



Studies in American Indian Literatures

**NEWSLETTER
of the
Association For Study
of
AMERICAN INDIAN LITERATURES**

**602 Philosophy Hall
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STUDIES IN AMERICAN INDIAN LITERATURES

The Newsletter of the Association for the
Study of American Indian Literature

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Modern technology is great, but SAIL hasn't quite mastered it yet. The following reviews have been in our hands for some time but have only recently been rediscovered on a floppy disk with a mind of its own. We apologize both to the reviewers of SUNTRACKS, certainly one of the most distinguished publications in our field, for this impossible delay --and we can pretty confidently assure our readers this won't happen again, until our technology is upgraded.

SUNTRACKS V

As usual, Suntracks, well worth its price, is a physically handsome production offering a rich variety of material. But I am mildly disturbed that the editors, at least for this particular issue, seem to be interpreting more loosely than in the past Suntracks definition of itself as "An American Indian Literary magazine." Let me be clear on this point; I see nothing wrong with the growing number of non-Native Americans writing of Native American themes, and, indeed, all the contributions to Suntracks V are undoubtably close, in one way or another, to things Native American. But this magazine reaches a number of people who may assume that in Suntracks they are receiving a totally Native

American production. Not all the contributors to this issue are of Native America descent, and that fact is not made plain. Jim Segal may be accurate in saying that his very fine poems begin with "my family, the family of the native peoples of northern New Mexico," but Segal himself is not to my knowledge a Native American. It would be easy for a teacher trying to garner poems by Native Americans for the classroom to mistakenly use work by Segal and some of the other contributors to this issue. I don't question the worth of these writers, but each issue of Suntracks does, I think, have a special responsibility to make clear to its readers in what sense it is a "Native American" production: the excellence of Suntracks gives it a peculiar responsibility.

Suntracks V is perhaps more uneven in its written contents than some issues; certainly it is more uneven than Suntracks VI to my mind the best issue yet published. The two interviews, with Harold Littlebird and Frank Waters, are among the most valuable pieces in the issue, Littlebird's for his thoughts about the ethos that nurtures '49 songs, and about the relationship of '49's to other kinds of contemporary poetry and song, and Waters' for his insights into his own work and Native American culture in general. The Waters interview is really a conversation, marked by the lively interplay between Waters and his interviewers, Leslie Silko among them.

The other major prose piece in the issue is Emory's Sekaquaptewa's informal and spirited telling of "A Clown Story", dealing with the wonderfully complex, delicate, and vigorous relationships among Hopi katchinas and rambunctious Hopi children and their older relatives.

Of the poetry, I find strongest Jim Segal's colloquial, loving, and unsentimental evocations of older people in northern New Mexico communities; his Willy and Uncle Steven move and breath and talk.

Though I am a solid admirer of mmla northSun, her long poem here, "Crow Fair '78" is rather flat description compared to most of her work. I miss her ironic edge, her playfulness, her economy. Linda Hogan and Jim Barnes have two good poems a piece, and it's especially pleasing to see Hogan's work becoming better known. Craig Volk's poems are sketches that grow out of the "accountability reports" issued by Hampton Institute on the physical and emotional condition of its students, they are moving, restrained readings-between-the-lines of brief and bitter epigraphs, taken directly from the report itself. Volk's work is accompanied by photographs from The Hampton Album.

Patricia Clark Smith
University of New Mexico

Congratulations to Suntracks, an American Indian literary magazine, for including photographic portfolios in its pages. Photographers Owen Swumptewa and Kenji Kawano also deserve congratulations for having taken the steps that led to the publication of their work. No mean accomplishment.

Owen Swumptewa's portfolio contains photographs of the Hopi village of Walpi and of his own Hopi people. Through his eleven photographs Swumptewa tries to let us enter into the feelings that he senses in the faces and in the "moments" photographed. In his own words, "You see a feeling or a mood within a subject and try to capture it." One image where this is accomplished is that of a wistful young Hopi boy in profile, his face lined with ceremonial markings and a small smile on his face. The image draws the viewer, yet leaves the imagination free to interpret the "moment" that surrounds the child.

Another photograph, the interior of a building, begins to pique the viewers curiosity. The textured

wall, beamed ceiling, light filled window, and the wall drawings of Hahai-i Wuhti and other figures are grist for the photographer's mill, but not enough has been done to make a good picture. The photographer has seen the elements but has not worked them together so that they express anything clear.

