressed resistance to three characteristics of the boarding school experience that were particularly oppressive: forcing children to live together in close quarters in gender-segregated dorms (since most of the children featured in the play are Lakota or other Plains nations, this was an especially drastic change), forcing the children to have their hair cut, and requiring them to abandon their names for Christian names. The appropriations and inventions are some of Momaday's most interesting representations of the functions of survivance ceremonies under make-do circumstances.

Richard Henry Pratt and the other administrators and teachers at Carlisle obviously thought that forcing the children to live in dormitories would help to "civilize" them. In the screenplay what they didn't realize was that forcing the boys to live in such close proximity would facilitate the development of a pan-tribal "secret society." In *My People the Sioux* Luther Standing Bear does recall that the "big boys" held a "council" and made "serious speeches" about

forced haircutting (140). Momaday expands upon this brief reference and gives Standing Bear a central role. In one of his stage directions, he describes a secret society:

They have evolved a secret society complete with ritual elements. There is an opening prayer in one of their native languages. Pollack has an eagle-bone whistle. He places one end into a vessel of water and blows into the other. It makes the sound of a bird warbling. He blows in each of the four directions. Then there is talk, mostly in such English as they have, assisted by sign language. (133)

The boys know that they are too young to lead rituals and form “secret societies” and that making speeches in broken English undermines the power of their elders’ oratorical traditions. But their need for communal ties and Indian identity is great, and this is the best they can do under the circumstances. Momaday’s Luther Standing Bear’s response to the situation is praiseworthy. Chad Allen characterizes him as the “voice of articulate Indian critique and defiant survival” (Review 414). Standing Bear’s concise definition of the situation and his response inspire the other boys: “Somehow we will understand each other; such things happen when there is need. I am Lakota. I am too young to speak in council, but I will speak” (134). Several of the boys do speak, and a sense of pan-Indian community does grow, a shared sense that Amelia Katanski and other historians of the boarding school movement have presented as an empowering form of communal resistance to assimilation.⁸

But this sense of community is almost immediately threatened. Captain Pratt is furious about the secret meeting. He sees the ceremonies and speeches as serious violations of school “rules” (135). His initial punishment is severe. He instructs his Kiowa assistant to gather up all of the boys’ medicine bundles: “Get rid of them once and for all” (137).

Again, there is a response unanticipated by Pratt. The boys trust the Kiowa assistant and know, or at least hope, he will treat the bundles properly. Furthermore, this painful shared deprivation of ceremonial objects reinforces the sense of community that the rituals and

talks of the secret society initiated. Luther Standing Bear perceives how that instance of deprivation fosters new strength: "I felt that night, especially that he [the Kiowa assistant] was trying to keep himself an Indian, trying hard, as we all were. The giving up of our sacred things was a sacrifice that made us stronger somehow" (137).

Haircutting and naming were oppressive facts of life at boarding schools and expected episodes in any boarding school narrative. Hence, it is not surprising that two of the most powerful scenes in Momaday's depiction of the first days at Carlisle in 1879 focus on these colonial assimilation rituals and not surprising that almost all the children submit to both. But there are two striking exceptions, one poignant, the other haunting, both involving invented counter-rituals that resist the oppressive assimilation rituals.

The one boy who refuses a haircut is a strong, eighteen-year-old Lakota named Plenty Horses. (One of Standing Bear's names was Plenty Kill, and one of the students at Carlisle was Robert American Horse [Standing Bear 125, 146]). Plenty Horses not only refuses the haircut—he throws the orderly protecting the barber to the floor, grabs the barber's scissors, and "*holds their points to the orderly's throat*" (143). After terrifying the orderly, he drops the scissors, releases his grasp, and steps back. The barber gets the message: "All right, son. I won't cut your hair" (143). That night Pratt's wife Anna is awakened by an "unearthly lamentation." Crouching by the bandstand, Plenty Horses wails out his agonizing lament as he cuts off his braids with his knife. This private ceremony soon becomes communal. The girls hear his cries, "spill out onto" their dormitory porch, and join in the keening.

Plenty Horses is thrown in the guardhouse for his resistance and private ceremony. It would have been easy for Momaday to depict Plenty Horses' treatment as a one-dimensional case of racist and colonial victimization. Instead he complicates Plenty Horses' ceremonial performance, presenting it as an act of survivance. Standing Bear and the Kiowa assistant, Etahdleuh, visit Plenty Horses, and Etahdleuh tells him:

What you did last night at the bandstand. It was good. It was good that you cut your own hair. It was your sacrifice, not

theirs. And it was your mourning, not theirs. You were Plenty Horses. You were your own being, and not theirs. You are an Indian. Always be an Indian. That is who and what you are. That is your self, and it is the best thing you have. (144–45)

It is wrong to form secret society rituals and speeches when you are young and untrained, it is wrong to lose medicine bundles, and it is wrong to invent a haircutting ceremony when you are young and not grieving for a lost relative. But in all these cases of impropriety and loss the children discover sustaining powers. In one crucial case even a transformed assimilationist ritual of abandoning one's name signals a resistance to and appropriation of the oppressor's power.

Throughout his writing career Momaday has celebrated the importance of naming, whether it is in the title of a book, as in *The Names*, or in exploring meanings of his several names or historical or fictional names. We should, accordingly, expect a dramatization of the oppressive boarding school naming ceremonies in this screenplay. The first part of the scene conforms to expectations about this ritual. The name of the classroom teacher, Miss Mather, is an obvious reference to the Puritan Cotton Mather. She is a dedicated assimilationist: "*on her matronly shoulders [is] the very burden of civilization*" (115).

The naming ceremony begins with blackboard inscriptions in a scene most likely inspired by *My People the Sioux*. According to Standing Bear, one day the students discovered "a lot of writing on one of the blackboards": lists of incomprehensible "marks," "white man's names" (136–37). In Momaday's screenplay Miss Mather writes two columns of girls' names on the blackboard. Each girl must rise from her seat, proceed to the blackboard, accept the pointer placed in her hand by Miss Mather, and point to a name. (Standing Bear describes a similar ritual [137].) Stands Looking is the first performer. She points to the name Margaret.⁹ Miss Mather proclaims, "Good, good! Oh, very good. . . . From now on she will be Margaret Looking, ah, Margaret Stands Looking" (130).

This event not only signals the layering of a foreign name over a Native name, it is also an erasure of the Native name, since most

of the time she will simply be called Margaret; the only permissible alternative being the nickname Maggie. The ceremony also violates Native concepts of multiple names and the dynamism of serial naming characteristic of many tribal cultures. "From now on" eliminates those possibilities (130).¹⁰

The next performer in this colonial ritual transforms the power relationships of the ceremony. In part, this is because the performer is rather unusual. When Pratt visits the Lakota chief Spotted Tail (another real historical figure), a stage direction introduces Gray Calf as an impish little girl wearing thick glasses and having the demeanor of "*age, even old age*" (188). Clearly she, like Grey from *Ancient Child*, is one of Momaday's ancient children. At Carlisle she leads the girls' wailing responses to Plenty Horse's lamentations; she also cuts her own hair. And she is dead. She died on the long train journey from Lakota country to Carlisle, Pennsylvania. To cover this potentially disastrous public relations tragedy, Pratt ordered Etahdleuh to dispose of the body. Etahdleuh wrapped her in blankets, dropped her out a train window, and later carefully and ceremonially buried her (127). But the earth cannot contain her. A stage direction compares her to a Pueblo Koshare, a sacred clown who is "*both worldly and other-worldly*" (131). She appears briefly in the midst of the secret society meeting; she leads the wailing for Plenty Horses; and she volunteers to be next after Margaret to select a Christian name.

Her initial performance is all wrong from a traditional Lakota perspective and absolutely correct from a Carlisle viewpoint. Her follow-up is a creative intervention between these binaries. She raises her hand "*emphatically*," walks "*briskly*" to the blackboard, grasps the pointer, and with great "*finality*" selects a splendidly Christian name—Grace (131). Miss Mather is pleased: "Good. Good" (131). As part of the assimilation ritual, she asks this cooperative child to say her new name. Gray Calf poses, surveys the class, "cracks an exaggerated smile," and names herself "GRASS!" (131). The class explodes with laughter and begins a loud chant of "GRASS, GRASS, GRASS!" (131). Miss Mather cannot control the class that day; nor can she get the little girl and her classmates to abandon the "Grass" name.

Certainly, this is not the first time a contemporary Native author has, with humor, reversed a colonial naming power play. Witness, for instance, in Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water* (1993) how Thought Woman rejects Robinson's Crusoe's attempt to name her Friday. Instead, she claims his name (245–46).¹¹ But Gray Calf's power play is particularly noteworthy. The "Grass" pronunciation of Grace grounds a Christian concept in what Vine Deloria Jr. would define as Native spatial images (75–89), in this case Plains grasses, rather than in Euro-American temporal images. Gray Calf's performance also refigures Christian election and resurrection narratives aligning this lowly girl child—once dumped out a window and buried under the grass—with powerful Christian saints and saviors.

VI

My main goal in this highly selective examination of Momaday's contributions to the representations of ceremonial adaptations in a modern and often hostile world is to emphasize the impressive variety of his contributions. They range from modifications of specific Navajo, Kiowa, Jemez Pueblo, Jicarilla Apache, and Christian rituals and ceremonies to creative interventions, adaptations, and re-creations of assimilation rituals imposed by non-Indian institutions and to perceptual processes, as in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, that enable modern Indians and non-Indians to see the sacred in the mundane. Momaday is fully aware that these forms of sacred play involve great risk. He concludes his *In the Presence of the Sun* (1992) collection with a poem entitled "At Risk." Wordplay is the immediate topic of the poem, but on other levels "At Risk" also highlights the challenges of writing about transformed ceremonies in a modern world (143):

My soul was at risk.
I struggled
Towards hurt,
Towards healing,
Towards passion,
Towards peace.

I wheeled in the shadow of a hawk.
 Dizziness came upon me;
 The turns of time confined and confounded me. (6–14)

Momaday dramatizes these risks in the ambiguous combinations of healing, hope, pain, and anguish in the ceremonial conclusions of *House Made of Dawn* and *Ancient Child*. Even his most optimistic work, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, concludes with complex juxtapositions of the vitality of the “burns and shines” of the “early sun” on the mountain and the finality of “this cold, black, density of stone” (l, 6, 7, 10, 89) in his “Rainy Mountain Cemetery” poem. But in community with Betonie, Blue Bird, Bush, Lipsha, Nellie, Rosa, Reeva, and Vizenor’s pilgrims who do not succumb to “terminal creeds,” and with Ben Benally, Tosamah, Grey, Set, and the narrator of *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, Momaday knows that “when there is need,” even if you are “too young” or untrained (*Moon* 134), or in the wrong place and time, sincere attempts to perform ceremony rooted in Native perspectives and coming from “the map inside ourselves” (Hogan, *Solar* 17) can foster survival, resistance, and even the possibilities of healing, passion, and peace.

The conclusion to *The Moon in Two Windows* dramatizes these possibilities. Luther Standing Bear has long since graduated from Carlisle. He walks with his son “among the headstones” at Carlisle Cemetery, a reminder that not every student found ways to survive assimilation ceremonies. This is a message reinforced in “The Stones at Carlisle,” one of Momaday’s best new poems from *Again the Far Morning* (76):

Here are six rows of children. How
 Symmetrical the small array.
 The names are dim and distant now.
 We come and go and here they stay.
 Please pray they rest and bless each name.
 They reckon innocence and shame. (1–6)

But Standing Bear and his son leave the cemetery and approach Indian Field where Pop Warner trained Jim Thorpe. Way in the dis-

tance the son sees “a man and a child. The man takes the child in both hands and swings her around and around” (177). This scene echoes an earlier joyous image of Etahdleuh and Grass; he swings this inventor of a powerful naming ceremony “round and round” (138). The ending is still ambiguous. Nevertheless, this ending suggests the possibility of endless returns of hopeful ceremonial spins even in a world grounded in cemeteries.

