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"The Rhythm of Three Strands": Cultural Braiding in Dorris's A Yellow Raft in Blue Water

David Cowart

Readers of Michael Dorris's 1987 novel *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water* encounter a succession of narratives chronicling the lives, since mid-century, of three American Indian women. The history of Native Americans, along with their fate in the Twentieth Century, resonates within these personal narratives, and the shifts in point of view allow for the representation of individual and collective experience over several decades. As each narrator tells her story, three generations speak in turn. Moreover, message and medium coalesce as lives lived at apparent cross-purposes prove ultimately the stronger for their differences. As a palliative to the problems of the islanded self in a time of cultural dissolution, Dorris presents a vision of the woven, cable-like integrity miraculously surviving among the members and satellites of the unnamed tribe his story concerns. As Louis Owens has pointed out, the figure for this embattled and conflicted solidarity is that traditional emblem of Indian culture, the braid (218).¹ But Dorris seeks to braid more than Indian experience into his novel. He intimates that life on and off the reservation must be understood as part of the larger braiding, the larger weave, of America itself.

By now theorists of Native American literatures have grown accustomed to a kind of standard problem. As critics such as Paula Gunn Allen, Gerald Vizenor, and Arnold Krupat have argued, Indian writing emerges from the oral and communal traditions of peoples resistant to Western ideas of linear narrative and sequential time, not to mention emphasis on the individual; therefore, the discourse and values of this literature—indeed, its very epistémè—must be differentiated from those of the dominant culture.

Criticism of Native American writing tends—sometimes excessively—to foreground the proclivity of complacent white readers to appropri-

ate the cultural production of the marginalized, ethnic other by projecting Western habits of thinking onto discourse whose integrity is thereby imperiled. At its most extreme this criticism generates considerable hand-wringing about the legitimacy of writers like Leslie Marmon Silko and N. Scott Momaday, writers who work in a genre—the novel—not indigenous to Native American cultures. Have these writers had to compromise their language, their structures, and their vision to breach the supposed cultural and linguistic impasse—to be perceived, that is, as licensed to speak (or, as Foucault has it, "*dans le vrai*")?

To my mind, the most persuasive of these critics is Arnold Krupat, who has moved, in three important books on Native American literature, towards greater and greater subtlety in assessing its vitality vis-à-vis the circumambient literary culture. In *The Voice in the Margin*, for example, he proposes the special category of "indigenous literature": "that type of writing produced when an author of subaltern cultural identification manages successfully to merge forms internal to his cultural formation with forms external to it, but pressing upon, even seeking to deligitimate it" (214). In the more recent *Ethnocriticism*, by the same token, Krupat resolutely affirms the validity of his own analytic practice, even as he judiciously weighs the epistemological question of whether the theoretical procedures to which critics subject Native American writing are not, like translation, doomed endlessly to replicate a framing, Eurocentric epistémè.

Harold Bloom, who in *The Western Canon* names not a single American Indian writer to his list of twentieth-century authors likely to achieve canonical status, dismisses the scrupulous and well-meaning theorists of minority writing as part of a School of Resentment whose endless reproaches to Eurocentrism do irremediable damage to what in his subtitle he characterizes as "the books and school of the ages." Robert Hughes, similarly, deplores the extensive balkanization of American identity in what he calls a "culture of grievance." But such fulminations miss the complexity of the relationship (indeed, the frequent blurring of boundaries) between mainstream and marginal. The embattled and precarious position of "minor literature," according to Deleuze and Guattari, often proves the source of significant change in the dominant culture's own literary sensibility. By the same token, the resistance of a major literary tradition—or, rather, of its guardians—to minority interlopers can also have a salutary effect. Such resistance functions like the formal constraints that complicate all literary production. (Frost, one recalls, likens the requirements of poetic form to the net in tennis: it is the very condition of meaningful achievement.) Inasmuch as the overcoming of resistance, formal or ideological, is a source of distinction, it may not be such a bad thing

that the voice in the margin must negotiate its legitimacy within the major or dominant literary tradition. I propose, in any event, to invert the critical paradigm and argue that Dorris's novel, even with its deference to an oral storytelling tradition, its non-linear movement, its "homing" theme,² and its emphasis on communal remedies to individual affliction, addresses itself to a politics of identity less Indian than simply American.

Which is not to say that Dorris, an anthropologist by professional training, ignores the unemployment, the alcoholism, the fragmented families—in short, the pervasive misery—of Native American life. As an anthropologist, Dorris has studied human social relations and culture as they relate to environment and differ from one racial or national group to another, especially over time, and he knows how far America is from the realization of its own collective synthesis, knows how many remain marginalized by the inexorable forces of American life. Thus he complicates the symbolism of his American theme by intimating that an individual or a whole people can be woven unwillingly into a fabric she or they may find uncongenial. To make the point in slightly different terms: Dorris registers the problematic character of America's assimilation of its minorities. What is remarkable, however, is that the author can chronicle the afflictions of Native Americans—can even set the action mostly in eastern Montana—without ever identifying the tribe to which his characters belong. By the same token, he refers to the language they sometimes speak instead of English as "Indian." Dorris seems to want an element of the generic in his depiction of Native American life.

