

ASAIL Notes

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"I heard the story so often
I remembered it, not as a story."
--"Dangerous Waters," by Michael Dorris

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ASAIL Notes

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Modern Language Association

The MLA convention, in New Orleans this year, will provide five sessions for A.S.A.I.L. members. President-elect James Ruppert will chair "American Indian Video Art" and a discussion group, "Ethics and Sacred Material"; Gretchen Bataille will chair "American Indian Women: Voices Past and Present." However, this year there will also be two arranged by the MLA Committee on the Literatures and Languages of America, and chaired by Larry Evers: "American Indian Verbal Art and Literature." (Copies of the papers to be read in the Evers sessions may be obtained in advance by writing to him at the Department of English, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ 85721, by December first.)

If you attend, do not forget to come to the business meeting. As A.S.A.I.L. President Kay Sands writes, the meeting is "the forum for raising new issues, announcing new projects, and examining avenues for gaining more recognition for American Indian literatures. We will also be nominating and electing new officers; all members are eligible to run, so consider placing your name in nomination or nominating a colleague." And the issues to be discussed are pertinent *and* pressing.

Schedule:

27 December 7:00-8:15 Chequers Room Hilton

Title: "American Indian Verbal Art and Literature I"

Chair: **Larry Evers**

Presentations: "The Organization of Thought in Puget Sound Narratives," **Toby C.S. Langen**

"Mourning Dove's Voice in *Cogewa*," **Alanna Brown**

"Storyteller: Grandmother's Spiderweb," **Linda Danielson**

"Contemporary Native American Literature," **Andrea Lerner**

27 December 9:00-10:15 Chequers Room Hilton

Title: "American Indian Verbal Art and Literature II"

Chair: **Larry Evers**

Presentations: "Songs of the Ponca *Helushka*," **James Charles**

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"Reflections on Hopi Clowns and Interpreters," **Roger Dunsmore**

"Point of View in Hopi Indian Oral Narrative," **Helen Jaskoski**

"From the Backbone to the Highline: The Fiction of James Welch,"

John Purdy

"Place and Vision: The Function of Landscape in *Ceremony*," **Robert**

Nelson

28 December 10:15-11:30 Cambridge Room Hilton

Title: "American Indian Women: Voices Past and Present"

Chair: **Gretchen Bataille**

Papers: "All the Fires of Heart and Harvest: The Importance of the Oral Tradition in the Poetry of Gladys Cardiff," **Patricia In the Woods**

"Coyote, She Was Going There: Prowling for the Hypotheses about the Female Native American Trickster," **Franchot Ballinger**

"All Them Laguna Intersections!': Laguna in the Works of Paula Gunn Allen and Leslie Marmon Silko," **Patricia Clark Smith**

"The Songs We Sing: The Venerable Lyrics of Navajo Women's Contemporary Songs," **Luci Tapahanso**

29 December 3:30-4:45 Eglinton Room Hilton

Title: "American Indian Video-Art"

Chair: **James Ruppert**

Papers: "The Writer and the Community: Working on 'Origin of the Crown Dance'," **Joy Harjo**

"The Trickster Figure in 'Harold of Orange'," **Alan Velie**

"Cultural Contexts: Seeing with the Native Eye," **Kathleen M. Sands**

29 December 1:45-3:00 Salon 6 Hilton

MLA Discussion Group

Title: "Ethics and Sacred Material"

Chair: James Ruppert

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Correspondence

From Gerald Vizenor:

The University of California, Santa Cruz, has established the first annual **Native American Literature Prize**. "The Santa Cruz Prize Committee nominates several authors each year and then consults with distinguished scholars in the final selection of a recipient. A monetary award [\$1000 for this year, with hope for an increase in the future] is presented at annual ceremonies . . . Vizenor will chair the first committee, which will include Kimberly Blaeser, Louis Owens, LaVonne Ruoff, and Page Stegner.

For more information, contact:

Gerald Vizenor, Chairman

Santa Cruz Prize Committee

Porter College

University of California

Santa Cruz, CA 95064

After the announcement of our recent change in editors in the last issue of "Notes," I received several letters. I greatly appreciate the responses, and the encouraging words. I also have included some of the advice in the current issue, most notably Brian Swann's request for a section devoted to research issues and potential projects. Since "Notes" is devoted to promoting our mutual endeavors and encouraging support and assistance from our colleagues, and since "Notes" will be sent to prospective publishers in our field, this and future issues will have a section entitled "Projects." If you have suggestions for research, current projects you would like to share with our members, or suggestions for works that you would like to see in print, please submit them for future issues.

