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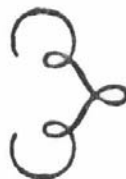
NEWSLETTER

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Perception and Imagination:
A Note on Seven Arrows

In the Spring 1980 issue of the ASAIL Newsletter Lowell Jaeger contributed a balanced and concise overview of the controversy about Hyemeyohsts Storm's Seven Arrows. In general I agree with his conclusions. Nevertheless, Jaeger overlooks two aspects of Storm's opening pages that deserve careful attention: Storm's emphasis on the significance of unique perceptions and the use of imagination.

Beginning on page 4, Storm uses the hypothetical example of a circle of people observing an eagle feather. He notes that physical circumstances and previous experiences shape each observer's perception of the feather. He then extrapolates: if perceptions of a "tangible thing" can vary markedly, then it's logical to assume that perceptions of entities as complex and changeable as the culture of a people can vary dramatically. Later in the introductory pages (page 11), Storm also reveals his reliance on the imagination, molded by his perceptions and experience. He states that many of the stories that follow were taught to him by "my Fathers and Grandfathers," but others are "new Stories that I have written from within my own Understanding and Experience." The importance of both unique perceptions and the imagination is expressed forcefully in Storm's initial paragraphs addressed to "Dear Reader": "All things that we perceive stimulate our individual imaginations in different ways, which in turn causes us to create our own unique interpretations of them" (p. 4).

Jaeger would probably argue that Storm's brief statements about perception and imagination are too slim to outweigh the other sins of omission and commission committed by Storm and his publisher throughout the rest of the book. And Jaeger's argument would be valid. But

in fairness to Storm, his critics should at least concede that Storm did warn his Dear Reader that the voice of one person, shaped by particular perceptions and imagination, should not be heard as the voice of a People.

--Kenneth M. Roemer
Univ. of Texas at
Arlington

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Duane Niatum. Digging Out the Roots. New York, Harper & Row, 1977. pp. 64. Pb. \$2.50.

Duane Niatum's Digging Out the Roots is a rewarding book, though it is an uneven one. He has never been an easy poet, and a number of the poems here are too idiosyncratic, too personal for a reader to follow the drift with any reasonable ease. I'm not speaking of the sort of obscurity that comes from a poem being written out of another culture; Niatum's poems don't send a stranger to Klallam life scuttling guiltily to the library to read up on Pacific Northwest shamanism. In fact, when Niatum is drawing upon the Klallam part of his heritage, talking of totems and totem-makers, sea and forest, wet fern and cedar, wolf and raven and owl, the sensuous texture keeps me going gladly, even if the poem be knotty. What makes me fidgety are passages of flashy and unnecessarily obscure imagery, where emotions and events are described so obliquely as almost to seem coy, passages where the language is warmed-over hippy, and places where Niatum's attention to form and rhythm at the expense of other elements makes a poem seem cold.

Still, much of this book is fresh, compelling, moving. Some of the strongest poems are the simplest, like the love lyrics of the section "Cycle For The Woman in the Field":

(I) think of you by the lake,
The night Center Moon wind
Called us to the shore to mate our memories
With the duck's wild courting.
Woman, I have not yet returned to my shadow,
Sleeping under the moontree like a child.

("Secret Meeting")

The finest parts of the book are the poems scattered throughout the first half that center around root-digging, around the speaker's quest to understand and finally to forgive and accept his family, and hence himself. Besides the speaker, the major figures are his childhood self; a shadowy missing father, grown mythically powerful in his very absence; a grandfather, a Klallam elder who teaches the fatherless child as best he knows; and other helping presences, some human, most not, who are guides, lovers, instructive mockers along the path.

The adult self who appears in many of the opening poems is physically grown, but troubled and incomplete. He feels empty, hapless, and has apparently been content to lay blame for his own rages and inadequacies upon outer circumstances. In the beautiful opening poem, "Songs From the Maker of Totems", Totem-maker cautions:

I offer you the chance to forgive your wounds
That often burned down the longhouse...
Wolf roams the white pine of your terror,
But he'll stop when you stop running behind the
dead...