Why? Dorris has remarked that specificity regarding particular tribes leads to too many letters from individuals claiming to recognize their relatives (Wong 41). But surely there is more to it than this. I suspect, for one thing, that Dorris does not want to speak for any tribe of which he is not a member. He may also wish to defer to what remains of tribal integrity; thus the reader sees in his generic Indians the necessary diffidence of one whose own tribe, the Modoc, has been largely assimilated. Another rationale appears in a 1979 *College English* article in which Dorris anticipates Krupat's idea of the "indigenous literature" that results from the encounter of Native aesthetics with non-Native forms. Though he deplores the Eurocentric tendency to lump three hundred or so separate cultures and languages together as an absurd monolith called Indian culture, Dorris argues for the emergence—in Momaday, Silko, and Welch—of a new, hybrid Native American literature, written for a readership that includes whites as well as Native Americans of all tribes. Auguring his own *Yellow Raft*, Dorris describes the characters of Welch's 1974 novel *Winter in the Blood* as "people who happen to be Native Americans living on a

reservation in Montana." The "culture" of these people "clearly has much in common with rural, white-American society," yet it

is also distinctly Native. It is a book about poverty but also about the the survival, against great odds, of tradition and of people. Together with such works as Leslie Silko's *Ceremony* (1977), it may well be among the first manifestations of a new era in Native American literary expression; at long last a pan-tribal tradition of true "Native American literature" may be happening. (158)

In *Yellow Raft*, however, the "pan-tribal" seems naturally to engage the yet larger community of America itself. Dorris seems to be meditating on the general American culture as much as on any specific Indian culture. Certainly the ills Dorris documents are not limited to Indians. He writes of people whose mental landscape consists of the same Stephen King-inspired movies and country music songs and consumerism that shape the dreams of the entire American underclass.

Yellow Raft unfolds with a distinctive rhythm as the reader moves backwards and forwards in time, encountering first the story of Rayona, then the story of her mother Christine, and finally the story of "Aunt Ida," whose real relationship to the first two becomes one of the novel's more powerful revelations. Ray narrates in the present tense, Christine and Ida in the past. All three stories begin with the narrator at fifteen years old. Ray stays fifteen, describing her experiences "between May and August 1986," as Dorris explained to an interviewer (Wong 40). Christine and Ida move forward in time, grow older, as their stories advance on the present. Central to the authorial purpose, the narrative's wavelike rhythm of overlapping and repetition allows the reader to see generational movement and cultural continuity as well as the reconciliation of radically different personal points of view. This last, a demonstration that truth is relative and that reality changes depending on the perspective from which it is viewed, is a commonplace of modern story-telling technique. From the perspective of her daughter, Christine seems a conspicuous failure as mother, but upon reading the full story of Christine and then Ida, the reader sympathizes with—indeed, forgives—each in succession. Thus the reader shares Christine's impercipient in a seemingly meaningless scene like the one in which she and Ida visit the dying Clara before discovering—in Ida's narrative—all that lies behind this visit. Yet, their singularity notwithstanding, the three narratives prove each to be the same profoundly human story of a struggle for integrity, growth, love, and connection—connection to family, community, and nation.³

The novel's backwards and forwards movement functions as a kind of cultural or anthropological analogue to psychoanalysis, in which one

moves into and out of a mental past to come to terms with a psychological present. Dorris, I suspect, holds no brief for the idea of a racial unconscious, but he sketches in the practical equivalent of this familiar Jungian notion in narratives that, outwardly distinct from one another, discover common mythic ground. At the same time he never loses sight of individual or personal experience. Readers come to know Ray, Christine, and Ida at the same time that they gain insight into the race and culture that, even in their disparateness, these self-chronicling characters represent. Thus Dorris documents intersections of the individual and her community the better ultimately to engage a larger theme of American identity in an age in which familial, cultural, and national cohesion have faltered disastrously for Indian and non-Indian alike. Dorris reifies these intersections, at least partly, in his images of braiding; indeed, this homely activity is behind the backwards-and-forwards narrative movement discussed above. Though the novel begins with Christine braiding Ray's hair in the hospital, one must wait until the last page—indeed, until the last sentence, after Ida and Father Hurlburt have crawled onto the roof in the dark—for the symbolism fully to jell:

The cold was bearable because the air was so still.
I let the blanket slip from my shoulders, lifted my arms
about my head, and began.

"What are you doing?" Father Hurlburt asked.