And speaking of our future issues, I would like to provide more information than in the present effort. The next issue be put together in January, so please share. If material and funds allow, "Notes" will be published quarterly, with tentative deadlines in the middle of January, April, July, and October. However, if another schedule seems appropriate, I would gladly adopt it.

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People

Gerald Vizenor has moved from Berkeley to the American Studies Department of Oakes College at the University of California, Santa Cruz. (As noted in "Books, he has also won the Before Columbus Foundation's 1988 American Book Award for his recent novel, *Griever*.)

Ray Young Bear has taken a position as Visiting Lecturer in English at the University of Iowa for Spring 1989.

Joy Harjo also has a new position. Previously on the faculty of the University of Colorado, Boulder, she is now teaching in the English department at the University of Arizona: a happy move for both Joy and her new colleagues. She has also been chosen to succeed Wendy Rose on the MLA Committee on the Literatures and Languages of America.

Dell Hymes has settled into his new position in the Anthropology department at the University of Virginia, and he is doing well.

Larry Evers and **Felipe S. Molina** were recently honored with the prestigious **Chicago Folklore Prize** for their book *Yaqui Deer Songs/Maso Bwikam: A Native American Poetry*. The prize has been "awarded annually since 1928 for major contributions to the study of folklore." The announcement of their first place award sings high praise for their book: "The work is the fruit of an innovative and rich collaboration between insiders and outsiders to Yaqui culture. The combination of excellent translations and a variety of critical voices creates a number of valid approaches to the understanding and appreciation of this insightful and organically presented corpus of oral poetry." Congratulations.

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Books

After a long novel silence from Gerald Vizenor, he has added two novels to his canon:

Griever: An American Monkey King in China (Illinois State University/Fiction Collective/Sun & Moon Press), the story of a tribal trickster/teacher on exchange to a university in China, and ***The Trickster of Liberty: Tribal Heirs to a Wild Baronage*** (University of Minnesota Press). In addition, for ***Griever*** he received the 1988 American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation at their annual convention in May.

A recent release from Gregory McNamee of the University of Arizona Press contains several titles that may be of interest: Edward H. Spicer's ***People of Pascua*** (an important edition for the cultural history of the Yaqui at Pascua, drawn from sixteen biographies), Louise M. Burkhart's ***The Slippery Earth: Nahua-Christian Moral Dialogue in Sixteenth-Century Mexico***, Paul V. Kroskrity's sociolinguistic study ***The Arizona Tewa***, Bernd Peyer's ***The Singing Spirit*** (an anthology of early fiction from 1810-1935), and Joy Harjo and Stephen Strom's ***Secrets from the Center of the World*** (prose poems and color photographs of the country of Four Corners).

Jim Barnes' new book of poetry, ***The La Plata Cantata***, is due out late this year from Purdue University Press. He also notes the birth of The Beast Fable Society of America. Founded by Ben Bennani at Northeast Missouri State University, it is an international organization established "to promote scholarly, creative and professional activities related to the beast fable. . . ."

From White Pine Press (76 Center Street, Fredonia, N.Y. 14063): ***Wounds Beneath the Flesh: 15 Native American Poets***, edited by Maurice Kenny, ***Near the Mountains***

{6} (poetry) by Joseph Bruchac, and *Between Two Rivers* and *The Mama Poems* (poetry) by Maurice Kenny.

Maurice Kenny also has a collection of new poems, *Humors And/or Not So Humorous*, out from Swift Kick Press (1711 Amherst, Buffalo, N.Y. 14214).

Ray Young Bear will have a new book of poems out in the very near future, too; *The Invisible Musician* will be published by Holy Cow! Press this Fall. An apt title, for Young Bear's singing group, The Woodland Singers, has an audio cassette, *Traditional Mesquakie Songs*, available from Canyon Records Productions: 4143 North 16th Street, Phoenix, Arizona, 85016.