Present in almost all the photographs is a sense of texture. Yet its importance is lessened by the ineffective cropping. Even the photograph of the young boy suffers from this. Tighter cropping behind and below the boy would have strengthened the image. Focusing the lens on the near sleeve rather than the far one would have emphasized the texture.

Continuing his words about capturing the feelings within a subject, Mr. Swumptewa says, "these feelings cannot be duplicated on a piece of film. But sometimes those feelings or moods should be looked at and enjoyed for that one short time and not photographed." It is difficult to capture through the eye of the camera the mood the photographer has felt in his subject. Technique is important, for through aperture, speed, lens-choice, angle, background, position, and composition the artist builds the momentum to supplement the precise moment that expresses what his feelings have sensed and what he wishes to express. Sometimes, as Swumptewa says, "these feelings cannot be duplicated on a piece of film." In the case of most of the photographs in this portfolio, either the feelings were too personal to be conveyed, or the moment was missed, or the technical handling was not adequate to the situation. The expressive feelings the photographer reflects on and wishes to convey do not find adequate voice in his photographs. More critical evaluations of one's work by experts, looking at the work of the pros, reflection ahead of time about what one is out to get on the film, these may be helps to making more effective photographs.

The theme, "The Indian Cowboy", chosen by Kenji

Kawano should afford a stimulating visual experience to the viewer. Whether Kawano is trying to capture significant moments in an Indian Rodeo or to show the evolution from youth to maturity of the Indian cowboy is not clear to this reviewer. However, anyone who has attended a rodeo with a camera knows that the scene is action-packed, colorful, dramatic, and that it is a challenge to coordinate the focus, light, and composition for each frame.

There are some good shots in this portfolio. The clown is expressive, humorous, and the cropping works. The rider atop the bucking steer with the crowd behind him and the anglo with the prodder to his side tell a clear story. With better printing and enlarging, the faces of the crowd would come to life. Facial expressions, the hats, and the flattened-out quality of the background make this picture. In the photograph of the calf-roping (the calf is indistinguishable) the composition, lighting, and the action work together for a good shot. The other five photos lack impact. The type of photography that gives a momentary glance at a relatively common scene must contain elements, insights, or innuendos that in some way move the viewer. These other photos fall short of the quality of the others because the scenes chosen are too commonplace or else too complicated. Even though the images have a sequential place in the story of the development of "The Indian Cowboy", they are weak photographically. The individual photograph must be able to succeed on its own merits and not just on its place in a sequence.

The main comment I wish to make is for the editors of Suntracks V. I think it is a mistake to publish an entire portfolio of photographs when two or three good ones would suffice. Just as poor poetry is refused, it would help the photographers (generally not the best judges of their own work) and the readers of the publication if only first-rate

photographs were published. In an age of visual glut and visual illiteracy, too many poor pictures get into print, and we come to believe they are good just because they are published. The photographs that are published should at least equal the poems that are printed.

Theresa Eppridge
College of New Rochelle

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The South Corner of time: Hopi, Navaho, Papago Yaqui Tribal Literatures. Ed. Larry Evers et.al. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1981. 234 pages. Maps, Photographs. Bibliographies. Paper \$14.95. Cloth 35.00

That is was predictable does not diminish the achievement. No one has worked harder, through sound scholarship and in both film and print, to find ways of effectively presenting the richness of Native American literatures than Larry Evers, currently a professor of English at the University of Arizona at Tucson. For the past several years, the most visible fruit of this labor has been the SUN TRACKS annual which Evers edits, each year producing succesively more finished volumes of increasing literary merit despite very tight money. With this particular issue, however, SUN TRACKS has found a budget and a production staff capable of realizing in a single volume an editorial conception of astonishing complexity and coherence.

The volume opens with a general introduction written by Evers which provides a brief discussion of principles for approaching the literature. Especially helpful are his comments on the nature and function of oral literature in a community, the relationship of audience and performer, performance and text, text and translation, and the continuity

between oral tradition and contemporary writing. The introduction is followed by four sections, each devoted to a distinct tribal literature-- Hopi, Navajo, Papago and Yaqui. Considering the limitations imposed by space and moeny, the range of selections for each literature, though anchored by a high proportion of oral literature, is impressive. And through the judicious selection of contrasting examples, a remarkable sense of the richness of form and the variety of personal styles in any oral tradition is communicated.