It was your own ignorance that started the tremor
That fed the sharks closing in...

The earthquakes, the shocks that have been visited upon him, are not the doings of a callous fate, but outer signs of unresolved inner confusion. The whole cycle of poems is too complex to deal with here, but the first positive step for the speaker, as for many questors, is a relaxing of his conscious attempts to order and control his world, to try simply living intuitively, open to what may come, ("The Visitor"). In a number of poems like "Street Kid" and "The Way", he surveys the strengths and escapes he possessed in a childhood that has lately seemed impossibly distant, and in "Owl Seen in Rearview Mirror", a quiet triumph of a poem, he accepts the possibility of death, or at least the death of certain things about his present life, releasing himself to large and miraculous forces.

His various yieldings-up of the self seem to bring him to a point where he can dig successfully after roots, and the discoveries he makes free him from the past. In "In New York City", the speaker at last reckons up ungrudgingly his strengths and blessings instead of numbering

his grievances, and tentatively abandons his own cherished guilt about his father's absence:

...lately I've been a man of some fortune...
Friends have been family, shamans, elders... So maybe
I'll try Salmon Berry Woman's feather charm,
Gift of a recent dream. "Your father," she said,
Leave him in owl's cave, without light, shadow."

Finally, in "Song to First Woman," this tentative release grows into a positive understanding of the past, and an energetic embrace of the possibilities of his own full self:

During my body's best years I felt grief sapped my
strength
Because of my mother's many-bladed bitchiness...
Now, the truth
Seems it was the terrible absence of my father,
And what's necessary is to act the man he wasn't...
(From) this mound, to lie naked under snow, wait
for First
Woman to offer me her eyes, the way to feed
White Buzzard the few remaining grains of my youth.

In the epigraph to this book, Niatum quotes from his relative, Francis Patsy, urging a young man to "learn from pain, joy, failure," and to "be grateful and patient. The best parts of this book stand as testament that Niatum, in poetry, is following his Elder's teachings.

--Patricia Clark Smith
Univ. of New Mexico

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Black Elk Speaks, ed. John G. Neihardt. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska, 1979. Intro. Vine Deloria, Jr. pp. XIX + 299. H.B. \$15.

The University of Nebraska Press has issued a new edition of John G. Neihardt's Black Elk Speaks. The text of this classic remains unchanged. The edition is significant, however, because of a new introduction by Vine Deloria, Jr. Deloria's comments put the book and

some of the issues surrounding it in their proper perspective as only such a respected member of the Sioux tribe and spokesman for Native American thought could.

Deloria suggests that Black Elk Speaks is a significant addition to world literature, "perhaps the only religious classic of this century," an assessment with which most readers of the book are likely to concur, while literary critics tend to lag behind, not willing to place the book in the proper broad context due to its "ethnic" material. Nevertheless, Black Elk Speaks has received consistently good reviews over the years and enjoyed a rapidly growing readership. Pocket Books, only one of its publishers, admits to 350,000 total sales through 1978. Worldwide sales probably approach one million. These figures attest to the beauty and universality of the book's essential message.

Deloria puts to rest the controversy surrounding the "poetic license" employed by Neihardt in assembling, editing, and, in places, re-writing the materials communicated to him by Black Elk during their Spring, 1931 conversation. "Can it matter," Deloria asks, "if we are talking with Black Elk or John Neihardt?...The very nature of great religious teachings is that they encompass everyone who understands them and personalities become indistinguishable from the transcendent truth which is expressed. So let it be with Black Elk Speaks. That it speaks to us with simple and compelling language about an aspect of human experience and encourages us to emphasize the best that dwells within us is sufficient."

Deloria's notes also emphasize the importance of this book for the present generation of young Indians. "To them," he writes, "the book has become a North American bible of all tribes. They look to it for spiritual guidance, for sociological identity, for political insight, and for affirmation of the continuing substance of Indian tribal life, now being badly eroded by the same electronic media which are dissolving other American communities." Deloria's introduction states the overall importance of Black Elk Speaks, providing the kind of commentary the book has long called for, but which few individuals had the authority to write.