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NOTES

1. Besides standard ethnographic sources such as Washington Matthews’s *The Night Chant*, Gary Witherspoon’s *Language and Art in the Navajo Universe*, and James C. Faris’s *The Nightway*, much of my information came from informal interviews with Will Tsosie during the time of performances of several Nightways in mid-October, 1993, near Tsaile, Arizona. For other interpretations of Momaday’s use of the Nightway, see Evers 127; Scarberry-Garcia 9–11, Schubnell 133–35, Hogan, “Who,” 167–77; Bierhorst 55–56; and Porter 82–83.

2. For Momaday’s familiarity with Navajo ceremonialism, see Momaday, foreword xv–xvii; Morgan 31–32; Allen, *Trans-Indigenous* 115–31.

3. See Catherine Kunce for some of the traditional Chickasaw and some of the adaptive elements of Bush’s ceremony.

4. For example, see *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (8).

5. For a different view of Grey, see Kathleen Donovan's "Menace among the Words."

6. In an interview, Gary Kodaseet, the former secretary-treasurer of the Kiowa Gourd Clan, acknowledged his strong response to coming into the presence of Tai-me when he was a young man. He compared his strong feelings to those Momaday describes in section 10 of *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (Kodaseet 152). In July 2009 at the Kiowa Gourd Clan Ceremonials in Carnegie, Oklahoma, I was with Mr. Kodaseet in his camp. Part of the camp was the tepee that housed the Tai-me. During the third and fourth of July several people came to be taken by Mr. Kodaseet to pray in the presence of Tai-me.

7. In her extensive annotated bibliography of Momaday's works, Phyllis S. Morgan indicates a 2006 manuscript version (202).

8. Amelia Katanski specifically focuses on the way learning to read and write English fostered pan-Indian connections (6).

9. Margaret (Maggie) Stands Looking was indeed the name of a student at Carlisle. She was one of the best students and a friend of Standing Bear (161, 174).

10. Momaday's Maggie doesn't have to have her name inscribed on her, as was the case with Standing Bear and his fellow students. He recalls that a piece of tape displaying the new name was sewn on the back of each student's shirt (137).

11. I thank Corby Baxter, a recent PhD who graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington, for pointing out the example from King's novel.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Qwo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, and Scott Lauria Morgensen, eds. *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature*. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 2011.
ISBN: 978-0-8165-2907-0. 249 pp.

Michael Snyder, *Oklahoma City Community College*

A landmark study, this new collection consolidates a new wave of critical perspectives that interweave indigenous studies with queer theory. These recent voices build upon earlier work by Native American and First Nations authors and critics who engaged gay and lesbian studies approaches. These predecessors include the two-spirited Mohawk poet Maurice Kenny, who penned the groundbreaking essay “Tinselled Bucks: An Historical Study in Indian Homosexuality” in the mid-1970s, and Craig S. Womack, who published a seminal final chapter in *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* on the closeted Cherokee playwright Lynn Riggs in 1999.

This new wave seeks to advance the critical discourse over and beyond that which was produced by non-Native anthropologists or other social scientists such as Walter L. Williams, author of the groundbreaking 1986 study *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture*. They take to task anthropological discourse, exposing the way in which discussions of Two-Spirit have been shaped by their utility to non-Native gays and lesbians without being grounded in conversations with indigenous intellectuals or being fully accountable to Native peoples. Moreover *Queer Indig-*

enous Studies ushers the critical discourse past some of the concerns negotiated in the 1997 anthology *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality*, edited by Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang. In twelve wide-ranging essays eleven contributors critique heteronormativity, “white colonial heteropatriarchy” (212), settler colonialism, and their deleterious influence on Natives’ internalized concepts of sexuality. They invite the reader to “imagine with us the future of queer Indigenous studies as a part of collective resistance” (24).

Published simultaneously with *Queer Indigenous Studies* is a companion volume of sorts, *Sovereign Erotics: A Collection of Two-Spirit Literature*. That intertwined collection shares a coeditor, the two-spirited Cherokee poet and critic Qwo-Li Driskill, who is joined by another queer Cherokee literary force, novelist and critic Daniel Heath Justice, author of *Our Fire Survives the Storm: A Cherokee Literary History*. Their *Sovereign Erotics* coeditor Lisa Tatonetti, who is doing crucial work on Maurice Kenny, analyzes in *Queer Indigenous Studies* D. H. Justice’s trilogy of fantasy novels collectively titled *The Way of Thorn and Thunder* and Driskill’s poetry collection *Walking with Ghosts*, uniting them as “outland Cherokees.” Qwo-li Driskill’s influential work and his term “Sovereign Erotic” are also elaborated upon in an incisive, historically grounded essay by Mark Rifkin. The author of the exciting recent study *When Did Indians Become Straight? Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty*, Rifkin here has produced a tightly crafted essay that engages theory productively and is perhaps the finest of the collection. Brian Joseph Gilley, author of *Becoming Two-Spirit: Gay Identity and Social Acceptance in Indian Country*, brings sexual desire back to the table in his article “Two-Spirit Men’s Sexual Survivance” and also happens to be Cherokee (and Chickasaw). While these essays are all strong, one might quibble that the emphasis on Cherokee literature and perspectives might have been better balanced with that of a wider range of tribes, albeit Driskill, Justice, and Gilley are widely influential on indigenous queer critical discourse.

While offering plenty of Cherokee-love, *Queer Indigenous Studies* expands its range past the national borders of the United States

into a broader indigenous studies approach. *Aotearoa*, or in colonial terms, New Zealand, is well represented with two essays, one by Michelle Erai analyzing colonial “queer castes” intermingling race and sexuality. A second essay by Clive Aspin explores Maori *takatapui* identity and community health. Indigenous Pacific Islanders are also the subject of Samoan artist and poet Dan Taulapapa McMullin’s meditation on Tagaloa, Jesus, and Nafanua (Samoa’s greatest warrior). These inclusions reflect the development of, and growing interest in, discourse on the indigenous people of the Pacific Islands. Closer to home, the Métis critic June Scudeler reveals how the Cree First Nations poet Gregory Scofield uses Cree concepts of sacredness and medicine to move toward an acceptance of his sexuality and Métis identity.

Queer Indigenous Studies in general very much emphasizes privileging what it terms indigenous knowledge over non-Native criticism or studies. This is an important move in establishing the intellectual sovereignty, to use Robert Allen Warrior’s term, of indigenous critics. This stance is not without certain complications or epistemological drawbacks, however. The editors refer to their “methodological turn to Indigenous knowledges” (4), but this suggests circular reasoning, since knowledge is not a method; rather, one uses a method to gain knowledge. Thus the concept of “Indigenous knowledge” is sometimes problematically treated as an a priori truth. A goal of defining “Indigenous truth” is even posited for another text, a basically essentialist claim (10). Sometimes this “truth” is said to be found in the conversations of contemporary indigenous peoples. There may be, however, vagaries of granting any given contemporary Native person instant epistemological privilege. On that token, related ethos issues are suggested by Driskill’s citation of MySpace forum posts by an unidentified Cherokee traditional person (105). Even “conversations with Indigenous intellectuals” (5) cannot be the ultimate source of such knowledge since it would privilege our present moment as somehow especially enlightened and evolved, buying into the Western mythos of progress. Therefore at times the concept of “indigenous knowledge” is overly ill-defined or treated as monolithic or a priori.

Moreover, the rejection of “settler colonialism,” which we all are urged to be doing constantly, is problematic at times because its goals are not clear. In some of the more radical statements it would seem that only the total emigration of North American people of European origin back to Europe would satisfy. Often it is not clear what is to happen after we renounce and repudiate the “U.S. settler colonial state” (47), though Andrea Smith aims to “dismantle the settler state” (56). Scott Lauria Morgensen suggests that “non-Native queers can remain in the groundless space of critiquing settlement as their condition of existence” (147). Apparently one is to incessantly hover over the colonial ground, constantly criticizing oneself. One wonders how this differs materially from “white guilt.” What would this critique look like? For example, Morgensen’s essay presumes that all indigenous knowledge is beyond criticism or commentary by outsiders, and that all non-Native knowledge is suspect. “Entering accountable conversation under Native leadership will expose non-Natives’ mistaken premises, unexamined desires, and collusions with settler power, while inviting transformation,” he writes (149). All faults and misunderstandings are placed squarely on one side that misrecognizes Indigenous Truth. That doesn’t sound like true dialogue. This move is a simple flipping of the old savage/civilized binary, which posited that Natives were ignorant and needed to be enlightened by Europeans, and is thus problematic. While non-Native critical allies are sometimes encouraged, the work of non-Natives of the past is largely repudiated, even when they have accumulated vast storehouses of knowledge of which critics and scholars, Native and non-Native, have availed themselves over the decades, revising or critiquing this material.

In spite of the impetus of “Queer” to decenter the subject and de-emphasize identity politics, some of these critics overly stress issues of authenticity, clearly marking insiders and outsiders. At a few of the most strained moments, the tone resembles that of middle-class, late-1960s radicals who sought to “smash the state” while teaching or learning at public universities, comfortably ensconced within the system. The word *genocide* is deployed loosely and referred to as a “performance genre” (51), and “the ongoing genocide of Native

peoples” is mentioned in passing without elaboration (47). The blunt rhetoric that is used, especially by Chris Finley and Andrea Smith, mirrors the diatribes of the controversial *autoposeur* Ward Churchill.

These imprecisions and rhetorical excesses, however, cannot mar the stark achievement of this significant work. *Queer Indigenous Studies* represents a step forward, taking us beyond the limitations of having to grapple with such now-dated issues as the so-called *berdache*, the etymology of *Two-Spirit*, the hemming in of indigenous studies by national boundaries or representational, ethnographic approaches to queer indigenes. *Queer Indigenous Studies* is a must-read for anyone engaging either queer theory or indigenous studies.

Molly McGlennen. *Fried Fish and Flour Biscuits*. London: Salt, 2010. ISBN: 978-1-84471-832-0. 68 pp.

Dean Rader, *University of San Francisco*

Collections of poems are like a box of chocolates.

[No, wait. That’s no good.]

Poetry collections are more like a box of Lucky Charms. There are some hard things, some sweet things, and, if you’re lucky, a special treat. [I think that’s even worse.]

Books of poems are like burritos—you never know what’s inside. [That’s astonishingly bad.]

Poetry collections (good ones) are like a can of salty mixed nuts: you just can’t stop consuming one after the other. [Must try again.]

Books of poems are most like a cookbook; they are filled with recipes for things you’ve devoured, hated, and longed to try.

Food similes are tough. There are so many ways they can go wrong (see above), so when you come across a book of poems that successfully utilizes that trope, it not only makes you feel hungry, it makes you feel grateful. That’s how I felt reading Molly McGlennen’s debut collection of poems, *Fried Fish and Flour Biscuits*. Hungry but grateful.

There is a lot of food in McGlennen’s collection: fried fish and flour biscuits, of course, but also wild rice, blueberry pie, Napa Val-

ley Merlot, oysters, sushi, chopped peppers and onions, potatoes, beans, walleye, peeled oranges, bacon, even something called “rock soup.” Food functions as connector in these poems, a poetic roux mixing and binding. In fact, the entire collection is itself an act of *collection*. McGlennen tells us in her preface that she, like other Native writers, sees poetry as “a form of community-building, a means to locate oneself in relationship to a network of people and places and memories” (1). This book gathers these poetic renderings of people, places, and memories in a way that both orders and celebrates relationships. “Our lives are made up of recipes,” McGlennen says. “Poetry is a way to preserve and translate those recipes. . . . Poetry is what nourishes us” (1).