All tribal literatures are represented by some traditional material in a bilingual, parallel text format, an unbelievably expensive propotion but one which reflects the volume's committment to audiences and literary traditions of both languages. Selections not only include portions of traditional origins stories (usually placed first in each section--a good move), but also song texts and contemporary personal narratives and anecdotes. Of these Nancy Woodman's spare but telling assessment of life contrasts with Ted Rios' anecdote about the Egg, a 'good example of a funny incident humorously retold, the kind that provokes a wry smile followed by a chuckle when someone remarks, "Remember what happened to that guy when.."

Extended selections occur in each section except the Yaqui. Of these, an excerpt from Frank Lopez' telling of the Papago origin story is especially notable. By indirection Lopez powerfully conveys the sense that the young boy who is the hero of this story is marked for a special future, and that the burden of exacting revenge for his father's death, a burden the whole community comes to share, requires concerted action to rescue not only his fate but that of his people from a dark future. The strong narrative line, richly textured with dialogue and well-motivated actions, provides a strong contrast to the abstract quality of Sandoval's summary retelling

of the Navajo origin story.

In order to provide context for these works, the volume is liberally illustrated with stunning photographs, many full-page, in addition to which each of the four tribal sections is highlighted by its own seven page portfolio, which offers the reader images of the land and the people in distinct photographic styles. Useful commentary by professional anthropologists is here and there included; especially valuable in this regard is an excerpt from Gary Witherspoon's Language and Art in the Navajo Universe. Maps, phonetic transcriptions with pronunciation guides, and further reading suggestions including recordings for listening to songs (its about time someone did this) are provided for each section. The volume concludes with suggested readings by genre for Native American literatures beyond the Southwestern scope of the volume, and they are especially useful guides for the first-time reader. While one could multiply cautions throughout such a section indefinitely, his pointed denunciation of Rothenberg's "workings", and of Casteneda in the Yaqui bibliography, are deservedly highly visible.

The sole weakness of the volume is in its selection of contemporary written material, which on the whole is less compelling than the oral literature. One might argue with the Wendy Rose selections--she has written better poems than "Vanishing Point: Urban Indian"--and none of the other writers even approach that level of skill. On the other hand, none of the other writers have worked as long at their craft. Perhaps this weakness is due to the restriction of the volume's scope to four tribes. In any case the contemporary writing does not represent the achievement of Native American literature as well as the selections from the oral tradition. Nevertheless, they illustrate a range of skills and provoke interesting questions about the

continuity of oral and written traditions.

The South Corner of Time attempts to represent the full range of Native American literary achievement, from the traditional origin stories to contemporary poetry, from formal genres to personal narrative. It seeks to do this not for one tribal tradition, but for four, each rooted in unique environments and histories, and to acknowledge the artistic integrity of native traditions by using a bilingual format. Finally, it aspires to sufficiently contextualize this enormous range of diverse material so that a reader new to it will have some sense of the people and land in which the literature lives. It comes close to this ambitious goal.

Andrew Wiget
Dartmouth College
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Franz Boas and Ella Deloria A Dakota Grammar (U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington D.C.) 1941
In his preface to Dakota Grammar, Franz Boas praised his Sioux collaborator and former student Ella Deloria for her "quick grasp of important details" and he attributed to her the fact that their joint effort could suggest points as subtle as "the emotional tone connected with the particles." His comments also point to the value of Dakota Grammar for various kinds of scholarship including narratology, where sensitivity to tone is a goal of analytic efforts.

First presented in 1939 and recently reprinted by Dakota Press, Dakota Grammar is a clear, efficient exposition of Sioux morphology and syntax. Six literary texts with extensive notes on significant semantic features form the appendix. The entire book serves as a major part of the philological foundation needed for close analysis of Lakota texts. As Dell Hymes has frequently noted in his essays, philology

is needed to justify and to establish the form of the text which, in turn, illuminates the rich complexity of tribal literatures. Scholars who are working with accurate texts can use the Boas-Deloria grammar to explicate the interpretive potential of semantic domains like the verbs of coming and going. For instance, Deloria gives us this elaborate translation for one verb, "he starts back, coming to where he belongs, carrying his own." If one remembers that points in space could and often did carry symbolic connotations, then the links between Deloria's elaborate translations and potential textual meaning become apparent.