This new edition also includes a remarkable portfolio of photographs of Black Elk and Neihardt. The University

of Nebraska Press has come up with an intelligent and meaningful repackaging of a book destined to become more widely recognized as one of the major works of literature to come out of America in the twentieth century.

--Michael Castro
St. Louis

* * * * *

White Man, White Whale
Albinism in House Made of Dawn and Moby Dick

What is it that in the Albino man so peculiarly repels and often shocks the eye, as that sometimes he is loathed by his own kith and kin? It is that whiteness which invests him, a thing expressed by the name he bears. The Albino is as well made as other men--he has no substantive deformity--and yet this mere aspect of all-pervading whiteness makes him more strangely hideous than the ugliest abortion. Why should this be so?¹

This passage could serve to introduce Juan Reyes Fragua to the reader of House Made of Dawn but it is taken from Moby Dick and refers, of course, to the white whale.

The reader sees Moby Dick for the first time through the eyes of Ishmael, who says it is the whiteness of the whale above all things that appalls him.(187) There is something about whiteness in general that is horrible and frightening; something that defies explanation and "by its indefiniteness...shadows forth the heartless voids and immensities of the universe." (195)

Ishmael says Moby Dick is huge; he has a "peculiar snow-white wrinkled forehead", a deformed jaw, and his body is "streaked, and spotted, and marbled with the same shrouded hue" (182)...but even more disturbing than his uncommon bulk to those who have seen him is an "unexamined, intelligent malignity" (183) which he seems to possess.

Compare this with Angela's description of the white man in House Made of Dawn: he is "large and thickset,

powerful and deliberate in his movements"² and yet there is something out of place, "some flaw in proportion or design, some unnatural thing" (M43) which fascinates her and in the instant before he looms above her, huge and hideous, she notes his pale head, the enormous browless face "mottled white and pink...the jowls rode on the bone of the jaws...his heavy, bloodless hand...like marble." (M44)

Critic Harry Slochower says that the story endows the albino whale with magical powers, "Ahab fears Moby Dick. But he is also hypnotized by him. He is both repelled by the White Whale and drawn to him...Moby Dick is a 'magnet' to Ahab..the personification of Evil"³ which he seeks to destroy.

As Ahab is drawn to the white whale so Abel is drawn to the white man. He also fears him and is repelled by him. While they are struggling during the fatal fight, Abel becomes "sick with terror and revulsion," (M78) He calls the Albino a snake and says, "a man kills such an enemy if he can." (M95) He has not yet learned to live with evil as Francisco has and, like Ahab, he seeks to obliterate it personally by destroying the white man.⁴ The description of Juan Reyes an instant before he dies suggests the white whale sinking into the sea: "his great white body grew erect and seemed to cast off its age and weight; it grew supple and sank slowly...as if the bones were dissolving within it." (M78)

Charles Larson says Momaday "has confused the issue (of albinism) by referring to the birth of an albino child in Fray Nicolas's journal entry for January 5, 1875,"⁵ but I think this merely stresses the important role it assumes in the story, and Floyd C. Watkins is of the same opinion. In his book, Time and Place, he states that the incidence of albinism is extraordinarily high at Jemez Pueblo:

At almost any given time several Albino live in this little village, which has never been as large as 2000 people. Three were living in the pueblo when Parsons made her study, and I saw two at a religious festival in the summer of 1971. Pueblo Indians regard albinism as an unnatural and abnormal state; treachery may cause it.... The birth of an albino to Manuelito and Diego

Fragua--recorded in the journal of the priest--emphasizes the significance of albinism in the novel.⁶

Larson continues by saying that the incident in the cornfield leads to further confusion.⁷ It seems to me that Momaday very meticulously sketches in this scene to contrast Abel's reaction to the albino with that of his grandfather. Francisco has lived many years with the albino and with evil and has long ago come to terms with both of them.

