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He Has More Than One Ear

Diane Glancy

He Has More Than One Ear

*He can hear many voices at once.
If you get past the crowd
and the fizz
like steam on a sound stage of a rock concert
you can see he is covered with ears.*

He who planted the ear, shall he not hear?
Psalm 94:9

In a Sweat Lodge ceremony, a man was praying in Lakota. I don't understand his language and he prayed a long time and my mind wandered to my own concerns. The Sweat Lodge is a hot, dark *church* where we come together to pray for others. Sometimes ourselves. And I wondered if my separate thoughts got in the way of the Lakota man and the Great Spirit, and I thought, no, the Great Spirit has more than one ear.

If he's like the Native culture, he prefers many narrators, many possibilities of meaning as he listens to his people struggle for reconnection, most of us without a manual.

To put my finger on something illusive, I've been thinking about Native American Literature and culture and what it has to offer because I'm nearing the end of another semester and I think, how can students understand the diverse culture? Full of strength and weakness. Meaning and no meaning. A people gone far away from themselves. A people zoned on themselves.

In the end, it's the moving variables which move again the moment you focus. It's transformation which is the constant.

That's what you get out of NA Lit and culture

after the life principles of harmony, reciprocity, balance, respect

after the presence of ancestors and the spirit world

after the interdependency of the group

after seeing the earth as a living being

after story and language as creator and maintainer

after a culture moving according to natural patterns instead of linear organization

after another way of seeing

another way of being

in the end

what NA Lit and culture offer you is yourself

because in the end *you* have to define meaning

and it's what you are that you see

Gerald Vizenor calls it the *tabernacle of mirrors* in his book, *Dead Voices*

not God's tabernacle in the wilderness with its ark of the covenant

but your own humanity

naked, uncomfortable, burdened, complex, unadaptable,

contradictory, angry, humorous, arrogant, self centered,

generous

NA Lit and culture offer you the seventh direction

after North, East, South, West, Earth, Sky

there's Center

which is the core of yourself

you carry with you wherever you go.

"The Belly of this Story": Storytelling and Symbolic Birth in Native American Fiction

Mary Chapman

Leslie Marmon Silko begins her novel *Ceremony* (1977) with a poem about storytelling:

I will tell you something about stories,
[he said]

...

He rubbed his belly.

I keep them here

[he said]

Here, put your hand on it

See, it is moving.

There is life here
for the people.

And in the belly of this story
the rituals and the ceremony
are still growing. (2)

The belly recurs throughout the novel as the location of the violence, emotional sickness, and shame of the past, but also as a space to be filled with new life and healing in the future:

The terror of the dreaming [Tayo] had done on this bed was gone, uprooted from his belly; and the woman had filled the hollow spaces with new dreams. . . . He could see Josiah's vision emerging, he could see the story taking form in bone and muscle. (219-26)

The image of the belly is puzzling for two reasons: the figure in whose belly the story resides is, in both cases, male, while the "story" is so clearly figured as a fetus growing in a mother's womb; and the story itself has a belly in which the rituals and ceremonies are still growing.

In this image, Silko presents two ideas: language can engender life, because a story can "bear" a culture like a woman bears a child, and men, through language, can have access to what might otherwise be considered a female power to create.

Feminist critics of Native American literature such as Paula Gunn Allen and Linda Danielson have ignored the creative role men can play through language by focusing on the "gynarchical system (heavily influenced by the presence of powerful female god-figures, culture bearers and engenderers) that defines Native culture" (Maguire 1058). In *The Sacred Hoop*, Allen, for example, reads mythic figures such as Thought-Woman, Yellow Woman, White Buffalo Calf Woman, and Sky Woman as signs of "[the] primary power—the power to make and to relate—[which] belongs to the preponderantly feminine powers of the universe" (17). Allen claims men's traditions are about transitoriness and death while women's traditions are largely about continuity, a claim Danielson repeats in her article "Storyteller: Grandmother Spider's Web."

I will argue, however, that the link between language and male creative power is pervasive in Native American "stories," from traditional myths of creation to contemporary fiction, in which gender is less important than language. Many of the creation myths from cultures across North America focus on the generative powers of language. In these stories, the earth and its people are formed not through female reproductive power but more often through language: through breathing, singing, and speaking. In a sense, language in these myths possesses a kind of sexual power. In an Iroquoian version of the "Earthdiver" creation myth, for example, Sky Woman marries a standing tree, but their commingling breath, not sexual intercourse, makes her pregnant with those who will people the earth (Wiget 7). According to a Uitoto creation story, "In the beginning, the word gave origin to the Father" (Swann 20). And in a Keres tale both Silko and Allen employ in their fiction, creation takes place through language and song rather than sexual reproduction:

In the beginning Tse che nako, Thought-Woman, finished everything, thoughts, and the names of all things. . . . She finished also all the languages. . . . Thus they said. Thus they did. . . . Thought Woman thinks creation and sings her two sisters (Naotsete and Uretsete) into life. (11-16)

Silko's rendering of a Laguna story about the origins of evil also underlines the performative power of language:

What I have is a story
[says the witch]. . .

Okay
go ahead
laugh if you want to
but as I tell the story
it will begin to happen. (*Storyteller* 132)

All these myths point to the importance of language as a kind of sexual power able to generate life in Native American cultures.

This shamanic tradition that the faithfully uttered word makes things happen extends beyond the realm of "creation" stories to tales in the oral tradition and in more recent written work by Native American writers. As Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist N. Scott Momaday explains,

At the heart of American Indian oral tradition is a deep and unconditional belief in the efficacy of language. Words are intrinsically powerful. They are magical. By means of words can one bring about physical change in the universe. By means of words can one quiet a raging weather, bring forth the harvest, ward off evil, rid the body of sickness and pain, subdue an enemy, capture the heart of a lover, live in the proper way and venture beyond death. ("The Native Voice," qtd. in Chapman 7)

This "word" is not the Logos of Judeo-Christian culture that is restricted to the deity, but breath, song and language accessible to anyone, regardless of gender and divine status. "A word has power in and of itself. It comes from nothing into sound and meaning; it gives origin to all things. . . . And the word is sacred" (*Way to Rainy Mountain* 42).

Oral cultures use stories on a daily basis to re-create themselves and their knowledge of their culture, to heal by bringing the isolated self into harmony and balance with reality, and to make children acknowledge through ritual what they have already received through birth. In recent years, the generative, performative aspects of language have also become central to contemporary Native American fiction, such as *House Made of Dawn* (1968) and *Ceremony*, in which storytelling brings Abel and Tayo back to health and life. In this sense then, feminist approaches to Native American literature such as Allen's run the risk of reinscribing rather than deconstructing Western essentialized notions of gender.

I would like to explore and attempt to explain the links between storytelling and sexuality in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks* (1988) and Leslie Marmon Silko's "Storyteller" (1981), in which storytelling by men is associated with what Allen would isolate as a strictly "feminine power" (82) to generate and perpetuate human life. Like *Ceremony*, both of

these works of fiction link male speech and reproductive power, by figuring storytelling as a sexual act and listeners as born or transformed by the stories they hear. Through storytelling, *Tracks*' Nanapush and the unnamed "old man" of "Storyteller" become agents of cultural continuity and links with the younger generation. Where mother figures provide biological continuity, the adopted grandfather and father figures in these works of fiction pass on the more subtle and yet more crucial details of identity—"who I was supposed to be, whom I came from, and who would follow me" (Allen 46) not merely in terms of biological or racial identity but in terms of spirituality and destiny.

Talk: "An old man's last vice"

Through the character of Nanapush, Louise Erdrich's *Tracks* emphasizes the engendering power of storytelling in Native American cultures. Narrated alternately by Pauline, a mixed-blood teenager, and Nanapush, named after the trickster who, in Anishnaabe mythology, "brings words over" from the animals to the people, the novel contrasts the deadly forces of Pauline's fabrication and rumor with the life-giving powers of Nanapush's truth. As Nanapush argues, Pauline "was worse than a Nanapush, in fact. For while I was careful with my known facts, she was given to improving truth" (39). Pauline is the voice of death, "good at easing souls into death but bad at breathing them to life, afraid of life in fact, afraid of birth" (57), whose chapters give accounts of the deaths of Jean Hat, George Many Women, Mary Pepewas, Fleur's second child, and Napoleon; Nanapush, by contrast, is the voice of life, rebirth, healing, and transformation.

Language and sexual power are linked throughout the novel, especially in the verbal sparring Margaret and Nanapush display, in which talk is initially a substitute for and later an equivalent to sexual intercourse. When the two oldtimers finally agree to live together, Nanapush narrates: "[She] lay on the bed with me. Our talk floated upward in the darkness. . . . I knew the breaths and nights we had left were numbered, but I was too weak to make any hay. I said to her, 'Maybe I'm ruined for it, after all.'" But Margaret reassures him when she links male potency and power to speak: "As long as your voice works, the other will" (129). According to Erdrich, then, stories are not only about children; they have the generative power to create children.

In addition to a general connection between verbosity and male virility, the chapters Nanapush narrates give three specific examples of males giving symbolic birth through language: first, when Nanapush saves Fleur from consumption by talking; second, when he transforms Eli into his son through singing; and finally, when he saves Lulu from frostbite by storytelling. All three are symbolic sexual moments at

which Nanapush becomes a father and grandfather through speech.

The first example appears in the opening chapter of the novel when Nanapush adopts Fleur when she is found half-dead in a cabin of people dead by consumption. Living together all winter Nanapush and Fleur are silent because mentioning the names of the dead may bring them back. Erdrich compares their silence, and the slowness of their movements as they are lured closer to death, to water being slowly frozen by the winter:

We were filled with the water of the drowned, cold and black. . . . Within us, like ice shards, their names bobbed and shifted. . . . We became so heavy, weighted down with the lead gray frost, that we could not move. . . . There were those who could not swallow another bite of food because the names of their dead anchored their tongues. (6)

When the spring thaw arrives, Nanapush suddenly begins to speak and his talk, like coursing floodwaters, ushers in new life: "My voice rasped at first when I tried to speak, but then, I was off and talking. . . . I gathered speed. I talked both languages in streams that ran alongside each other, over every rock, around every obstacle" (7). The fluency of his talk after a winter of silence parallels the regaining of health he and Fleur experience after a season of resisting consumption; language is their life force, liquid as blood rushing through their veins. "I saved myself from sickness by starting a story. . . . I got well by talking. . . . Death could not get a word in edgewise" (46). Here talk is a physical power and medicine, which keeps the only known Anishnaabe survivors alive.

Later, in Chapter Five, Nanapush uses language again to keep the tribe and its individual members safe, this time from starvation, by leading Eli to hunt game. Guided by Nanapush's song, Eli kills a healthy young moose and stores the pieces of meat on his own body. "He . . . quickly cut off warm slabs of meat and bound them to his body with sinew so that they would mold to fit him as they froze. . . . He pressed to himself a new body, red and steaming" (103). The heat, blood, and fleshiness of the moment recall the birth process, and the moose transfers its power to Eli the way a nursing mother gives her strength to a new-born. Eli is transformed at once into the moose, because he has absorbed its power by attaching its carcass to his body, and into Nanapush's son because he has learned Nanapush's hunting lessons well. Although they are not related by blood, Nanapush tells him "You're my son," when he returns with the meat, "You're my relative."¹ This double transformation marks the scene as significant because it is about "becoming" itself, a process of rebirth set off by

storytelling and song.

This almost maternal moment, when power is transferred from the moose's body to Eli, is recalled later when Lulu suffers from frostbite and Nanapush must thaw her out by strapping her close to his body and transferring his warmth and power to her. "Margaret drew the covers away from your poor feet and put one on either side of my chest, tucked into the hollows beneath my arms. . . . Then I absorbed the cold into myself" (166). Nanapush has already declared himself Lulu's "father" by signing his name on her baptism certificate, a lie that rescues Lulu from white schooling and acculturation. By bestowing a name on a newborn child, one of the trickster's functions, Nanapush transmits to the child all the benefits he has derived from dreams (Vizenor, *The People* 14). In this later scene, Nanapush declares himself Lulu's mother, tied to her by a verbal umbilical cord:

Eventually, my songs overcame the painful burning. . .
Once I had you I did not dare break the string between us
and kept on moving my lips, holding you motionless with
talking. . . Many times in my life, as my children were
born, I wondered what it was like to be a woman, able to
invent a human from the extra materials of her own body.
. . . I was like a woman in my suffering, but my children
were all delivered into death. It was contrary, backward,
but now I had a chance to put things into a proper order.
(167)

Through language, his "extra material," Nanapush is able to "invent a human" like a mother. Here Nanapush links storytelling quite overtly with sexuality but in its sexual sense the scene is highly ambiguous. Not only does he declare himself both father and mother to Lulu but then he presents himself as her lover: "For the first time in my life, it was my duty as well as pleasure to hold forth all night and long into the next morning. . . . I talked on and on until you lost yourself inside the flow of it, until you entered the swell and ebb and did not sink but were sustained" (167). Here "holding forth" becomes both sexual and verbal endurance, and the language of swelling and ebbing introduced in the first chapter when Nanapush rescues Fleur recurs to symbolize rebirth. This one moment of talk is a microcosm for the parts of the novel narrated by Nanapush, which together give the adult Lulu her cultural identity.

Nanapush's ability to become a parent through storytelling is linked to his appreciation of the physical world. Like the trickster for whom he is named, he ties his speech to the body and to basic human functions such as eating, defecating, and procreating. The fact that Pauline, conversely, denies her body makes her speech full of lies because her very behavior lies about her humanity. That she becomes

a vehicle of death throughout the novel and abandons rather than welcomes her own offspring underlines the threat the written culture of the Catholic whites represents to the oral culture Nanapush attempts to preserve.

"The story must be told"

Like *Tracks*, the title story in *Storyteller*, Leslie Marmon Silko's collection of fiction and biography, is concerned not only with the mystery of individual origins and genealogy, but also with the question of how Native communities can survive. With mythic economy, "Storyteller" recounts the life of a young Inuit woman jailed when a white man who rapes and pursues her drowns in moving ice. Orphaned while still a child, the unnamed protagonist lives with her maternal grandmother and an old man to whom she is not related. In the larger plot of "Storyteller" are embedded many narratives: the grandmother's account of how the girl's parents were killed by poisoned alcohol sold to them by a white storekeeper; the girl's "story" of her relationship with the "gussuck" oil rigger; her narrative of leading the white storekeeper across the ice; and the old man's myth of a hunter chased across Bering Sea by a bear. All of these stories contribute to the larger picture, "the other story" of racial conflict between the technology-rich whites and the Inuit, depicted in terms of color intruding on the traditionally white Northern landscape. Set against a backdrop of "gussuck" industrial exploitation of the North, "Storyteller" reasserts the enduring power of the Northern people, who are able to survive in the Northern landscape because of the stories they tell and enact. The many narratives are absorbed into one about the power of story to pass on cultural identity. Like Lulu, the unnamed female protagonist is guided by the old man's story, which provides her with the power to enact a vision of the rebirth of the Inuit.

The old man is the traditional tribal storyteller, an elder who recites a story on dark winter evenings, but his story differs in that it takes an entire winter to relate. His story is told in "real" time, perhaps even slow motion; it is so long that it becomes more important than living. Instead of fishing and hunting with the other men, he stays in bed,

smelling like dry fish and urine, telling stories all winter; and when warm weather came, he went to his place on the river bank. He sat with a long willow stick, poking at the smoldering moss he burned against the insects while he continued with the stories. (19)

The story he tells is a mythical one about "a giant bear whose color was pale blue glacier ice" (22) who "stalk[s] a lone hunter across Bering

Sea ice" (22) who waits for him with a knife in his hand.² The young woman's story, her legal testimony, avenges her parents' murder by the white storekeeper when he lies and the crime goes unexamined. To retaliate for this crime, the young woman lures the current storekeeper, who stupidly chases her without his parka or mittens, across a dangerous area of shifting ice where he falls through and drowns.

Although these two tales seem initially unrelated, they are linked because both tell stories of Inuit resistance to white domination. The two stories become one story as the old man exclaims when the young woman tells her account of the storekeeper's death to the state trooper: "The story! The story! Eh-ya! The great bear! The hunter!" (31). While the old man recites the mythic tale, the young woman learns to become part of it, to enact it in its present-day meaning. As writer Simon Ortiz explains, part of the storytelling process involves the participation of the listener:

It's like a story being told when it's not only being told. The storyteller doesn't just tell about the characters, what they did or said, what happens in the story and so on. No, he participates in the story with those who are listening. The listeners in the same way are taking part in the story. The story includes them in. You see it's more like an event. . . . The story is not just a story then—it's occurring, coming into being. (104)

Her story—about the storekeeper chasing her across ice he does not know as well as she—and the old man's—about a bear chasing a hunter who at the last moment gets a cramp in his hand and drops his knife—are reversals of the traditional story of human aggression towards nature. Instead of the hunter and the gussuck storekeeper outwitting and destroying the bear and the native people the bear represents, both are killed by their inability to survive the Northern climate and topography.³ Both stories reverse the subject/object relation that might traditionally be told—the boasting hunters who successfully trap their prey become the objects of a hunt.

Central to the old man's myth and the young woman's actions is the sexual relationship between the two. The young woman seems both "granddaughter" and sexual partner to the old man, literalizing the sexual scenario only suggested in the scene between Nanapush and Lulu in *Tracks*: "The old man, whose hands were always hunting, like ravens circling lazily in the sky, ready to touch her. . . . She had no patience with the old man who had never changed his slow smooth motions under the blankets" (20). Silko repeats this sexual language, figuring storytelling as a sexual act, when she describes how the old man relates his story:

Each year [the grandmother] spoke less and less, but the old man talked more—all night sometimes, not to anyone but himself, in a soft deliberate voice, he told stories, moving his smooth brown hands above the blankets. . . . The old man caressed the story, repeating the words again and again like gentle strokes. (27)

The fact that the old man tells the story every night in bed to himself after the grandmother has died appears to link storytelling with masturbation rather than procreation, but even when he is alone, the old man seems surrounded by listeners: the younger hunters who "still came from the village to take care of the old man and his stories" (25) and the girl who seems to hear the story the old man tells even when she is sleeping with the Gussucks. His story is sexually powerful in that it brings to life a new identity in the young woman—that of a proud Inuit able to enact the vision of cultural preservation the old man's story asserts. That he teaches the young woman pride in her culture through storytelling figured as sexual activity is significant because the Inuit's exploitation by the Gussucks is also depicted in terms of sex. However, in contrast to the harsh, humiliating sex the young woman experiences with the "red-haired Gussuck" and the "blue-eyed storekeeper," and the corresponding rape of the tundra through oil drilling, the physical attentions of the old man are comforting and nourishing, "gentle," "smooth," and "soft." Like the young woman's story, his story resists the sexual and cultural rape by ending with a moment of symbolic castration when the male hunter's phallic jade knife shatters on the ice. The glacial bear, the girl's guardian animal, protects her from the men who have taken advantage of her and the exploitation white culture has inflicted on the Inuit (Lincoln 230). Readers might find the sexual attention an old man pays his adopted granddaughter initially perverse, but understood in the context of older, mythic stories, in which sexuality is used as a medium for transformation and empowerment, his sexual activity can be read as an act of cultural continuity and a powerful resistance to the steady encroachment on northern culture by "gussuck" technology and morality.

On the day the old man begins this mythical story, he sets it up in the context of cultural conflict between the Inuit and the whites: "They [Gussucks] only come when there is something to steal. . . . But this is the last time for them. . . . It is approaching. As it comes, ice will push across the sky" (22). He links his story, then, with the apocalyptic suggestions scattered throughout the story: The young woman's vision of the ice taking over the sun which stops in the middle of the sky one day, "the still point when the sun doesn't move at all," the time when no divisions of color will exist between ice and sky, and

"this final winter" (19) all suggest a moment at which the North will become too cold for the whites and their machinery to survive. The domination of Native peoples by whites will end and a reversal of chronology and subject/object relations will occur; time will move backward to a moment before contamination by Gussuck rape, before white territorial and ideological encroachment. The whites come from the east driving the Inuit further and further northwest, but the glacier bear and the ice which was "crouching on the northwest horizon like the old man's bear" (28-29) resist this, coming from the northwest like the first arrival of nomadic peoples who crossed the Bering Strait ice/land bridge over 25,000 years ago. By narrating the northeastern movement of the Bear across the Bering Sea, the old man recalls the grand migration, and the birth of his race. When she participates in this story, the young woman also retreats chronologically to become her grandmother, wearing her parka and blending into the landscape. "The predawn light would be the color of an old woman. An old woman sky full of snow" (27).

The two stories combined function to rewrite the history and the future of the Inuit. Unlike the man who killed her parents, the young woman claims full responsibility for the death of the storekeeper: "He lied to them. He told them it was safe to drink. But I will not lie. . . . I killed him . . . but I don't lie" (31). Although by legal and fictional standards the young woman is not responsible for the death of the man who drowns, because the old man's story has mapped out a plot that she and her culture must follow, she is the agent of the man's death just as the bear causes the hunter's death in the cold. "I intended that he die. The story must be told as it is" (31). The old man and young woman's stories then are the opposite of the lies the whites fabricate to justify their position of exploitation. Verbal lies such as the storekeeper's protestations of innocence serve as metonymy for the cultural lies that steal the Inuit's history away from them. The two storytellers act as shamans purifying the world by telling stories to exorcise evil. Although the young woman initially suspects the old man of lying about the gussucks, she quickly realizes that his stories are the only truth and that she can enact this truth: "He had lied about what he would do with her if she came into his bed. But as the years passed, she realized what he had said was true" (20). Like Nanapush's lie about paternity which prevents the government from taking Lulu away from her community, the old man's lie brings about a more fundamental truth, by keeping the girl in touch with her ancestry. By her legal testimony, the young woman becomes the village's new storyteller. Like the story in the belly of *Ceremony*, her story guarantees future generations for the people. "It will take a long time, but the story must be told"(26). Although "Storyteller" ends with the

old man's death and the young woman's incarceration, it ends triumphantly in the sense that the story he has told and she has enacted challenges the lies that existed previously, reiterating what Silko has written elsewhere, in "The Storyteller's Escape": "With these stories of ours / we can escape almost anything / with these stories we will survive" (*Storyteller* 247).