Dakota Grammar is so precisely analytical that nothing in it draws attention to the immense effort involved in gathering the data and then arranging it. Some brief recognition of this effort is, I believe, appropriate on the occasion of its republication. In light of our current emphasis on poetic and dramatic structures of narrative, we can appreciate the importance of Deloria's realization that she had to retain the quotative particles in her text of tales, although originally she had eliminated them, feeling they were repetitive and meaningless. In a letter to Boas dated August 29, 1937, she documented the way attention to phonology alerted her to other matters. "At Santee...I listened everywhere to all the speaking for glottal stops. And you know, I am quite sure now that the glottal stop is used only when the speaker makes a statement of something he personally experiences. It is quite exact the way the glottal stop is avoided unless the speaker is also the authority." As a result of her observations, she went back, adding quotatives to the tale-texts where the speaker appealed to the authority of tradition.

All who study Sioux literatures are indebted to Deloria and Boas treasuring both the published and the unpublished manuscripts. As more and more scholars perceive the importance and excitement of

comparative study of tribal literatures, basic linguistic documents like Dakota Grammar should gain more readers in the linguistic community where they can serve as basic tools for literary and stylistic analysis.

Elaine Jahner
University of Nebraska

Omaha Tribal Myths and Trickster Tales. Roger Welsch. Athens, Ohio. Sage/Swallow Press and Ohio University Press. 1981. 281 pp. End notes, bibliography. Hb. \$21.95.

Omaha Tribal Myths and Trickster Tales is another collection of Plains folklore from a versatile and very busy man. From tall-tale postcards to sodhouses, ditches filled with edible weeds to Norwegian jokes about Swedes, Indian handgames, five-string banjo picking styles, cat's cradle positions, and other Praire finger games, the subjects of Roger Welsch's researches in Great Plains folklore are as interesting as they are varied. He has published the standard collection of Nebraska folklore, and a half dozen more focussed and equally substantial studies of aspects of traditional Plains life. Among these, his Shingling the Fog and Other Plains Lies, a collection of outrageous narratives graced by a single graphic illustration, a reproduction of a Ski Nebraska poster, is exemplary of the innovative fieldwork it represents as well as for its readability.

Welsch's theoretical work in the area of material culture is held in high regard among folklorists, and he has done a distinguished translation, from the German, of Kaarle Krohn's Folklore Methodology. No ivory tower academician, Welsch is equally at home talking about any of the above in kitchens and farmyards throughout Nebraska or floating down one of

its rivers. On at least one occasion he has run for political office--Lancaster County Weed Control Commission (on a pro-weed platform). Apropos the collection under review here, in the four years I spent on and around Omaha Reservation, Welsch was the only white man I saw sit down to the drum with Omaha singers.

All the narratives Welsch gathers, rewords, and annotates in this collection have been published elsewhere. Upwards of eighty percent of them come from the Reverend J.O. Dorsey's enormous bi-lingual collection of Omaha and Ponca stories The Cegiha Language which was first published in 1890. Most of the rest come from Dorsey's best "informant" Francis LaFlesche, a full blood Omaha who went on to become a professional linguist, anthropologist, and author (The Middle Five is his best). There are a couple of stories from journal articles on the Omaha, and one which Welsch discovered in the correspondence of the ubiquitous Franz Boas in the American Philological Society Library in Philadelphia. For the record, there are a couple of good stories among the LaFlesche Papers and the Dorsey Papers at the National Anthropological Archives which Welsch does not include or mention. The coverage of historic narratives in this collection is superb.

The great weakness in the coverage, and in the book generally, is in the area of contemporary oral narratives: myths, legends, and tales. Welsch writes in his Introduction that "today these myths of the Omaha are lost. Several of my Omaha friends and relatives have told me that they remember hearing there were stories about Rabbit, but not the slightest fragment remains." This is nonsense. There are videotapes, recorded in 1972, of contemporary Omaha story-teller John Turner telling traditional Rabbit and Orphan stories in the archives of Welsch's own university. And the Omaha Tribal Elementary School at Macy has a collection of audio

recordings of traditional stories told for the children by Turner and his wife Suzette in both Omaha language and English. Several of those stories are versions of ones included by Welsch in his book. Similarly there seems to be an abundance of contemporary legendary narratives to be recorded among Omaha people today. Why Welsch, who in his other Plains researches is a careful fieldworker attentive to contemporary use of traditional forms makes these omissions is the one question I have of the book.