There seems to be a great deal of sea imagery in House Made of Dawn. The two men fight in darkness and rain, and the telephone pole that leans against the black sky suggests the main mast of a ship. The distant lights waver "like candle flames in back of swirling mist" (M77)--a good description of lights along a coast-line. All is silence except for the sound of rain and the moaning wind. Just before he dies, the white man looks off into the darkness, the rain and the black infinity of sound and silence. These same four words are used to describe the sea when Abel awakens on the beach in the paragraph that begins, "Why should Abel think of the fishes?" (M91) and later describes the silversided fishes that spawn according to the moon and tides.

A few pages farther on, the sea is mentioned again. "Forever is the sea. Away in the fog there was a crashing of the sea." (M44) and the next sentence establishes the link with the white man--"He thought of the trial..." He remembers the white man's body, "limp and lifeless in the night rain, bright like phosphorous"--or a silversided fish stranded by the tide? The fish imagery is introduced during the death scene when Abel feels the "scales" (M78) of the white man's lips and after he has killed him, looks down at the "white hairless arm (which) shone like the under side of a fish." (M79)

The physical similarities of the albinos, especially their whiteness and huge bulk, the evil which they both represent to the two protagonists (whose Biblical, four-letter names both begin with "A"), the sea imagery which Momaday introduces into a tale about a desert Indian (we are told that Abel "could not understand the sea; it was not of his world" (M91)) and its association in Abel's

mind with the albino, all add up to more than coincidence. The comparison is just one of many--a single thread intricately woven into the fabric of Momaday's fascinating novel--waiting to reward the reader who traces its course through the overall design.

The parallel between the two albinos would seem to end with the killing of the white man and the killing of Ahab by the white whale--but does it? True, Abel destroys the white man, Juan Reyes, but he himself is destroyed by White Man, the same White Man whose religion proclaims the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God. It seems sadly fitting that an Indian named Abel should be destroyed by his brother--his white brother.

¹Herman Melville, Moby Dick (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1976), p. 191. Citations by page number in text hereafter.

²N. Scott Momaday, House Made of Dawn (1968: New York: First Perennial edition, 1977), p. 43. Citations hereafter in text by page number, preceded by M.

³Harry Slochower, Mythopoesis (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970), p. 233.

⁴In "Words and Place: A Reading of House Made of Dawn", Western American Literature, XI (1977), p. 309, Lawrence J. Evers suggests that it is "the White Man in the Indian: perhaps even the White Man in Abel himself" that he kills.

⁵Charles R. Larson, American Indian Fiction (Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1978), p. 88.

⁶Floyd C. Watkins, Time and Place (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1977), p. 141.

⁷Larson, p. 89.

--Mary P. Chambers
Tucson, AZ

Mourning Dove (Humishuma). Tales of the Okanogans, edited by Donald Hines. Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1976. 182 pp. \$12.50.

In 1933, Mourning Dove (Humishuma) published Coyote Stories, a collection of twenty-seven traditional Okanogan folktales, eighteen of which center on the peripatetic and ubiquitous Coyote. Mourning Dove had begun her collection of "folk lores" among the older members of her tribe some fifteen years earlier at the urging of her lifelong friend and literary mentor, Lucullus V. McWhorter. In a singular letter dated 29 November 1915, McWhorter exhorts Mourning Dove to "step out from the gloom of ghastly fears into the golden light of opportunity...and show to the world her nobility of purpose to perpetuate the story of her people in their primitive simplicity."

With barely more than a fifth grade education, Mourning Dove found the task of recording tribal tales to be an enormous challenge. She did not possess an easy or total command of either Okanogan or English, and it was often a great struggle for her to find the word in English that would convey the sense of the Okanogan concept. Mourning Dove was also quite poor, taking seasonal work as a migrant laborer, and could ill afford the time necessary to track down the older storytellers. Even when she did, she often had to overcome their distrust before she could record a story. As she writes to one friend, "it is very difficult to get an Indian myth in all of its parts at one sitting." But despite the difficulties, she loved her work and was totally committed to "preserving the sacred stories of her fast disappearing people."