"Sending a voice"

Examples of male storytelling figured as sexual are widespread in contemporary Native American literature. In his autobiography, Gerald Vizenor suggests that male storytelling and sexuality are linked because men use language as a substitute for the power to give birth: In the words of his comic character, Sophia Libertina, he writes, "men overturn the world with translations because they cannot bear children, because they cannot tolerate their own impermanence" (*Narrative Chance* 77-88). His comment may superficially explain Nanapush's psychological motivation for talking in *Tracks* but this trope of storytelling as a kind of reproduction also suggests that narrative functions differently in Native American cultures than in non-Native cultures.

As in non-Native fiction, the theme of lost or unknown parents is common in Native American novels, such as *The Surrounded*, *House Made of Dawn*, *Winter in The Blood*, *The Death of Jim Loney*, *Love Medicine*, and *The Ancient Child*. But the resolutions to these plots of uncertain parentage are not merely the discoveries of one's true parents, as they might be in nineteenth-century British and American novels about genealogy such as George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* or James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pioneers*; these stories are resolved by the discovery of one's cultural inheritance, perhaps passed on by someone who is not technically a parent or grandparent. In Dorris' *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water*, for example, Christine and Rayona discover that Ida is not Christine's mother but her aunt. But the process of storytelling that the three women share links them like a braid winding each of the three generations around the others, "the rhythm of three strands, . . . of twisting and tying and blending, of catching and letting go" (372).

In *Tracks*, Lulu's father is left a mystery. The novel's plot is not propelled toward an answer to that question as much as toward the idea of cultural knowledge and continuity, suggesting that in Native American society, children are formed more through their cultural parenting than the biological engendering: As Nanapush claims "We don't have as much to do with our young as we think. They do not come from us. . . . Once they live in our lives and speak our language, they slowly seem to become like us" (169). Similarly, in Silko's "Storyteller," the unnamed protagonist loses her biological parents

because of the exploitation of Inuit society by whites, but gains knowledge of her culture and a spiritual ancestor through the ritual of storytelling.

While the essence of Euro-American fiction could be said to be genealogy, by creating a non-sexual, language-based model of procreation, Native American literature privileges spiritual, adoptive parents over biological parents, and cultural knowledge over racial identity. Using nonbiological fathers as transmitters of culture, Erdrich and Silko seem to defuse the exclusively female power of reproduction. Both Erdrich's *Tracks* and Silko's "Storyteller" underline the importance of male creative power, as a way of giving children not biological or racial origins but a cultural source. Consequently children are freer to develop themselves outside of restrictions such as biology or race. Unlike much of British and non-Native American literature in which mothers are seen as the conveyors of culture, because of and in addition to their biology, these works of fiction suggest that men also play an important part in passing on the cultural information, which is important to the construction of identity. From eighteenth-century tales of colonist prisoners-of-war adopted by East Coast Native communities to contemporary news reports of sympathetic non-Natives being inducted into North American tribes, Native Americans show themselves to be less concerned with racial purity and racial origins than Westerners.

Paula Gunn Allen's suggestion that the presence of women in creation myths and oral literature by Native Americans restricts creative power to females ignores the important role that language plays as a reproducer of culture. By gendering creative power female, she places a priority on biological forms of reproduction to the exclusion of other more symbolic forms of creation open to males, such as storytelling. By doing so, she actually conforms to rather than challenges a Western/Euro-American model of creativity in the sense that a sexuality-centered creative power focuses on the issue of race more than is accurate in Native American culture. Because everyone ultimately is a "mixed blood," the emphasis in Native American cultures is less on racial purity and more on knowledge of tradition, and this tradition is passed on not through biology but through the birthing process that storytelling begins. In this way, the imagination of the storyteller is the most valuable resource the people have: "We are what we imagine. Our very existence consists in our imagination of ourselves. The greatest tragedy that can befall us is to go unimagined" (Chapman 103). For a culture whose system of beliefs differs so radically from the majority by which they are surrounded, biological or racial survival is not sufficient. Without the stories that define them, Native Americans cannot give birth to future generations.

NOTES

¹This scene recalls a moment in the Winnebago trickster cycle when the trickster transforms himself into a deer by donning the carcass of a dead deer. See Wiget, *Critical Essays on Native American Literature* 170.

²This story is popular in Inuit tales. In *Paper Stays Put*, an anthology of Inuit writing, Kiakshuk's poem entitled "The Giant Bear" opens with these lines: "There once was a giant bear / who followed people for his prey."

³In the beginning the old man links himself with the bear whose claws his own toenails resemble (21). His hibernation and his abstinence from hunting also link him with the bear and the natural world. In a sense, the unnamed female protagonist is also the bear, who knows how to save its life by knowing how to survive in the cold.

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Gender Construction Amid Family Dissolution in Louise Erdrich's The Beet Queen

Louise Flavin

Louise Erdrich's novels of Native American life on and off a North Dakota Indian reservation chronicle the dissolution of tribal and familial life. Erdrich's professed purpose is to "tell the stories of contemporary survivors while protecting and celebrating the cores of cultures left in the wake of the catastrophe" ("Where I Ought to Be" 23). In *The Beet Queen* the focus is primarily on the remnants of a white family, sundered and dislocated. Like Erdrich's stories of the breakdown of tribal life on the reservation, this story shows how new structures of human relationships are formed to replace traditional ones. After the break-up of the Adare family in the city, a different kind of family with strange new branches becomes rooted, like the sugar beet, in the Argus community. The new family that is constructed is nonconventional, yet it has at its core the creative spirit that unites the best of the feminine and masculine, a dualism emblemized in the figure of Dot.

The novel begins with images of the sundering of a family, symbolized in the breaking off of the flowering branch of the tree in the Prologue. This passage especially prefigures the future action:

. . . either to protect himself or to seize the blooms, Karl reached out and tore a branch from the tree.

It was such a large branch, from such a small tree, that blight would attack the scar where it was pulled off. The leaves would fall away later on that summer and the sap would sink into the roots. The next spring, when Mary passed it on some errand, she saw that it bore no blossoms and remembered how, when the dog jumped for Karl, he struck out with the branch and the petals dropped around the dog's fierce outstretched body in a sudden snow. Then he yelled, "Run!" and Mary ran east, toward

Aunt Fritzie. But Karl ran back to the boxcar and the train. (2)

The weak tree, silhouetted against "the gray of everything else," the harsh world of the Dakota plains, represents what is left of Adelaide Adare's little family. After their abandonment by Adelaide, the youngest son is stolen away from Mary in Minneapolis, and Karl, after ripping the branch from the tree, runs back to the train, to a life of motion and perpetual travel. Mary finds her aunt and uncle at Kozka's Meats, where she plans "to be essential to them all, so depended upon that they would never send [her] off" (19). The childless Mary is like the tree, which is later attacked by blight and yields no petals or fruit. The novel begins with this symbol of the dissolution of a family, a catastrophe like the breakup of tribal life and custom that is the subject of other contemporary Native American novels.

With the breakdown of conventional family structures, gender construction becomes increasingly ambiguous. When Mary Adare remembers her childhood in Minneapolis, she says of their little family, "There was something different about us even then" (5). Mary takes on increasing responsibilities in their fatherless home, as her mother grows more despondent and withdrawn after the death of her lover and the birth of a third child. Mary's brother Karl, although older, develops the same passive identity as his mother and depends on Mary to save them after their mother's abandonment. To effect the reconstituting of family, gender will be constructed in an unconventional way since the dissolution of the family unit necessitates the redefinition of familial roles. Mary develops what are typically construed to be masculine gender traits—active, independent, and individual. When she finds a new home in Argus, she meets Celestine James, another orphaned child, who will develop these same attributes. For both Celestine and Mary, feminine gender identity is problematic. Instead of the ideal of gender formation outlined by Nancy Chodorow, in which the female child's gender and gender role identification are with her mother and other women (51), Mary and Celestine reject feminine gender qualities as passive, fragile, and dependent. For them, gender formation becomes a process of cultural adaptation, as they situate themselves in an environment lacking conventional norms of behavior and manner.

Both girls have in common the loss of their biological mothers, a loss that is both physical and psychological. Unlike Celestine, whose mother has died, Mary's mother is still alive. But Mary imagines scenes in which Adelaide dies as punishment for abandoning her family. She dreams that Omar throws her mother out of the plane and drops her to earth: ". . . her red hair flowed straight upward like a flame. She was a candle that gave no warmth. My heart froze. I had

no love for her. That is why, by morning, I allowed her to hit the earth" (16). Later Mary will send Adelaide a postcard with an aerial view of Argus and, in her aunt Fritzie's handwriting, tell Adelaide, "All three of your children starved dead" (57). With these words she breaks off correspondence with her mother and denies her existence for the rest of her life. Elizabeth Abel writes that the archetypal daughter's dilemma is "to achieve independence from one's mother, frequently by devaluing her, without thereby devaluing one's feminine identity" (427). For Mary the imaginary scene of her mother's death is a devaluation of her mother and the feminine nature she represents.

Having severed ties to their mothers' identities, Mary and Celestine bond in friendship, representing Elizabeth Abel's ideal of "an almost impossible conjunction of sameness and autonomy, attainable only with another version of oneself" (429). Social bonding between Mary and Celestine begins the cycle of creative renewal in the Argus community. When Celestine learns that Mary has been abandoned by her mother, the two girls become close friends, sharing even a similarity in appearance. Mary's cousin Sita notices that with their growing friendship, "they looked suddenly alike," although "Mary was short and stocky, while Celestine was tall." The similarity in appearance, Sita thinks, stemmed from a "common sort of fierceness" (33). The two motherless girls become increasingly masculine in appearance and habits. Mary takes over her uncle Pete's meat shop, and Celestine and she work like men. Celestine says of Mary, "If you didn't know she was a woman you would never know it" (214), and Celestine is described as being "handsome like a man" (67). Celestine doubts that she will ever have a sexual encounter with a man. She speculates that "perhaps . . . I'm too much like them, too strong or imposing when I square my shoulders, too eager to take control" (125). Both girls develop the qualities most often associated with masculinity, qualities necessitated by their being forced into early independence. They learn to value strength and self-sufficiency.

Karl Adare must also deal with abandonment and separation from his mother. His growth in identity is more problematic because he has not grown up with a father. While Mary welcomed the visits of Mr. Ober, Karl was jealous and resentful. His fantasies about his mother reveal an Oedipal fixation as he dreams of saving her by killing off Omar, the stunt pilot with whom she elopes. He fantasizes: "I killed the pilot many times and in many ways. . . . Always, at the end of each episode, my mother rushed to me over his dead body. She held me close, and when she kissed me her lips were lingering and warm" (53). Nancy Chodorow writes that for the male child, "the attainment of masculine gender identity involves denial of attachment or relationship" with the mother and differentiation of himself from her. It also

"involves devaluation of femininity on both psychological and cultural levels," and "identification with his father," as he attempts to "internalize and learn components of the [father's] role" (51). Karl is forcibly separated from his mother and never devalues her feminine identity, nor does he internalize masculine gender roles in the absence of a male father figure. Lacking conventional masculine gender identity, the bisexual Karl is described by his sister Mary as "delicate," with full red lips, a wandering salesman who has difficulty establishing lasting relationships with men or women.

By contrast, Sita Kozka, Mary's cousin, is raised in a traditional home and retains feminine identity, constructing her femininity to a degree that leaves her vulnerable, dependent, and voiceless. Mary describe Sita as flowering "into the same frail kind of beauty that could be broken off a tree by any passing boy and discarded, cast away when the fragrance died" (21). Throughout the novel, Sita is ridiculed and deflated for the feminine qualities she represents. She becomes associated with sterility and poison, and dies a macabre death in her backyard after taking an overdose of pills. Through the deflation of Sita's femininity, the novel suggests that frailty, self-absorption, and vanity cause one to die spiritually. Sita's hysteria, culminating in her muteness and her dependence on diet pills, epitomizes the dangers of femininity constructed to an extreme.

In a similar way, Russell Kashpaw, the half-brother of Celestine James, represents the extreme construction of masculine gender. The high school star football player becomes the most-decorated war hero in the state of North Dakota. The veteran of several wars, Russell is physically mutilated and socially isolated, eventually suffering a stroke in a fishing shack, leaving him voiceless like Sita. She and Russell represent the extreme constructions of femininity and masculinity, individuals whose gender identity fails to harmonize the masculine and the feminine.

Mary Adare will never marry, but her dreams reveal sexual fantasies. After a brief flirtation with Russell, she says of herself, "Even then I knew that the shape of my life was to be no tunnel of love in darkness, no open field. . . . [Solitude] came on me like a kind of vocation" (69). As she gets older, she is seen by those around her as "ruthless," and "shrewd" (161), "so good at hardening her heart" (137). Celestine James looks for love as well but finds it to be much different from her expectations. An avid reader of romance magazines, she is unprepared for the coarse lovemaking that Karl Adare offers her. After the seduction Karl attempts to sell Celestine the cheap knives he is currently marketing. The comic deflation of the traditional lovers' scene affirms the absence of romanticized love, the kind found in many fictions and magazine stories.

From the union of Karl and Celestine will come the child who functions as the basis of a new, unconventional family unit. The rearing of a child furthers the spinning of the web of relationships that began with the friendship of Mary Adare and Celestine James. Not surprisingly, the mothering of Dot Adare is unconventional. When Nancy Chodorow theorizes about female gender formation, she notes that a girl, unlike a boy, "forms her gender identity positively, in becoming like the mother with whom she begins life in a symbiotic merger." Then "she must develop in such a way that she can pleasurable re-create the mother-infant symbiosis when she herself becomes a mother" (qtd. in Gardiner 182). When we consider that neither Celestine nor Mary had the positive bond to a mother from which this capacity for nurturance and empathy would naturally come, it is not surprising that the mothering of Dot would be unorthodox. Nevertheless, Celestine's capacity for nurturance is awakened as she is closely bonded to the baby whose existence she knows depends on her. She sees the growing bond of mother to daughter imaged in the spider and web she finds in her young baby's hair:

It was a delicate thing, close to transparent, with long sheer legs. It moved so quickly that it seemed to vibrate, throwing out invisible strings and catching them, weaving its own tensile strand. . . . A web was forming, a complicated house, that Celestine could not bring herself to destroy. (176)

Just as the severed tree branch is emblematic of the dissolution of one family structure, so the web acts as a symbol of the restructuring of family relationships. Celestine forms a close bond to Dot, whose night feeding provides a powerful image of bonding: "The baby clung like a sloth, heavy with sleep, and latched on in hunger, without waking. She drew milk down silently in one long inhalation" (176).

Mary never bears a child, but she vicariously experiences the growth of Celestine's child in the womb through a vision she has while lying in the orchard among the plum trees. She dreams of Celestine's baby, while sensing the ripening of plums around her in a potent symbol of fertility:

[The baby] peered at Mary, her eyes the gray-blue of newborns, unfocused but willful already, and of a stubborn intensity that Mary recognized as her own. Then the dark deepened and the night grew deliciously soft. From where she lay, Mary heard the wild plums ripen. They grew plump on their thin stems and fell, knocked off by wind. In her sleep she heard them drop through the long brittle grass and collect all around her in a glorious waste. (143)

Mary's dream trance, in its sympathetic merger with Celestine as mother, suggests her need "to complete the relational triangle" and to recreate "the exclusive symbiotic mother-child relationship" (qtd. in Elliot 131). At the same time, Mary is reminded of the "lost baby brother" stolen from her arms by the Millers, desperate for a child. This baby brother had been like a child to Mary, as Adelaide refused to nurse it or acknowledge its birth.

While the bond of friendship between Mary and Celestine marked the beginning of the regenerative cycle in Argus, the shared experience of caring for the baby furthers the bond and contributes to the interweaving of other disparate individuals in the Argus community. Through the union of Karl and Celestine, Mary, as the child's aunt, is further bonded to her friend and her brother. Even Wallace Pfef, who invents a "poor dead sweetheart" (159) so that he will never have to marry, finds a room in Celestine's "complicated house" (176). Wallace, through a homosexual encounter with Karl Adare in Minneapolis, is already linked to the growing family, but he establishes a closer bond when he finds himself acting as midwife at Dot's birth. It is Wallace for whom she is named, and he will act the roles of brother and uncle, even father, to Dot as she is growing up.

For both Celestine and Mary the birth of Dot occasions the reliving of their own childhoods, especially for Mary as she becomes both a child again and mother to her niece. Mary says, "We were thorough in living through her, in living our childhoods over" (181). Nancy Chodorow writes about the phenomenon of maternal indulgence: "A woman identifies with her own mother and, through identification with her child, she (re)experiences herself as a cared-for child" (47). Since Mary was abandoned by her own mother, it is not surprising that she lavishes attention on her niece and becomes increasingly permissive and defensive of her bad behavior, in effect nurturing the uncared-for child within herself. Wallace Pfef, himself a sympathetic indulger, says, "They loved Dot too much, and for that sin she made them miserable" (233). Later, he says, "more than anything we had in common, Dot's spite drove Celestine, Mary, and me together" (301).

While Dot's rebellion will force the unity of those around her, her anger will also force others in the community away from her. Dot comes to symbolize the contending forces of union and separation that this book embodies. When her grandmother made her bold escape from the stifling responsibilities to her children, she precipitated the complete fragmentation of her family. Dot recognizes her connection to her grandmother: "There is a thread beginning with my grandmother Adelaide and traveling through my father and arriving at me. That thread is flight" (335). As she flies away from the coronation ceremonies that would have seen her crowned Beet Queen, Dot, like

Adelaide, experiences the feeling of separation: "I feel too light, unconnected" (336). While she glories in her separation, her flight brings together on the ground Celestine, Wallace, Karl, and Mary:

Only the four stood rooted, heads tipped back, ears straining for the engine's return. They made a little group, flung out of nowhere, but together . . . watching as above them Dot's name slowly spread, broke apart in air currents, and was sucked into the stratosphere, letter by letter. (328)

Like her grandmother, Dot eventually must return to earth. When she does, only her mother remains waiting for her, and she feels the thread to her earthbound mother as well: "In her eyes I see the force of her love. It is bulky and hard to carry, like a package that keeps untying" (337). Dot has a thread of connection to her father and grandmother, who ran from their responsibilities, but she also links to her mother and aunt who, like Wallace's sugar beets, are firmly rooted in one place, in the reality of their existence. The simultaneous urges to flight and rootedness make Dot an important thread in the intricate fabric woven around her. Likewise, Dot unites the feminine qualities of caring, love, and bonding with the masculine gender identity of strength, independence, and self-sufficiency.

The novel ends with a final image of union and separation. Dot says of her mother:

I want to lean into her the way wheat leans into wind, but instead I walk upstairs and lie down in my bed alone . . .
I think of her lying in the next room, her covers thrown back too, eyes wide open, waiting. (338)

The image is one of union in separateness. The wheat is a traditional symbol of fertility as is the rain that Dot brings after her escape from the Beet Queen coronation ceremonies. After surviving the catastrophe of family dissolution, Mary and Celestine and Karl create a new family around the child who is part of them all. Through the making of friendships, the creation of a family, and the growth of community, Louise Erdrich's characters reaffirm the values of love, creativity, and sharing, the core of culture in the wake of catastrophe.

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Masquerading as Farmers

Clyde L. Hodge

digging at a site
diggers of what they perceive as
Digger Indian
es-cav-ate
the pieces of the past
buried more by people than by time
grave robbers with a license
to arbitrate
postulate
conjecture shapeshifts to fact
with the stroke on a notebook
strike of a keyboard
the bones of ancestors

listed on the dried pulp of trees
like fungus the data dissolves
heritage into statistics
and emerges as new soil to tread

food for seed
of a mutant grove of thoughts
replacing old growth culture
with an orchard
of acontextual knowledge
and the fruit
to be picked by tunnel vision
scientific reporters
masters and doctoral candidates

and consumed with
the impression
they will then know the intricacies
in this root of the tree of life

Noah Meets Old Coyote, or Singing in the Rain: Intertextuality in Thomas King's Green Grass, Running Water

Laura E. Donaldson

The political and theoretical genealogy of modernity lies not only in the origins of the *idea* of civility, but in this history of the colonial moment. It is to be found in the resistance of the colonized populations to the Word of God and Man-Christianity and the English language. The transmutations and translations of indigenous traditions in their opposition to colonial authority demonstrate how the desire of the signifier, the indeterminacy of intertextuality, can be deeply engaged in the postcolonial struggle against dominant relations of power and knowledge. —Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location Of Culture*

I will tell you something about stories,
[he said]
They aren't just entertainment.
Don't be fooled.
They are all we have, you see,
all we have to fight off illness and death.
You don't have anything
if you don't have the stories.
—Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*

The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them. —Edward Said, *Culture And Imperialism*

On a foreboding day in the 1620s, a group of Spanish Franciscans manifested their love for Christianity's God by forcibly entering the kivas of Santo Domingo Pueblo and building crosses on them to delimit

a new sacred topography: "Indians complained that such defilements put their gods to flight. The friars were delighted to hear this and boasted that they had driven the devil from his house" (Gutiérrez 72). The Franciscan attempt to expel sacred beings by literally and metaphorically overwriting their social text vividly dramatizes the process of intertextuality, or the absorption and transposition of one signifying system by another—here, the Pueblos' interpretation of their world by the hegemonic narratives of imperial Christianity.

Intertextuality—literally, "between textness"—is one of the most important semiotic concepts to emerge in the last several decades. As originally articulated by French theorist Julia Kristeva, it describes the transposition of one sign system into another in order to exchange or to alter it: a gesture implying the displacement of the earlier system by the later and the condensation of the later system onto the earlier. However, critics such as Pierre Bourdieu have argued that, while Kristeva's notion of intertextuality socially situates the codes, discourses and voices traversing any particular text, it still (after all is said and done) considers only "the system of works, the network of relationships among texts . . . Hence . . . they are compelled to find in the system of texts itself the basis of its dynamics" (179).