As reported at our business meeting at MLA last December, several writers have formed the Northwest Native American Writers Association, which is currently putting together a directory of writers from the Northwest. Elizabeth Woody is the current president, and her first book of poetry, *A Hand into Stone*, was published by Contact II Publications this Fall. (If the poems she read to Jarold Ramsey's NEH summer seminar at Central Oregon Community College this summer are any indication, *Hand* promises to be a very powerful work, and Woody a rising figure in contemporary poetry. She also recently shared first-prize with Dian Million in the Mr. Cogito Press American Indian poetry contest.)

And Joseph Bruchac is as busy as always. His *Survival This Way: Interviews with American Indian Poets* is doing well, and *New Voices from the Longhouse* (an anthology of contemporary Iroquois writing featuring poetry, fiction and non-fiction) will appear in December 1988. (By the way, Bruchac is looking for current addresses for two of the contributors--Nancy Johnson and Carol Snow.) Moreover, Bowman Books is publishing a new book of his retellings and traditional Abenaki stories, and part of the

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profits from *The Faithful Hunter* will go to the land fund for the Abenaki Nation of Vermont (to help purchase and protect a burial site for over one hundred Abenaki whose remains were removed from their resting places). The Greenfield Review Press is also putting together an anthology of contemporary writing by Alaska writers (Indian, Eskimo, Aleut), and The Greenfield Review Literary Center is still adding titles to its Native American Authors Distribution Project; for a free copy of the current book list, send a SASE to the project at the center, 2 Middle Grove Road, Greenfield Center, N.Y. 12833.

James Ruppert's Western Writers Series monograph on D'Arcy McNickle was released this summer. Besides a short biography, it touches on each of McNickle's published books and offers concise and cogent analyses of his life and work.

Louise Erdrich's newest novel, *Tracks*, came out this summer, as well. If you read her two earlier novels, it is a must (and well worth the reading even if you have not). It is also receiving a great deal of attention. In fact, as reported in *Publishers Weekly* last November, Harper & Row bid the highest for the paperback rights to the novel, \$600,000. They also acquired an option on her fourth and last novel in this tetralogy, *American Horse*.

Projects

Brian Swann: "I've been noticing in my travels that Black Elk Speaks is being used in a number of courses, not just Native American Literature (e.g. courses on the Frontier, on 19th Century History, and so on). A collection of the best essays on *B.E.S.* would be very valuable (along the lines of Prentice Hall's *Twentieth Century Views*). . . . I was also thinking of putting together a collection of essays devoted entirely to the question of Translation. . . . there is a great need for such a volume. . . ."

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Significant Other

In a recent issue of the *ACLS Newsletter* (Volume 1, No. 2, Winter 1988), an article ("National Council on the Humanities Considers 'Significance Issue' Once Again") has raised issues of concern to our members. The article summarizes the "Discussion Paper on the Encouragement of Synthetic, Broad, and Synoptic Projects in the Division of Research Programs" from the NEH Council, and reveals some interesting attitudes in two of its sections, from which I quote:

The discussion paper also includes two appendices. The first addresses issues relating to proposals to the Research Division Tools program for linguistic work on "apparently obscure Native American languages." The topic was selected because such proposals have reportedly been opposed as overly narrow or too specialized by some NEH professional staff and Council members.

And a few paragraphs later:

Mr. Berns [Professor Walter Berns] said that both he and Ms. Cheney object to spending money on such small projects as American dictionaries with so few speakers. He said that he favored supporting projects for languages with literatures. Ms. Paolucci argued that oral literatures also need to be preserved. Leon Kass asked rhetorically, "Is anything sung or spoken by human beings of interest [to NEH]?" Mr. Kass called for measuring the degree of contribution (e.g. a Shakespeare or a Homer) and said that if a language has not developed a [written] literature, "then there is only the question of what helps the linguist."

I think I've heard this story before.

And the "Columbus: Countdown 1992" people have been active lately. Recently, I have received numerous press releases (about upcoming celebrations), fliers, and even an invitation to a \$100 a person dinner on Fifth Avenue. If anyone is interested, more information may be gained from Columbus: Countdown 1992, 166-25 Powells Cove Blvd., Beechhurst, N.Y. 11357.

Has anyone heard of other plans for celebration?