Fried Fish and Flour Biscuits is not autobiography, and it’s not memoir, but it certainly is personal, and it’s worth addressing issues of voice and persona here. Every semester in every class, I caution my students against assuming the speaker of a contemporary American poem is the poet. I think there is even more of a temptation to conflate speaker and author among writers of color, a move I understand but am skeptical of. It is dangerous, for example, to assume an autobiographical reading of someone like fellow Ojibwe writer Louise Erdrich, who loves the poetic persona. Is the speaker of “Dear John Wayne” Erdrich herself? We know it isn’t in first-person poems like “Windigo” or “Indian Boarding School: The Runaways,” but other intimate poems from *Baptism of Desire* are less clear.

My own reading of McGlennen’s poems suggests that quite often—maybe all the time—the speaker and the poet are pretty much one and the same. For readers who might be confused, the poet helps us out here. In her acknowledgments she mentions “Ellia,” and later in the book we come across three poems about the birth of Ellia. There is a poem about Louis Owens, poems about historical people and events, and poems about love and loss. Some, of course, are easier to “verify” than others, but all carry the weight of authority and authenticity. One reason is because the gap between McGlennen’s language and her content is small indeed. A poet like John Ashbery or Orlando White or Ai plays so much with artifice and language, it’s impossible for the poem to function as an accurate window into identity.

Not the case with *Fried Fish*.

McGlennen's poems seem uninterested in boundaries. They erect no fences, they don no masks. Consider "For Uncle," a poem dedicated to Richard Joseph Roskop, who died in 1991 at the age of forty:

You don't even look
like the rest of the eight.
Dark sand for skin, hair to mid-back.
You let my brother and me throw rocks
At cars, eye sores in your idealistic vision.
One for agent orange.
One for those god damned politicians.
One because.

And you talk funny—
a nasal buzz. (18)

or this stanza from one of my favorite poems in the book, "What Red Leads To":

Everything was unwinding: earlier,
the neighbor-girl and I played dress-up
in the backyard for an audience of rocks who
would see my dismount my too-large platform heels,
watch my unraveling crimson gypsy blouse, the one
I usually tied like a halter-top

because at lunch she had said I was a sexpot and squeezed
her eight-year old eyes at me like almost-dead roses, the
ones
on our kitchen table, blackened and shriveled—(14)

There is an intimacy in these poems I find moving. They are not "confessional" in the traditional sense. They don't work through abuse. They don't poeticize a bad marriage. They don't explore the black holes of alcoholism or depression. In some ways they are riskier because they do not rely on psychological drama to deliver a poetic punch.

What they do is show how experiences of the past shape the pres-

ent. In this case the poems demonstrate how a kind of slideshow or memories can evolve into a poetic vision of the present. McGlennen suggests as much in “Composition”:

I assemble with the hands of a poet
who does not know the end
of her poem, ink is an afterthought.
Piecing myself together I use all of the material I can
gather (37)

Fried Fish and Flour Biscuits is itself a piecing together of the poet’s material, most of which are memories. Like Leslie Marmon Silko in *Storyteller*, McGlennen knows that mere collection can morph into nostalgia. But when the writer figures discrete scenes into an orderly poetics, something larger and more significant emerges. Silko uses the basket as her metaphor for how the Native writer weaves various strands of the self and her community into one aesthetic (and culturally relevant) text. McGlennen participates in a similar project, but for her the metaphor is food, and the poet-slash-chef combines the various ingredients of her life into something readers can consume, digest, take in.

If the reader will indulge me with this food metaphor, I’d like to say something about the matter of *taste*, namely that *Fried Fish and Flour Biscuits* will likely appeal to many. The dishes are pleasing. The portions are generous. Readers more drawn to elliptical poetry like that of Orlando White or Sherwin Bitsui will find these poems notably looser and more expansive, but McGlennen’s nice long lines and her facility with the prose poem will win them over. This book is the Sunday family dinner of poetry. Light on experimental constructions and abstract language, these poems can be enjoyed by anyone. Because of the book’s accessibility and its minimal use of poem-speak, it would be a great collection to use in an undergraduate class. Students will relate to the reminiscences of home, the pull of familial gravitas, and the ongoing construction of self.

The book also does a nice job of blending political poems (“Columbus Day,” “Silent Death,” and “War Curio”) with more personal ones. And in the wonderful “10 Little Indians,” the poet purees

both. Poets tend to be too easily categorized as “lyric” poets or “narrative” poets or “political” poets. McGlennen demonstrates such silos are unnecessary; she can inhabit all three worlds concurrently.

I’ve been searching for the appropriate food metaphor for *Fried Fish and Flour Biscuits*. Is it a jambalaya: a mélange of different but complementary items? Is it a casserole: a mysterious mixture of heartland goodness? A bowl of wild rice soup? A hearty concoction of indigenous substance laced with surprising spices?

Yes.

James Mackay, ed. *The Salt Companion to Diane Glancy*.
Cambridge: Salt, 2010. ISBN: 978-1844714284. 209 pp.

Amanda Moulder, *St. John’s University*

The Salt Companion to Diane Glancy offers a helpful supplemental bibliography of Glancy’s writing and criticism on that work, which makes very clear just how thin the scholarly attention directed at Glancy’s body of work has been. In the introduction to this edition, editor James Mackay surveys some of the recent scholarship on and responses to Glancy (from Adrienne Rich, Kimberly Blaeser, Molly McGlennen, Birgit Däwes, Brewster Fitz, Frederick Hale, Arnold Krupat, and Daniel Heath Justice). Mackay then explains that the collection sets out to fill a gap in critical attention.

Like Mackay, Chadwick Allen also laments scholarly inattention to Glancy and hypothesizes that this “may well be because scholars have been either unwilling or ill-equipped to engage Glancy’s driving compulsion in these texts: to examine in detail a Christian faith embattled both from without and within; to explore a largely unknown indigenous descent; to describe the painful isolation of juxtaposed and asymmetrical identities” (15). Allen’s “Esther in the Throne Room, Zaccheus in the Tree (Sequoyah in His Cabin): Diane Glancy’s *Voice Between*” draws deeply upon his personal connection to Glancy. He writes that he and Glancy “share similar lines of known and unknown genealogy . . . , common geographies . . . , familial stories of struggles epic and mundane” (16). To

locate evidence of Glancy's "embattled" identity, Allen's essay surveys her early works: the chapbooks she published on her small in-home presses, Hadassah and MyrtleWood, as well as her 1983 master's thesis.

Many of the other essays in this collection examine the interplay between her Christian and Cherokee identities, the seeming paradox present in much of Glancy's writing. In "Claiming Faith: Border-Crossing Theology in the Writing of Diane Glancy," Jerry Harp examines Glancy's syncretism and the tension between her identification with evangelical and Cherokee communities in her poetry and in some of the literary criticism on her work. Harp characterizes Glancy as a border-crosser and, in so doing, points out what may make this writer controversial: that when Glancy "finds anything in Cherokee belief or practice—e.g., conjuring, multiple gods—fundamentally at odds with her life in Christ, she leaves it out of her devotion. On the other hand, she remains fundamentally alive to what it means to be Cherokee" (49).

In contrast, Molly McGlennen's essay, "Diane Glancy's Creative/Critical Poetics," begins with some skepticism about Glancy's dedication to Cherokee communities. McGlennen engages deeply with indigenous nationalist scholarship, and by bringing this scholarship into the conversation, McGlennen is able to ask: "in terms of sovereignty, how does Glancy's literature assert ideas of Cherokee nationhood in community-based, activist, and autonomous ways?" (61). Her analysis shows that Glancy interweaves many forms, genres, and narrative voices. In spite of her initial skepticism, McGlennen surmises that Glancy's "writing illustrates the diverse voices and experiences of Cherokee communities that are scattered across the hemisphere" (67). In other words, through this weaving, Glancy simultaneously participates in and constructs a Cherokee poetics.

Birgit Däwes's "'Foxtrot with Me, Baby': Diane Glancy's Dramatic Work" shows how Glancy's plays deconstruct "notions of essentialist cultural identity in order to find new modes of historiography" (145). She discusses an ethics of reception through which to read and understand Glancy's dramatic work, one that is nonlinear, pluralistic, and transnational. As such, Däwes's analysis sidesteps some

of the questions about Glancy's paradoxical identity yet arrives at a conclusion about the writer similar to McGlennen's: that "Glancy's dramatic work bridges the gaps between various genres, between theory and practice, storytelling, performance, and reception, and between a whole range of cultural differences" (148).

In the republished "Employing the Strategy of Transculturation: Colonial Migration and Postcolonial Interpretation in *Pushing the Bear*," Karsten Fitz studies how Glancy's *Pushing the Bear* uses transculturation (à la Mary Louise Pratt) to absorb Christian stories into Cherokee culture, thereby making survival possible, even through the incomprehensible trauma of forced removal and migration. John Wilson's brief essay, "Ghosting: The Possibility of a Rewritten Life," points out that while Glancy identifies both with Christian and Cherokee communities, she also levies heavy criticisms of historical Christians, European invaders who came to convert the "heathen." Yet, he also shows that Glancy sees the cataclysm of Removal as part of a much larger Christian history of dispossession.

Other scholars included in this collection maintain some emphasis on Glancy's "embattled" identity but shift their main focus to examine how Glancy weaves the themes of travel, space, and time into her writing. "In the Talking Leaves: Diane Glancy's Reclamation of Voice and Archive," Crystal Alberts's essay on *Designs of the Night Sky*, touches on the theme of travel, place, and space. Even though this essay examines the theme of travel, it overlaps with some of the other essays by demonstrating how Glancy syncretizes Cherokee and Christian beliefs. Alberts contends that Glancy resolves "the conflict between written and oral tradition" in *Designs* by arguing that "the written word represents a new version of" the oral tradition (115–16).

Like Dawes, A. Robert Lee reads Glancy in light of her short fiction's performative elements and its emphasis on the present moment in time in "Whole Parts: Scripting Diane Glancy's Short Fiction." Lee is interested in what he calls the "scriptedness" of Glancy's work, which he argues "invites its own due and particular recognition" (155). Polina Mackay examines Glancy's "driving poems," showing how Glancy explores the fluid space of the road through

poetry and the poem as the road: “The final lines of ‘Wyoming’ override this connection between voyaging and reality to bring into sharp relief the discursive dimension of travel, since the road trip figures here not as a record of an actual journey but as a composition” (35). Helen May Dennis employs Bakhtin’s theory of the literary chronotope to explore Glancy’s 1998 novel *Flutie*, in which the mixed-blood title character associates road metaphors with her search for alternative future paths, ways to make her “own road” (97). Dennis argues that *Flutie* is “a postmodern novel that uses the chronotope of the road to depict . . . the traumas and tragedies of Oklahoma’s rural poor” (98). Therefore, the novel is not a traditional road novel, nor one about the connectedness of the characters to space and place, but one that uses the road as a metaphor for the protagonist’s individual journey.

James Mackay’s collection is a clear contribution, given the sheer dearth of scholarship on such a prolific writer. At the end of his introductory essay, Mackay clarifies one possible reason that scholars may have neglected Glancy: “Glancy’s Old Testament–inflected understanding undoubtedly challenges what otherwise seems like a decided status quo” (7). And at the end of the collection, Mackay’s interview with Glancy furthers this claim. Glancy describes her belief system honestly, revealing her conviction that Native American traditionalists are “going the wrong way. Because it’s like the Old Testament, which has been replaced by the new. . . . When you go out to the reservations, you go to Sun Dances and the sweat lodge, but it’s an old form that has been replaced. In my opinion. By Christianity. . . . By a higher form of spiritual life” (180). By characterizing indigenous traditionalism as a low form of spiritual life, Glancy alienates herself from the members of Cherokee communities, which may leave these members (or some nonmember academics) feeling irritated or uncomfortable. Yet, in her identification as a Cherokee and a Christian, she also represents other members of Cherokee communities. So, while her Christian fundamentalist ideology may impinge upon some of the purposes of and positions within Native nationalist scholarship, for the most part the work in the *Salt Companion to Diane Glancy* that concerns itself with

Glancy's identity—even that which engages with Native nationalist criticism—affirms her identity as both a mixed-blood Cherokee and a Christian writer.