Although Omaha transcriptions are available for most of the historic narratives he includes, Welsch gives only English language versions in this collection. J.O. Dorsey's translations, with which Welsch is working, often approach unintelligibility in their Victorian English, and Dorsey's habit of giving all sexual and scatological references in Latin doesn't help. Welsch's "rewordings" of the Dorsey translations are, by contrast, very readable, and they are accomplished with a light and sensible editorial style. Welsch's annotations for the stories are brief and helpful, especially for the general reading audience who need to be attracted to this first literature of the Plains. Occasionally they are, in a casual way, scholarly. The following annotation for a narrative in which Rabbit catches the Sun in a snare is typical in its topics, length, and depth of discussion:

The tale of the sun snarer is one of the most broadly distributed folktales of the world. The Rabbit is a classic example of that narrative. The sun, its passages, and its annual variations were of profound importance to the Indians; so when Rabbit interferes with it, he has taken on an important opponent,

indeed, in the Omaha's eye.

The tale is etiological; that is, it explains an origin, in this case, the origin of the coloration of the rabbit's pelt. The initial statement about Rabbit's living alone with his grandmother is a formulaic opening frequently used to introduce the Rabbit stories. Dorsey comments that some of the statements in his transcription seem illogical, perhaps the result of an impatient informant.

The real heart of the collection, of course, are the stories themselves. Living at the edge of the prairie along the Missouri River with their backs to the woodlands to the northeast, Omaha people lived on the margin of two native cultural styles and, as Welsch puts it, they enjoyed the best of both worlds. This collection of stories reflects the richness of that syncretic way of living. Here Rabbit, the culture hero/trickster of the Woodlands meets Coyote, the trickster/culture hero of the West, and they move together through an unusually wide gathering of usual episodes. Here Orphan, the culture hero without status or social power, goes out again and again from his poor old Grandmother's shack on the village trash heap, to keep the people going in catastrophic times. And here are stories of the Trickster in what may be his most essential form, the wandering, inquisitive, horny, old man dragging his miserable racoon skin robe from an adventure with the Rabbit to one with the Orphan, in and out of the stories of all the animal actors and out again, knitting them together with the order of his disorder. This rare confluence of tricksters and culture heroes from all across the continent distinguishes these stories and makes them together one of the most interesting collection of late nineteenth century Amercian Indian narratives we have. Roger Welsch is to be commended for getting

them back into print.

Larry Evers, University of Arizona

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NOTES

Covers Strawberry Press (P.O. Box 451 Bowling Green Station, N.Y.N.Y. 10014) New York, 1982 \$3.50 pb. 50 pp.

A collected montage of poems and illustrations that have appeared in various publications over the past half dozen years by a multi-talented Mohawk. The graphics are especially impressive, some reminiscent of Beardsley in their spare elegance but all possessed of an original vibrance, a fearless power. Highly recommened, particularly for those seeking inexpensive ways of introducing at least a bit of Indian graphic art to literature courses.

A Guide to B.C. Indian Myth and Legend: A short History of Myth Collecting and a Survey of Published Texts. Talonbook: Vancouver, 1982
(201, 1019 East Cordoza, Vancouver, British Columbia. V6A 1M8 Canada) pp. 218 illus.

A valuable survey of ethnographers and native informants responsible for most of the printed material on Northwest cultural materials. Maud is not merely descriptive, and though his evaluations are bound to provoke some dissent they not only add spice to his presentation but also deepen one's understanding of the limitations of much early collecting, dramatizing in particular how often literary qualities were lost. Maud's judgments are generally sensible and frequently expressed with amusing neatness: "Farrand is a neat and thorough person, and his work reflects it, the thirty two tales in this collection being far too well-mannered

to be very close to the originals." This book is indispensable for anyone dealing with Northwest Coast literature; a similarly comprehensive, judicious, and well-written survey for some other culture areas, the Southwest for example, would be welcome.

The International Journal of American Linguistics regularly publishes technical articles of interest to students of Native American languages. Often these are very specialized, but sometimes helpful to the student of literature. An example from Vol 48: 1, January, 1982, is the amusingly titled "The Synchronic and Diachronic Behavior of Plops, Squeaks, Croaks, Sighs, and Moans" by Marianne Mithun. In Vol 48:3 July, 1982, Ofelia Zepeda in "O'odham ha-Cegitodag/ Pima and Papago Thoughts" gives originals and translations of recent Pima/Papago poems.

Robert W. Lewis, editor of North Dakota Quarterly plans an issue on Indian Studies, guest edited by Mary Jane Schneider. Inquiries and contributions to: English Department, U. of North Dakota. Grand Forks, N.D. 58202.