The incident at Santo Domingo Pueblo likewise provides a basis for questioning this restricted frame of reference because it testifies to intertextuality's status as much more than the dialogic space of texts. The taking up and absorption of one sign system by another also constitutes a material practice of transnational circulation enabling the transmission, dissemination, regulation, and recuperation of a plethora of cultural productions which are extraordinarily diverse and unevenly located in political economies.¹ Although the opening scenario originates in the annals of historical imperialism, neo-colonial examples abound, ranging from signs of multinational capitalism (e.g., the Coke bottle taken up by the Bushman in the film *The Gods Must Be Crazy*) to J. M. Coetzee's South African rewriting of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (a limit text of British colonialism) in his novel, *Foe*. The notion of intertextuality as a transnational critical practice is crucial for understanding both the Christian engagement in "the colonizing process of story changing" (Allen, *Hoop* 240) and what Edward Said identifies as the narrative connection between culture and imperialism.

However, recent appropriations of intertextuality by American Indian writers—most notably, Cherokee/Greek/German novelist Thomas King—demonstrate that its powerful socio-literary mechanisms can be directed towards either subjugation or resistance. Among other things, King attempts to displace and counteract the Christian transposition of aboriginal sign systems by rewriting one of its foundational narratives: the biblical story of Noah, which itself rewrites several ancient

Mediterranean flood myths.² This intervention ironically enacts a kind of poetic justice, since early Euramerican accounts positioned Native Americans as descendants of Noah's disgraced and exiled son, Ham. For the seventeenth-century Puritans, such a paternal heritage allowed them to ask whether the Indian "was not perhaps the farthest of all God's human creatures from God Himself? Descended from wanderers, had he not lost his sense of civilization and law and order? Had he not lost, except for a dim recollection, God Himself?" (Pearce 25).

In his 1993 novel, *Green Grass, Running Water*, King answers these questions through a deft construction of several contrapuntal plots: one centering upon Eli Stands Alone and his mother's house, which the spillway of the Grand Baleen Dam threatens to flood; another offering action-packed encounters between Indian and Christian origin narratives; and a third focusing upon the fraught love triangle between university history professor Alberta Frank, a sleazily slick lawyer named Charlie Looking Bear, and the somewhat hapless television salesman Lionel Red Dog. The final subplot involves tricky Coyote and four ancient Blackfoot Indians (named, appropriately enough for a paper on intertextuality, Robinson Crusoe, Ishmael, Hawkeye and the Lone Ranger) who escape from a government mental hospital and set about "fixing up" the world—which includes reversing the outcome of Grade B Hollywood westerns so that the Indians always win and causing the Grand Baleen dam to burst. This last event reveals the intertextual twist of the novel's title, since *Green Grass, Running Water* reiterates and transforms a phrase known all too well to Indian people: the (in)famous promise by the United States Government that they would honor their treaties for "as long as the grass is green and the waters run." In King's novel, the waters indeed run, but not in a predictable or humanly controlled manner.

My essay will examine how, as Homi Bhabha so eloquently notes in his epigraph, the desire for the signifier and the indeterminacy of intertextuality are deeply engaged in the postcolonial struggle of American Indians against cultural and religious relations of power-knowledge. In so doing, I will follow a fundamental truth of oral tradition—that every story elicits another story—and will produce my own intertextual narrative about Turtle Island's ongoing contest for meaning. With this in mind, then, let us turn to one of Western monotheism's most important creation texts—the biblical story of Noah, the Flood and his floating microcosm of the world, the Ark.

Coyote Dreams

So.

In the beginning, there was nothing. Just the water.
Coyote was there, but Coyote was asleep. That Coyote

was asleep and that Coyote was dreaming. When that
Coyote dreams, anything can happen.

I can tell you that.

—Thomas King, *Green Grass, Running Water*

After all, what is writing but controlled dreaming?

—Jorge Luis Borges

Whether they have read the Bible or not, most people know the Genesis story of Noah and the ark. In the popularly disseminated version, God becomes unhappy with humans because of their evil behavior, regrets his decision to create them, and sends a torrential rain that engulfs the whole world—all except for Noah, that is. With two of every kind of animal (although there is a discrepancy of numbers in the biblical text), Noah drifts in the ark until God relents and commands the waters to recede. What this folk narrative conceals, however, is that the biblical story itself exists as an intertextual construct and that the problem precipitating the Flood is a violation of established category boundaries rather than human depravity.

According to Hebrew Bible scholar Gerhard von Rad, "the biblical story of the Flood as it now exists is an ingenious interweaving of the two sources J [Yahwist] and P [Priestly]. The redactor [editor] has wonderfully worked both texts together in such a way that both Flood stories have remained almost intact. Since the Priestly story of the Flood was larger, even externally, and since in addition it is also literarily younger, it became essentially definitive for the form and content of the final redaction" (119).³ Another way of saying this is that the later P source transposes the earlier J material, thereby creating a richly intertextual, but not ideologically innocent, document. Since the P tradition possesses a specific socio-historical origin—a group of Zadokite Aaronid priests of the mid- to late-Sixth Century B.C.E. Jerusalem—and a specific theological focus—that holiness is based upon the division between *tahor* and *tame*, the pure and the impure (Coote and Ord, *Beginning* 39)—the so-called "Priestly" writers and editors rework the Flood story in order to foreground a definite point of view: the necessity for the separation of categories and for constituting strict identities without intermixture (Kristeva 93).

Although biblical critics usually ascribe the section immediately preceding the Flood to the Yahwist, its placement nevertheless supports Priestly ideology by suggesting a cause and effect relationship between human transgressions of the distinction between creator and creature and the necessity for God's retribution (Coote and Ord, *History* 85). In Genesis 6.1-6 we read:

When people began to multiply on the face of the ground and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that they were fair; and they took wives for themselves of all that they chose . . . The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went in to the daughters of humans, who bore children to them . . .

The LORD saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. (Gen 6.1-6, NRSV)

Some have described these verses as a narrative of the Ancient Mediterranean world before the Flood since, in the fertility cults of Canaan and the sacred marriage rites of Mesopotamia, regular sexual bonding between gods and humans enhanced the prospects for earthly and even eternal life (Wenham 145-46). Such practices were anathema to the ruling Priestly elites, however, whose intertextual positioning of the story literally transposes its original meaning into an opposite frame of reference. In the Priestly context, it becomes yet another vehicle for that dichotomous consciousness so endemic to Western monotheism—a consciousness which enacts separation as the major premise of existence (Allen, "Imagination" 569).

Co-mingling the divine with the human represented an unrestrained miscegenation which deeply offended the Priestly view that each species must only propagate according to their own kind. Because like must only associate with like, the law also prohibited the joint yoking of an ox and ass, intermarriage with foreigners, wearing garments of mixed cloth, sowing mixed seed, bestiality and homosexuality.⁴ Whether these prohibitions emanated from fear of sacred contagion, fear of the foreign or the influence of Hellenistic philosophy may never be decided; their cumulative effect, however, was an embracing of symmetry and a rejection of anomaly. Consequently, the mixed-blood offspring resulting from the sons of God "going into" the daughters of men (the Yahwist uses the graphic Hebrew term for sexual intercourse) constitute a bold challenge to an ideology based upon maintaining the inviolability of categorical boundaries. The relegation of God and humans to irrevocably separate spheres and the subsequent historical capacity of Christianity to impose this view holds particular importance for Turtle Island's aboriginal peoples.

Although it is dangerous to generalize too broadly about Native American beliefs, most Indian cultures affirm that sacred beings inhabit the same space as humans and that frequent interchanges with them

form a necessary part of both individual and tribal experience (Allen, *Grandmothers* 6-7). Indeed, according to Laguna Pueblo writer Paula Gunn Allen, the distinguishing characteristic of tribal thought is precisely this "enduring sense of the fluidity and malleability, the fragility and plasticity of the creative universe in which we live and dwell and have our being" (*Grandmothers* 22). Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water* likewise maintains such epistemological and spiritual flexibility and, by conducting a fictional renegotiation of the biblical Flood story, initiates both an *intertextual* and *intratextual* struggle over the signs of God.

"Intra" literally means "within," and it is within the text itself that we glimpse the opening salvos in this important argument. Not coincidentally, they also occur at the precise juncture where Old Coyote first appears as a character. In this scene, King comically conflates the so-called earth diver creation stories ("In the beginning the entire world is covered with water. The earth diver, portrayed as Beaver, Duck, Mink, Muskrat, Turtle, or Loon, dives to the bottom of the water and brings up a small bit of soil that the creator transforms into land" [Gill 78]) with the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) tale of the woman who fell from the sky. First Woman—not Sky woman as in the original tradition—lands on the back of grandmother Turtle; they decide they better make some land "and pretty soon that mud starts to grow" (King 32). In the midst of these female doings, Old Coyote floats by on an air mattress, offering his help and suggesting that what they really need is a garden:

Exactly, says that backward GOD . . .

A garden is the last thing we need, says grandmother Turtle.

No, no, no, says Old Coyote. A garden is a good thing. Trust me.

Oh, Oh, says First Woman. Looks like another adventure.

"So that's the way the story starts," I says. "That's the way it is beginning."

No, no says that God. That's not the way it starts at all. It starts with a void. It starts with a garden.

"Stick around," I says. "That garden will be here soon."

Hallelujah, says that God. (32)

This comedic bickering over the content of human beginnings serves a very important function since it suggests that the monotheist version of *creatio ex nihilo*—creation of the earth from nothing—achieves its singular and univocal status only by suppressing all other voices in this highly contested terrain (pun intended).⁵

Of course, one can just imagine the garden dreamed up by Old Coyote: in it, the tree of knowledge talks to First Woman and, in addition to apples, offers her melons, bananas, hot dogs, fry bread, corn, potatoes, pizza and extra-crispy Fried chicken (all the essentials of human survival). However, the most salient feature of this Coyote Eden is the manner in which it—like the old trickster himself—breaches the categorical propriety so important to the Priestly writers of Genesis. The presence of talking trees in paradise and, later, talking animals on Noah's ark threatens the qualitative distinction that the Bible makes between humans and all other forms of life. According to the great chain of being revealed in the first chapter of Genesis, humans occupy a unique place because only they are made according to God's likeness and only they possess dominion over all other living entities. In contrast to this divinely ordered hierarchy, the creation stories of Turtle Island manifest a much more decentered and less anthropocentric view: humans are only one life form among others and, whether two-legged, four-legged, winged or leaved, all living beings uniquely embody the spirit of the Creator.

Old Coyote's garden should hardly surprise us, however, for he rivals the sons of God and the daughters of men in his outrageous choice of sexual partners, ranging from Changing Bear Maiden to Frog and Mouse as well as members of his own family (not to mention the families of others). Named *coyotl* by the Aztecs and "coyote" by Spanish-speaking Mexicans (Bright 342), Old Man Coyote belongs to that race of beings who have inhabited the world since before the time of humans. He—except in fiction, coyote is usually male—is not an original creator but rather, according to Mac Ricketts, a *bricoleur*, a creator of the-world-as-it-already-is (Bright 348).⁶ He tinkers with the "Eden" of the original Creator, trying to make the world a fitting one for those human inhabitants who seem to be as imperfect as Coyote himself (Bright 352). In his novel, King adapts Ricketts' notion of coyote as "the trickster-fixer" and creates a character whose uncanny ability to "fix things up" has significant social and textual consequences. Acoma Pueblo poet Simon Ortiz brilliantly captures Coyote's "mixed" message in a tale of how he lost his soft, glossy fur (through some scrape or other) and gained a new coat:

So some mice
finding him shivering in the cold
beside a rock felt sorry for him.
"This poor thing, beloved,"
they said, and they got together
just some old scraps of fur
and glued them on Coyote with piñon pitch.
And he's had that motley fur even since.

You know, the one that looks like
scraps of an old coat, that one. (158)

Coyote's coat, like Coyote himself, figures pastiche, or a congeries of incongruous parts that eludes our attempts at unitary meanings.

The heterogenous fur of this "half creator, half fool" (Allen, *Hoop* 158) also becomes a visual metaphor for King's own narrative method. Borrowing eclectically from many different traditions, King creates his own distinctly hybrid—but hopefully not scraggly—intertextual vision. How else could Eve/First Woman metamorphose into Changing Woman (she survives a great flood to become the first Apache), who then travels into a Haudenosaunee tale? The issue of travelling characters again raises the question of intertextuality as a transnational critical practice which, in this case, circulates fragments of stories belonging to Native American nations. Yet, unlike the friars at Santo Domingo Pueblo, King uses the intertextual process in a more gentle and generous way: it neither subjugates nor obliterates but, rather, parodies and resists the way dominant Christian stories have too often been used.

Given this context, it seems particularly apt that Old Coyote "mixes up" biblical stories by floating rather blithely (on his air mattress) from the Garden of Eden into Noah's ark. Once there, however, he is abruptly flattened by Changing Woman when she falls from the sky directly onto the ark or, as Noah so baldly puts it, onto a canoe full of animal poop:

But before Changing Woman can apologize to Old Coyote, before she can give him some tobacco or some sweetgrass, a little man with a filthy beard jumps out of the poop at the front of the canoe.

Who are you? says the little man.

I'm Changing Woman, says Changing Woman.

Any relation to Eve? says the little man. She sinned, you know. That's why I'm in a canoe full of animals. That's why I'm in a canoe full of poop.

Are you all right? Changing Woman asks Old Coyote.

Psssst, says Old Coyote.

Why are you talking to animals? says the little man.

This is a Christian ship. Animals don't talk. We got rules. (King 123)

Noah's blaming of Eve for his predicament articulates the time-honored Christian belief that women bear primary responsibility for the Fall. This attitude has its roots in I Timothy, the letter mistakenly attributed to Paul, which contains the only passage in the entire Greek Bible assigning more blame for sin to Eve than to Adam: "I permit no

woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor" (NRSV). Mainstream biblical scholarship has reached a consensus that this prohibition against women's speaking does not articulate the homogeneous position of the New Testament Church but, rather, represents a second generation reaction against the widespread participation of women in leadership, ministering and teaching in first-generation Christianity (Phipps 54-55).⁷

Of course, no one told this to Noah, who confronts Changing Woman with not only the arguments of I Timothy, but also the distinctive views of St. Augustine—Fourth Century bishop of Hippo (near present-day Annaba, Algeria) and one of Christianity's most influential theologians. In *The City Of God*, for example, Augustine contends that the Flood reveals yet another facet of women's dangerous depravity for, unlike the Fall, where woman seduced man by cunning, this evil resulted from women's very bodily presence.⁸ In other words, when it came to the daughters of men, the sons of God just couldn't help themselves. The rather dramatic plummeting of Changing Woman into Noah's theological framework subjects her to double indemnity, however, since as a woman she inherits the guilt of Eve, while as an Indian she commits the category mistake of talking to animals.

Noah mistakenly believes that Changing Woman is a new wife sent to him directly by God (he abandoned the first Mrs. Noah and her children to the Flood when they protested his decision to throw many animals overboard). Immediately, he attempts to intimidate his providential bride with the first rule of the Ark which, according to a still flattened Old Coyote, is "Thou Shalt Have Big Breasts. And Noah's wife had small breasts? says Changing Woman. No, says Old Coyote, she had great big breasts. Ah, says Changing Woman . . . We got to get rid of those rules" (King 125). She begins her campaign to subvert the ark's "rules" by eluding Noah's lascivious pursuit. Although in Hebrew the name "Noah" means "rest," i.e., serenity in God's safe world (Brueggeman 69), King's Noah is anything but serene and God's world anything but safe. Indeed, with a sexual appetite that is clearly out of control, "for the next month, Noah chases Changing Woman around the canoe . . . But every time he works his way to the front of the canoe, she dances to the back. And every time he works his way to the back of the canoe, she dances to the front" (King 124). Old Coyote must be chuckling slyly at this point because Noah—the dominant signifier of chosenness—ironically suffers from the very ailment that, according to Augustine, is men's specific punishment for disobedience in Eden: unruly genitals. As the esteemed bishop so delicately notes: "Deservedly are we ashamed of those members which

are moved, as we might say, by their own law and not at our command. Before the fall of man it was not so" (14.17).

When the ark-canoe reaches an island, the contest dizzily continues until Changing Woman exhausts, angers and finally defeats Noah. "This is a Christian ship, he shouts. I am a Christian man. This is a Christian journey. And If you can't follow our Christian rules, then [in his own intertextual reference to Timothy Findley's fictional revisioning of the Flood], you're not wanted on the voyage" (King 125). In Findley's 1984 novel, *Not Wanted On The Voyage*, women also contest the dominance of Noah as well as the masculinist, hierarchical and genocidal "rules" that he enacts. However, Findley's "Doctor Noyes" is a much more sinister character than King's: he not only has his libido well in control, but also conducts gratuitous experiments upon animals, supervises the brutal rape of his son's child-wife, Emma, murders her mentally challenged sister, and cold-bloodedly kills dolphins and whales. In fact, his perspective mimics the binarist "Manichaeian" view that Frantz Fanon assigns to the European colonizers.

In *The Wretched Of The Earth*, Fanon describes the socio-surgical incisions of imperial epistemology:

the colonial world is a world cut in two. The dividing line, the frontiers are shown by barracks and police stations . . . The zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. The two zones are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity. Obedient to the rules of pure Aristotelian logic, they both follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity. No conciliation is possible, for of the two terms, one is superfluous. (38-39)

The Noah of *Not Wanted On The Voyage* cuts the world in two when, during a family gathering, he observes that four people plus four people make eight: "Lucy almost laughed—and Mrs. Noyes was about to say *yes—and two and two make four*, when both were brought up short by the realization that Noah was stating more than a mathematical fact. He was drawing a line between them—right down the centre of the table: *we and thee*, he was saying, *us and them* . . . four and four make eight" (202). Like Fanon's colonial village, Findley's ark becomes a site that literally divides earth's remnant into privileged higher and marginalized lower orders of being. Committed to "mastery by whatever means" (*Voyage* 232), Doctor Noyes dispatches his wife, his son Ham and virtually all the animals to the lower regions of the ship, while he and his favored sons Shem and Japeth occupy the upper spheres. It is from the spatial and symbolic underside, then, that "the

Great Revolution of the Lower Orders" transpires.

In this insurrection, animals talk to their human counterparts and, with the exception of Ham, its freedom fighters are all female: Mrs. Noyes, Lucy (actually Lucifer crossdressing as a woman and married to Ham), Mottyl (Mrs. Noyes' blind cat, who has just given birth to kittens), and Crowe (a powerful trickster in many American Indian cultures). They wage a fierce contest and actually gain some significant victories; at the end, however, "the situation between the two factions might have been called a draw . . . Ham had been overpowered—and had lost control of his prisoners. Shem, Hannah and Doctor Noyes were free. But so was Ham free, and his mother and Lucy and Emma" (338). In spite of this ambiguous resolution, they at least reclaim the right to share the upper decks with their oppressive "saviors." Further, this mottley group—like the calico cat Mottyl, the hybrid product of mixing categories—demonstrates the resilience and tenacious will of women, animals, and all other colonized beings upon earth, including coyotes and Indians, to survive.

Changing Woman's fictional vanquishing of Noah in *Green Grass, Running Water* similarly evokes much more than the resistance of one female character, for this "big woman. Strong woman. First Woman (31)" manifests qualities shared by all women. A sacred figure of both the Navajo and Apache, Changing Woman and her sisters White Shell Woman, Turquoise Woman and White Painted Woman are seen and remembered in the cycle of the seasons, for this is the most profound manifestation of her presence in the lives of The People (Beck et al. 76). Changing Woman conjures Mother Earth herself and, through this link, engenders respect toward women. Cheyenne scholar Henri Mann Morton celebrates this attitude in her statement that "I am an American Indian woman. My grandmothers have been here for all time. The land . . . is my grandmother—my mother. She is oldest woman—first woman. She is sacred; she is our beloved earth woman. We must revere her" (196). In all her guises, Changing Woman evokes the very life-affirming universe that the Christian Friars attempted to rewrite at Santo Domingo Pueblo.

However, in *Green Grass, Running Water* it is Changing Woman who rewrites the texts of patriarchal imperialism, including that icon of American literature, Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. After being stranded on the island by Noah, Changing Woman eventually swims out to board a passing ship called the *Pequod*. A nice-looking young man named Ishmael subsequently explains to her that this is a whaling ship whose Captain—Ahab, to be sure—has decreed that all must keep watching for "whaleswhaleswhaleswhaleswhaleswhaleswhaleswhales!" (163). Indeed, Captain Ahab espouses an ethic strikingly similar to that of Findley's Doctor Noyes: "This is a Christian world, you know. We

only kill things that are useful [whales] or things we don't like [lesbians]" (King 163). When the whalers claim to have glimpsed the "great male white whale" of Captain Ahab, Changing Woman interrupts the power of dominant cultures to enforce meaning through her enactment of an Indian version of "the emperor's new clothes." In a send-up of the (now) classic retort "I have seen God and *she* is black," she instructs the *Pequod's* crew: "That's not a white whale. That's a female whale and she is black" (King 164). And so we are introduced to Moby-Jane, the Great Black Whale, who agrees to travel with Changing Woman to someplace warm and presumably far away from both the men of the *Pequod* and the rules of Noah's ark.

In her review of *Green Grass, Running Water* for *Maclean's* (a popular Canadian magazine), Diane Turbide observes that the effect of King's re-telling of Christian myths is not so much disrespectful as distancing:

By portraying biblical stories from a native point of view, King shows how illogical and foreign the natives found the Christian religion. And without resorting to polemics, he illustrates how white culture misinterpreted, ridiculed and even outlawed native beliefs. (44)

While I certainly agree with this statement,⁹ I also doubt that "distancing" is what we gain from King's vision. In the narrative that I have produced, Changing Woman's *intratextual* infiltration of Genesis thematizes its field of power and establishes its text as an arena of cultural conflict, while the novel's *intertextuality* reveals its status not only as an agent, but also as an agent provocateur. The French poet Mallarmé once called the book an *attentat*—an act of terrorist violence (Bourdieu 44). With *Green Grass, Running Water*, however, one would more appropriately speak of laughing oneself to death. In addition to foregrounding how Western monotheism has either altered or suppressed American Indian and First Nations knowledge systems, it also mounts an hilarious—yet nonetheless stinging—critique of patriarchal imperialism and its still insidious effects.

Singing in the Rain

The clouds moved away from the sun as the old Indians and Coyote made their way through the prairie grass. Ahead, the mountains rose off the prairie floor, supporting the clouds and the sky.