While she alone collected the tales and wrote them down, Mourning Dove depended on McWhorter and Heister Dean Guie to edit the stories into their final form. McWhorter provided notes to the stories as he had done for Cogewea, Mourning Dove's earlier novel. Guie, a young journalist from Yakima and McWhorter's own choice for editor of Coyote Stories, assumed the responsibility for "rephrasing some parts for smoothness," filling in dialogue, providing definitions for Okanogan words, and illustrating the tales. Gearing the collection to a children's audience, Guie eliminated some of the repe-

tition in the oral versions, reordered many of the tales, and most significantly, perhaps, devulgarized the collection, eliminating at least ten tales from the final manuscript that are frank explorations of incest, transvestism, and infanticide.

For the most part, Mourning Dove sanctioned Guie's editing and was grateful for his meticulous attention to detail, which was reflected in innumerable letters about the meaning and spelling of a single Okanogan word, "brain teasers," as Mourning Dove called them. Unfortunately, Guie did not apply the same precision to the subject of a tale but rather yielded to his own sense of decorum and what was likely to be acceptable to a white reading audience. In all fairness to Guie, he was supported by McWhorter and Mourning Dove, who felt that the Indians would be able to "read between the lines just the same."

How much nicer it is that we no longer have to speculate on what exists between the lines. In Tales of the Okanogans, Donald Hines has published the original tales in Coyote Stories and added ten more that were excluded from the 1933 publication. His purpose, as he states in the preface, is to present the tales as Mourning Dove recorded them and to restore as much of the "oral flavor" of the tales as possible. The manuscript for Coyote Stories, initially entitled Okanogan Sweat House, is part of the McWhorter papers in the archives of Washington State University and is the basis for Hines's changes from the 1933 edition of Coyote Stories. With the exception of some light editing to regularize spellings and straighten out occasional "infelicities" in the syntax, Hines has tried to be faithful to Mourning Dove's original version of a story. For example, her opening line for "Coyote and Buffalo" reads as follows:

One day Coyote was walking along a prairie country where he could see no trees, and as he came to a flat, he saw an old buffalo skull gray with age.

Hines edited this line to read:

Coyote was walking along a prairie country where he saw no trees. He came to a flat and there

found an old buffalo skull, grey with age.

Guie, on the other hand, opens the story in the following way:

No buffalo ever lived in the Swah-netk-qhu country. That was Coyote's fault. If he had not been so foolish and greedy, the people beside the Swah-netk-qhu would not have had to cross the Rockies to hunt the "quas-peat-za" (curly hairs).

Clearly, Guie felt compelled to frame the stories with background material that would make explicit their didactic purpose, rather than letting the action speak for itself. In reading Hines's version, on the other hand, we are much closer to what Mourning Dove actually wrote and we can be doubly grateful that Hines has resurrected this important and singular collection from obscurity and has taken such careful pains to preserve the original text.

What one might fault Hines for is that he has not followed Mourning Dove's preferred order of the tales. In several letters to McWhorter and Guie, she states that the naming myth should be first and "The Arrow Trail" last or penultimate in the collection. The tales circumscribe the limits of the animal people. However, in the original table of contents submitted by Mourning Dove for Okanogan Sweat House, she lists the naming myth first but ends with "How Disease Came to the People." "The Arrow Trail to the Upper World-Land" falls toward the end. Hines has placed the naming myth number nine in his collection but has kept "The Arrow Trail" as last. There is no apparent rationale for so situating the naming myth, and it does make it slightly awkward to be introduced to Coyote in the tales that precede before we know his origins and role in Okanogan culture. It is possible that the confusion over the order of the tales may be the result of the triangular correspondence between Mourning Dove and her two editors and that what was eventually filed by McWhorter as Mourning Dove's original manuscript may not necessarily have been the order she had given the tales.

But this ultimately is a relatively minor problem compared to the major contribution Hines has made in

bringing Mourning Dove's work to light. He is a sensitive editor and has done a commendable job in allowing Mourning Dove once again to tell the tales of the Okanogans.