The National Association of Interdisciplinary Studies (NAIES) promotes research, study, curriculum development and publications, including Explorations in Sights and Sounds as an annual supplement to its main publication Explorations in Ethnic Studies, as well as a Newsletter and occasional monographs. Membership, including annual subscription, is \$25/year. Mailing address: George E. Carter, Treasurer, Ethnic Studies, California State Polytechnical University, 3801 West Temple Ave, Pomona CA. 91768.

One can obtain American Indian Literatures: A Selected Bibliography for Schools and Libraries,

divided into sections of books for Elementary, Junior High and Senior High levels. Resources for teachers are included. \$5.00 from Gretchen Bataille, Associate Editor for NAIES, English Department, Iowa State University, Ames, IA. 50011.

Jim Ruppert is looking for published and unpublished essays on contemporary Native American writers for an anthology of criticism. Send suggestions of manuscripts to: Dr. James Ruppert/ Fulbright Lecturer/ Amerika-Institut der Universitat Munchen/ Schellingstr. 3/ 8 Munchen 40/ Federal Republic of Germany.

Pursuing the trickster in world myth, teachings, contemporary poetry and stories, in any form of art that can be reproduced on a printed page (6"by9") editors 'Gogisgi' Carroll Arnett, Peter Blue Cloud and Steve Nemirow continue the search began in the special issue of Coyote's Journal. Send submissions to Backward Dancer, P.O. Box 649, North San Juan, CA 95960. Deadline September 1, 1983. Payment in copies at least.

WENDY ROSE
* * *

Lost Copper by Wendy Rose. Malki Museum Press

Wendy Rose is the open range and the power of the sun. She is wind and will, unbound by barriers, at the same time noting the perimeters set upon the natural. She is the aptitude and reservoir of Native American resilience, tearing off the imposed romanticism of Western thought, working the magic that one's own reality may hold.

Wendy Rose is a woman of many abilities --poet, illustrator, anthropologist. N. Scott Momady calls Wendy a maker of songs, and perhaps this best describes the lyrically elemental quality of her work.

Lost Copper is a hardbound collection of her poetry, old and new, and it is a collection long awaited by those who have followed her blossoming verse over the years.

Nominated for a 1980 Pulitzer Prize, Lost Copper is a handsome volume of innate sensitivity, the author's bold illustrations more than complementing the tapestry of her words.

A poem here is like the web of a spider, its lines stark and catching, bearing ornate, unfettered structure and moisture at the center. The moisture nurtures:

The voices have no end.
They are not stilled.
Songs steam
dipping into snow
as they look for familiar trails.

even when the earth is missing , or insidiously replaced:

What once was leaf
twisted from the plaster
is bloodless.

The irony of non-Western existence (in the face of Western extermination) is explicit in her work, even as the winding roads taken by the indigenous and intransigent in order to survive, are embraced. She captures the tragedy of American indoctrination and reveals the basic human differences, whether it is the fairly recent auctioning of bones gathered from the bloodied ground at Wounded Knee, the "more basic"

snottiness of the early morning red-neck, or the effeteness of degree-holding experts who make anthropology nothing more than esoteric grave-digging.

They hope, the professors,
to keep the keyhole blocked
where my mind is pipelined
to my soul; they block it
with the shovel and pick
of the pioneer spirit,
the very energy that made
this western earth turn over
and throw us from her back
bucking and hollering like
stars were whipping her.

Reflections like the above show her clear, unerring hand and eye, sweeping her path clean, devoid of ranting epithets. She is a keeper, builder, and celebrant of tradition, not an artifact, not a toy. In the snapping irony of a poem titled "Academic Squaw," she makes it plain that with her, such roles will not apply:

When I wake before the sun and be still
I can feel the bone shape itself into words,
bone that is frame for Hopi blood
and hides its secret parts under
woven wool folds, lies with sheepdung
and stones and sheetmetal and shreds
to cover fragile thin pieces left
from the potter's fire.

Lost Copper is full of wit as well as the sacred, the irony often building into the sardonic laughter of "The anthropolgy convention" or "For the White Poets who would be Indian." Try the razor-sharp

sarcasm at the end of "Academic Squaw", and learn this is a knowing, sophisticated grin.

They give me, stretched across the desert,
their ethnology. I am being trained,
as the bones and clay bowls left upon
are drained. Grandmother,
we've been framed.