Mark Rifkin. *When Did Indians Become Straight? Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty*. New York: Oxford UP, 2011. ISBN: 978-0-19-975546-2. 436 pp.

Bethany Schneider, *Bryn Mawr College*

Mark Rifkin's *When Did Indians Become Straight? Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty* is a towering achievement in two fields, American Indian studies and sexuality studies, and ought to be celebrated as paradigm shifting for both areas of study. From its title to its final page, the book throws down the gauntlet: the two fields are much more than lenses that can be used to illuminate one another—if we truly engage them together, the way we ask questions in both fields will never be the same again. Rifkin here brings to maturity a critical body of scholarship that has been growing up for some time in the fissures between Native and queer studies. This is not work that develops directly from the important scholarship illuminating traditional Native genders and sexualities, nor from the essential work growing out of and supporting the Two Spirit movement. Rather, in a book that spans the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Rifkin shows us how, under the conditions of settler colonialism particular to the United States, the political and cultural complexities of Native America can only be fully understood if we also address the equally complex ways that Native and non-Native sexualities were and are policed and propagated in the service of state control.

The question “When Did Indians Become Straight?” asserts that straightness is not a natural condition but is something that happened and is happening to Native people somehow and sometime. But it is in the subtitle that we begin to comprehend the scope and ambition of this work. *Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty* weaves the title of Michel Foucault's trilogy that inau-

gured a new era in the study of Euro-American sexualities in between two critical terms that have been the most dynamic concepts in American Indian studies for two decades and more: kinship and sovereignty. It is an interweaving that critiques and threatens the tendentious whiteness of queer studies, and that usefully triangulates the ways in which “kinship” can be misunderstood as a form of straightness and “sovereignty” as a form of collectivity recognizable and therefore ingestible by settler state governance. Rifkin’s volume, in other words, uses each field to illuminate historical and critical complacencies and lacunae in each other, in ways that explain the existence of those lacunae and then ultimately make each field stronger and more critically incisive. Across the whole Rifkin makes his connections boldly and with the respect and dauntless scholarly precision that we have come to expect from him.

The introduction is a complicated tour de force in its own right, but it lays out the overarching questions of the book quite simply in the opening pages:

What are heterosexuality’s contours and boundaries, and where in relation to them do indigenous forms of sex, gender, kinship, household formation, and eroticism lay? Pushing the matter a bit further, can the coordinated assault on native social formations that has characterized U.S. policy since its inception, conducted in the name of “civilization,” be understood as an organized effort to make heterosexuality compulsory as a key part of breaking up indigenous landholdings, “detrribalizing” native peoples, and/or translating native territoriality and governance into the terms of U.S. liberalism and legal geography? What would such a formulation mean for rethinking the scope and direction of queer studies? These are the questions addressed by this study, exploring the ways placing native peoples at its center would alter the history of sexuality in the United States and how doing so would allow for a reconceptualization of both the meaning of heteronormativity and understandings of the scope and shape and native sovereignties. (Rifkin 6–7)

The most far-reaching work that the introduction does is to reconceptualize “sovereignty” and “kinship” through a critique of heteronormativity. Both kinship and sovereignty are, Rifkin reminds us, translations, and it is through an extended exploration of that translation that Rifkin is able to carefully construct the queerness of his argument. Kinship and sovereignty are often useful, but ultimately they “articulate native peoples’ existence as polities through a comparison to the logics and structures of the settler state” (17). Rifkin wants us to understand that these translations occur under the auspices and in the service of a mode of heteronormativity that is at the very foundations of state power. Rifkin doesn’t, of course, throw the baby out with the bathwater. His introduction almost relentlessly pursues the internal contradictions of these concepts within Native and queer scholarly and activist communities, and ultimately the introduction serves as a scholarly retranslation of the terms that will serve us all, whether or not we work in the intersections of Native and queer studies.

The intricate architecture of his argument and the vast interconnectedness of his archive are useful in and of themselves, but they also pay off; ultimately Rifkin is able to show how his use of “queer” illuminates the ghastly translations of settler colonialism. The logical threat that indigeneity poses to the colonizing state (it shouldn’t exist) causes that state to “interpellate forms of indigenous sociality, spatiality, and governance that do not fit within liberal frameworks as *kinship*, coding them as aberrant or anomalous modes of (failed) domesticity when measured against the natural and self-evident model of nuclear conjugality” (37). The additional racializing definition of Indianness as reproductively transmitted, “and the attendant presumption of heterocouplehood as the atom of social life,” aid the state in, effectively and negatively, queering any cultural or political or artistic suggestion that Native collective identity might be anything else. Thus, Rifkin can finally argue, “While they are not *queer*, per se, native social formations are translated as something other than proper politics in ways that can be foregrounded through the critique of heteronormativity developed within queer studies, expanding the scope of heteronormativity by understanding it as

naturalizing not only the privatized domestic space of the (white) marital household but also the domestic space of settler nationalism” (37–38).

Six meaty chapters, each an elegant historical and theoretical reading that places Native literary texts alongside white fictions of either literary or jurisprudential provenance, follow the introduction. Each chapter focuses on a specific Native national literature; Seneca, Mahican, Dakota, Mohawk, and Creek. The chapters work in historical pairs, so that while the book is carefully attentive to national specificity, it also allows for a sense of how US Indian policy and national literary trends affected Native politics and self-expression both inter- and intratribally. Together, the six readings constitute what Rifkin calls a “native-centered history of sexuality” that stretches from the 1820s to the 2000s.

The first two chapters examine texts of the 1820s, focusing on that decade as a moment when the United States was codifying its Indian policy and its ideologies of gender and family. Here Rifkin explores how Native kinship networks were queered, overwritten, turned to racializing logics, and made illegible and invisible, both in the writing of Indian fiction by non-Native writers and in the ways in which the narratives of Native people were translated or framed. For instance, chapter 1 traces how the drive to read Mary Jemison as white, and the insistent downplaying of her adoption by the Seneca as incidental to an unchangeable racial selfhood inherited via a reproductive white family, deny the ways that Seneca collectivity was understood and reproduced by Senecas, with the result that Seneca claims to the land are also disavowed.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the 1880s and the 1930s, respectively. Rifkin examines Native texts that he sees deploying traditional kinship structures in explicit contradistinction to the pressures brought to bear on Native communities by changes in Indian policy, namely, the General Allotment Act (1887) and the Indian Reorganization Act (1934). Each of these acts aimed to superimpose Euro-American family ideals onto Native communities, a move that Rifkin brilliantly reads as literary intervention in what is perhaps the strongest chapter in the book, chapter 3. Here he shows how, together, allot-

ment and the boarding school program worked to rewrite the “plot” of Native America as “romance.”

Chapters 5 and 6 bring us to a more contemporary moment but show how the very long story that Rifkin has been telling remains alive and well, influencing and perpetuating homophobia in Native communities and in Native policy making. He also ties his long history to contemporary non-Native queer attachments to fantasies of what Native kinship and traditional Native gender diversity might mean to an ultimately colonizing non-Native queer politics. Chapter 5’s comparison of Leslie Feinberg’s Buffalo-based memoir, *Stone Butch Blues*, with Beth Brant’s *Mohawk Trail* is a particularly brilliant example of how scholarship that is attentive to Native national specificity can illuminate not only Native texts but also the colonial violence of some place-based non-Native writing. If you have the luxury of reading this remarkable book from cover to cover, arriving at chapter 6 is a homecoming; Rifkin’s treatment of Craig Womack’s *Drowning in Fire* (2001) stands on its own and will certainly be the benchmark for any readings of that glorious novel that follow, but it also serves as a reminder of the exciting scope and, indeed, the audacity of Rifkin’s scholarship. The fact that he can make this argument not only stretch fact but also develop and gain in depth and character from Mary Jemison to Craig Womack is just one of many signs that this is, as Daniel Heath Justice says on the back cover, “one of the best works of criticism in the field in recent years.”

Myla Vicenti Carpio. *Indigenous Albuquerque*. Lubbock: Texas Tech UP, 2011. ISBN: 0896726789. 178 pp.

Ted Jojola, *University of New Mexico*

This book barely scratches the surface of the divide that exists between those Indigenous people who live in urban places versus those who live on their original homelands. That divide is both mental and physical.

But as author Myla Vicenti Carpio reveals, urbanism for aboriginal people has existed since time immemorial. Indigenous people

once coveted precolonial places that were densely settled and centers of complex civilizations. Their displacement through colonial time has resigned them to what she concedes is a dismal “image of failure.” In that sense Westernization and urbanization have served to disempower Native people from the places they both created and valued.

Carpio attempts to set the record straight by looking at the roles Indigenous populations have had in Albuquerque. The largest city in New Mexico, it has historically been the center of many Indigenous urban activities. After all, Carpio’s primary purpose in uncovering that urban narrative is to answer, once and for all, the question of “who are urban Indians.”

Although the treatise stops short of definitively answering that question, in the process she concludes that the answer is invested in how Indigenous people have “lived” that experience. And in that manner, she begins to uncover that legacy by first digging into her own personal life and the journey upon which her mother unwittingly set her.

Carpio’s birthright is Apache. She left her reservation at age four to live in Denver, Colorado, where she stayed for most of her adolescent life. That could have easily dead-ended her except for that fact that her mother never allowed her to forget her Indigenous roots, which were multiracial—Jicarilla Apache, Isleta, and Laguna Pueblos. It was when her family moved to Albuquerque that the urban lightbulbs, so to speak, began to illuminate over her head.

“Who am I?” is probably the biggest unstated question in this volume. It’s where the central tenet of this inquiry begins. It’s the point where most good scholarship should begin. A road map to self and understanding. The concept of urban, and Carpio’s reflections upon it, are not a mundane academic exercise. Rather, it is because she is an urban Indian that we are able to glean the benefit of her scholarly attempts to “decolonize” that legacy. In her mind it’s an urban milieu that has systematically chosen to exploit the presence of Indian people.

All in all, Carpio nearly pulls it off. Nearly, because the bookends of the treatise are rather lean compared to the fatty grist of the

substance sandwiched in between. That grist represents decades of Indigenous urban movements in a place that is geographically at an Indigenous crossroads. Surrounded by Indian reservations to the north, west, and south, Albuquerque is very much like urban areas where Indian communities have also circled the wagon. Think Phoenix, Denver, Seattle, Oklahoma City and Minneapolis, to name a few.

This book could have just as easily been written about any of these places. Indeed, they all share similar signposts. Indian boarding schools, relocation centers, Indian Health medical centers, Bureau of Indian Affairs offices, and urban Indian centers are only a few of those policy mile markers. Throughout the delusional era(s) of US federal Indian programs, Native people have been subjected to the push and pull of forcible assimilation.

The more interesting stories, however, are those that are invested in the Indian people themselves. Of particular note is the chapter on the Albuquerque Laguna Colony. It's significant because it doesn't comfortably fit into any assimilationist niche, *per se*. It's an instance where Indian people—or in this case Pueblo people—are adapting to urban life by choice. It represents a twentieth-century encounter when two trains pass one another in the dark of the night. In the resulting moment, railroad barons inadvertently unleash the economic vitality of Laguna workers. In time these workers and their families establish Pueblo colonies. They are dotted far and wide, alongside major railway junctions.

The Laguna Colony of Albuquerque is a survivor. Although the rail yard has long been vanquished to scrap, children who are four generations removed from the original rail worker families continue to work and play in the city. More remarkable, they maintain a reciprocal social and political relationship to the traditional mother village, an easy hour's drive in the direction of the sunset.

That story of resilience unhinges much of what cultural assimilationists and even Indian leaders say can't be done. But Carpio in her concluding chapter, "Decolonizing Albuquerque," takes aim only at Albuquerque's civic fathers. She chides them for ignoring the contributions of urban Indians to the city's vitality. But the same aim

should have been directed toward tribal leadership. In the humdrum of Indian Self-Determination, Natives who eke out their lives away from their reservations and in urban areas tend to be summarily ignored, chastised, and disparaged.