--Dexter Fisher
Modern Language Association

* * * * *

Bonita Wa Wa Calachaw Nunez. Spirit Woman. ed. Stan Steiner. New York: Harper and Row, 1980. pp. vi-243. HB. \$12.95. Photographs, drawings, paintings.

Editor Stan Steiner doesn't realize he has a Gothic horror story in his hands even after seven years of working with the diaries of Bonita Wa Wa Calachaw, but that is just what the book is, complete with a villain doctor, neurotic and overbearing stepmother, and innocent young victim. The episodic memoir he has put together from the subject's life-long notes and diary fragments describes the taking of the infant Luiseno Indian from her mother in California by a "charitable" Victorian socialite from New York City, their return to the East where she is displayed in buckskin, and her drawing skills are exploited by her mother's new physician brother who is involved in dubious medical experiments. It becomes readily clear that this clever child is as much a specimen as the pickled brains and stuffed mice she draws. She is kept from school, isolated from normal relationships with other children, taught spiritualism and various psychic theories, married off to a man with whom she is never actually allowed to live, and eventually abandoned to make her own way in life. The portrait is chilling, yet Steiner seems to confuse the perverse with the profound, characterizing her in his introduction as a mystical grandmother who spoke in spontaneous parables. Perhaps even worse, the publisher takes his evaluation at face value and touts the book as the diary of "a woman who was a feminist, lecturer on Indian rights, spiritualist, and self-taught artist." It appears that Wa Wa Calachaw was not only exploited in her life, but also in her death.

This is not a memoir in the usual sense, but a series of disconnected fragments, musings, and sketches

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that only obscurely reveal the life story of the author. As structured by Steiner, the book gives no sense of chronology or even indication of time sequences, though with careful reading some of the order of events can be unraveled. The material is grossly underedited, often not even comprehensible because of the abstract language, incomplete narration of episodes, and disconnected ideas. All this he glibly dismisses by saying, "The individuality of her expression had never been dulled by standardized textbooks or teachers. Her vocabulary and spelling were her own, as earthy and symbolic as Shakespearian English..." (xv). Even where her misspelling is obvious and leads to garbling of meaning, he leaves it untouched, as in her description of her method of learning the piano, which she says three separate times, she learned "to play by Air," obviously meaning by ear. Many other such linguistic puzzles are not so easily solved, leaving the text frequently vague, obscure, and incoherent. A light editorial touch and preservation of authorial style in autobiographical writing is critical to the integrity of the work, but not passivity to the point of neglecting to make the material coherent.

Undoubtedly people will approach this work as a memoir tracing the author's assertion of her Indian identity, a statement of the validity and vitality of the Indian heritage. What they will discover is naive spiritualism, the kind of phony mysticism that stereotypes Indians as exotic and quaint. The fault is not Wa Wa Calachaw's. She is the victim of perverted and misguided philanthropy, who in spite of her bizarre upbringing, did survive and find some satisfaction in holding to her Indian identity and taking up Indian causes. The responsibility for this misrepresentation of the author as a spiritual grandmother, a Spirit Woman, rests on the editor and publisher. The story of this woman's life is a chilling tragedy. Steiner's presentation of it reduces it to Indian-hype. To do it justice, Steiner should have used Wa Wa Calachaw's diaries as the foundation for a biographical study revealing what is probably not a unique case of abuse masquerading as charity.

--Kay Sands
Arizona State University

IMPORTANT!

price rise, alas price rise, alas
Volume 5 (1981) of SAIL will be priced at \$4.00. The increase is necessary if we are to improve our format and extend the range of our coverage. We plan at least one and possibly two double issues for next year. Our first number will consist of a completely updated bibliography through 1980 by LaVonne Brown Ruoff; we do not expect this to be available for back orders, so subscribe promptly. We hope also to present a special group of pieces on The Death of Jim Loney. We will begin a series of bibliographies of contemporary Native American writers along with a directory of addresses of many smaller presses publishing these writers. So -

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