Lost Copper is quiet skys and virgin horizons
long stolen, to be restored and cleansed. It is the
sharing of hearts and heritage; it is the hushed
majesty of the darkness understood. Lost Copper
reclaims the magic of a whole day.

Michael Hopkins
Buffalo New York

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BLUE STONES, BONES AND TROUBLED SILVER: The poetic
craft of Wendy Rose

1973. Ten years ago. The mind struggles to
remember how it was. "Peace with honor." Wounded Knee
was on everyone's lips. For those of us just then
coming to care about it, Momaday was Indian
literature. Jim Welch was a poet. Leslie Silko and
Simon Ortiz were secrets, and only they had heard of
Paula Allen or Joy Harjo. There were no anthologies
really, except for John Milton's special edition of
South Dakota Review from 1969. And a small press in
upstate New York brought out the first chapbook of a
young California poet, Wendy Rose.

There is something to be said for time. It
sifts, it sorts, it makes demands. I'm not talking
about the artificial demands created by fads or
trendiness. The literary world of ten years ago,

like that of the present, had its share of fads,
which only served to highlight those "relevancies"
which are ultimately external to the life of a poet.
The real demands of time are more substantial,
internal ones: to extend oneself into new
relationships, to deepen the shadow of the present by
appreciating the past, to discover not only the
possibility but the inevitability of a future. These
tasks face us all, but the poet, in the process, must
also continually supplant the well-worn, familiar
language with newer language, until he or she begins
to deliberately develop a distinctive voice while
coming into conscious possession of a unique self.
Ten years isn't long for this purpose, but already
the decade is littered with those who have turned
aside after a first appearance in an early "Indian"
anthology or a single chapbook. Wendy Rose continues
to write and to be read, it seems to me, because she
has not flinched from the most painful aspects of her
growth as a person nor from the poetic task of
translating that growth through vital, affecting,
language into a shared vision.

It seemed her task from the beginning. On the
back of that first chapbook, HOPI ROADRUNNER DANCING,
Rose included in a biographical note a pseudonym,
"Chiron Khanshandel." Today such a gesture might be
graciously chalked up to adolescent fascination with
centaurs. Though centaur motifs recurred in Rose's
painting for several years --the same theme, I would
argue, she has now transposed into her kachina
motif--the pseudonym itself never reappeared.
Perhaps this is because she has so deeply
internalized what the motif signifies. One could
speculate that the centaur's noble combination of
graceful power and aspiring vision, far from being an
empty object of youthful fantasy, provided Rose with
her first image to fuse two alien forces through an
act of imagination. To appropriate such an image to
herself so personally as to take it for a name was, I

believe, to recognize in it both the critical issue of her bicultural identity and a fruitful strategy for creating a future. "Indian is how I was born," she has written, "Poetry is what I do." And she indicated elsewhere in a Book Forum article, this has made her adamant about labels like "Indian" literature which can mislead the reader by directing attention away from art to inheritance. "My work is no more or less "ethnic" than anyone else's." Everyone's work is saturated with ethnicity because our backgrounds are contexts for our work. "There is only literature written by people who are Indian and who, therefore, infuse their work with their own lives the same way that you do." For Rose creating poetry is simultaneously and paradoxically an act of self-discovery and self-creation.

Lost Copper (Malki Museum Press, 1980), which collects poetry from her four previous volumes together with some new material, focuses this activity through the image of a journey of coming home to one's self. The book is framed to highlight the principle of creating identity via art, with a frontispiece affirming the rootedness of the poet's childsongs in Mother Earth and Hopi and an epilogue poem asserting her participation in an emerging community of voices: "Silko and Allen and Harjo and me." (L.C. 129) On almost every page of Lost Copper Rose marks out a path of increased self-knowledge in the discovery of affinities, a visceral identification with particular places and moments. Something leaps out in us in response to a familiar voice calling from behind the mask of experience, a mask now transparent and permeable, which only a moment ago was opaque and impenetrable. What continually brings me back to Rose's poetry is that she knows things intimately, tells them over and over like beads, and fleshes them out with words of weight and color and substance and energy. In doing so, she gives body back to spirit and rescues the truth of

the moment from the oblivious rush of experience.