Unfortunately, this is where Carpio misses her cue. This treatise is way larger than Native American studies and theories of decolonization. Seen that, heard that. In Carpio's own words, the "indifference to the interests of its Indian residents" in Albuquerque has inadvertently stoked the imbalance of power and given privilege to the voices of Hispanos and Anglo-Americans. The missing triad of that power relationship is the notable absence of tribal leadership. And the bottom line is that tribal governance has made little or no difference in the urban lives of their own people. Oops, sorry about that!

By far, the best resources on that topic can be found among Canadian First Nations scholarship. Canadian and American policy may dovetail only in certain respects, but Canadian First Nations have been more assertive about how their populations are integrated into urban life. We could take lessons from that activism. Canadian tribes own and manage urban reserves. Imagine that? And unlike our apathetic brand of urbanism, they continue to gain momentum by leaps and bounds.

Nonetheless, Carpio's *Indigenous Albuquerque* is a solid contribution to the narrative of the urban Indian experience in America. For those who are looking for examples to round out their bookshelf of Indigenous urban place-based events, this is a great addition.

It could have been more. It should be more. Alas, we just have to await the expanded edition.

Malcolm D. Benally, ed. and trans. *Bitter Water: Diné Oral Histories of the Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute*. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 2011. ISBN: 978-0-8165-2898-1. 102 pp.

Eric Cheyfitz, *Cornell University*

One day in the summer of 1997, very early in the morning, I, my wife, and our youngest daughter, who was then ten, along with Marybeth

Sage, a Diné friend of ours, took a walk on Big Mountain, the focal point of the Navajo-Hopi land dispute, with Pauline Whitesinger, whose testimony and photographs appear in *Bitter Water*. Pauline stayed well ahead of the rest of us so that, alone, she could perform a specific ceremony at a specific site. When the ceremony was completed she rejoined us, and we all took the walk back to our car, down the rough terrain we had just climbed up, past grazing sheep, the center of Diné life: “Sheep is life [*Dibé bee iiná*]” is the recurring refrain of the testimonies in this text. Then over the dirt tracks that pass for roads on Big Mountain, we drove back to the homesite of Pauline’s sister and our friend, Katherine Smith, whose testimony also appears in this book. When I showed my daughter, who is now a photographer and videographer, the photos of Pauline in *Bitter Water*, which she admired, she remembered that day vividly and how Pauline had teased her about her lack of stamina over what was for my daughter a very long walk.

From that moment, whenever I think of stamina and strength, both physical and spiritual, I think of Pauline and the other Diné women represented in this book and representative of their peers, who have for almost forty years led the resistance to what is known in the legal literature as the Navajo-Hopi land dispute. For them and, indeed, for the entire Navajo Nation *the Long Walk*, of which the dispute is a recent leg, begins with what Jennifer Denetdale describes in her foreword as

Kit Carson’s brutal scorch-and-burn policy. Over ten thousand Diné were forcibly marched to the Bosque Redondo Reservation in northwestern New Mexico, where they were to be inculcated with American beliefs and values. The forced removal was extremely traumatic and still lives in the collective Navajo memory. In 1868, Diné leaders signed a treaty, the last they would sign with the American government. (xii)¹

This treaty marks the formal colonization of the Diné, of which the Navajo-Hopi land dispute is an extension. The name itself, Navajo-Hopi land dispute, is an act of colonization, not only because it erases the crucial motivator of the dispute, the United States gov-

ernment, but also because the dispute and the relocation of thousands of Navajos it forced was and is resisted by certain Navajo and Hopi elders, who joined to insist that traditional—that is, precolonial—relationships between the two peoples should prevail. Both comity and conflict are recorded in the traditional narratives of both communities. Hopis and Navajos formed alliances against colonial invaders, first the Spanish and then the Anglos. Historical trading relationships and intermarriage continue. Marybeth Sage, who accompanied us on our walk on Big Mountain, is the child of a Navajo father and a Hopi mother, and we visited her Hopi relatives without the slightest tension. In her formative study of the land dispute, *The Wind Won't Know Me*, Emily Benedek quotes Albert Yava, “a Hopi-Tewa, [who] wrote in his book *Big Falling Snow*”:

The well-off Hopi has special interests. If he owns a lot of cattle for example, that land we have been contesting with the Navajos is much more important to him than to a poor family in Shipaulovi [one of the Hopi villages]. The average Hopi isn't going to benefit very much from the land settlement.²

In her one-room home on Big Mountain, Katherine Smith has hung a drawing of a coyote Uncle Sam, who holds in each hand a marionette, one labeled “Hopi Tribal Council,” the other, “Navajo Tribal Council.” That drawing sums up succinctly the colonial politics of the so-called Navajo-Hopi land dispute.

But *Bitter Water's* tack is not to re-create the linear narrative, beginning in 1882, of the legal machinations (congressional acts and federal case law) that constitute the dispute, though Denetdale's foreword and Malcolm Benally's introduction allude to these machinations, as do the testimonies, spoken and transcribed in Diné and translated into English, of the four women featured in the book, who, in addition to Pauline Whitesinger, are Mae Tso, Roberta Blackgoat (now deceased), and Ruth Benally. A brief chronology of statute and case law, beginning with the Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement Act of 1974, points to a segment of the legal narrative; some of the texts included in the bibliography contain that narrative or portions of it in detail (see, in particular, the works by Benedek,

Brugge, Cheyfitz, Churchill, Kammer, and Redhouse). The mainline of court cases, extending from the generative *Healing v. Jones* (1963, certiorari denied), ended in 2001 when the Supreme Court also refused to grant certiorari in the *Manybeads* suit.

Rather, the tack of *Bitter Water*, centered in the narratives of the four women, in the chapter "Sheep Is Life," and in the appendix, "Natural Law and Navajo Religion/Way of Life" (by Roman Bit-suie and Kenja Hassan) is to provide a particular Diné perspective on the dispute, located in the communal values represented by the sentence: "Sheep is life." As Denetdale notes in her foreword: "Diné origins and creation narratives tell one kind of history while narratives about the Diné from non-Indian sources tell another, which often contradicts Navajo stories" (xi). As I have written elsewhere, the fundamental difference between traditional Indigenous and traditional Western history is the relationship between people and the land. In the latter, land is *property*, a fungible, alienable commodity, while in the former land is a living being, bound to the community through kinship.³

Diné kinship is centered on the mother: a child is born *into* his or her mother's clan but *for* his father's clan. The anthropologist Gary Witherspoon says of the Navajo that "true kinsmen are good mothers," prompting us to note that for the Diné, as for other Indigenous communities, kinship is traditionally behavioral, not biological.⁴ Pauline Whitesinger reminds us: "The reason we will not relocate is because the land has become part of us. She is our mother" (47). For the Diné "mother" in this context is not a metaphor. Ruth Benally as well stresses Diné kinship with the land: "So that we never lose the memory of a cornfield we have a natural kinship that is woven into the land" (58). As Mae Tso says: "We have become this land of ours" (23). Roberta Blackgoat tells us: "The natural kinship brings comfort to me here. I know the names on the land where I live" (33). Sheep is life because sheep, like corn, like the Diné themselves, are of the land, are the land, are literally mothers. In the words of Maize Begay: "My mom told me once, 'The sheep are your mother. When something happens to me, anything, the sheep will be your mom.' That is what she said. I learned this is true. It's good for my

well-being to herd sheep” (71). These words in one form or another are the refrain of *Bitter Water*, as passionate commitment to a traditional way of life, as resistance to the colonial violence advanced against that way of life, and as lament for what these Diné women fear is its disappearance.

In order to gain a full appreciation of the context in which *Bitter Water* is situated, it will be useful for a reader of the book who is unfamiliar with or only peripherally aware of the Navajo-Hopi land dispute to have a knowledge of its legal history that defines key terms: the 1882 *Reservation, District 6, Joint Use Area* (JUA), *Hopi Partitioned Lands* (HPL), *Navajo Partitioned Lands* (NPL), *Accommodation Agreement* (AA).⁵ For the informed reader of the dispute or the reader who wants to become informed, this is an indispensable book precisely because it allows us to hear the voices of some of the Diné women who have upheld and are upholding traditional Navajo values against US colonialism, voices typically erased by US history, which desperately needs to hear and heed them.

NOTES

1. The Bosque Redondo reservation—in fact, a concentration camp—is in northeastern, not northwestern, New Mexico. Given the Navajo understanding of “Sheep is life,” the modern equivalent of the Long Walk in Navajo history was the stock reductions to correct overgrazing carried out by the federal government in the 1930s, where thousands of sheep and goats were massacred on the reservation. Navajos disputed the government’s assessment of overgrazing and resisted the stock reductions. See Garrick Bailey and Roberta Glenn Bailey, *A History of the Navajos: The Reservation Years* (Santa Fe: School of American Research P, 1986), 184–93.

2. Emily Benedek, *The Wind Won’t Know Me: A History of the Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 143.

3. Eric Cheyfitz, *The Poetics of Imperialism: Language Translation and Colonization from The Tempest to Tarzan* (1991; Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, expanded ed., 1997).

4. Gary Witherspoon, *Navajo Kinship and Marriage* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1975), 64.

5. In his introduction Malcolm Benally understands the “seventy-five

year lease" agreement between Navajo residents of the HPL and the Hopi Tribe to be a part of Public Law 93-531, the Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement Act of 1974 (2). This is in fact not the case. The seventy-five-year lease agreement is a part of the Accommodation Agreement between the Navajos, the Hopis, and the United States, which is included in the Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement Act of 1996. On this matter see Eric Cheyfitz, "The Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute: A Brief History," *Interventions: International Journal of Post-colonial Studies* 2. 2 (2000): 270-71.

Jeff Berglund and Jan Roush, eds. *Sherman Alexie: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Salt Lake City: U of Utah P, 2010.

ISBN: 978-0-60781-008-7. 302 pp.

Laura M. Furlan, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Jeff Berglund and Jan Roush's book is an exciting addition to the growing body of scholarship on Sherman Alexie's work. The fourteen essays in the collection—diverse in terms of coverage and approach—are arranged roughly according to the publication date of the Alexie work(s) they consider. Berglund explains in his introduction that the essays focus on "intertextual readings—readings across the genres of Alexie's works—to find intricate reworkings and meditations on common themes, emblems, and motifs, as well as characters" (xvii). This is a refreshing approach, given the growing corpus of Alexie's writing, and what can be gained from thinking through the relationships between and among his stories, poems, novels, and films.

A wonderful example of this intertextual approach can be seen in the first essay, Lisa Tatonetti's "Dancing That Way, Things Began to Change," which traces Alexie's use of Wounded Knee and the Ghost Dance as metaphors throughout his work, as they morph from signifiers of loss into ways of imagining pan-Indian survivance.

Next, Philip Heldrich's essay on dark humor in *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* and *Toughest Indian in the World* presents some interesting close readings of the stories in these two collections. Elizabeth Archuleta very adeptly examines "The Trial of

Thomas Builds-the-Fire” in terms of legal discourse and the role of silence, which, she argues, works as empowerment.

P. Jane Hafen’s essay, “Rock and Roll, Redskins, and Blues in Sherman Alexie’s Work,” is a revised version of her 1997 *SAIL* essay, which combines a discussion of Alexie’s use of popular music with an introspective response to his sometimes essentialist portrayals of Indian identity. What redeems Alexie’s work despite this is, for Hafen, his gritty realism, his ability to make his audience laugh, and his use of a “universal chord”—a register of historical and emotional understanding for Indian readers.

A pair of essays offers new readings of *Smoke Signals*. In “This Is What It Means to Say Reservation Cinema,” James H. Cox argues that *Smoke Signals* is an antidote to conventional Hollywood Indians, and he articulates the ways in which *Smoke Signals* operates as a Native film without all of the usual markers of Indian identity. Instead, Alexie relies on other factors, like geographic location, the reservation, as a “construction of a cultural space distant from non-Natives,” and the act of community storytelling performed by Thomas Builds-the-Fire to signify that this is indeed a film about Natives (84). Angelica Lawson’s essay, “Native Sensibility and the Significance of Women in *Smoke Signals*,” reads the film as a version of the hero-twin story—instead of a buddy or road-trip story—and argues that by reading from a Native perspective, female characters become central to the plot, as “stable arbiters of Native culture” (106).