"This is a lot of fun," Coyote says to himself quietly.
"I feel like . . . singing." (King 278)

King brings the story of Noah to a fitting close through the

narrative of Eli Stands Alone, a retired literature professor who stands very much alone against a dam that the Canadian government has built upon Blackfoot ancestral lands. Indeed, the Stands Alone house, built log by log with his mother's hands, represents not only his maternal and cultural heritage but also the only hope of stopping perhaps the most effective technology yet developed for the genocidal annihilation of Native cultures. One need only think of the Tennessee Valley Authority which, with one flick of a switch, closed the sluice gates of the Tellico Dam and buried the ancient heart of Cherokee culture to realize the irreplaceable losses engineered by this technology. Threatened with his house turning "into an ark" (King 120), Eli consequently becomes a kind of First Nations' Noah who rewrites the biblical story by blocking the water rather than sailing it.

Unfortunately (and arrogantly), the government consistently ignored warnings that the ground under the dam was scored by earthquake faults. The government also ignored the way that, when properly sung with an objective in mind, songs "take on a force which is as mysterious as breath and life itself" (Beck et al. 41). Like thought, singing possesses the power to create, transform and vitalize (Beck et al. 42)—a fact that Coyote's rather uncontrolled humming in the midst of a violent rainstorm makes all too clear:

"It's going to be a good day," said the Lone Ranger.
"I can feel it."

"You bet," said Eli, and he arranged the coffee cups on the porch. But as Eli reached for the coffeepot, it began to rattle and then bounce. Eli grabbed the railing of the porch and tried to stand up. And as he did, the land began to dance.

"Oh, oh," said the Lone Ranger. "Things are getting bent again."

"You haven't been dancing again, Coyote?" said Ishmael.

"Just a little," says Coyote.

"You haven't been singing again, Coyote?" said Robinson Crusoe.

"Just a little," says Coyote.

"Oh boy," said Hawkeye. "Here we go again." (341)

The ensuing earthquake cracks open the stress fractures underneath the dam and causes it to burst. The subsequent flood, replete with various automobiles belonging to the novel's characters, conjures emancipation rather than cataclysm, however, for it enables the Blackfoot to resist governmental control of their lives and to reclaim their homeland. Even the watery parade of cars—a Nissan, a Pinto and a Carmen Ghia—echoes this liberatory movement since the faint recollections of the

Niña, the Pinta, and the Santa María suggest a washing away of Columbus's colonial heritage.

Sometimes, according to Bourdieu, "cultural producers are able to use the power conferred on them, especially in periods of crisis, by their capacity to put forward a critical definition of the social world, to mobilize the potential strength of the dominated classes and subvert the order prevailing in the field of power" (44). Through the cultural production of *Green Grass*, *Running Water* and its contestatory intertextuality, Thomas King effects just such a subversive re-ordering of relations in the dominant fields of imperialist, capitalist and masculinist power. The novel succeeds in illuminating not only how reading and interpretation constitute a crucial component of the relation between culture and empire, but also of Indian resistance to this nexus. Indeed, as Alan Velie once remarked in an essay on trickster novels, "as for readers, by reading the narrative of the trickster, told by the trickster, they are manipulated into being tricksters who will share [the characters'] outrage at the current state of things and will join them in the fight against evil, using wit rather than violence" (137). Using wit and even a few coyote dreams, perhaps we can widen the cracks that King has opened until the waters again run freely and promises are kept.

NOTES

¹For a fuller discussion of this process, see my essay "When Jesus Rewrote the Corn Mothers: Intertextuality as Transnational Critical Practice," forthcoming in *Semeia: A Journal of Experimental Biblical Criticism*.

²For example, the Sumerian "Atrahasis" story parallels Genesis in that the Gods create a catastrophic flood which only Atrahasis and those in his ark survive, but the reason for it is radically different. Rather than a purging of human evil, this flood is an antidote to divine insomnia: "In less than twelve hundred years . . . , / the land was overpopulated, / The people multiplied. / The land bellowed like a bull, / The uproar disturbed the Gods. / When Enlil heard the noise, / he complained to The Divine Assembly. / 'I cannot stand this human uproar, / I cannot sleep!' / Send a plague upon the earth!" (Matthews and Benjamin 21). In the Epic of Gilgamesh, Utnapishtim tells the story of how he and his wife became immortal by surviving a great flood in an ark "as wide as it is long with a roof like the dome of the heavens" (Matthews and Benjamin 36). The comparison of these narratives with Genesis has spawned a huge body of scholarship in the fields of the history of religions and comparative mythology.

³Von Rad refers here to the "Documentary Hypothesis," which is accepted by most mainstream biblical scholarship. According to this hypothesis, the Hebrew Bible as we now know it is the result of writers and editors from four

basic traditions: the J, or Yahwist, tradition which takes its name from its practice of usually referring to God as "Yahweh"; the E, or Elohist, tradition which usually refers to God as Elohim; the D, or Deuteronomic, tradition which produced the book of Deuteronomy; and the P, or Priestly, which is primarily concerned with cultic laws and practices. Each of these traditions has specific literary and religious perspectives, with J usually considered as the earliest of the four.

⁴In Leviticus, homosexuality is regarded as an infringement of proper order because something in one category ("Man," for example) allegedly takes on the characteristics of another category ("woman").

⁵Those who study Genesis already know that there are at least three Creation stories which, when juxtaposed to each other, function in much the same way as King's cosmic squabble.

⁶Bright here cites M. L. Ricketts, "The North American Indian Trickster," *History of Religions* 5 (1965): 327-350.

⁷Phipps quotes a summary of Rosemary Reuther in making this point.

⁸In *The City Of God* Augustine states: "This evil [the Flood] again had its source in the female sex, not indeed in the same way as at the beginning . . . but from the beginning those who were of loose life in the earthly city, that is, in the society of the earthborn, were loved for their physical beauty by the sons of God . . . Thus the sons of God were caught by love of the daughters of men and in order to live with them in marriage they left the path of piety characteristic of the holy community and degenerated into the base morals of the earthly city" (15.22).

⁹I should also say that Turbide has written one of the few mainstream reviews that shows any understanding not only of King's novel but of Native American semiosis. In his review for the *New York Times*, for example, James McManus chastises King for making his non-linear narrative method "repetitively explicit," and by what McManus characterizes as the author's continual interruption of himself with explanatory flashbacks and point of view changes. One could just as easily question McManus' own preference for an Aristotelian "beginning, middle, and end" as well as for naturalism.

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The Washita

Dorys Crow Grover

The poetry of the wind
came swirling down
across the Panhandle
like Custer's troops
marching through the night
to massacre the Cheyenne
camped peacefully on the Washita
that time, when the white flag
of surrender fluttered,
and Old Glory signaled peace,
where Black Kettle died.

I have seen the dust of stars
in the eyes of the dead,
who believed in the promises,
and where the pathways led.
Although ages now have passed:
many snows in the burn of time,
nothing has dimmed the stars,
nor slowed the ticking mind,
nor lifted the bones long
lingering on the wind's song
where Black Kettle died.

FORUM

Lonesome Duck: *The Blueing of a Texas-American Myth*

D. L. Birchfield

There is a line of dialogue in *Hud* in which Homer Bannon (played by Melvyn Douglas in an Academy Award-winning role), standing like a patriarch of grandfatherly wisdom at the foot of a staircase in a ranch house on the West Texas plains, delivers a bit of Hollywood screenplay cornpone philosophy to his grandson: "Little by little," says old Homer, "the look of the country changes because of the men we admire."

Hollywood cornpone or not, one can learn something about a people by examining the men they admire. One can learn something about Texans and Texas by this method.

In May, 1965, when President Lyndon Johnson was asked to write a foreword to a University of Texas Press edition of Houghton Mifflin's 1935 monumental 584-page work of history, *The Texas Rangers: A Century Of Frontier Defense*, by Walter Prescott Webb, an edition printed from the original plates, identical in every regard except for some minor changes in the frontmatter, among them the substitution of Lyndon Johnson's foreword for a couple of pieces of poetry, the Texas Ranger singled out for special mention by the President of the United States, himself a Texan, was Captain L. H. McNelly. The President writes:

Captain McNelly was one of the most effective of the Texas Rangers. . . . [He] repeatedly told his men that "courage is a man who keeps on coming on." As Dr. Webb would explain to me, "you can slow a man like that, but you can't defeat him—the man who keeps on coming on is either going to get there himself or make it possible for a later man to reach the goal" (x).

Captain McNelly does indeed keep on coming on. His exploits have a special appeal to Texans, even to scholars steeped in Greek philosophy and German poetry, such as Craig Clifford. As an unemployed Ph.D. living in Maryland, having spent many years away from Texas, Clifford was so amazed at the power of McNelly, speaking to contemporary Texans across a century of time, that he was moved to wonder if he could learn something about himself, moved to ask: could he "learn who he is by reading how Captain L. H. McNelly crossed the Rio Grande with thirty Texas Rangers in 1875 against all orders of the U.S. authorities?" Clifford discovered "when I read how McNelly told a U.S. Cavalry officer that he didn't object to his men sitting down with him because he wouldn't fight alongside anyone he didn't believe his equal, I knew a little better than I did before why I'm the way I am" (Clifford 13-14).

What was it, one might ask, that Captain McNelly did in 1875 that so stirs the hearts of Texans a century later, whether they be a President of the United States or an unemployed Ph.D.? Perhaps the following quotation can shed light on that question:

Early in 1875 McNelly and his men were sent into the infamous Nueces Strip, that portion of Texas lying between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande. McNelly's job was to rid the area of cattle thieves, of which there were a great many. He did a brilliant, brave job, and his methods were absolutely ruthless. Any Mexican unlucky enough to be caught was tortured until he coughed up information, then summarily hung. Mexicans found with cattle were shot. In one of his boldest moves, McNelly and his thirty men crossed the Rio Grande to attack a ranch near Las Cuevas, where some 250 Mexican soldiers were assembled. Unfortunately the Rangers dashed into the wrong ranch and found a number of men working at the woodpile, cutting wood while their wives cooked breakfast. The Rangers shot them down, then realized their mistake and went on to the right ranch. Whether apologies were offered to the wives of the slain woodchoppers is not recorded. Webb is aware that McNelly's methods might conceivably be criticized, but he satisfies himself with the remark that "Affairs on the border cannot be judged by standards that hold elsewhere."

Why they can't is a question apologists for the Rangers have yet to answer. Torture is torture, whether inflicted in Germany, Algiers, or along the Nueces Strip. The Rangers, of course, claimed that their end justified their

means, but people who practice torture always claim that. Since the practical end, in this case, was the recovery of a few hundred cattle, one might dispute the claim. Only a generation or two earlier the Nueces Strip had been Mexico, and it is not inconceivable that some of the Mexicans involved had as good a right to the cattle as Captain Richard King or any other Texas cattleman. (McMurtry, "Southwestern Literature?" 40-41)

As is evident from the content of the above passage, its author, Larry McMurtry, is a perceptive and provocative critic of Texas letters. In the above essay he practically invents literary controversy in Texas. He does the unthinkable. He desecrates the hallowed names of J. Frank Dobie, Roy Bedichek, and Walter Prescott Webb, taking them one at a time and seriously damaging their reputations as men of letters. Texas letters has never been the same. (For some idea of the stature of these men and the courage required to do what McMurtry did, see the memorial testimonials in *Three Men In Texas: Bedichek, Webb, and Dobie; Essays by Their Friends in The Texas Observer*, edited by Ronnie Dugger, U of Texas P, 1967).

McMurtry's stature as a critic of Texas letters is the equal of his reputation as a novelist, at least within Texas. As Ernestine P. Sewell reports, for his attack on Dobie, Bedichek, and Webb, "McMurtry was labeled the enfant terrible of Texas letters" (Reynolds 318). Jose E. Límon calls McMurtry "the foremost of the few critics of 'Texas literature'" (Clifford and Pilkington 59).

McMurtry's willingness to find fault with the work of fellow Texas writers was first manifested in 1968 in his essay "Southwestern Literature?" in his book *In a Narrow Grave: Essays on Texas*. Lest Texans forget the main themes of that essay, he followed it up with a scathing lecture (in which he refers to Dobie, Bedichek, and Webb as "the Holy Oldtimers"), delivered in person at the Fort Worth Art Museum in September, 1981, entitled "Ever a Bridegroom: Reflections on the Failure of Texas Literature," which was published in the October 23, 1981 issue of the *Texas Observer* and reprinted in 1989 by SMU Press in *Range Wars: Heated Debates, Sober Reflections, and Other Assessments of Texas Writing*, edited by Craig Clifford and Tom Pilkington, in which McMurtry adds a 1987 postscript to his essay.

McMurtry's essays, and his novels, and the movies made from those novels, led to a rather thick tome, also published by SMU Press in 1989, entitled *Taking Stock: A Larry McMurtry Casebook*, edited by Clay Reynolds, in which practically all of Texas takes turns telling what they consider to be wrong with Larry McMurtry.

Nowhere among any of this literature does one find a Native American viewpoint (though Louise Erdrich does offer a review of

Texasville, a novel and movie not concerned with Indians). Not only does McMurtry fail to voice any concern with the way Indians are dealt with in Texas literature, but the considerable body of rebuttal to McMurtry's criticisms is also silent on the topic.

When McMurtry wrote "Southwestern Literature?" in 1968 he was a young English professor who had been teaching at Texas Christian University and at Rice Institute. He had gained a reputation as Texas' most promising novelist with the publication of his first three novels: *Horseman, Pass By* (1961; filmed as *Hud* in 1963); *Leaving Cheyenne* (1963; filmed as *Lovin' Molly* in 1974); and *The Last Picture Show* (1966; filmed under the same name in 1971).

In preparation for writing "Southwestern Literature?" McMurtry read the entire canon of Dobie, Bedichek, and Webb, twenty-nine books in all, twenty-two of them by Dobie. All three men were recently deceased. They comprised The Big Three of Texas letters, Dobie the anecdotal worshipper of things rural, Bedichek the naturalist, and Webb the historian of the West.

McMurtry finds Dobie and Bedichek irrelevant to the experience of modern, urban Texas. "For my generation," he writes, "I doubt we could scrape up enough nature-lore between us to organize a decent picnic" (36). That is among his more gentle observations, as he then sets about dissecting the work of the two nature lovers, being harshest on Dobie.

After warming up on Bedichek, and before getting to Dobie, McMurtry takes up the case of Walter Prescott Webb, the late, revered professor of history at the University of Texas. McMurtry's critical acumen is not nearly so penetrating when applied to the history of the West, which he makes evident by his fairly reverent attitude toward Webb's books on the subject, particularly *The Great Frontier*.

Webb was an uncritical disciple of Frederick Jackson Turner's "Frontier Hypothesis," in which the westward movement of Anglo-Americans, particularly their complete inability to be restrained and their disregard for the rights of indigenous peoples, somehow becomes a thing filled with great promise for the earth.

But McMurtry can spot a "glaring whitewash" (40) when he reads one, and thus he focuses his attack on Webb's *The Texas Rangers*.

McMurtry is appalled at the racism and violence of the Rangers, but even more so at Webb's blindness to it. McMurtry writes: "His own facts about the Rangers contradict again and again his characterization of them as 'quiet, deliberate, gentle' men" (40). McMurtry cites a number of examples similar to the quotation above concerning Captain McNelly in 1875, all regarding the Rangers' relations with Hispanics or Blacks, including Captain Bill McDonald's speech as he advanced on men accused of being the Ft. Brown rioters in 1906: "You

niggers hold up there! I'm Captain McDonald . . . and I'm down here to investigate a foul murder you scoundrels have committed. I'll show you niggers something you've never been used to . . ." (42).

McMurtry indicts Webb for failing to censure the Rangers' "racial arrogance," for his willingness "to accept the still common assumption that a Ranger can tell whether a Mexican is honest or dishonest simply by looking at him," and laments that "the same method was used to separate good Negroes from bad" (42). Throughout McMurtry's attack it is telling that he has nothing to say about the Texas Rangers' attitude regarding Indians or the glee with which Walter Prescott Webb reports the genocidal activities of the Texas Rangers against Indians.

McMurtry is not alone among critics of Texas letters in not having it occur to them to mention Indians when discussing the failures of Texas literature. Celia Morris, in a keynote address delivered at a Texas women scholars' conference held at the University of Texas at Austin in the spring of 1986, while finding fault with the way men portray women in Texas literature, says, "I find little hint, really, of the Texas women—black, brown, or white—whom I know best in any of this writing. . . . And If I, a white woman close to some of those male writers, find their work alien, I have no trouble imagining how remote it must seem to black women and Chicanas" (Clifford and Pilkington 107-08).

Indians, women and men alike, find it very remote indeed. Texas writers seem to be incapable of thinking of Indians as Texans. The image is too jarring to the soul to be admitted. To Texans, Indians have always been a part of Nature; they are sub-human. They are also past tense. They were a "barrier" (Rupert Norval Richardson's term), or they committed "depredations" (J. W. Wilbarger's term). They were dealt with long ago, and, like the buffalo herds, they are gone now; no need to dwell on why or how that happened, unless, of course, Hollywood might be interested.

In that case the moviegoer will be treated to scenes of heroic "settlers" fighting off attacks by redskinned horseback sub-humans. Somehow the Indians manage to get portrayed as the invaders and the "settlers" get portrayed as the ones defending the invasion of their homeland. If the action takes place in Texas it will likely take place in West Texas, as though somehow that was the only part of Texas that had any Indians, and the Indians will not have any more sense than to ride around in circles until a sufficient number of them have been shot. One is left to assume that the Indians continued to ride around in circles until they all got shot, and that is how Texas ended up without any redskinned sub-humans. (For an entertaining survey of how Indians have been portrayed by Hollywood, see *Shadows Of The Indian* by Raymond William Stedman, U of Oklahoma P, 1982).

The truth of the matter in Texas is far more interesting than fiction but is something Hollywood has not yet gotten around to exploring.

Edward S. Curtis, in volume 19 of *The North American Indian*, succinctly states the Texas attitude regarding Indians: "Texas was generous in respect to its aboriginal inhabitants, being ever willing to give its Indians to any one who might want them. In fact, the Texas mandate, though not recorded in the statutes, was 'Go elsewhere or be exterminated'" (36).

The student desiring a brief summary of how Texas managed to rid itself of its aboriginal inhabitants well before the end of the Nineteenth Century, with the exception of the 97-acre Isleta del Sur Pueblo near El Paso and the Alabama-Coushatta in East Texas, is referred to Chapter 13, "Extermination and Oblivion," in *The Indians of Texas: From Prehistoric to Modern Times*, by W. W. Newcomb, Jr. (U of Texas P, 1961). One might note particularly that it made no difference whatsoever whether the Native peoples were hostile or friendly, nomadic or sedentary, whether they lived on the high plains, the central plains, the eastern woodlands, or along the Gulf shore, whether they attempted to reside peacefully on land specifically set aside for them, or whether they were allies of Texas, even if they had supplied fighting men to help champion the Texas cause against other Indians. They were not wanted; they were not tolerated; they were driven out of Texas or they were exterminated.

At least one prominent official who attempted to intervene on behalf of the Indians was murdered—Texas Superintendent of Indian Affairs Robert S. Neighbors, who committed the offense of hurriedly ushering his charges out of state in 1859 to save them from being exterminated by angry mobs who did not care to attempt any distinction between peaceful and hostile Indians. These Indians numbered about 1,500, with 1,000 of them being mostly Caddo, Anadarko, Ioni, Waco, and Tonkawa from the Brazos reservation, and about 500 of them being Penateka Comanches from a smaller reservation nearby. They were forced to abandon nearly all their possessions and livestock on more than 70,000 acres, where they had pursued an agricultural and range cattle economy, and where they had, in fact, been allies of Texas in armed engagements against other Indians. Neighbors made the mistake of returning to Texas where he met with vigilante justice, a shotgun blast in the back (Richardson, *Texas* 152; Utey 135-38; Wallace and Hoebel 302).

The Cherokees, Delawares, Kickapoos, Seminoles, Shawnees, and other Native peoples from east of the Mississippi, who had migrated to the headwaters of the Sabine, where they established agricultural communities, made the mistake of residing on rich land coveted by the East Texans. In 1838 they were summarily ordered to leave. When

they refused, they were driven from Texas in two bloody engagements, finding themselves relentlessly pursued until they had crossed the Red River into the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations (Newcomb 347).

The Karankawas of the Gulf Coast, hemmed in on all sides, unable to flee and unwilling to attempt much of an accommodation with the Texans, were exterminated (Newcomb 341-43). One can seek out the fate of any particular Native people in Texas, but with the exception of the Alabama-Coushatta, the story has the same ending; they were exterminated or they were driven out.

Not until the Twentieth Century did Indians begin returning to Texas, where they remain practically invisible, clustered in the state's urban centers, where they struggle with the problems of urban Indians everywhere, stripped of their land base, isolated from their scattered people, aliens in their native land (Arkeketa, "Returning The Gift" panel discussion). Being invisible, they are ignored. When they are not invisible they are not appreciated.

On the weekend of March 13-15, 1992, the Texas chapter of the American Indian Movement organized a Columbus protest march in Corpus Christi, Texas. The *Micmac News*, a Canadian Indian publication, had correspondents on the scene, who report:

One noteworthy incident occurred which caused a lot of bad feelings. A Corpus Christi police captain, in speaking to a member of the press, stated: "The FBI thinks of AIM as Assholes In Moccassins," and made it clear that he shared that same opinion. AIM demanded a full apology, which was not given immediately. The captain was given a 10-day suspension—with pay—from the police department (punishment or reward?). This type of racist comment is inexcusable from a person in his position and might have had an influence on the gun threats the demonstrators received. Eventually an apology was published in the local press.