The organising principle of What Happened When the Hopi Hit New York, (Contact II Publications, 1982) Rose's most recent volume, which features poems based on her travels, is the inextricable association between place and self. In Vermont she writes, "Here, too, the skin has been red," (27) and in New Hampshire she finds herself "Comparing kinds of desert." (28) In both cases she accepts the experience, but measures it against an inchoate knowledge. She can not be brought to identify herself with the place. The same is true for her visits to Iowa City, where her alienation and objectification through other, prejudiced eyes, force her to "Maintain/without willing it/ an Indian Invisibility," (16) and her hunger for substantiality forces her back to earth, to "swallow the river/ that saves your life/ endlessly brown and smooth." (13) So central to her person and art is the fact of this response to place that it is frequently imaged in terms of internatlization. "Inlaid fragile on my bones/ morning dips and shines..." (9) Alienated in Ivy League Hanover, New Hampshire, she looks down to her lap to see her hands "moving back and forth, palms down/ and fingers curled on cool stone,/dreaming the metate/and the maise within." (28)

But place, of course, is inseparable from time, and Rose's clock is always poised to measure the space between the tickings.

I am accustomed
with my western eyes
to extremes; the very ancietrn
or things new enough
to smell like carpet glue.
like that I have
balanced my bones
between the petroglyph
and the mobile home. (NY,26)

Bones. They are everywhere, scattered like runes or dice, the signature of the poet-archeologist. In one moment they represent her most essential self, the most basic structure of her being both as a person and as a poet. A slight change of perspective, however, reveals that the essential self is the historical self, that which remains after having endured the brutality of ages. Look again and the focus shifts to the very act of parting the bone and the flesh, as the bone comes to finally fix itself as the residuum of pain and calls up complementary images of flesh: "I expected my skin/ and blood to ripen/ not be ripped from my bones." (LC,14)

Bones are ubiquitous in Rose's poetry because they provide a metonymic locus for relationships to place and time which can then be caught up in a larger, coherent imagery of Body, both body as resource and body as residuum. Each aspect of body imagery complements the other. As a resource, it is visceral knowledge, felt pain or pleasure that motivates her poetry. "I began as a song or an agony,/a buzz from the mother of tongues."

"These words must be remembered/ as butchered things, as bits of life/ thrown down." (LC,69) As residuum the fear of death is expressed as a fear that the poetic self, having become the self-consuming artifact, will exhaust itself or be annihilated by masks which smother its uniqueness and vitality: "death came carried by words/ in weakening meter, in the false welcome/ of parentheses, in the open mouth/ of another dead poet's anthology." (LC,62)

The urgency of purpose with which this understanding of art endows Rose's writing is responsible in no small part, I think, for her great attention to her craft. Her poetic skills are evident on every page and are one of the greatest sources of pleasure in her work. Look, for instance, at how she accelerates the rhythm of "Potsherds."

(LC,58) Note how the first period doesn't come until the end of four long, quiet lines: then come eight shorter lines, five of which have strong punctuation breaks to quicken them further; then comes the final solitary thirteenth line which skates off on sibilance into infinity. Rose also has an excellent ear for sound. She can subtly modulate between back-vowel sounds: "You sang and murmured, water over stone,/ a tumble of flute and drum and bamboo clacker." (LC,76)

Ironically, despite the vitality which the act of writing stimulates, because a poem is finally a made thing, a writer who identifies closely with the act of writing can feel that publication is a kind of death, a final chilling into print, the displacement from the made to the maker. In "The Poet as Unclaimed Corpse" she traces the life of the poet and poem:

I began as a song or an agony
a buzz from the mother of tongues,
I end like that, laid out in diagrams,
to be buried in a strange land. (LC,62)

I suspect that the continual revision that marks Rose's poems when they reappear in subsequent volumes is an attempt to reaffirm the poetic self in a strategy of continual remaking that defeats the closure of print.

Wendy Rose is an energetic, continually active poet of rich and various gifts. One obviously does not exhaust such a voice in so small a space as this. There has been no room to talk about her wit, for instance. Take a look at the double reference for "Fault creep" in the third part of "Builder Kachina" (LC,124), or the way in which she as Indian-anthropologist reverses the cultural microscope to interpret the runic graffiti the "savages" have left on the New York City subways.

One ought to consider more carefully the way she adapts rather than adopts elements of her Hopi heritage as resources for her poetry. She resists summary and paraphrase, but in a poem she wrote about the buckeye tree (LC, 69) a central resource to the native peoples of California, she has provided us with the best image of herself:

Survivor
Singer
Feeder
Doctor

And her art? Subsistence poetry, good medicine, food for the long journey home.

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