Two essays, Susan Berry Brill de Ramírez’s “The Distinctive Sonority of Sherman Alexie’s Indigenous Poetics” and Nancy J. Peterson’s “The Poetics of Tribalism in Sherman Alexie’s *The Summer of Black Widows*,” offer some insightful readings of Alexie’s poetry. Brill de Ramírez takes a formalist approach by focusing on Alexie’s poetic craft, while Peterson traces Alexie’s employment of tribalism as “worldview or critical consciousness,” particularly in the “Bob’s Coney Island” section of *The Summer of Black Widows*. Peterson posits that as Alexie’s poems move further away from the reservation, geographically and thematically, they invoke a stronger sense of tribalism. In poems like “Capital Punishment” and “Sonnet: Tattoo Tears” Alexie takes up tribally important ethical issues,

such as the disproportionate number of American Indians in prison and endangerment of ecosystems on tribal lands, while in “Things (for an Indian) to Do in New York (City)” Alexie articulates what it means to be “brown” in both local and global networks. Peterson writes, “Alexie’s poems locate ways to walk in both worlds and in fact highlight the tremendous creative energy that can emerge from a collision of identities, cultures, and poetics” (155).

In “Sherman Alexie’s Challenge to the Academy,” which first appeared in *SAIL* in 2001, Patrice Hollrah suggests ways in which non-Native scholars might ethically and responsibly write and teach about indigenous peoples and books, despite Alexie’s numerous fictional admonitions, particularly those articulated by Marie Polatkin in *Indian Killer*, that suggest the impossibility of such a task. Meredith James’s “‘Indians Do Not Live in Cities, They Only Reside There’: Captivity and the Urban Wilderness in *Indian Killer*” reads the novel as a reverse captivity narrative and argues that Alexie’s use of mystery genre—albeit an unresolved mystery—highlights the protagonist’s unsolved identity quest. Stephen F. Evans’s “Indigenous Liaisons: Sex/Gender Variability, Indianness, and Intimacy in Sherman Alexie’s *The Toughest Indian in the World*” considers the pedagogical potential of Alexie’s collection in terms of the ways in which it engages with cross-racial and same-sex relationships and the ways it challenges current iterations of homophobia—in Indian Country and abroad. In “Sherman Alexie’s Transformation of ‘Ten Little Indians,’” Margaret O’Shaughnessey reads Alexie’s repetition of this phrase—taken from the nursery rhyme—throughout his work as a kind of reclaiming and argues that he is using it to recount and signify survival. Jan Johnson’s “Healing the Soul Wound in *Flight* and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*” reads these novels as narratives of trauma “that bear witness to American Indian history and experience and seek witness to their characters’ ongoing suffering” (226). Johnson suggests that both novels reflect a shift in Alexie’s message, from a nihilistic outlook to the possibility of cross-cultural reconciliation, one that gives a predominantly white audience an opportunity to enact an ethical responsibility for what they read.

In the final essay of the collection, Jeff Berglund explores Alexie's various ruminations on authorship, focusing specifically on *The Business of Fancydancing* and "The Search Engine." In both texts Alexie challenges readers' expectations of the American Indian author—especially in terms of authenticity and the wielding of cultural capital. Berglund's piece—and this collection as a whole—further solidifies Alexie's centrality to the field of American Indian literature, though, as Berglund points out, Alexie has had a fractious relationship with a number of critics, particularly those in the nationalist/tribal sovereignty camp. Berglund rightfully and smartly points out that Alexie's perspective often coincides with nationalist motives, namely in his championing of tribalism (except when taken too far) and in his desire to portray the diversity of Native experience. The extensive bibliography of work by and about Alexie that appears at the end of this collection alone makes this book an invaluable resource for scholars and future scholars of Alexie's work.

Phyllis S. Morgan. *N. Scott Momaday: Remembering Ancestors, Earth and Traditions: An Annotated Bio-bibliography*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-8061-4054-4. 396 pp.

N. Scott Momaday. *The Journey of Tai-me*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-8263-4821-0. 69 pp.

N. Scott Momaday. *In the Bear's House*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-8263-4839-5. 98 pp.

N. Scott Momaday. *Again the Far Morning: New and Selected Poems*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2011. ISBN: 978-0-8263-4842-5. 136 pp.

Jim Charles, *University of South Carolina Upstate*

Shortly after being offered the opportunity to review for readers of *Studies in American Indian Literatures* a disparate collection of books, one about and three by N. Scott Momaday, and very shortly after accepting the offer, I asked myself the proverbial, yet still trou-

bling, question, “Now what have I gotten myself into?” Since a review provides summary and evaluation of a work under consideration, I immediately struggled with a way to bring order to a review of four works clumped together for the present purpose, recognizing that each of these wonderful works was deserving of its own specific and separate scrutiny. I say “clumped together” because very quickly after accepting the offer, I realized that the only “glue” I had to bind the works together was Momaday; he is central to them all, of course. But I wondered how I would synthesize the works in question, keeping to my assigned word limit. The works run a daunting gamut—from old (albeit re-released) to new, fiction to nonfiction, mixed genre to poetry, general use to reference. And then it dawned on me. What I reacted to at first as a disconnected grouping is actually a collection that accurately reflects Momaday’s range of styles and purposes, and in so doing it is a collection accurately reflective of Momaday himself: a Kiowa (one raised among the Navajos and Pueblo peoples), an academic (Emily Dickinson scholar, expert on Billy the Kid), a teacher (of high school and college students), Gourd Dancer, Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist, an essayist, poet, painter, and narrator. This collection properly represents Momaday—a defiant artist, resisting categorization.

The crucial issues surrounding Phyllis S. Morgan’s annotated bibliography *N. Scott Momaday: Remembering Ancestors, Earth, and Traditions* are whether it accurately and fittingly presents the scope of Momaday’s work and represents the range of critical responses to and interpretations of it. Morgan describes her goal as creating a “tribute to [Momaday] and a celebration of the works from his pen and paintbrush” (xiv). Given Momaday’s fifty-plus years of production, containing such a tribute and celebration within the covers of a single volume would be tough. To do so, Morgan would have to consider the amount of Momaday’s work, the variety of genres, the varied modes of expression (including his work as a narrator for films and TV productions), and the range of publications in which his works appear, in addition to the amount and range of critical scholarship that has been produced about Momaday’s work and his life. Successfully rendered, such a volume would be indispensable

to scholars, teachers, and others in need of specific information on Momaday and his art. It would guide scholars, teachers, and students to information necessary to begin or to sustain inquiry, lessons, and projects on anything Momaday.

In all this Morgan's effort is successful. It is a volume well put together. The book itself is beautiful. From its textured endpapers to the quality of its paper, from its clear fonts to its clean layout, the publisher and printer attended to the kinds of aesthetic details with which an artist like Momaday would be concerned. The work is a fitting tribute to Momaday, described by Morgan in the preface as an artist who has "achieved much, fulfilling the vision of the elder storyteller and the hopes and dreams of his loving parents and relatives. He has also brought understanding, wonder, and delight to millions close to home and around the world" (xv). It is a well-organized volume in three parts: Momaday's biography and chronology; a bibliography of Momaday's works; and a bibliography of works about Momaday and his works. Following Morgan's preface, Kenneth Lincoln, who in 1983 placed Momaday in the vanguard of a Native American Renaissance, provides a crisp and insightful introductory essay that summarizes Momaday's career and literary accomplishments and reiterates Momaday's position as both "Godfather" (5) and "Grandfather Bear spirit of a Native American Renaissance in Western letters" (13). To complete part 1, Morgan then includes an interesting and well-illustrated "Biography and Chronology," a detailed summary of the highlights of Momaday's life, punctuated with photos of him, his parents, and elder relatives who played important roles in his identity formation; there are also photos of Rainy Mountain and Rainy Mountain cemetery, the destinations of Momaday's long journey of self-discovery that began as *The Journey of Tai-me* and *The Way to Rainy Mountain* and, in many ways, has undergone continuous refinement throughout his career as a writer and teacher. I say that the "Biography" is interesting because Morgan presents it, not as a seamless, linear biographical narrative, but rather as a series of relatively short commentaries focused on the key developmental periods in Momaday's life. Within each of these periods, for certain, there are omitted details.

Future biographers, historians, and literary scholars will describe, illuminate, and interpret such details. Morgan's commentaries provide a framework essential for understanding the major influences on Momaday's life and for guiding scholars and teachers to the resources they need for further, and more detailed, study. A chronology, focusing on Momaday's achievements and honors, follows. It is an extensive list, bookended by Momaday's birth in 1934 and the receipt in 2009 of his seventeenth honorary doctorate. It includes everything from Momaday's winning the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1969 to his auditing a drawing course at Stanford in 1974; from the deaths of his father and mother in 1981 and 1996, respectively, to his receipt of the National Medal of Arts in 2007 and being named poet laureate of the Kiowa in 2008.

Part 2 is an extensive bibliography of Momaday's works. Morgan clearly organizes these annotated lists by genre and affords proper attention to some of Momaday's less critiqued work—his newspaper columns, reviews and commentaries, artwork, and work in other nonprint media. The lists include Momaday's books and private printings; published essays, stories, and passages with reprintings; anthologies containing Momaday's writing; newspaper columns in *Viva: Northern New Mexico's Sunday Magazine*; Momaday's forewords, introductions, prefaces, and afterwords; reviews of published works by other authors; Momaday's published poetry, including works in anthologies and published works by others; plays and dialogues; Momaday's paintings and drawings in his and others' works; interviews and conversations with Momaday; a selected list of nonprint resources involving Momaday; and the locations of special collections and archives of Momaday's works.

Part 3 lists works about Momaday and his works. It, too, is arranged by genre and within category by year. It is a well-organized and inclusive list, capturing the major responses to Momaday's works from Yvor Winters's 1967 introduction of Momaday to the literary world through recent critical analyses and reviews of Momaday's works appearing in a range of scholarly journals (up through 2009). There are inclusive lists of magazine articles, newspaper articles and press releases, bibliographic reference sources, Internet and

online resources, works that discuss pedagogical approaches, and a list of master's theses and doctoral dissertations that focus on Momaday and his work. In short, if it is by or about Momaday, and if it was written prior to 2010, it is referenced in Morgan's book.

Many of Momaday's works are recursive in that they present new works and re-present previously published works. His latest work, *Again the Far Morning: New and Selected Poems*, is no exception. Momaday includes ninety-six new poems plus fifty-two poems selected from previously published volumes. This blending of old and new work is a consistent feature of Momaday's writing and approach. What harm is there in reconsideration? What new insights emerge about a work from its presentation in a different format, an altered context? Since the works are arranged chronologically, insights emerge related to Momaday's evolution as a writer, to his structural and thematic constants and changes. Within the volume readers can see and hear Momaday's attention to elements of form—meter, syllabics, free verse prose poems, lyrical language, vivid imagery—as well as elements of meaning—themes of identity, nature, love, death, the power and meaning of words, the utility and beauty of language. I appreciate both the continuity and the change. The same controlled precision that characterizes Momaday's early poems such as "The Bear" and "Buteo Regalis" characterizes one of his latest poems, "The Stones at Carlisle." After one reads *Again the Far Morning*, it is impossible to conclude that Momaday is mired down or unwilling to experiment. His skill is honed; his themes are refined in their expression.