... "We were closely watched by the FBI, the Texas Rangers, and the National Guard," said Santos Suarez, head of the Texas chapter of AIM, "but we were not there to try anything foolish, just there to inform the people of the truth about Columbus. We had no sound system so we had to shout our speeches to get our message across. On the second day, they tried to drown us out with a rock concert." (Cape and Dedam 20)

Not all Texans were Indian haters bent on driving all Indians out of Texas. The Indians had a friend in Sam Houston. During his terms of office as president of the republic of Texas and as governor of the state of Texas he attempted to accommodate the needs of Indians in

Texas governmental policy. As previously noted, Robert S. Neighbors lost his life in saving the lives of the people of the Brazos reservation. Other prominent Texans, such as frontier physician and naturalist Dr. Gideon Lincecum, were deeply interested in Indian culture. Before moving to Texas shortly after Texas became a state, Lincecum had been a student of Choctaw language and culture in Mississippi. Late in life he contributed a valuable biography of Choctaw Chief Pushmataha, as well as other observations about Choctaw culture in transition which are available nowhere else (Lincecum's contributions were published early in the twentieth century in the *Publications Of The Mississippi Historical Society*). It might also be noted that one of the most sympathetic and knowledgeable students of Choctaw culture, H. B. Cushman, who grew up among the Choctaws of Mississippi early in the Nineteenth Century as the son of American Board missionaries to the Choctaws, spent his mature years as a resident of Texas (Cushman's *History of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Natchez Indians*, 1899, is a cherished document for students of Choctaw history).

But men such as these were a distinct minority in Texas. Even Sam Houston, while president of the Republic of Texas, was unable to persuade the Texas senate to ratify the treaty he had negotiated on February 25, 1836, with the Sabine River communities of Eastern Indians. In 1838 Houston's successor, Mirabeau Lamar, moved quickly to drive those communities out of Texas (Newcomb 347; Everett 100-09).

When another man such as Mirabeau Lamar, Hardin R. Runnels, became governor of the state of Texas on December 21, 1857, matters took a grim turn for the Indians. Official Texas policy became one of genocidal attack upon Indians, even if the Indians were to be found living outside the boundaries of Texas. The Texas legislature approved the creation of a new company of one hundred Texas Rangers specifically designated for offensive operations (Webb, *Texas Rangers* 151; Hughes 130-31).

Genocidal attacks upon Indian villages have now become well known events. In recent decades the conduct of Colonel John M. Chivington and his Colorado Volunteers at the Sand Creek Massacre in 1864 and of Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer's Seventh U.S. Cavalry at the "Battle" of the Washita in 1868 have become clichés in the history of the West. Much less well known within American popular culture is the role of Texas and the Texas Rangers in demonstrating that Plains Indians were vulnerable to such attacks.

United States Army policy in Texas had been one of maintaining a defensive line of fortifications stretching across West Texas (see Utey, *Frontiersmen In Blue: The United States Army And The Indian, 1848-1865*, U of Nebraska P, 1981). This policy changed quickly after

the Texas Rangers demonstrated that Plains Indian villages filled with women and children were in no way defensible military fortifications.

Governor Runnels found his man in Ranger Captain John S. (Rip) Ford. Runnels appointed him Senior Captain in charge of all Texas forces and commissioned him to pursue the Indians to wherever he might find them, brooking no interference from the United States or anyone else. With 102 Texas Rangers, most of them armed with two Colt pistols and a muzzle-loading rifle, giving them an estimated firepower of fifteen hundred rounds without reloading, and with an equal or slightly greater number of Indian auxiliaries from the Brazos reservation under the command of Captain Shapley P. Ross, Ford crossed the Red River into present-day Oklahoma and, in the early morning hours of May 12, 1858, attacked without warning and destroyed a Comanche village on the north bank of the Canadian River near the Antelope Hills (Webb, *Texas Rangers* 151-58; Hughes 129-49).

Regarding this attack, Rupert Norval Richardson writes, in *The Comanche Barrier To South Plains Settlement: A Century And A Half Of Savage Resistance To The Advancing White Frontier*:

The village which was destroyed was that of a band of Kotsoteka or Buffalo-eater Comanches. The fact that there were no "American" horses among the three hundred or more head which Ford and Ross took from the village indicates that this Comanche band had not recently committed depredations on the Texas settlements. Ford does not state the number of women and children among the seventy-six Indians slain, for that was a matter of no great concern to the Texas people. . . .

A singular characteristic of the Ford-Ross campaign is that it was carried out by Texas forces, acting on state authority only, yet operating and fighting a battle outside of the state. In this regard, the officers take no notice of the fact that the battle with the Indians was not fought on Texas soil, and the boundary line evidently was a matter of little concern to them. The Indians had been defeated; the place of the engagement and the means used were items of little consequence. As one enthusiastic citizen wrote the president: "The rangers, with the assistance of the friendly Indians, killed seventy wild Indians. When did the soldiers ever do as much?" (236-237).

Contemplating this genocide, Walter Prescott Webb writes:

In Ford's eyes the campaign was of much importance. It had demonstrated that the Indians could be followed, found, and defeated in their own country; it proved that

the buffalo ranges beyond Red River could be penetrated and held by white men. Ford might have added—and he may have had in mind—that what was most needed for such undertakings was a leader with brains and courage. Texas had not lacked men to follow; what it had lacked for ten years or more was a Texas Ranger with brains supported by a governor with enough internal fortitude to back him up. Ford and his men had rescued an ideal. (*Texas Rangers* 158)

There is something strikingly similar about Ranger Captain Ford dashing into an Indian village outside of Texas in 1858, killing Indians with whom Texas may have had no quarrel, and Ranger Captain McNelly dashing into a ranch outside of Texas in 1875, killing Mexicans with whom Texas may have had no quarrel.

There is also an important difference. While Captain McNelly's attack did not inspire others to follow his example, Captain Ford's attack showed the United States Army how to deal with Plains Indians. It was a lesson the Army was not long in taking to heart.

Major General David E. Twiggs, of the U.S. Army's Department of Texas, was inspired by the example set before him. "'For the last ten years we have been on the defensive,' he wrote to General [Winfield] Scott on July 6. Now it was time to abandon this policy, invade the Indian homeland, 'and follow them up winter and summer, thus giving the Indians something to do at home in taking care of their families, and they might possibly let Texas alone'" (Utley 130).

On October 1 of that same year, 1858, acting on orders from General Twiggs, Major Earl Van Dorn, leading a force of United States Cavalry out of Texas into present-day Oklahoma, attacked and destroyed a joint encampment of Wichitas and Comanches near the present town of Rush Springs (Utley 130-32).

Unknown to General Twiggs and Major Van Dorn, these Indians had just concluded an agreement of peace and friendship with officers from Fort Arbuckle of the U.S. Army's Department of the West. General Twiggs and Major Van Dorn were embarrassed by this difficulty in following the Texas Rangers' example of shooting first and asking questions later. Their response was to urge that the Army put a stop to such treaty making. Early the next year Major Van Dorn carried out another attack from Texas, this time on Comanches in present-day southern Kansas (Utley 132-35).

The beginning of the end for the Plains Indians, at least on the Southern Plains, can be traced to this genocidal military tactic of the Texas Rangers, first demonstrated in the spring of 1858. Many other factors would be important in the destruction of the Plains Indians' way of life, among them the eventual slaughter of the buffalo herds upon

which their culture depended. But the vulnerability of their women and children in their villages played a significant role in breaking their will to resist (Wallace and Hoebel 302).

No one today would think of attempting to portray Colonel Chivington as a hero in a work of literature. It would not be considered politically correct by contemporary standards. Chivington's massacre at Sand Creek is regarded as one of those "unfortunate" events in the American past.

Likewise, the reputation of Colonel Custer has not fared well in modern times for the same reasons. The unflattering portrait of Custer in the film *Little Big Man*, in which "Custer is portrayed as the psychotic he clearly was" (Scheuer 416), is likely to be the best he can hope for.

How can it be, then, that the foremost critic of Texas letters, a person who is quite likely the state's most talented novelist, can write a novel glorifying two mid-nineteenth century ex-Rangers? These "heroes" are men who, so their fictional resumé states, were high-ranking leaders of the Texas Rangers at the time of that seminally important genocidal attack in 1858, and who, by age and circumstance, would have been a part of that attack or would have engaged in similar conduct.

How can it be that such a choice of heroes can be so taken to the heart of the American public that the book should receive the Pulitzer Prize in literature and become a tremendously successful television mini-series?

Are such men worthy candidates for canonization as American heroes? How can an author such as Larry McMurtry, who is sensitive to racially prejudicial material in Texas literature regarding Blacks and Hispanics, be callous where the sensitivities of Native American people are concerned? Yet, it is Larry McMurtry who has given us *Lonesome Dove*.

As a 1985 novel it received not only the Pulitzer Prize but a Spur Award by the Western Writers of America as well as the Texas Institute of Letters Prize for fiction. In 1989 it held the viewing public spellbound as a television mini-series, and since then it has reached millions of viewers on video cassette, both by purchase and rental of the cassettes.

In *Lonesome Dove* McMurtry has given us Captain Augustus McCrae and Captain Woodrow F. Call, aging former Texas Rangers, veterans of twenty-one "engagements" with the Comanche and Kiowa, civilians now for about ten years, struggling to find a place in the world, in an Indianless Texas, in the aftermath of their Ranger service. They will get up a herd of cattle and horses, which they steal from Mexican ranches in a sort of tongue in cheek tit for tat, and drive them

to Montana.

They are a lovable pair, indeed. They poke fun at one another's habits, argue about the propriety of keeping a pair of pet pigs, and generally bask in the glory of their Ranger days. In their relations with Indians they conduct themselves in a politically correct manner by contemporary standards, thereby endearing themselves to modern audiences and perpetuating myth. They give cattle to starving Northern Indians whom they encounter on the cattle drive, pathetically suggesting that the Indians would have met a kinder, gentler fate if only there had been a few more Texas Rangers on the scene a decade or two earlier.

Why not pick Paraguay for a setting and put Joseph Mengele in the cattle business; he could cut out a few head of cattle and give them to a Jewish orphan's home, thereby endearing himself to readers and TV mini-series viewers in Tel Aviv and New York and Dallas. Better yet, why not write speculative fiction. Imagine a scenario in which Hitler manages an armistice that allows his regime to remain in power. His aging Nazi Storm Troopers could become figures of romantic heroism in contemporary literature. If a novelist of sufficient talent were to take up the task, infusing his characters with an engaging comradeship, there might be a Pulitzer Prize in it.

One is reminded that it is McMurtry in his essay "Southwestern Literature?" who finds nothing worthy of comment about the manner in which the Texas Rangers operated against Indians or the manner in which Walter Prescott Webb reports the genocidal conduct of the Texas Rangers toward Indians. Reading Webb with a critical eye, McMurtry passes over in silence Webb's description of this conduct as having "rescued an ideal," of requiring "brains" and "internal fortitude," and his conclusion that Texas had wasted "ten years or more" waiting for the right combination of Ranger and governor to make such activity possible.

Among the things overlooked by McMurtry in *The Texas Rangers* is Webb's report of "the last real Indian fight on Texas soil" (403) in January, 1881. Webb's idea of a "real Indian fight" is for a detachment of sixteen Texas Rangers under the command of Ranger Captain George W. Baylor, augmented by an unspecified number of Rangers under the command of Ranger Lieutenant C. L. Nevill, to sneak up on an Apache encampment of twelve men, four women, and four children, and, at dawn, shoot the women and children. Webb explains: "The warriors were the first to run off, and the result was that the women and children were the chief sufferers. Baylor explained that it was a bitterly cold, windy morning, and as the Indians all wore blankets, it was impossible to tell women from men. 'In fact,' he added, 'the law under which the Frontier Battalion was organized don't require it'" (405).

Members of this Apache band may have killed a small detachment of soldiers, some isolated herders, and some travelers. Materials found at their camp—one might add, found after the shooting—principally some cavalry equipment, including saddles and a pistol, satisfied the Rangers, and Webb, and apparently McMurtry, that they had found the group of Indians they sought. It apparently did not occur to them that this group of Indians may have traded for the materials or otherwise come into their possession innocently. The Apaches were not given an opportunity to respond to any charges, even though the Rangers under Captain Baylor had admittedly lost the trail of the group they had been attempting to follow for several days, a trail that wound in and out of Mexico, from the scene of an attack on a stagecoach. They had, in fact, given up on trying to follow the trail and had fallen in with Lieutenant Nevill and his men who had found a trail on the other side of the mountains, which may or may not have been the same group of Indians (403-06). In any event it is not clear what crime the children were thought to have committed.

One is reminded of McMurtry's reverence for Webb's *The Great Frontier*, which, despite its title, is actually an examination of the impact upon the Old World of having brought the New World within its orb. To facilitate the discussion he wants to present, without being pestered by matters he considers irrelevant, Webb explains that Indians are not people, not really, not real people the way Americans are people; Indians are "primitive" (3); and they are not really there, anyway; the land is "empty" (3); "the American experience" was one of "sole proprietor of an unsettled contiguous territory" (3); and since Indians are not really there, the best thing for them is to brush them aside into a footnote.

Despite whatever sort of blindness it may have been that afflicted Walter Prescott Webb as an historian, and despite whatever shortcomings Larry McMurtry may have as a critic, McMurtry's talents as a novelist are something to reckon with. In *Lonesome Dove* one can only lament his choice of heroes.

Texas Rangers who were in active service in the middle of the Nineteenth Century do not deserve to be portrayed as anything other than villains in works of literature. It is open to question whether Texas Rangers of any era deserve much in the way of sympathetic treatment. (For a recent reappraisal of the Texas Rangers, see Samora et al., *Gunpowder Justice*, U of Notre Dame P, 1979, which does not take into account Ford's genocidal Ranger attack in 1858).

Hollywood does not seem capable of portraying the Texas Rangers in any way other than the hero worship evident in such films as *The Comancheros*, with John Wayne. But there are novelists who have had no difficulty discerning the character of these men and conveying it to

their readers. John Prebble is one such novelist.

In *The Buffalo Soldiers*, a novel concerned primarily with the relationships between a White cavalry officer, his Black Civil War veteran troopers, and a small group of reservation Comanches which the soldiers are escorting on a buffalo hunt on the plains just north of Texas, Prebble renders a memorable portrait of a troop of 35 Texas Rangers when they put in an appearance at the Red River. The Rangers kill one of the Comanches when he ventures across the river to hunt deer (49-53; Prebble apparently bases this incident on the death of Au-to-tainte, a Kiowa who was killed by the Texas Rangers under the same circumstances, see Nye 354).

Prebble gives a close-up view of two Ranger officers when they cross the river to try to intimidate the Army into standing aside. Angered that the cavalry officer and his troopers will not allow the force of Rangers to cross the river to kill the rest of the Comanche buffalo hunters, the Rangers hurl insults, "nigger" being prominent among them, and alternately try to goad the troopers or the Comanches into giving the Rangers an excuse for crossing the river in force (49-53).

In addition to novelists such as John Prebble, scholars such as Ernestine P. Sewell have no difficulty assessing the character of the Texas Rangers. She says of them flatly, "they were violent, ruthless men who thought all non-whites to be sub-human" (Reynolds 318).

McMurtry might have done a service to the reading public, and by extension to the television-viewing public, if he had obtained a vision of these men as profound as the one which John Prebble achieved.

Lonesome Dove would be a different book and the television mini-series would be a different viewing experience, but it might not have been necessary to change the story, except for the motivations, inner thoughts, and interpretations of the characters.

It might not be too late even now to see what sort of story McMurtry might have told. Since it is acceptable to distort history, why not distort it grossly by giving his two main characters a conscience, a real conscience, something other than an ethnocentric conscience. After all, if Addo-eette, known as Big Tree, who as a young Kiowa had participated prominently in the Salt Creek Massacre of 1871, could say late in life that he deeply regretted the things he had done in his youth (Nye 317), perhaps it is not so far-fetched to imagine that two old ex-Rangers might find discomfort in memories from their past.

Other than this change, it might be possible to remain faithful to McMurtry's storyline and situations in all other respects. Such a story might be titled *Lonesome Duck*.

In *Lonesome Duck* one would find the same emptiness on the plains

of West Texas that is central to McMurtry's story. The Southern buffalo herds are gone, slaughtered by commercial hunters, leaving behind only millions and millions of bones.

Gone too are the Indians. The Texas Rangers and the U.S. Army have done their jobs, having swept down on villages filled with women and children until even the most courageous freedom fighters became convinced that the savage invaders would exterminate them if they continued to defend their homeland.

In this momentary vacuum, before greedy, land grabbing cattle ranchers have completed the dispossession of the landscape, the sweeping away of organized Indian life has left the stage to a new form of being—the renegade—young men estranged from their people, from their culture, from their way of life. Their time will be short upon the earth. They will not perpetuate themselves, will not propagate and see themselves recreated in their children. They will be outlaws for a time, a unique creation of Texas and American Indian policy, and then they will die violent deaths and be gone. Their companions will be another endangered species on the brink of extinction, shiftless Comancheros, now out of business since there are no longer any Indians with whom to conduct illicit trade.

Dominating this empty landscape is a half-breed, renegade outlaw named Blue Duck, an aberration, a monster created by the Texas Rangers as much as by anyone else, a sociopath who occupies himself raiding the ranches of the invading Texans, looting, burning, murdering, raping, plundering, stealing children at will, and retreating to the vastness of the Llano Estacado. When Blue Duck leaves his isolated, lonely camps, he leaves behind no vulnerable loved ones. The Texas Rangers do not know how to deal with him. He can travel farther and faster without water on the arid landscape than they can. He is everywhere and nowhere. The Rangers are frustrated nearly to tears at their inability to do anything about him.

Unable to stop Blue Duck—not just unable to catch him, but unable even to get a good look at him—one group of Rangers has quit. Feeling the sting of the way the Texas myth hates a quitter (a myth so strong it would still be alive a century later, demanding its brutal sacrifices at the altar of the football practice field at the University of Texas, ably described by Gary Shaw in *Meat On The Hoof*), these "retired" Rangers have huddled together on the banks of the lower Rio Grande, in the lower Rio Grande Valley, about as far from the rest of Texas as one can get.

They were famous once, but now they'd just as soon not explain why they're not Rangering anymore or what they do with themselves these days.

Captain Augustus McCrae has become an alcoholic. A decade of

whiskey-soaked afternoons and evenings has left him able to do little but hold a deck of cards into the wee hours of the morning and then make biscuits.

Ten years of sloshing in whiskey makes a man's hands tremble.

Captain Woodrow F. Call seeks solace in non-stop work. The burr under his saddle is a big one. He cannot forget the times when he was judge, jury, and executioner, all on a single day. Faces of dead Indian children torment him. He fears that some power greater than Texas will call upon him to answer for his actions. Void of any sense of humor, cold and distant to all who know him, dangerous to anyone who doesn't, he sits in solitude each evening cleaning his rifle and guarding the river, just in case.

Reduced to stealing for a living, they have become horse and cattle, and probably pig, thieves, raiding other ranches within the watershed of the Rio Grande without energy, ambition, or purpose.

Pea Eye, like the faithful ex-Ranger corporal he is, is devoted to his captain, Woodrow F. Call, and is too slow a thinker to realize the man is haunted by his past.

An unlikely Black ex-Ranger scout, Joshua Deets, is just there, having nowhere else to go. He waits for the day when Captain Call will again need a scout and ruminates by moonlight on the mysteries of a White Man's Texas.

Newt, the orphaned son of a long-dead whore and take-your-pick one of the men of the household, has grown to early manhood here, idolizing, and being over-protected by, Woodrow F. perhaps-his-father Call, learning blacksmithing from the corporal, being buddies with the Black scout, and receiving his education by listening to the whiskey words of Augustus McCrae, who fancies himself a philosopher.

An aged, diabetic, retired, Mexican-bandit cook named Boliver rounds out the household, which is situated across a dry wash from Lonesome Dove, which has a small dusty barroom with one whore, a store, another building or two, and little else.

Into this graveyard of Texas honor rides a long-lost former member of the Ranger troop, Jake Spoon, now a gambler on the run from what passes for the law in Fort Smith, Arkansas, not the federal boys, Judge Parker's *True Grit*/John Wayne/Rooster Cogburns, but the indecisive, tenderly emotional sheriff of Fort Smith, July Johnson, and his dimwit deputy, Roscoe Brown.

Spoon has seen the grasslands of Montana, where the Indians are still burdened by the vulnerability of defenseless loved ones, and now that the U.S. Army has gotten around to them, having recently buried Colonel George Armstrong Custer, these men know what will happen next. Woodrow F. Call determines to move into the vacuum, "before the bankers and lawyers get it," and become the first man to graze

cattle in Montana. He will get up a herd, stolen from other ranchers, and drive them there.

Augustus McCrae, alcoholic, whoremongering horse and cattle thief, and idle-about, penny ante gambler, carrying around a memory of himself now laughably at odds with the truth, decides to go along as far as Ogallala, Nebraska, to make one last effort to woo and win a woman perceptive enough to have seen him for what he was and what he would become, fifteen years earlier.

McCrae and Call forget that between where they stand and where they hope to go lies the range of Blue Duck.

On the trail, having had this grand stage properly prepared for him, Blue Duck takes time off from his work of ridding the landscape of one land grabbing Texan after another, and rides boldly into camp, not the cattle drive camp, but the satellite camp of the Lonesome Dove whore, who is tagging along, nominally with Jake Spoon, trying to make her way to San Francisco.

Augustus McCrae is visiting the whore, and he barely has time to strap on a six-gun as his worst nightmare comes riding up.

Blue Duck faces down McCrae and takes what he wants, a drink of water from the river. He has nothing but contempt for a "worn out old Ranger."

With the honor of Texas hanging in the balance, McCrae does what he does best, nothing. The moment passes, and the opportunity is gone when Blue Duck rides away.

Energized by the frantic denial of the deep look he has had into his soul, McCrae performs superhuman feats when Blue Duck returns and steals the Lonesome Dove whore. McCrae almost convinces himself that the yellow in his laundry can be counteracted by just a touch of blueing agent. If only he can catch and kill Blue Duck, honor will be restored.

A lot of killing does take place, including a few shiftless Comancheros and the renegade Kiowas in Blue Duck's gang. McCrae retrieves the Lonesome Dove whore, but she's been abused beyond the immediate recovery of her senses.

Blue Duck leaves McCrae with one more reminder that he should have stayed on his shady porch in South Texas. While McCrae and Sheriff July Johnson, who has teamed up with McCrae, are a few miles away killing Blue Duck's drunken, renegade Kiowas, Blue Duck is butchering the ones they left behind, Johnson's nitwit deputy and a boy and a girl, reminding McCrae, with all the irony of a sick sort of poetic justice, of how the Texans "whipped" the Indians.

Haunted by the memory of his encounter with Blue Duck, and all the old Ranger memories that encounter rekindled, McCrae continues on to Nebraska, only to learn that the woman of his dreams is not in

the market for a retired mass murderer. In Montana, having come to the end of his string, McCrae chooses suicide when an infection from arrow wounds offers him a choice between death from blood poisoning or having both of his legs cut off, which would reduce him physically to his actual stature in the West.