One of the developments in Momaday's poems is an unabashed playfulness. In *Again the Far Morning* readers find such playfulness in several places, including a series of epitaphs. These newer epitaphs are different in both sound and sense from earlier ones. Most of the new epitaphs are not closed couplets; rather, they are poignant memorial portraits delivered with economy of language, fitting irony, and summary wit; in short, they exemplify Momaday's playfulness with words. Composed while swimming laps, without benefit of paper and pen, these epitaphs are Momaday's mental meditations upon death, the great equalizer. And they remind

us all to “give it a rest,” figuratively and (eventually) literally, to not take ourselves too seriously. Writing this, I am reminded of the old woman Ko-sahn who appears in *The Journey of Tai-me* and *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. She is at once a respected elder, teacher, and a “child” at heart. She remembers stories of the ancient origins of the Sun Dance, and she remembers the role of play in that tradition. And just like Ko-sahn, Momaday, through these works, reminds us of the absolutely essential need for play. Summarizing a life in “The Gardener,” for example, Momaday concludes, “God knows a certain air belies her / Her life was mould and fertilizer” (102).

In deciding to reissue *The Journey of Tai-me* and *In the Bear's House*, editors at the University of New Mexico Press acknowledge the importance of these works to Momaday scholars, as well as their continued appeal and potential for increased interest among general readers. *In the Bear's House* represents a statement of a constant in Momaday's writing and life—bear.¹ Several elements converge to set Momaday on a lifelong journey in search of an integrated identity and worldview. These elements include the Kiowa story of how the Pleiades and Devil's Tower (*Tsoai*, Rock Tree, to the Kiowas) came to be and Momaday's naming ceremony in which he was given the name *Tsoai-talee* (Rock-tree Boy). Binding these elements together is Bear. *In the Bear's House*, then, is Momaday's multifaceted treatment of that constant in his life, “the animal representation of the wilderness” (xii). It is a work that synthesizes discrete genres into a new form. The book contains written work in several genres as well as artwork created in different media. Unfortunately, the artwork in the new edition is not in color. Color provided yet another point of comparison and contrast between elements of the poem and drawing pairings in the book. There are ten dialogues between Bear (Urset) and Yahweh (God), including two (“Writing” and “Baseball”) not in the original edition; there are eighteen poems, three prose passages, and sixteen drawings or paintings. Bear is in all these works. . . . In the book Momaday layers a drawn sketch upon dramatic dialogue upon watercolor upon poem upon another sketch upon narrative. Each layer adds to the one preceding it; at the same time, it presages the next. What results is a tightly unified,

very coherent work. In the form of dialogues, Bear (Urset) and Yahweh (God, the Great Mystery) exchange words and thoughts on the subjects of language, human nature, prayer, dreams, story, thought, time, writing and baseball (Bear asks Yahweh to “fix it . . . so that my cubs never lose” [51]. *Cubs* never losing a baseball game—fat chance!). Yahweh issues profound declarations meant to bring clarity and vision to Bear. Each of these subjects and each of Yahweh’s profound utterances is an important concept to Momaday, one that he has dwelt upon and written about in one form or another in his previous works. At the heart of all of these dialogues, as Momaday makes clear in the introduction, is the notion of wilderness—nature, ecology, the elements, and creation. In a process mirroring the Socratic dialectic Yahweh prays or describes a dream or tells a story. Then Urset (Bear) prays, describes a dream, or tells a story. Bear responds to God and between the two of them—God, whose thoughts are global and synthetic, and Bear, whose thoughts seem more concrete and specific—a clarification emerges. In their specificity and concreteness, Bear’s thoughts are no less poignant than God’s. Since Bear is a creation of God, this is as it should be. In the dialogues, all utterances are essential.

Sixteen poems on Bear, with five accompanying paintings or sketches, follow the Yahweh-Bear dialogues. A standing bear (in the original edition it is pink in color against a yellow background) illustrates the poem titled “The Bear.” The painting does not seem to fit the poem, but being that Momaday created them both and put them together, readers should pause to reconsider. Perhaps the juxtaposition is another “ruse of vision” (55). This particular bear stands, growling at the sun, in sharp contrast to the maimed and aged bear of the poem. The bear (again, pink in the original edition) is the bear that was, the courageous bear who incised surfaces with its claws. Its position juxtaposed to the aged bear of the poem heightens readers’ appreciation for the wilderness, the “wildness” that once was in the maimed bear, and the contrast helps readers perceive the impending purpose of the buzzards’ flight. The relationships, at times comparative and at times contrasting, between the drawings, sketches, and paintings and the accompanying writ-

ten works create dissonance that often leads to insight. In class it generates wonderful discussion. One of my favorite images created by Momaday is that of "A Bear in Bronze" (59), which functions as a fountain. It is a very clear image. I see this particular sculpture outside a museum that houses collections of American Indian artifacts and samples of magnificent American Indian material cultures. It is a standing bear, guarding the entrance of the museum. But Momaday's bronze bear, with head held high, says, "I stand upright and piss on passersby" (59). Maybe fountains are inappropriate expressions of wilderness and of Bear; maybe museums, as typically run and organized, are not appropriate venues for experiencing American Indian cultures.

I end this review with a reconsideration of Momaday's beginnings as expressed in *The Journey of Tai-me*, originally published privately in 1967 in a short run of one hundred copies as an expensive, leather-bound volume printed on hand-made paper. *The Journey of Tai-me* contains thirty-three Kiowa stories. In 1969, twenty-three of the stories would form the basis of *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. *The Journey of Tai-me* represents Momaday's initial attempt to set down in writing the old Kiowa stories he heard as a child from his father and other Kiowa elders. In so doing, he provides readers a glimpse into the beginning stages of the construction of his sense of himself. These are stories, collected and arranged by Momaday, to tell the story of all Kiowa people, including himself. These stories represent the beginning of Momaday's connections, through blood and place and experience, to his great-grandparents, grandparents, and parents. In the work, readers sense the beginnings of the impending braiding of the triadic tellings that would become *The Way to Rainy Mountain*.

Heretofore *The Journey of Tai-me* has been viewed as an early version, a draft of sorts, of one element of *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. It is no more (or less) a rough draft than the poems selected from previous volumes to be included in *Again the Far Morning* are drafts of newer poems included in that work. Reissuing *The Journey of Tai-me* increases access to the work and increases the probability that it will receive careful study as a unified work unto itself. In it

Tai-me receives focused attention, as does Ko-sahn, the old woman who reappears in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. As such *The Journey of Tai-me* presents a more fully accurate vision of the significance of the Sun Dance in Kiowa society, a role fulfilled now by the Gourd Dance and other Kiowa cultural ceremonies.

And so, just as in *The Journey of Tai-me* there are the seeds of *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, there are in the four works under present consideration those elements one needs to appreciate and celebrate, to discover and rediscover N. Scott Momaday and his work.

NOTE

1. The portion of this review on *In the Bear's House*, updated to reflect the few changes in the new edition and slightly revised, appeared previously in Jim Charles, *Reading, Learning, Teaching N. Scott Momaday* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 91–93.

Phil Bellfy. *Three Fires Unity: The Anishnaabeg of the Lake Huron Borderlands*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2011.

ISBN: 978-0-8032-1348-7. 150 pp.

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Three Fires Unity, Phil Bellfy's modestly sized volume, examines several sweeping and interrelated topics, including the past five hundred years of indigenous history in the Lake Huron region, the eighteenth-century emergence of the multitribal political alliance called the Three Fires (or sometimes the Three Council Fires) composed of Ojibwes, Odawas, and Potawatomis, the history of the treaty negotiations of these allies with both the United States and Canada, the resurgence of cross-border Native activism in the 1990s, and the complexities of the political phenomenon of "borders" and "borderlands."

The volume opens with a discussion of borders and borderlands. Bellfy notes that for the Native peoples who lived (and whose descendants still live) in the lands surrounding Lake Huron, the

lake was anything but a border. It facilitated travel, provided a generous livelihood, and helped shape the identities and remarkable political philosophies of the Anishinaabeg, the indigenous peoples who would become known to Europeans as Ojibwes, Odawas, and Potawatomis. Indeed, it would be the colonizing actions and colonialist impositions of those Europeans—first the French, then the British, then the English-descended Canadians and Americans—that transformed Lake Huron into a boundary between empires. Once the lake became a barrier rather than an integral part of an environment, the surrounding region was reenvisioned as a borderland, a contested region of shifting power relations among and between nations, both Native and European. Europeans asserted their growing power with acts of appropriation, claiming geographic space as they mapped the region and renamed its lakes and rivers. Most problematically, they renamed and gave new identities to the region's indigenous peoples and, most importantly, determined which indigenous peoples “belonged” to which “side” of that new construct, the US-Canadian border.

Although Bellfy initially conceptualizes the Lake Huron borderland in ways that locate it within postmodern and postcolonial understandings of the power of social constructions to shape social realities, his main interest is not theorizing the international border. He articulates a second understanding of borderlands, and this conceptualization frames much of the rest of the book. In this second view Bellfy asserts that the Lake Huron borderlands are best understood as an indigenous place, an identifiable and enduring physical locality continuously inhabited by Anishinaabeg people. At present this physical place is composed of a number of counties in the state of Michigan and districts in the province of Ontario that, Bellfy demonstrates, are distinguished by their disproportionately high aboriginal populations. The remainder of the book examines indigenous resistance to the real-world implications of a homeland bisected by an externally imposed division. Native peoples, especially the Anishinaabeg of the Three Fires alliance, not only continued to occupy the region but also continued to assert their political sovereignty over the entirety of the borderlands. Indeed, as Bellfy

reminds us, the imposition of the border was not instantaneous, and several early treaties (among them the Jay Treaty of 1794) recognized aboriginal rights to cross the border as part of such everyday activities as hunting, attending religious ceremonies, or maintaining family ties. Three chapters of historical background review the interactions of Ojibwes, Odawas, and Potawatomis with the region's several successive colonial regimes from the 1600s to the mid-1800s. They describe Anishinaabeg involvement in colonial wars and detail their political efforts, in the wake of those wars, to assert their continuing sovereignty. Frequently based on older historical works, including those of James Clifton and Richard White, these chapters recount an oft-told tale and are the least satisfying portions of the volume. The focus on Anishinaabeg relations with Europeans has the unfortunate tendency of positioning these allied nations as reacting to European actions rather than as initiating political actions of their own. The more significant points—that the border was more porous than official colonial language made it appear and that Native peoples retained cross-border rights to continue to live, work, and travel throughout the region—get lost in the too-lengthy recapitulation of three hundred years of Native historical interactions with successive colonists.

The book's real strength lies in the last two chapters, which reconstruct what Bellfy describes as the enduring "cross-border" (x) nature of Anishinaabeg life in the Lake Huron borderlands. Beginning in the 1790s, when the newly independent Americans were finally able to assert a meaningful military presence in the region, and concluding in the 1990s, these chapters examine the ongoing Anishinaabeg refusal to accept the imperial logic of the international border. While each colonizing power believed the border enacted real physical divisions of the indigenous landscape and mandated changes within tribal polities, Anishinaabeg leaders and their constituents never accepted such division of their lands. In their diplomatic relations with the United States and Canada, and also within their own communities, Anishinaabeg leaders continued to operate according to their own understandings of what constituted appropriate political action and who were the leaders capable of carry-

ing it out. Anishinaabeg leaders had always negotiated jointly, with regional leaders delegated to attend councils as representatives of their localities, and the new international border did not change this. Tribal leaders from across the borderlands still gathered for important political negotiations and leaders routinely ignored the international border with its designation of them as “American” or “Canadian,” signing treaties with colonial powers on both sides of the border.

Culling data from an array of important Canadian and American primary sources, Belfy has indeed uncovered a surprising amount of cross-border political activity. From the records of treaty negotiations, Indian agents’ reports, and letters written by Native community representatives, he has compiled tables of statistical information about tribal leaders. By correlating the names of individuals with the treaty or treaties they signed, their place of residence, and, interestingly, any changes in residence across the international border, he maps the political careers of individuals in considerable detail. To cite but two examples, Shingwauk, an influential Ojibwe leader associated with the Canadian side of Sault Sainte Marie, signed treaties in 1817 and 1819 with the United States and then in 1850 signed the Robinson Treaty in Ontario with the British (Canada still being a British possession at the time). The Odawa leader Jean Baptiste Assikinock similarly negotiated across the international border, signing both the 1817 treaty with the Americans and the 1850 Robinson Treaty with the British. Anishinaabeg political activists in the 1990s, whose efforts form the subject of the final chapter, were well aware of this cross-border legacy. In a series of cross-border demonstrations and political actions, they cited the provisions in the several treaties that acknowledged indigenous rights to live and travel freely throughout the Lake Huron region.