He chooses to be remembered by the myth of his younger days, when others, especially Texans, honored killers of women and children and clothed their crimes against humanity with all the elaboration of legend.

Blue Duck, however, is not finished with these two old Rangers. Woodrow F. Call is given the privilege of meeting Blue Duck while transporting McCrae's body back to Texas for burial. In Santa Rosa, New Mexico, Call visits Blue Duck in his cell, where he is awaiting execution on the gallows.

Call can find no pleasure in hanging men anymore, having found it necessary to hang his old friend, Jake Spoon, for, among other things, stealing horses. He can find no salve for the guilt of too many dawn raids on helpless noncombatants. In a fit of conscience he had refrained from massacring a small, starving band of Northern Indians who had stolen some of his horses for food, only to cause the death of his faithful Black scout. He found no joy in being the first man to bring cattle into Montana, having left the ranch in the hands of young Newt. But he will find pleasure in watching Blue Duck hang. Watching Blue Duck hang may be the last pleasure remaining to him in life.

But Blue Duck will not hang. As he is led from his cell he grabs the deputy who arrested him and plunges through a high window in the jail, hurtling himself and the deputy to their deaths on the ground below. He provides Call with a sharp contrast between his suicide, taking an enemy with him, and McCrae's lingering death, bribing a Montana whore to keep playing a piano until he is gone.

If Larry McMurtry's vision of the West, and the place of the Texas Rangers in it, had coincided with John Prebble's view of these men, the popular myth McMurtry retold might have become a cautionary tale. It might have told us that we must step outside the ethnocentricity of our culture and examine the methods by which we gain fame, and if they are grounded in squalor, so shall our souls be.

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Mourning Dove: Editing in All Directions to "Get Real"

Jay Miller

While the present concern with multi-culturalism is commendable, its implementation leaves a lot to be desired because "other" cultures are being both misunderstood and misrepresented in the process of presenting aspects of their literature and sensibilities to a white audience. The fault is both with English as a sole language of representation and with academics being unwilling to immerse themselves into the language and meanings of another way of life. The same respect shown to written languages of the world, albeit Indo-European or Chinese, where a scholar is expected to know both the language and its contexts, has not been accorded to the traditions of the Native Americans, except in the case of linguists and anthropologists, whose work is regarded as too technical or specialized for the purposes of comparative literature.

Admittedly, I have been deeply involved in this attempt, but, as a linguistically-sensitive anthropologist, I came to it from the academic bastion whose hallmark is cultural relativity, with a profound respect for appreciating the grammar and traditions of other lifeways. I also grew up in a rich context of cultural differences and experiences. Therefore, much of recent ferment about "the other" and "native voice" has struck me as belaboring the obvious in hackneyed ways. Too often, American humanists will seek to accredit their work by reference to Aristotle or other giants of the West. But what of Native philosophers and interpreters from other cultures? Unfortunately, they are treated, if known, with over-romanticism, condescension, or outright ignorance.

Native American oral literature, at this stage, cannot be strictly approached in terms of "text." Too much is lost or garbled by this approach. "Context" is everything in a cross-cultural perspective. If a member of the Native community does not supply such background, either directly or through the medium of research, too much is lost in translation and interpretation. Indeed, if there is a rallying call needed to overcome the blight of "school marms" still maligning Native people in the classroom it is, quite simply, Get Real!

Getting Real

What drew me into this novel situation of dealing with academics in English, Literature, and History trying to "enrich" their classes with Native content was my editing of the efforts of Christine Quintasket, whose pen name was Mourning Dove, a woman from the Colville Confederated Tribes of Washington State. What has muzzled me since then has been my role as expert witness in a court case involving these tribes, as I explain below. Along the way, my particular editing of her work has proven beneficial to the Colvilles, which I consider the highest accolade possible.

A member of a prominent family, all of whose members had a gift for languages, Mourning Dove, if alive, would have been baffled by the attention paid to the nuances of her English, which was neither her first nor probably even her second language. All elders who knew her agree that she was most comfortable and fluent, considerably so, in Interior Salishan. Among prominent families, such as hers, linguistic facility was and still is much prized. A woman in the generation before her spoke at least twelve languages, both native and foreign ones like English, French, and Chinese—so she could talk with the family cook. Most people did not have this multi-lingualism, but important families did and still do.

Yet all of this richness and complexity is steam-rolled when humanists over-emphasize her English. True, that is the language she tried to write in, to reach the widest audience, but it was not a language she was comfortable with. A skillful linguist might take her English and show where it reflected underlying Salishan forms, but that was not something I attempted, although it should be done. As one example, Salish does not recognize gender in its pronouns (he, she, it do not exist), yet English insists on it. There are times when Mourning Dove, just like modern Salishan speakers using English, used any and all of its pronouns seemingly at random.

Indeed, Interior Salishans had societies that were remarkably relaxed about gender. Men and women could do the same or different things, depending on personal motivations and sanctions from local supernaturals. Sex roles existed in a statistical rather than an absolute sense, yet most of the critics of her autobiography have ignored or been unaware of this wonderful freedom.

This is one of the important points that I wanted to convey in my editing of the text and in additional footnotes. I saw my responsibilities as lying with Mourning Dove herself, her family—as expressed by her brother, who had long been a friend—and the Colville tribes as members of a very different "other" culture.

In keeping with this sense of obligation, shortly after the book was published, I was asked by Colville officials to serve as an expert

witness in a very important court case. From that moment, I was asked to refrain from public statements since anything I said in print might and would be used against me on the witness stand. The case was heard in July of 1993 and the initial determination was not positive. The case is now on appeal, but all of the evidence has been entered and I am free to speak with a certain discretion. Needless to say, the legal process has its own drawbacks from an academic perspective. Piles of evidence were admitted, but its use in an adversarial context selected against any and all multi-cultural interpretations. Indeed, any thoughts I had about white academics being small minded, but trying to broaden, were eclipsed by watching a federal court in action.

The great irony was that it was just such openness, inadmissible in court, which guided my work on the manuscript. Mourning Dove wrote for the public and wanted to appeal to the masses, unlike most academics. Her family, or those I knew best, wanted to have her words edited in such a way that she and they would be presented as educated and thoughtful people. Consequently, her three years of schooling and bafflement at basic English grammar had to be overcome in the editing. Furthermore, the confederated tribes pride themselves on a progressive, pro-Indian outlook. As the first woman elected to the tribal council, Mourning Dove has become a symbol of such success.

For her autobiography to appear exactly as she wrote, revised, and rewrote it would have upset many of my friends and most of her relatives. Colvilles reiterated that since I had the education and the degrees, I could "fix" things to read well. Moreover, I knew Colville traditions, having worked in delicate situations in the past to earn the good will of informed elders from prominent families, although they were only interested in academic topics if these had utility for the tribe and its concerns.

Some of these elders had written down stories and memories, which they asked me to edit. As I read them it was clear that they were thinking in Salish but writing in English. Any reader had to know well the overall context to understand why things began, progressed, and ended as they did, if there even was anything like a finish. I could not initially understand most of what they wrote, but after we talked things over, I began to comprehend what they intended. Then I rewrote to make sense, for an English reader, of their narratives. There was nothing wrong with this, from their perspective. They wanted to be understood by white "others," but they were justly unsure and self-critical of their own abilities in standard English and had encountered too many racist situations in their lives to feel comfortable with advancing into mainstream America without the defenses provided by an educated "voice."

The process was fascinating. One man wrote things out in long hand and then had his daughter type them up. I urged him to talk into a tape recorder and let me type up what he said into a computer, which I had to do anyway, but he refused. Writing down his thoughts meant doing just that. He had to grapple with English words, phrases, and grammar to prove that he could do it for himself, his family, and for me. Only then could it be changed to meet criteria of intelligibility. It was all part of the process, and that is what Salish language and culture revel in.

Mourning Dove must have had the same feelings for her editors, Lucullus Virgil McWhorter and Dean Guie, although the latter asked far too many questions and was not patient about her replies. Since he was a newspaper reporter, he was only doing his job as he saw it.

Hundreds of pages of varying lengths existed for the autobiography, and I first had to sort them out. This process was complicated because Erna Gunther, a legend in Northwest anthropology, had tried to edit the pages as her last work, but ill health and death intervened. While Gunther was well versed in coastal traditions and, in fact, had trained several generations of scholars, she did not know Colville or its place in the Plateau culture area, such as it was. Therefore, from the start, I rejected Gunther's efforts and decided, without serious regard for "voice," that Mourning Dove deserved her own words, at the very least. And that is what I did. I sat in front of a computer, working with pages that I had organized into chapters or topics. I read each sentence and took the very same words, but regularized them by tense, agreement, and spelling. As much as possible, without compromising sense, I kept her sentences and most of her paragraphs. Each of the chapters was also hers, but I made an educated guess, based on my past experience editing the work of living elders, about arranging these chapters into a pattern, actually four sections, that fit into an overall logic according to each chapter and comparisons among all of them. Subsequent finds of missing pages, particularly the chapter on widowhood, confirmed my overall ordering.

What I intended, on the advice of Colvilles and others, was something that had a popular appeal and that allowed me to use my own knowledge of Colville contexts in footnotes to fill out the record. I wanted the treatment to be as full, rich, and complete as possible, yet grappled with the "otherness" of a Colville woman trying to communicate with whites, a painful process that still goes on daily in central Washington state.

The editing was academic in only the sense that it was intended to be complete and thorough. It was never my desire to be what a general reader would call arcane or complex (I do that elsewhere), although the basis for this was built into the notes.

Some have noted the lack of any "reflexive anthropology" in the editing. That too was deliberate, as explained at the outset. Often, such second guessing can be insulting to the people involved. Sometimes, the technique is badly misused by scholars who fail to appreciate that, at its best, critical readings are done by people who already know the texts, contexts, and cultures in great detail. They have, as it were, done their homework. Too often, reflexive considerations by outsiders lack cultural sensitivity to other ways of life that were not classical, Greek, or even European. At its most grotesque, such reflexivity lacked any sense of scholarship, of in-depth research into a topic, and was, therefore, superficial and ethnocentric.

There are many stops, starts, and fumbblings in the manuscript pages and I wanted to convey something of this, much to the horror of my editors, all of whom, by the way, were women. They wanted consistency, but Mourning Dove was not consistent. Her previous publications may look that way because of her male editors, but she did not always spell the same word in the same way or use identical punctuation. Her words also changed with each retelling of an event. Sometimes she used an English dictionary but, at other times, she was highly original. Occasionally, I needed the help of an elder of her own generation because she used the right word in the right place, but it referred to something before my time and experience. Elders, particularly Isabel Arcasa, whom I called grandmother, were only too ready to do so because it was part of a past they shared with Mourning Dove.

Certain of her chapter titles, though well meant at the time, were charged with her personal opinions and had to be changed to avoid offending modern Colvilles, perpetuating stereotypes, and misrepresenting the situation. I did this because I was editing for the present not the past, but duly noted the change in the notes. Some of the elders did not want me to even mention the prior title, but that would have left no trace of Mourning Dove.

I did not edit for flow as such, nor for literary merits. I edited as an anthropologist trying to place a special contribution into its most broad and general context for an English reader because, for me, its merits are as "a woman's personal ethnography of lasting value." The final publication achieved what it was intended to do. Most Colvilles are happy with it, as I know from autographing copies along with members of her family. It is sold in the tribal book store.

During the summer of 1991, moreover, the book was introduced as evidence in a federal court case. Since all of the reports submitted to this judge had to be written in an "interesting and engaging" fashion, as mandated by the lawyers, a reflexive and literary editing would have worked against this case and Colville hopes. It was a satisfying

moment to know that, in print as in life, Mourning Dove was still working to benefit her tribes, continuing her double life, a private one as Christine Quintasket, a woman migrant laborer struggling to make ends meet, and Mourning Dove: a writer, lecturer, and politician.

Her private life was primarily spent picking crops, allowing her time to write only after long hours in orchards and fields. She was often exhausted from over-extending herself and this led to increasing medical complications. During the early 1930s, as she began to be published and politically active, some whites criticized her efforts. In reply, she drafted several versions of the autobiography, providing a superb overview of female life among Interior Salishan tribes.

While her parents were prominent in the local culture, they were poor. In consequence, Christine chose education as a means of advancement. After about four years during the 1890s at Goodwin Catholic Mission near Kettle Falls, Washington, she spend the year of 1900 at a government school at Fort Spokane. Several years later, she joined the staff at Fort Shaw School near Great Falls, Montana. There she met and married Hector McLeod, a Flathead, but they soon became estranged.

She decided to write a novel, finally published as *Cogewea* in 1927, set in Montana and conveying the emotional depth and range of Native peoples to counter the stoic stereotype she found so offensive. She moved to Portland about 1912 and produced a draft, adopting the pen name of Morning Dove, whose Native form she spelled *Humishuma*, although it is hardly an approximation of the "real" word in her own language. The next year, she enrolled at a business school in Calgary to improve her grammar and writing skills.

About 1914, she met Lucillus Virgil McWhorter, a Yakima businessman, who edited her novel and, after considerable delay, arranged for its publication.

About 1917, Christine taught on the Inkameep Okanagan Reserve in British Columbia, where she was active in local politics. She used her salary to buy a typewriter and began, with the encouragement of McWhorter and others, to record stories collected from Salish elders, including her own parents.

In 1919, she married Fred Galler, an enrolled Colville, and moved to East Omak, Washington, on her home reservation. Childless, except for periods fostering a niece and nephew, she prepared her collection of stories, published in 1933, but editing in collaboration with McWhorter and Hester Dean Guie to appeal to a white audience. In 1921, she adopted the spelling Mourning Dove, adding tragic overtones to her efforts. Living at Omak, she formed and joined organizations of Native women to promote crafts and to intervene in legal difficulties between local Natives and whites. In 1935, she was the first woman

elected to the Colville tribal council.

Routinely over-taxing herself, she complained more and more of a "nervous" (her spelling) disposition, until, in 1936, she became disoriented and died, after several days, in a state hospital. She is buried in a white rather than a Native cemetery, and her grave was marked by a simple concrete slab that recorded only that she was Mrs. Fred Galler. Funds from the autobiography purchased a granite tombstone for her grave and conversations with her brother about what it should say established that her likely birthdate was 1884 not 1888 as appears in the book. This kind of constant improvement is impossible without continuous contact with the Native community.

Once again I was reminded of how much Mourning Dove went out of her way to hide her personal life. Because I had been on Colville, I knew that she was Christine Quintasket, but I never found a shred of paper to indicate that this woman and Mourning Dove were the same person. She used other first names and the last names of her husbands rather than use the one that most Natives knew her by.

She kept a wall between her personal life as a Native woman and her public life as a spokeswoman about Native issues to whites. She took pains to keep people away from her family and off the reservation. She was most comfortable when she was in charge of a situation and she could do that by withholding personal information.

This, of course, allowed her creative outlets. Many of the characters in her novel are based on her own sisters and their families. Her knowledge of Montana came through contacts with her grandmother, who also figures in the plot. Yet in her collection of stories, she scrupulously kept from referring to the important character of Mourning Dove by name, again as a way of distancing herself from her writing.

In a similar way, she gave herself a white grandfather as a way of identifying with her readers. Interestingly, her brother continues to suggest other reasons for her false claims to a white ancestor, all having to do with gaining respect, recognition, and freedom of choice among whites. None of the enrollment records reflect this fiction until after she became active in tribal politics and could apply pressure to agency staff. Such ancestry is always sensitive to Native peoples and, in the case of her relatives, a cause of great concern. At least one member of the family was briefly dropped from tribal enrollment because of a lack of "blood quantum," the legal fiction imposed by the government to determine who is and who is not "Indian."

Much of her life and work cannot be understood or appreciated without knowledge of the Columbia River, Colville traditions, and recent history. Yet many of the most outspoken critics of the editing have never been there, or only visited briefly to confirm their own

romantic notions. A recently published collection of her stories (1991) presents them as only outsiders can, devoid of any sense that their context, geographical placement, and integration are still a part of Colville life.

This culture continues to have much to recommend it to the Humanities, but on its own terms, not those of obtuse critics wallowing in European tastes and traditions. There is a vast world out there and Colville is part of it, despite the level of ignorance shown by those who write and think only in the mode of English.

In sum, *Getting Real* requires an understanding of the kinds of oral and written records that are out there to inform a text, not rushing off to "hug a tree" or "touch an Indian" (or "Native American" in the city). At base, it requires the one thing that has been most lacking in recent efforts to expand the canon: scholarship in place of cant and commentary.

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REVIEWS

**Looking Glass. Ed. and intr. Clifford E. Trafzer.
San Diego: San Diego State U P, 1991. \$15.00 paper,
ISBN 0-934931-06-2. 219 pages.**

In the introduction to the anthology *Looking Glass*, Clifford Trafzer (Wyandot) advises his readers that he has chosen artists who are not necessarily well-known in the American literary world but who echo the themes of other well-known, contemporary Native American writers. The lack of a profusion of famous American Indian authors does not detract from the quality of the anthology, however. Trafzer has managed to combine authors and pieces that are complimentary to one another. This volume includes photographs, essays, book reviews, criticism, poetry, autobiographical material, and traditional stories with variations. All of the pieces deal with historical and/or contemporary issues containing themes common to Native American people. The anthology also contains a few pieces authored by non-Indians who have either worked closely with American Indians or who are involved in historical, artistic, or Native American studies. The common threads weaving the web of connection in the stories, essays, poetry, and photographs are the themes of contemporary Indian life that include concerns about the preservation of traditions, rituals, songs, dances, dreams, memories, identity, community, and the indigenous peoples' intimate ties with the earth. In this surprising array of pieces, Trafzer accomplishes what he states in his introduction that he set out to do; he offers a selection of "different kinds of contemporary American Indian literatures" in order to "illuminate and instruct about the diverse cultures of Native Americans."

If there is a complaint about this anthology, it stems from the

shortage of poetry. Native poetry at its best often encapsulates Indian tradition and concerns in tight, terse words. The small sampling included leaves the reader wanting more. However, all three selections offered—Darryl Wilson's (Pit River) "Dancing," Marcy Lackey's (Cherokee) "Three Poems," and Toni Busto's (Ojibway) "The Pow Wow,"—unite and resonate with the common images of dancing and dreaming, music and song, community and connection. In these poems, tradition and memories, the honored old ones, and the earth are all responsible for creating the power and the pattern to the flow of the universe. The land, the people, and nature images are all linked inexorably to the Native American and, ultimately, to the written word.

Several of the stories in the collection form the base for the anthology by illustrating traditional values and beliefs. Joseph Bruchac (Abnaki), a gifted storyteller, shares the story of "Agwedjiman," or "Try Him"—a dog who shares a close affinity to his Indian companion. In the story, dogs transform into people when the People in the village go hunting. Bruchac informs us that in the long ago, the People and dogs married each other creating a link of intimate understanding between humans and dogs, which leads to the sharing of the breath of life between friends. Darryl Wilson's (Pit River) "Gedin Ch-lum-nu: Let It Be This Way" is a legend of a time when the Hawaiian people "visited" the California coast, wandering into Pit River country and intermingling with the Pit River people. The Hawaiians, in time, long for their own land because their dreams are not the same dreams as when in their homeland. Knowing that their traditions, dances, customs, and language will disappear if they do not return home, and fearing that they will become a people without purpose who will eventually disappear, they seek a council to resolve their dilemma. A great council is held and after much weeping, A-poni-ha (Cocoonman) gathers power from the top of Ako Yet (Mt. Shasta) to build parallel bridges, rainbow and land, and with the help of Yas, a flute-playing weasel, the Hawaiians travel the bridge, returning to their homeland. Greg Sarris (Pomo/Coast Miwok) contributes a story of an old woman healer who remembers the past and how she received her healing songs and instruction from a green frog who appears to her sometimes as a small frog and sometimes as large as the family pig. The frog gives her strong medicine and teaches her how to fight illnesses caused by poison men and women.

Remembering is an important theme throughout the anthology. Memory plays a particularly important part in David Lucero's (Luiseno) "Jerome," and LeAnne Howe's (Choctaw) "Dance of the Dead: From *The Bone Picker*." In "Jerome," No Shoon remembers being a very small boy and watching his parents and tribal members killed by men dressed in blue skins. Escaping the massacre and fleeing

from bounty hunters, No Shoon and his grandfather return to the place of the massacre to burn the dead relatives and to bury the eagle dance skirt that had belonged to his father, as well as his grandfather's sacred pipe. Many years later, No Shoon returns as an old man to disinter the pipe and the skirt and use them as he performs a ritual in honor of the people who went before him. In "Dance of the Dead" Howe's character Koi Chitto, a bone picker, purifies himself in order to perform his traditional role in tribal life drama as a "dancer of death, transformer of life, the one who brings sex, and the lord of rebirth." Memories, tradition, and ritual are linked to life's mysteries and are connected with the inner music, the drumming of all life. Dreaming is an integral link to mystery. In "The Stone Badger," Misha (Métis) explores one woman's close walk in the two worlds of dreaming and reality as her fetish, the badger, intercedes to protect her from a Windigo.

William Weeks' essay "Junipero Serra" questions the spiritual conquest made by the early Catholic church in California and its recent attempt to elevate the priest Junipero Serra to sainthood. Weeks argues that to canonize Serra would risk condoning the civilizing of the California Indians ("heathens") by methods of proselytizing that the Catholic church of today has disavowed. Charles Brashear's (Cherokee) "When The Fry Bread Molders" examines one Indian youth's choice to commit suicide when faced with questions about what it means to be Indian, and Troy Johnson's essay "Depression, Despair, and Death: Indian Youth Suicide" acts as a complimentary piece to furnish the grim statistics behind American Indian youths and suicide. Johnson's piece is not without hope as he offers some practical working solutions to a massive, ongoing problem.