A book with a mere 150 pages of text inevitably raises questions it does not answer. One wonders about the years between the 1860s, when American and Canadian treaty making with Lake Huron area tribal nations ceased, and the 1990s. Did cross-border political action and governance continue through these years? The book’s argument for continuous Anishinaabeg assertions of sover-

eignty into the late twentieth century would be immensely strengthened by an analysis of these decades. This gap of over one hundred years is left unexamined and unexplained, and it is hard to see how the acts of nineteenth-century Anishinaabeg connected to those of their twentieth-century descendants. Bellfy provides evidence of one possible mechanism Anishinaabeg might have employed, though he does not make it central to his analysis. He details the continuing movements of Anishinaabeg back and forth between American and Canadian communities throughout the nineteenth century, with the movement of Potawatomis from the United States to the Ojibwe reserve of Walpole Island, Ontario, in the 1830s and 1840s being the best-known example. The Potawatomis' decision, along with other less-publicized movements of families and communities, strongly suggests that for significant numbers of Anishinaabeg the intellectual position that the Lake Huron region remained a totality had its roots in lived experience. Kin groups and families defied or just plain ignored the border and continued to live their (treaty-mandated) cross-border lives. Might such deliberate, politically enacted sovereignty also provide the connection between the treaty period and the activism of the 1990s? Bellfy suggests as much but does not explore this fascinating topic in depth. Taken as a whole, *Three Fires Unity* provides broad outlines of a number of similarly fascinating topics but would have benefited from deeper analysis of them.

Jodi A. Byrd. *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2011.

ISBN: 978-0-8166-7641-5. 294 pp.

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Recently I attended two conferences that focused on varied modes of racialization in the United States and their relationship to dynamics of law, jurisdiction, and sovereignty, and at both, a number of participants sought to cast all populations of color in the United States as occupying a similar horizon in relation to the white supremacist investments of the state. I wish I already had read Jodi A. Byrd's *The*

Transit of Empire so that I simply could have referred people to it. It offers a thoroughgoing and often breathtaking critique of the collapsing of indigeneity into racial Indianness. Broadly stated, Byrd analyzes the dynamics and cross-referencing of two different modes of Indianization: the remaking of indigeneity as a racial identity and the coding of other populations subjected to US authority as Indians. She observes, “racialization in the United States now often evokes colonization as a metonym,” and “this conflation masks the territoriality of conquest by assigning colonization to the racialized body” (xxiii–xxiv). Recasting polities with distinct territorialities as a single, racially defined population—as *Indians*—displaces discussion of the ways the existence of the United States depends upon the remaking of Native lands as its “domestic” space while renarrating this legacy of foundational violence as the potential for antiracist inclusion of Indians into the nation as citizens. Reciprocally, she argues that “through continual reiterations of pioneer logics,” the United States “make[s] ‘Indian’ those peoples and nations who stand in the way of US military and economic desires” (xx). Thus, not only does “Indian” erase Indigenous polities as such, but it also enables the remaking of others as proper subjects of national invasion, discipline, tutelage, and violence. To engage with the ongoing legacy of settlement, then, involves understanding the ways the “cacophony” created by US imperialisms and racisms was and is predicated on the dispossession of Native peoples and the traducing of their preexisting sovereignties, and in order to do so, white settlers and nonwhite “arrivants” need to be situated within a geography centered on the continuing denial, deferral, and dismembering of the geopolitics of indigeneity.

The book is organized around a somewhat episodic collection of six case studies, each of which illustrates different ways that Indigenous identity is effaced, racialized, or transferred. The first chapter lays out the book’s title concept, exploring the roles that citations of Indianness play in contemporary critical theory. Alluding to the transit of Venus, the passage of the planet Venus past the sun once every 120 years (an astronomical event that Byrd notes helped inspire the journey of Captain Cook, among others), the “transit of

empire” refers to the ways, like the stretching of Venus as it passes across the sun, that “colonialist discourse functions as a distortive effect within critical theory as it apprehends ‘Indianness’” (30). In this vein, she offers surprising and trenchant readings of a range of prominent thinkers, including Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Lauren Berlant, Judith Butler, and Amy Kaplan, indicating how Indianness operates as a “present absence” and a “supplemental gap” in their work (8). Chapter 2 takes up the figure of Caliban, particularly his iconic and paradigmatic position in post-colonial and Caribbean studies. Tracing the perennial displacement of Ariel as the island’s only indigenous inhabitant in favor of Caliban, Byrd addresses how those cast as a nonwhite, alien presence within the nation seize upon indigeneity as an antiracist strategy: “How do arrivants and other peoples forced to move through empire use indigeneity as a transit to redress, grieve, and fill the fractures and ruptures created through diaspora and exclusion?” (39). In this vein she interprets Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña’s quinquennial performance piece, in which they played members of a fictional South American tribe on display in museum spaces, as an effort to occupy Indian subjectivity as an oppositional figure in ways that further empty out and defer indigeneity as such. The next chapter turns to Guyana and the mass suicide at Jonestown in 1978. After stunningly illustrating Jim Jones’s own identification with things “Indian,” and the ways that felt connection directly led to the mass death of his followers (“produc[ing] Indianness as an anticipated genocidal outcome of a failed militant idealism” [82]), Byrd interprets Wilson Harris’s novel *Jonestown* as seeking to situate the suicide, and Caribbean nationalisms, within the history of Native presence and imperial displacement in the Americas, even as it tends to consign Indianness to the past.

Chapter 4 addresses the controversy over the Cherokee freedmen, exploring how a “blues epistemology of grievability” might intercede in the process by which “indigenous nations now police the imperial transit of Indianness as the only way to enact the real” (122). Tracking the ways congressional responses to the attempted exclusion of black Cherokees “mak[es] racial what is international” (125), she reciprocally traces the ways the Cherokee Nation, among

other peoples, reifies colonial logics of blood Indianness to secure themselves against the threat of further diminishment. The question of officially recognizing Native Hawaiians as a “tribe” is the subject of chapter 5, in which Byrd examines the ways this maneuver on the part of the US government not only enacts a homogenizing and racializing collapse of disparate histories (extending the existing amalgamation of separate peoples as “Indians”) but also sets populations against each other. The chapter tracks how this legislative proposal has helped propel a problematic repudiation of Indianness within the Hawaiian sovereignty movement: “Hawai’i is in this view a militarily occupied territory logically outside the bounds of American control, while American Indian nations are naturalized as wholly belonging to and within the colonizing logics of the United States” (149). Suggesting a longer genealogy for this dynamic, Byrd offers an excellent reading of Queen Lili’uokalani’s *Hawaii’s Story by Hawaii’s Queen*, attending to the ways that, in defending Hawaiian independence by arguing for further US use of its “own” land, “she cannot see that what she deems empty space is actually full of peoples” (163). The final chapter takes up the relation between Native sovereignty and Asian immigration, specifically the internment of Japanese citizens and residents on Native lands during World War II. After examining the policy aims of John Collier, who oversaw both the Indian Reorganization Act and the process of internment on reservations, the chapter turns to readings of Karen Tei Yamashita’s *Tropic of Orange* and Gerald Vizenor’s *Hiroshima Bugi*. Against calls to consider everyone as dislocated within capitalist modernity and neoliberalism, and thus to treat indigeneity as a kind of regressive retrenchment, Byrd powerfully argues, “any notion of the commons that speaks for and as indigenous as it advocates transforming indigenous governance or incorporating indigenous peoples into a multitude that might then reside on those lands forcibly taken from indigenous peoples does nothing to disrupt the genocidal and colonialist intent of the initial and now repeated historical process” (205).

The Transit of Empire provides an invaluable resource in articulating a new paradigm through which to understand legacies of invasion, dispossession, diaspora, and racialized exploitation as they intersect with the (re)production of the United States as a set-

tlar state and extension of its power “abroad.” More than assessing the value of *applying* concepts like *différance*, rhizome, subaltern, and internal colonialism to Native peoples, Byrd brilliantly and precisely illustrates how settler colonialism in the Americas (the United States in particular)—and the attendant production of Indianness—already is an integral part of the intellectual genealogies from which those concepts emerge. In seeking somewhat polemically to indicate the ubiquity of Indianness as a trace of ongoing conquest, a goal of great scope and ambition, though, the book can trade narrative coherence and theoretical clarity for a more multivalent sense of the messiness of the dynamics Byrd addresses as they play out in particular periods, locations, or specific political or cultural fields. For example, drawing on the work of Giorgio Agamben, Byrd observes in her conclusion that within the logics of US settler colonialism the “Indian” functions as “*homo sacer*,” “all who can be made ‘Indian’ in the transit of empire . . . [may] be killed without being murdered” (227). However, is being made Indian always the same? Are there multiple forms or discourses of Indianness? If so, how do they work differently and in complex combination or refraction? Are official and popular discourses of Indianness necessarily symmetrical or continuous, and what difference might such disjunctions or unevenness make, including for forms of Indigenous self-representation? Additionally, might what begins as an identification with Indianness by non-Natives (whether white or of color) potentially open into a critique of settler colonialism? Conversely, is Indianization the only or primary mode of exception through which Native peoples are interpellated into US legal and administrative logics? How does Indianness interface with other forms of recognition, evasion, translation, and displacement adopted by the United States in its effort to manage the challenge indigeneity poses to the legitimacy of its existence? That being said, the book will and should be required reading in Indigenous studies, American studies, critical ethnic studies, and postcolonial studies, helping as it does to engender a powerful, substantive conversation among them that productively can reorient those varied fields in their engagement with indigeneity and Native sovereignty.

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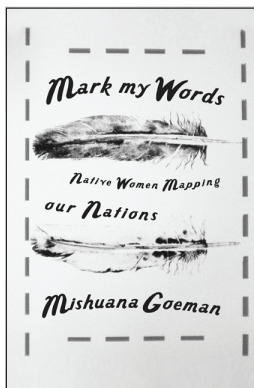
MICHAEL SNYDER is a professor of English at Oklahoma City Community College. He earned his PhD degree from the University of Oklahoma and his MA from the University of Colorado. His numerous peer-reviewed articles on twentieth-century and contemporary Native American and American literature and culture have appeared in top-tier journals and book collections. His article queering the protagonist of John Joseph Mathews's novel *Sundown* was one of three featured in the *SAIL* special issue *Queering Native Literature, Indigenizing Queer Theory*, edited by Daniel Heath Justice and James H. Cox. He is currently at work on a book on Mathews and continues research on Gerald Vizenor, the subject of three articles for book collections (*Gerald Vizenor: Texts and Contexts*, *Across Cultures/Across Borders: Canadian Aboriginal and Native American Literatures*, and the forthcoming *Gerald Vizenor: Poetry and Poetics*).



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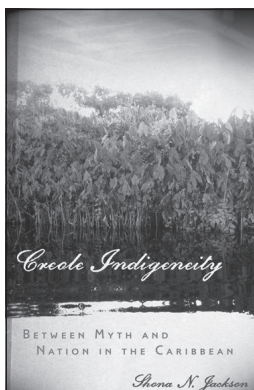


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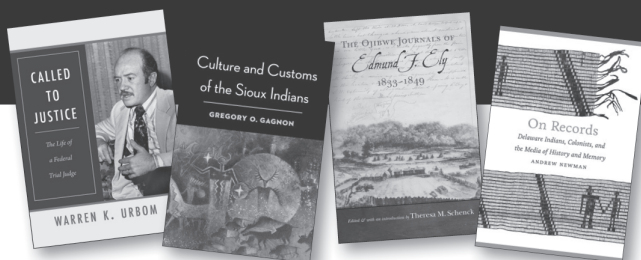
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