Ray Maracle (Mohawk) writes an essay entitled "The Great Law of Peace and the Bingo Unrest" that examines the collision of white values and Native traditions. "Tsiyeet," by Warren Perkins, looks at a traditional Navajo wedding skewed by outside influences resulting in a union between a mentally disturbed woman and a criminal. Andrew Lang addresses the controversy over the federal government's attempt to clear the land of Black Mesa for strip mining in "Navajos, Hopis, and Sacred Lands." Ida Rigby discusses three different types of Native American art in her essay "Some Issues in Contemporary Art by American Indians." "Learning Love Medicine," a selection from Mourning Dove's (Okanagan) autobiography, is also included in this anthology. Mourning Dove is generally credited as being the first Native American woman to write a novel.

Patricia Riley-in-the-Woods (Cherokee) responds to a criticism of James Welch's *The Death of Jim Loney* and suggests that a traditional Plains Indian story pattern emerges in Welch's book. The pattern

consists of an orphan who suffers in isolation only to be restored and healed within a broken relationship with the help of a mysterious animal spirit. Janet Conlon offers an essay on "American Indians in Children's Books" as she searches for "writing that is true." Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe) contributes a modern-day trickster story in "The Heirs of Columbus."

Huanani-Kay Trask reviews Richard's Drinnon's book *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian Hating and Empire Building* while Clifford Trafzer reviews two books by Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat, *I Tell You Now* and *Recovering the Word*. Both authors present complimentary reviews of the works they evaluate.

Several photographs are included in the anthology. Alejandro Aguilar Zelemy, Maribel Guterrez Mendivil, Richardo Maria Garibay Velasco, and Ann Teresa Lizarraga Mendez suspend in time the facial expressions of members of different Mexican Northwest Indian tribes. Jim Tynan lovingly immortalizes on film the faces of the Navajo and Hopi, while David Avalos, James Luna (Luiseno) and Deborah Small create photographic art by juxtaposing white, Christian, and Indian symbols.

Clifford Trafzer's collection merits attention because of its extensive range of fiction, poetry, photography, essays, and reviews. The storytellers tell their stories well and the essayists contribute interesting information and arguments regarding contemporary Native issues. Trafzer not only accomplishes what he has set out to do by providing a wide range of writing and art by contemporary American Indian writers and artists, but also offers to each reader a mirror to reflect questions concerning the values that form different cultures and their meanings. As a catalyst, the anthology becomes a valuable tool to extract meaning from text and life. As a representation of American Indian art and writing, the anthology becomes a microcosmic look at worlds that offer a paradigm profoundly different than that of current, white American culture.

Candice Bowles

Ethnocriticism: Ethnography, History, Literature.**Arnold Krupat. Berkeley: U of California P, 1991.****\$38.00 cloth, ISBN 0-520-07447-5; \$14.00 paper,****ISBN 0-520-07666-4. 225 pages.**

In his latest collection of essays, Arnold Krupat wants to turn Western history, ethnography, and critical theory, now untidily sprawled beyond their traditional borders, into a shapely hybrid, a warrior, essentially, who will advance upon and slay the twin enemies of our chance for a truly heterogeneous culture: "manichean reasoning" and "manichean metaphors." "Literature" is the actual third member of this triumvirate, but Krupat is wrestling, in part, with a critical methodology for defining the relationship of Native American oral literature as well as written, to American imperial culture, and his emphasis falls on critical practice as an epistemology. These essays, in other words, are discussions of the theoretical basis for critiquing Native American literature, and how such criticism might be *performed*, a word that indicates the direction Krupat would like ethnocriticism to go. The lessons learned from history and anthropology can now support a critical language for accommodating "literature" with its own oral traditions but no critical theory with which to rationalize their role in our culture. Krupat has a political agenda: concerned that literary criticism be moved out of the MLA and into the field, the addition of the prefix "ethno-" should signal the demise of our culturally-limited vocabulary in favor of one providing "interrogation of and challenge to what we ordinarily take as familiar and our own" (3). Krupat is well-aware of language's belligerent colonizing, separating peoples, elevating one culture over another, hiding the Other in the folds of familiar rubrics. Ethnocriticism has an enemy to slay, all right: Western cultural criticism's crippling lingo, the parent from whom, in part, it derives. The critic must find figures with which to subvert his/her autocratic displacement of the literature to be described. At the same time, and with greater difficulty, there must somehow be

invited into critical discourse, without being co-opted, the language and so the identity of the Other.

How is this to be done, given the critic's position within the dominant culture? Krupat cites with approval Gayatri Spivak's definition of the "deconstructive philosophical position . . . in which one offers an impossible 'no' to a structure which one critiques, yet inhabits intimately" (8). Ethnocriticism, following this charge, must decode what we in the West deny we are saying about those "frontiers" where cultures cross and which language establishes and destabilizes. Its task is to subvert that "dichotomized, binary compositional or manichean reasoning" (20) which privileges sameness, only encouraging "continual rebellion . . . with no hope of revolution" (112). Ethnocriticism insists on its "betweenness—while seeking a certain privilege or centrality . . . ethnocriticism is not only *at* but *of* the frontier, its situation and its epistemological status the same" (28). All well and good, but we need to know what critical methods derive from this "betweenness" and how we might make them perform. Criticism, taking its life from another, by its very definition is a creature of abstraction and category, available for replication. How can we identify its "position" through deconstruction? How do we avoid appropriating the Other, given the vexed problem of translation of Native American material into the dominant language system? In fact, it is the gap between text and oral expression that Krupat wants to close by treating both as "literature," a familiar net whose cast has already drawn in ethnography and history. Whether ethnocriticism, as Krupat sets up its ground rules here, can do so is the question.

Although he denies it, Krupat begins definition by what it is not, asking how successful forerunners have been in filling Spivak's "position." Not as well as we've been led to believe, evidently, they being prone to modernist or postmodernist irony, an inadequate tool for true revolutionaries. In essays on Franz Boas and James Clifford, Krupat draws tropes from the Western rhetorical tradition to establish useful critical structures. Boas' sign seems to be catechesis, an ironic figure expressive of "commitment to sustaining contradiction, a refusal of closure as somehow a violation of the way things 'really' are: a refusal, of course, that denies the possibility of science" (90). Even though Boas' last work with its essential ironist's view frustrates "conventional expectations for climax and closure" (94)—a modernist skepticism linking him to Nietzsche, Joyce, and Virginia Woolf(!) (88)—his writing with its "*abysmal* ironic vision" (99) may still be more available for a projected "scientific anthropology" if not for the "betweenness" Krupat has in mind.

James Clifford, unfortunately, proves to be an inflexible ironist. Analyzed closely, as is Boas, for his language, Clifford too is its

victim. "Movement," an important term for ethnocritics, in Clifford's work takes the form of "oscillation" between "Western narrative paradigms," in his case tragedy and comedy "which even in dialogizing form, may have little use as providing paradigms for the understanding of the variegated narratives of identity of other cultures" (116). Clifford has set up comedy and tragedy (in *The Predicament of Culture*) as paired and inadequate-because-incomplete categories (120) into which representation of non-Western material is forced. He is the "ethnographic conjuncturalist" whose delight in "perpetual ironic free play" is not enough to subvert Western narrative; the true ethnocritic should perform some kind of closure which develops "awareness . . . of the very different narrative structures used by other cultures as explanatory emplotments and narratives of identity . . ." (116).

Krupat's own writing in these initial forays into deconstruction is itself deeply expressive of the difficulties of getting what is "between" into the open. Part of the problem with his style is the wish to appear on the cutting edge of critical wordplay, perhaps because such lingo has become the matrix for ethnological readings as "narrative." But a sentence like the following would crush to earth any but the toughest of modish critical Atlases:

. . . [ethnocritical discourse] will try to move between such positions as, for example, a persistent if (properly) contested humanism, on the one hand, and, on the other, a Derridaean/Foucauldian/de Manian virulent anti-humanism; between a Rortyian/ Lyotardian/Tyler post-modernist fragmentariness, and a social-scientific aspiration to cognitive adequacy; and so on. (25-26)

Fortunately this stunner is followed by one of the few examples of humor (or so one hopes) in this book: "This is all quite easy to say." The whole paragraph is a model of how not to write clearly about critical theory. Usually it is in theoretical passages where Krupat is jousting with the giants or trying to set up his picture in a contemporary intellectual frame that "claims to scientificity" and "ambiguous Western narrative" turn up. His analysis of Clifford as both ironist and cultural artifact himself is especially Gordian. Symptomatic perhaps, of the difficulty for culture-specific language in seeking to undo itself. Finally, however, we can see what the problem is: ethnology-based writing as now practiced will always be about "us" and "them," disguised as a liberating diction for scientific analysis or some form of pat sympathy for the Other, which is exclusive, irresponsible, and coercive. What is to be done?

Perhaps there is another language to use. For starters, the ethnocritic will be in favor of "movement," not the "oscillating" kind

but cross-border travel in many directions; he/she will be concerned with "differences rather than oppositions," preferring dialogic models to oppositional ones (26). Critics will eschew irony and insist upon dialogue and the "shifting processes of 'transculturalization'" (28), the goal being "real engagement with the epistemological and explanatory categories of Others . . ." (113). All these are surely unexceptional (and not very new) admonitions. But when this creature is to be given flesh and these thoughty terms set to make things happen, difficulties arise: What distinctive form will "real engagement" take? For instance, the true ethnocritic, unlike Clifford, will not be circumscribing either the "other" or him/herself in a confining comic or tragic destiny, but rather, be "recognizing, accommodating, mediating, or, indeed, even bowing under the weight of sheer difference" (125).

It is difficult to know what Krupat means here. Surely terms like "recognizing" and "accommodating," for all their suggestion of "movement" and "betweenness," are still as metaphorically available for the misrepresentation of marginal peoples as Clifford's "displacement." How can a critic who bows "under the weight of sheer difference" be doing more than confessing to the failure of dialogizing? Krupat is aware of the possibility of being brought down with his own lariat, and often follows a conjectural statement with "What I am trying to say" or "I admit to tentativeness and unsureness here" (191). Other essays, however, suggest what the real epistemological problem is: Krupat's insistence on enlisting oral material under the banner of "literature" must necessarily turn it into *text*. He cannot yet provide the necessary language for accommodating the Other in that writing.

The telling instance of this problem appears in his success in using Western rhetorical figures on material translated into English. In a reading of the 1829-30 Cherokee memorials to Congress, he shows how their emplotment makes them available for tragic or comic readings (shades of Clifford) as the doomed Cherokees make subtle analogies between their history and that of the United States. In this deconstruction of texts, rhetorical tropes are persuasively used to reveal Indian adaptation of our nation's self-serving stylistics of occupation to their political purposes. Krupat imaginatively notes the ironic implications of this "real engagement" of opponents, these texts the product of loss—Native language—but also gain as the master language is used against itself. Such insightful analysis seems to have nothing to do with a critic "bowing under the weight of sheer difference": the Cherokees' goals and methods are those of the Whites, their "difference" couched metaphorically in similarity, and available for Western critical analysis. This reading enables Krupat to jump ahead to the "ironic emplotments" which link the later "terminated Native of the Eisenhower period with Beckett, Ionesco, Antonioni, and Edward

Albee" (!) (148), an example, one would think, of the type of "aesthetic universalizing" for which he attacks Karl Kroeber and his ilk (180-81). More importantly, however, what is still missing from this analysis is the *Native* voice, and Krupat suggests that recent study of Indian oratory may possibly show that Cherokee rhetorical structures are somehow available in the memorials (155). But so far, we can't know what these might be, just as we can't know what Wampanoag "story forms" may have been "internalized" by present-day Mashpee and perhaps represented in their recent history (117). Native voicing is wishful thinking, so far.

In other words, when Krupat takes up Englished texts to examine their structures, his rhetorical methods work. He can set up, for instance, a "synodochic" representation of self in Indian autobiography in opposition to a "metonymic" or Western self. The former means a writer's sense of relationship to a community; the latter refers to the self seen as "different and separate from other distinct individuals" (212). Significantly, however, his extended example is the autobiographical writings of William Apess, a transitional figure from the early Nineteenth Century who was immensely loyal to his defeated community, the Pequots, and a defender of another, the Mashpees. He can thus possibly be seen to carry over a communal or tribal sense of self into the forms of Western individualism. But Apess wrote entirely in English and for American audiences, as far as we know, a subtle and crafty user of traditional Western rhetoric against itself, as the title of his "Eulogy for King Philip" suggests. Krupat's terminology convincingly provides ways of describing how an Indian writer challenges "what we ordinarily take as familiar and our own." But, again, the imperial self-serving language is the foundation for his analysis.

These are *texts*, and when Krupat wants to direct ethnocriticism away from them, he can offer very little alternative: admittedly the relation between a criticism that is textual and a "literature" that is oral, is problematic (175). In "'Criticism/Literature'" he approaches another possible solution to the impasse by suggesting that translation in some form may be read as an adequate "frontier" even though texts will always "threaten to swallow, submerge, or obliterate" performance-based "literature" (186). He writes rather wistfully about translation as performance, citing Jerome Rothenberg's "performances" as criticism that respects Indian sources and "mediates idealist and materialist concerns" (?) by paying some attention to the original syntax but more importantly, searching out the "'poetic' dimensions of the original" (195-96). In fact, Krupat argues that however "bad" as *texts* translations by Rothenberg and Mary Austin may be, they "may be quite 'good'—at least useful—as criticism" (194). In other words, the less "faithful" as text a translation is, the further removed from

normative textual standards, the better it may be as expressive of the "poetic dimension of the original." Krupat seems to have in mind here a parallel to Spivak's "deconstructive" philosophical position and Maurice Blanchot's suggestion that in translation what is involved "is an identity that takes off from an alterity" (quoted 196). But this vision still leaves unclear what actually occurs in this perverse response to "alterity"; certainly Rothenberg's "poetic dimension" can also describe a poetics in which plausibility may be strong but authenticity questionable. Such abstract language and abstruse citation do not explain how a "bad" text makes "good" criticism.

Translation, it could be argued, carries an "internal" critique within its process of "alterity" and this possibility interests Krupat because it seems to get around the problem of culturally-determined categories, imposed from without. Krupat has been influenced by Talal Asad's essay, "The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology," a more carefully reasoned and written discussion of the issue by a cultural anthropologist. Krupat quotes approvingly Asad's injunction that translation must be "learning to live another form of life" (quoted 185) to be successful. In Asad's argument, translation of Native materials might, in fact, take other forms than textual, so long as, following Walter Benjamin, the anthropologist can determine what its "intentio" is. That is, to treat the material as a dramatic production, or a dance: "These would all be *productions* of the original and not mere interpretations: transformed instances of the original, not authoritative textual representations of it" (Clifford and Marcus 159). Asad, too, is pessimistic about any such performance displacing the anthropologist's text in our present culture. Nevertheless his suggestion may reinforce Krupat's admiration (qualified) for Rothenberg's work.

The trouble is that Rothenberg's "poetic dimensions" are not the same as Asad's. The latter makes the point that the translator works much like the psychoanalyst in determining the "intentio" of the original, in "psyching out" a whole culture's "intention," and while Krupat has taken up Asad's term "internal," he means it to operate in ways literary critics can achieve less readily than anthropologists. "Internal" for Asad means a critique based "on some shared understanding, on a joint life, which it aims to enlarge and make more coherent." Furthermore, such a critique "no less than the object of criticism—is a point of view, a (contra) version, having provisional and limited authority" (156-57). "Internal" means "lived" for Asad: "In order for criticism to be *responsible*, it must always be addressed to someone who can *contest* it" (Clifford and Marcus 156, my italics). Thus, while Krupat agrees with one of Asad's major points, that translation causes the translator to examine critically "'the normal state of his or her own language'" (quoted 199), he leaves a vital ingredient

out of the recipe. Asad's context is the relationship of the languages involved and their speakers who *live* on those Native grounds. Rothenberg's view that translation should get away from writing, challenge "dominant attitudes" but also "help foster . . . the conditions for a new, even a newly *sacred* sense of poetry and of life" (quoted 199), is still far from Asad's: Rothenberg's real purpose is the creation of an interesting "experience," performance-as-poetry hung on the hook of a deeply sentimental view of "traditional Indian peoples" and just as available for being "used" imperially, as any other metaphoric enterprise. Who, after all, can "contest" it? Poetic plausibility cannot be proof of authenticity, however difficult it may be to capture this illusive quality with texts.

In yet another effort to get away from "writing," Krupat suggests an alternative form of "internal" critique. He puts forward Wendy Wickwire's discussion of the way Harry Robinson, perhaps the last Okanagan storyteller, can be said to "critique" his own stories as they evolve in re-telling, perhaps mixing in contemporary English locations. Thus "their evolution would contain *within* them any 'criticism' of them, revisions, and variously selected 'contaminants' serving as implicit commentary . . ." (190). Krupat's writing here is particularly frustrating: the quote from Wickwire is not clearly cited; her book on? of? Robinson is not listed in the bibliography; Jana Sequoya provides an abstract supporting quotation in an "unpublished manuscript," provenance unspecified. Krupat concludes with a curiously morbid bottom line: Robinson's mode of "internal" criticism, if it is such, implies that "what is necessary for Native American oral literatures to become subject/objects of criticism is, to put the matter baldly, that they *die*" (190, my italics). That is, I take it, if they become texts. But Krupat has been suggesting an alternative to texts. It is Wickwire (I think) who has created the writing-that-kills. If, however, we follow out the analysis of Robinson's story-telling, a dire conclusion doesn't derive from what Wickwire says: Robinson's "evolving" story, absorbing its own history and its external enemies and going gracefully on, is surely living and breathing. Nevertheless, only Harry Robinson can "contest" himself, a notoriously un-shareable condition. But whether it is text that kills or not, this is a terrible recognition from a critic wishing to establish "betweenness" as a critical position.

Is there anyone riding to the rescue? Well, Krupat rightly cites Gerald Vizenor's writing as exemplary, his figure of the trickster brought over into the Western novel, and a natural challenge to literary and cultural assumptions: "a communal sign in a comic narrative," he is a holotrope (the whole figuration) . . . a consonance in tribal discourse" (183). Actually, Vizenor got his "holotrope" from Bakhtin's "chromotrope," a previous cross-fertilization that speaks to intertextu-

ality rather than "lived" experience with the Other. Nevertheless, the figure and the concept could be said to meet certain of Krupat's criteria: Griever, for instance, certainly challenges familiar social/political narrative. Like the trickster of tribal cultures, he is as often amoral as moral; his purpose in China is enlightenment through imaginative aggression. His actions, however, lead to a death but little enlightenment. Griever's departure in his ultralight can be taken as commentary both upon rigid Chinese Communist society and upon his willful if idealistic self: a frantic irresponsibility that reveals "holotropically," I suppose, the errors of both sides, an "interface" which is neither tragic nor comic (as Vizenor notes), but ironic. Of course, Krupat has indicated that irony at this point in our cultural history isn't enough.

I can think of another example where ethnocriticism of the ideal kind is being attempted: Mary Louise Pratt's discussion of an Inca cultural crossbreed, Guaman Poma (Vizenor's "mixedblood" with a Spanish accent), who wrote a letter to the King of Spain in both Spanish and Quechua, complaining about mistreatment of the conquered Indians of Peru. Pratt almost seems to be addressing Krupat's concerns directly. Not only is this material cross-cultural; it is also self-critical (Pratt calls Krupat's "frontier" the "contact zone"), what she describes as an "autoethnographic" text, one "in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them" (Bartholomae and Petrosky 445). She notes that although Guaman Poma's text did not reach the King, the "transcultural currents of expression it exemplifies continued to evolve in the Andes, as they still do, less in writing than in storytelling, ritual, song, dance-drama, painting and sculpture, dress, textile art, forms of governance, religious belief, and many other vernacular art forms. All express the effects of long-term contact and intractable, unequal conflict" (Bartholomae and Petrosky 450). As with Vizenor's *Griever*, these are border-crossings in which apposite but oppositional figures both represent and challenge, and are available for analysis.

It may be, in other words, that ethnocriticism is, in fact, taking place out there. So far, it is essentially pragmatic rather than conceptual. Like Vizenor, Pratt, and Krupat's own best work, it accepts the necessity of texts but can use them to subvert the imperial language and cross-fertilize imaginative responses to the Other. It is responsible, not ironic. Guaman Poma seems to have been doing it a long time ago. Krupat's effort to establish models is hampered by his anxiety about texts and yet his necessary reliance on them; by his inability to cite successful non-co-optive alternatives; and by resort to contemporary critical jargon in place of looking steadily at his subject. This perplexed and perplexing text tells us what we already know: to

paraphrase another fisher in muddy critical waters, "Being ethnocritical is so very hard to do."

Robley Evans

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Point Riders, 1980. \$3.50 paper, ISBN 0-937280-07-0.
62 pages.**

Carter Revard (Nom-Pa-Wa-The), Osage, has written a poetic journey, beginning with birth, describing the adventures of youth, the sacredness of tradition, and the realities of family life with its unsolicited yet often exciting members, bringing them to life through the use of humor, understatement, and irony. For example, the poem "On the Bright Side" ends with the speaker describing roaches being caught to feed the family goldfinch and the children having "empty bellies," underscoring the horrors of poverty. When "our grandfather," in "Pure Country," falls into the out-house hole, this decidedly humorous event is calmly described as ". . . he sank slowly up to his chest in the liquid stuff." Revard writes in a simple, accessible style, with a pleasing tone and energy and "shows" instead of "tells" his poetic tales, allowing the reader actively to experience his poetry (while possibly

re-experiencing one's own childhood), not just passively reading it.

Ponca War Dancers is divided into three sections: "Getting Across," "Home Movies," and "Ponca War Dancers." Similar to N. Scott Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, each section of Revard's text represents a different aspect of a personal and spiritual inner discovery, linking together memories of self, family, and tradition. In the first section, "Getting Across," complex issues are examined through the innocent eyes of a child. The danger that children often face, unaware, is demonstrated in the description of a child climbing across the underside of a bridge, using only fingers and toes to hang on, and the event is summed up with the memorable last line, "where he passed his death." In "Notes toward a Definition of the War on Poverty," in "Home Movies," the speaker remembers Uncle Bert first, because "he was a bad example," which realistically exemplifies family life. Revard effectively embraces and humanizes family members who most try to hide. The sacredness of Native American dancing is demonstrated in the section and poem "Ponca War Dancers" through Uncle Gus, "potbellied but quick-witted," who was the "greatest of the Ponca dancers."

In this very personal text, Revard effectively segues three important Native American beliefs and shatters the myths of perfect families and childhood innocence. In place of these "lies," Revard offers a realistic view of life while embracing its imperfections, and we as readers smile silently remembering their own Uncle Berts.

Julie LaMay Abner

**Language, History, and Identity: Ethnolinguistic
Studies of the Arizona Tewa. Paul V. Kroskrity.
Tucson: U of Arizona P, 1993. \$50.00 Cloth,
ISBN 0-8165-1427-5. 289 pages.**

Because you have behaved in a manner unbecoming to
human beings, we have sealed knowledge of our language

and our way of life from you. You and your descendants will never learn our language and our ceremonies, but we will learn yours. We will ridicule you in both your language and our own. (11)

In the late Seventeenth Century the Arizona Tewa put this linguistic curse on the ungrateful Hopi who, having asked the warlike Tewa to defend them from Ute attacks, failed to show gratitude. Evident in this passage from Arizona Tewa oral history is the language attitude which has had a powerful effect on the preservation of their language, history, and identity; their ultimate act of cultural revenge is to withhold their language. One wonders how they feel today about revealing their unwritten language to linguists and anthropologists who write scholarly books. Paul V. Kroskrity, author of *Language, History, and Identity: Ethnolinguistic Studies of the Arizona Tewa*, certainly contributes to the breaking of this seal in his study of the Tewa language which argues that a people's beliefs about their language should be studied as much as their beliefs about religion. He indicates, however, that he did his fieldwork in a speech community in which few individuals denounced such research as "the selling of the language" (87).

Kroskrity, professor of anthropology and chair of American Indian Studies at UCLA, based this work on three and one-half years of field research conducted between 1973 and 1989 on and around Tewa Village, of the First Mesa of the Hopi Reservation in Northern Arizona. Linguistic anthropology (defined as a combination of historical linguistics, ethnography of communication, linguistic analysis, textual analysis, discourse analysis, and ethnography) is the author's method (227). The book was ambitiously designed for both professional linguists and a wider audience, and Kroskrity admits he had originally planned to include significantly more technical information which he omitted to make the book more accessible.

The author selected the Arizona Tewa, who today number only about 625, because of their notion that language, history, and identity are unified in individual and collective experience. He goes on to make the sweeping generalization that their notion of the unity of these three categories is unsurpassed by any other people (3). Today the Arizona Tewa live surrounded by the Hopi, who are in turn surrounded by the Navaho. Although they are intermarried and interrelated with the Hopi, speak Hopi, and in most external aspects are indistinguishable from the Hopi, they have an identity which is unavailable to the Hopi, and language is the most symbolic vehicle of this identity. Kroskrity credits the linguistic perseverance of the Tewa with their remarkable cultural perseverance. For them, it is a cultural victory that they can speak Hopi while the Hopi cannot speak Tewa (218).

Kroskrity departs from traditional linguistics and anthropology,

offering models for studying Native American languages as they evolve in the present rather than attempting to freeze them in an ethnographic past. Of the book's many emphases, most seminal for scholars of Native American languages are the following: (1) emphasizing culture contact between tribes rather than exclusively with Euro-Americans, as is usually done; (2) studying the relationship between Tewa folk linguistic theory and the persistence of their language; (3) focusing on intraspeech variations and language change as suitable subjects for anthropological study; (4) including "lingual life histories" of exceptionally instructive individuals; (5) developing a theory of "evolving ethnicity" using the Tewa as a multicultural model, emphasizing "code switching" and the "repertoire of identities" found among individual Tewa.

First, in emphasizing culture contact between tribes, Kroskrity uses linguistic analysis to argue for multilingualism between Apache, Tewa, and others in precolonial times (65). However, Kroskrity differs from acculturation theory, which tends to view culture change through culture contact as a unilinear process leading to complete assimilation, by supporting the paradox that at the same time the Tewa assimilate with the Hopi, they preserve their unique identity (20).

The folk linguistic theory of the Arizona Tewa can be generally summarized in two of their statements: "Our language is our history" and "My language is my life history." The first demonstrates their awareness that their language has been shaped by historical forces; the second is well illustrated with a statement from one of their members: "I only have to hear someone talk for a short time before I know who they are and where they have been" (45). Kroskrity argues that this linguistic ideology has had a powerful effect on language purism and the extent of foreign language influence.

In these discussions of culture contact and folk linguistic theory, Kroskrity's emphases are refreshing; however, his work on intraspeech variations among the Tewa is an even greater departure from traditional anthropology and linguistics. First of all, he studies semantic and syntactic variations among speakers as well as the phonological variations, which had been the sole concern of previous studies of language variation. The Tewa are aware of grammatical variations among their own community members: the five social variables being gender, clan, age, personal idiosyncrasies, and the secular or sacred nature of the speech situation (81). He finds that socioeconomic factors provide motivation for increased use of English among young Tewa, and that English is grammatically interfering with the Tewa language of these young people. A synchronic examination of the linguistic production of a cross section of the speech community demonstrates the rapidity with which these languages have been changed within the span

of a single generation via apparent disparities in the internalized grammars of younger and older speakers (106). Arguing that language variation and language change are suitable subjects for anthropological research, Kroskrity points out the folly of analyzing a language through Chomsky's "ideal speakerhearer" and calls for greater care in methods of data collection and interpretation as they pertain to actual native speakers of living American Indian languages (108).

For the non-linguist, the most meaningful part of the book will be Kroskrity's "lingual life histories" of three exceptionally instructive members of the Arizona Tewa speech community. Traditional linguistics has not encouraged analysis of individual linguistic behavior, but instead has disassociated the individual and his language by extricating language from its social context. Here Kroskrity diverts from his coolly analytic ethnolinguistics and completely re-embodies the language that he studies. The lingual life history is defined as "a subspecies of cognitive life history that contains the elements of social learning, personal network, and cognitive sharing and diversity but in which the focus is more exclusively on the biographical acquisition of linguistic knowledge" (114). Through these case studies Kroskrity demonstrates that even nearly exclusive exposure to the native language during childhood does not guarantee continued command of the language by the adult (136). The value of studying the language habits of these individuals is that

exceptional individuals—like ungrammatical utterances—seem to provide a privileged access to insights that permits a more profound understanding. Rather than being viewed as a tolerable level of error or as expected imperfections in otherwise neat sociolinguistic patterns, exceptional individuals can be more profitably viewed as instructive challenges to conventional levels of sociolinguistic explanation. (140)

Finally, Kroskrity's linguistic analysis offers a model for understanding identity in a nonwestern culture whose members do not share the western conception of the single, unified self. He cites code switching examples as the trilingual Tewa talk among themselves, code switching being defined as: "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two or more grammatical systems or subsystems" (from Gumperz, 1982). In this code switching, he sees an "evolving ethnicity" among the speakers as well as a "repertoire of identities" within individuals. The repertoire approach focuses attention on speakers' alternation or selection of codes and identities, both intracultural and intercultural (223), and Kroskrity discovers that cultural members work creatively together to produce

and reproduce structures which have been the obsession of conventional sociocultural analysis (224). In his conclusion, Kroskrity recommends that the Tewa community consider a program of language renewal, a community based effort to provide opportunities to people to restore fluency in the native language.

The student of Native American story telling will be most drawn to Kroskrity's transcription of a "Bird Story" which he includes in both the Tewa language and translated into English. I would like to see a greater collection of these stories and include a short excerpt here:

LONG AGO, so they say
south of here, at a place they call "Hawk Cliff" so
[motions with both hands to the south]
a bird had her young.

And there, nearby so
in the same way, on that slope so
too, other birds had their young.

At one spot so
there was a slope on that point

And then so
after the little birds became strong enough so
they were being taught to fly.

And THEN again so
downward, again and again so
they were flown on this slope.

And then, after they got quite strong so
over to the plain so
they were flown by their mother

This so
they were doing when spoken to so
by their mother

[Mother Bird] "Since you are not yet grown up
Old Man Coyote will be always coming around here.
..." (169-70)

Language, History, and Identity: Ethnolinguistic Studies of the Arizona Tewa is an important work for students of the Pueblo cultures and a must read for linguists interested in Native American languages as well as for anyone wanting to learn the discipline of linguistic anthropology.

Janet A. Baker

**Returning the Gift: Poetry and Prose from the
First North American Native Writer's Festival.
Ed. Joseph Bruchac. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 1994.
\$45.00 Cloth, ISBN 0-8165-1376-7; \$19.95 paper,
ISBN 0-8165-1486-0. xxix + 369 pages.**

Returning the Gift has special meaning for the readers of *SAIL* because it was published with the support of the Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures and, indeed, comprises the second number of the sixth volume of *SAIL*. It is also part of the Sun Tracks series put out by the University of Arizona. The book would be a valuable textbook for any teacher who wants to show not what the big names are up to—Silko and Welch and Momaday and Erdrich are not in the volume—but what the emerging generation of Native writers is saying.

The story behind this book of Native North American writing is almost as interesting as the contents of the book. In July, 1992, on the campus of the University of Oklahoma, more than 300 Native North Americans gathered for a four-day conference or "festival" on Native literatures: writing it, teaching it, reading it, publishing it, organizing it, performing it. The festival was timed to be a kind of Native response to the Columbus quincentennial, but it quickly took on wider dimensions. The Columbus incentive was soon overshadowed by the need to celebrate the richness of Native writing in North America, from Costa Rica to Alaska, from Southern California to Newfoundland.

Never before have so many Native writers been together in one place. Two-thirds of the Native participants were there by specific invitation after they had passed a kind of means test by filling out forms stating the basis of their relationship with a tribal heritage or group, and affirming that a tribal community recognized them as members. Those who satisfactorily answered the questions were officially invited and offered a subsidy (sponsored by a number of organizations). Others were welcomed to attend, but without subsidy

—and many did attend. A list of most of the attendees is given at the end of the book.

The title of the conference, as Geary Hobson, *Returning the Gift* Festival historian, states in his preface, was suggested by Chief Tom Porter, an Akwesasne Mohawk: "He remarked that in our avocation as Native writers, involved as we are in taking our peoples' literature back to them in the form of stories and songs, we were actually returning the gift—the gift of storytelling, culture, continuance—to the people, the source from whence it had come" (xxv). That phrase was selected also as the title for the anthology of poetry and prose that is the subject of this review.

Those who had been officially invited to attend the conference were later invited to contribute original and previously unpublished material to *Returning the Gift*. Some of the material submitted had been read at the festival, other pieces had not been. Of the more than 200 pieces submitted, editor Joseph Bruchac selected 170-odd pieces, by 90-odd writers, for inclusion in the volume. In his introduction Bruchac is—perhaps understandably—vague about his selection criteria: "I selected what I felt was the best of the work submitted" (xxi).

The materials Bruchac selects are mostly poetry, though there are 20 prose selections, as well. Are these works any good? Of course they are, though it is difficult to say precisely what standards of "goodness" one applies to a collection of works by diverse writers who have little in common beyond that they are descended at least in part from Native peoples of North America, that they write in English, and that they don't use rhyme. To be sure, we find some recurring themes, such as an insistence on the importance of nature—stars, wind, sun, animals, the living Earth, for example—and an emphasis on family and ancestry.

Bruchac praises the works he has published as diverse: "Those who attended the *Returning the Gift* Festival are living proof of that wonderful diversity, like a forest filled with trees of many kinds, each one different, yet all of them rooted in the earth" (xxi). Rooted in the earth, yes, but these writers are also, many of them, anchored to a distrust of European culture. Because the initial impetus that brought these writers together was the 500th anniversary of the beginning of Native oppression and displacement, it is perhaps to be expected that many of these writers express anger at and distrust of things European.

At regular intervals we find references to shallow and empty Anglos. One white man says to an Indian in a bar, "Hey chief, / I'm gonna cut your hair" (Arnett, 11). Another drives the bulldozer that slashes "the breast of the Indian mound" (Awiakta, 14). Two others drive their new white pickup shouting at Indians "you goddamn indians" (Baca, 17). Others ask "stupid questions" like "are you really

indian? . . . you don't look indian" (northSun, 217). There are scattered references to "the same lies / the white men always tell" (Caldwell, 73), to whites as murderers who "pray to dead concrete" (Forbes, 105), to whites who "took all our poems and songs / and buried them in the drawers of their dark museums, gasping for air" (Garza, 116), to "blood-sucking scum" who "need us weak and weak we get" (Jacobs, 170), to "another Indian treaty broken, oh well" (Salisbury, 252), to "these foreigners / these Americans" who bring "a foul stench / among our children" (Trask, 293-94), to "the Earth raped so that strangers could reap / great profits" (Tremblay, 298). Some of the Indians referred have evilly gone white, like the Indian politician who "tours the poverty of his kinsmen / in his cadillac" (Moss, 198).

I am pleased to note that several of the writers in this anthology question what poetry is, or should be, to Native writers. For Beth Brant, Indian poetry should serve a social and political purpose: "'What good is a poet?' / What good is this pen, this yellow paper if I can't fashion them / into tools or weapons to change our lives?" (52). For Kimberly M. Blaeser, to be an Indian poet is to experience an identity crisis that all Indians feel: "You a poet? / No, I just write Indian stuff" (45). If I read Blaeser's words correctly, she seeks to distance herself from the European notions of what "literature" and "poetry" are. She tries not to imitate a tradition she has no reason to accept. Rather, she seeks to be something more authentic. Until Natives find a better word for what they write, "Indian stuff" seems to me a good enough descriptor. It is quite good enough for Indians to write Indian stuff.

One might have hoped that Bruchac could have found a better way to organize these selections than merely alphabetical by author, using an alphabet from the "enemy" language. One might have hoped that more of the writers had dealt more directly with alcoholism and other social problems rather than spear so repeatedly the guilty, foolish, or evil Anglo. One might have hoped that the publisher would use in the paperback edition a glue that would not release the pages of so fine a book into the lap of readers. Such criticisms are dulled, however, by the sparkling gems every reader will find. For me two gems that sparkle bright are "Round Women" by E. K. Caldwell and "Indians" by Roxy Gordon, but there is enough diversity of excellence in this Indian stuff that all readers will find something they wish *they* had written, darn it.

Peter G. Beidler

**Hopi Ruin Legends. Ed. and trans. Ekkehart Malotki.
Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1993. \$50.00 cloth,
ISBN 0-8032-2905-4. xiv + 510 pages.**

In his work *Hopi Ruin Legends*, Dr. Ekkehart Malotki takes seven stories concerning actual Hopi village ruins and how they were destroyed and gives them to the reader in both English and Hopi form. These stories are called "ruin myths," and they are not simply legends but actual historical events. Even though these stories are based on fact, they still contain the supernatural events and beings that give them the tone of Native American magic realism.

Ruin myths and other stories are used not only to record and teach the past of the Hopi people but also to instruct, by example, all people about the best way to live. Each of the seven myths in the work is preceded by an introductory chapter that gives background history on the specific ruin site and other research done on the particular story and Hopi culture. All of the cities used in the stories were once healthy parts of the Hopi society and their ruins do exist today. The myths describe how the people of these cities fell into a state of "koyaanisqatsi, or social chaos," and the village had to be destroyed in order to return things to their proper balance. In many cases it was the village chief, himself, who actually brought about the destruction of his city since once the people began on the path to koyaanisqatsi the only way to stop the process was total destruction. This destruction could come in the form of wind, fire storms, earthquakes, or even war.

While *Hopi Ruin Legends* at first appears to be quite daunting because of its size, once begun it is almost impossible to set down. Dr. Malotki describes the different rituals and beliefs of the Hopi culture as well as the underlying reasons and thinking behind the actions that brought about the koyaanisqatsi and the destruction. The dual text format of *Hopi Ruin Legends* makes the book even more valuable for anyone interested in Native American culture. The slow decay and loss of many aspects of Native American culture has been

struggled against for many years. *Hopi Ruin Legends* secures at least a small part of the legends, rituals, religion, and language of the Hopi people. Also, certain aspects of today's society can be seen in the ruin legends themselves and the reader is asked if he/she has become caught up in *koyaanisqatsi* as well.

Marie H. Marley

Old Shirts & New Skins. Sherman Alexie.
Los Angeles: American Indian Studies, U of California,
1993. \$12.00 paper, ISBN 0-935626-36-0. 91 pages.

In some ways, *Old Shirts & New Skins* continues Sherman Alexie's earlier volume of poems and stories, *The Business of Fancydancing*. Familiar characters reappear: Seymour, Crazy Horse, Lester Falls Apart, and, briefly, Chief Victor. Familiar landscapes surrounding the Spokane Indian Reservation envelop and support the poems. And, like repetition in oral literature, memorable lines from *Fancydancing*—"There is nothing as white as the white girl an Indian boy loves" ("Distances")—surface in *Old Shirts* ("Red Blues"). But what Alexie does with some of these lines signals a major difference between the two volumes. In *Fancydancing*'s "13/16," Alexie writes "I cut myself into sixteen equal pieces / keep thirteen and feed the other three / to the dogs, who have also grown / tired of U.S. Commodities. . . ." But in "Anthropology" of *Old Shirts*, Alexie transforms the line into a darker vision: "Then, I cut my skin into sixteen equal pieces, keep thirteen buried in my backyard, and feed the other three to the dogs. I am left with my bones. . . ." And it is this change that characterizes *Old Shirts & New Skins*.

The comic irony characteristic of *The Business of Fancydancing* gives way to a more bitter tone and bleaker critique on life in *Old Shirts & New Skins*. In "Reservation Love Song" from *Fancydancing*, Alexie cloaks the discouraging reality of reservation economics in humor as the speaker propositions his love: "I can pay your rent / on

HUD house get you free / food from the BIA / get your teeth fixed at IHS." But he highlights the economic realities of poverty in "Sociology" in *Old Shirts* when the speaker's relationship with a single mother he met in the line for Commodities dissolves because "my minimum wage / raised the household income / and lowered our benefits. / When the cheese was gone / she told me to leave."

Themes of death that underlie and link many of these pieces also contribute to the darker vision of *Old Shirts & New Skins*. In some, death is overt, but in others it lurks in the wings, encroaching on life through disease: the "calendars" that two older men "carried in their livers, blackened by whiskey" in "Physical Education," and the cancer spreads into the speaker's eyes to "steal my vision" in "Anthropology." Motifs of death extend into the animal world, such as the slaughter of ponies in "Horses" and the drowning of wasps in "Poem for James. . . ." Death also arises in the images of both old and new bones and burial grounds. In "Crazy Horse Speaks," the warrior "discovered . . . / in a vault of The Mormon Church / 3,000 skeletons of my cousins," while the speaker of "Archaeology" merges with the past through finding "the long forgotten / burial ground of some tribe / or another." New graves as well abound in the poems: a lake in "Learning to Drown," a wheat field in "The Possibilities of Agriculture in Idaho," and a burrow in the earth in "Nature Poem."

Threads of old history and new also weave through *Old Shirts*. Alexie explores the two warriors' symbiotic historical relationships in "Crazy Horse Speaks" and "Custer Speaks." The image of Sand Creek governs "Texas Chainsaw Massacre," as does the AIM in "The Marlon Brando Memorial Swimming Pool." In this collection, Alexie articulates that, as new Skins, Indians must come to terms with the old shirts (Ghost Dance shirts?) of the past and of history in order to change the path of the present. As in *The Business of Fancydancing*, the metaphor of Crazy Horse coming back to life offers a positive vision. But in *Old Shirts & New Skins*, the task of rebuilding American Indian peoples and nations seems more daunting.

Kristan Sarvé-Gorham

Myths and Traditions of the Crow Indians. Robert H. Lowie. Intr. Peter Nabokov. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1993. \$9.95 paper, ISBN 0-8032-7944-2. 308 pages.

Myths and Traditions of the Crow Indians was originally published as an American Museum of Natural History Anthropological Paper in 1918 and it has been reissued by Bison Books with a new introduction by anthropologist Peter Nabokov. It is an impressive collection of 69 myths and folktales recorded by the renowned anthropologist Robert Lowie during his visits to the Lodge Grass district of Crow territory in southern Montana. In many ways this volume is a double artifact in that it is both a valuable record of Crow oral narratives and history and an example of the anthropological biases of Lowie's day.

Read as a record of Crow oral narratives, *Myths and Traditions of the Crow Indians* is an invaluable resource. Lowie was a diligent and sympathetic chronicler, and the stories reflect his commitment to preserving material that might otherwise have vanished. Many of the tales are straightforwardly etiological, involving Old-Man-Coyote and his adventures creating the Crow's universe. Others, like "The Woman Who Married Worms-In-His-Face," are longer and more stylistically complex narratives that are clearly meant to both educate and entertain. The latter story relates the trials of a Crow girl who must call upon the female members of the animal world to help her complete the impossible tasks, such as cleaning an immense buffalo hide in a single day, set by her malevolent husband. Like many of the tales, this story is fascinating on its own terms and in its suggestion of European fairytale motifs (in this case, the "young girl aided by animals" pattern in "Snow White" and "Cinderella").

While sufficiently engaging as early examples of Plains Indian literature, the collected material can frustrate the lay reader seeking to formulate a picture of Crow culture and world-view. Lowie himself, in his 1918 introduction, comments upon the Crow tendency to avoid abstract philosophical thought and systematization in their stories (7).

While anthropologists have used Lowie's collection to develop an understanding of Crow cultural life (most notably Clara Ehrlich's lengthy "Tribal Culture in Crow Mythology" [1937]), the work itself contains little contextual material. Nabokov's characterization of the book as "raw ore" (vii) indicates the relatively untransformed nature of the texts themselves.

As I have indicated, Lowie's book also reflects a particular moment in the history of ethnographic research. Heavily influenced by the text-based approach of his teacher Franz Boas, Lowie downplays the political, historical, and performative elements of the narrative act, elements which anthropologists today see to be indispensable to the understanding of culture. Nabokov indicates how Lowie's writings do not reflect the "considerable ferment and hard times in Crow country" (ix) at the turn of the century. Nabokov's introduction to the book is both helpful and honest in this regard, acknowledging Lowie's methodological shortcomings and including the names of Lowie's likely Crow informants. While these additions do help, I feel that a more extensive attempt to annotate the texts and provide context about Crow material culture would have broadened the book's appeal and usefulness. However, despite this objection, I would enthusiastically recommend *Myths and Traditions of the Crow Indians* as an invaluable, consistently challenging work that has assured the continued survival of many colorful and unique Plains oral narratives.

Robert Appleford

CONTRIBUTORS

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