As a man with cut hair, he did not identify the rhythm of
three strands, the whispers of coming and going, of
twisting and tying and blending, of catching and letting
go, of braiding. (372)

Ida's language is suggestive: the three strands are at once hair, lives, and stories—the stories of the three women the reader comes to know in the course of the novel. The author takes as his subject, in other words, the "coming and going," the "twisting and blending," and the "catching and letting go" of human beings, of mother and daughter, of one generation and another.

The phrase "As a man with cut hair," on the other hand, reveals the curiously mixed perspective from which Ida speaks and Dorris writes. It is, of course, the mixed perspective of most Native Americans. "Cut hair," that is, is the marker of maleness only from the point of view of the larger culture within which contemporary Indian life has its being. From the Indian point of view, it is the marker, rather, of whiteness; for at a number of points the author reminds his reader that Native American men have not, traditionally, worn their hair short.⁴

One may wonder at the absence of male voices, especially when

women's experience does not prove to be the whole story. After all, the reader also hears a good deal about Leon, father to both Ida and Christine, and about Lee and Dayton and Foxy Kennedy. Perhaps Dorris means to remind his readers of the familiar sociological point about the pervasive dereliction and absenteeism of fathers in American ghettos. Perhaps, too, he wants a particular type of marriage between form and content—between the theme of braiding and the narrators who embody that theme. The author, that is, seems aware of the ancient tradition of women's being at once weavers and woven in the human community.

Dorris's real sympathy, however, remains with the vision of a national (as opposed to a tribal) braided wholeness. Moreover, one credits this novel with adding fresh inflections to the gendered grammar of weaving—for women in literature perennially engage in catching and letting go, in twisting and blending. Shuttle or needle in hand, they occupy themselves with weaving, embroidering, and quilt-making. One thinks of Eve spinning ("When Adam delved and Eve span"), of Arachne's contest with Athena, of Philomela making of her loom a prosthetic tongue, of Penelope weaving and unweaving, of Queen Matilda and the Bayeux Tapestry, of the Wife of Bath and her cloth-making, of the weaving of Tennyson's *Lady of Shalott*, and of the quilt-making tradition in Alice Walker's "Everyday Use" or Bobbie Ann Mason's "Love Life." This, archetypally, is what women do: they weave, they quilt, they work cloth, they embroider. In doing so they compose for themselves a myth of womanist purpose, a myth of what women always represent in human society. Women are weavers of their culture and of their world.

In opting exclusively for female narrators, Dorris might seem uncritically to endorse the ancient view of women as what the Anglo-Saxon poets call "weavers of peace." But he himself, along with Melville's mat-weaving Ishmael, embodies the possibility that men, too (and certainly sensitive male writers who collaborate with their wives, as this author does),⁵ can promote relationship, connectedness, community, family, and all the other cultural desiderata contained in the imagery of braiding and weaving. Though wholly the activity of women and the metaphor for their writing of themselves, the narrative braiding here nevertheless figures in a work signed by a male author, who thereby resists female hegemony in the realm of the weave, the realm of relation, the realm of human connectedness.

Feminism has contributed the phrase "the personal is political" to the lexicon of ideological analysis. But Dorris resists this formulation, too. Binding himself to the unsophisticated perspectives of his narrators, he emphasizes the personal in opposition to the political and thus declines to produce what one might expect from an author so

acutely conscious of the plight of Native Americans in our time. Even in his references to Vietnam (potentially a matter of great passion) he avoids the easy scoring of points: he has no desire, for example, to underscore the irony when Lee, last scion of a warrior race, allows the hegemonic Anglo-Saxons to dispose of his energies and his life (not to mention those of so many black and Hispanic Americans) to subjugate, on the other side of the world, yet another pigmented population. The author carefully underplays the larger political dimensions of his story, as if to resist Frederic Jameson's reductive formulation for "third-world" literature, in which *"the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third world culture and society"* (69).⁶ Dorris lays greater emphasis on the intimate, familial tragedy of Christine's thoughtless shaming of Lee into participation in a fight that was never his own.

Similarly, Dorris is uninterested in an easy demolition of the spiritual chauvinism of Christian missionaries. Although the decent, humane, and part Senecan (322) Father Hurlburt, a good shepherd to Ida, gives way presently to the loathsome Father Novak (a priest guilty, in Milton's memorable image, of climbing into the sheepfold), Dorris emphasizes not the fact of Christian hypocrisy but rather the universal attenuation of a spiritual life of immense importance, historically, to Native Americans. What is central to the lives of Ida and the young Christine (Father Hurlburt on the one hand, the nuns and the promised end of the world on the other),⁷ proves, by the time Ray is coming of age, to be almost lifeless. For Ray, a rich and distinctive spiritual heritage exists only vestigially, in the half-remembered dream of a bear (totemic emblem of power among northwestern tribes) and in her negative initiation in the middle of Bearpaw Lake. Latitude for a spiritual life, in other words, dwindles from generation to generation.⁸

This is not a condition experienced exclusively by Indians—it is part of the American heritage in modern times. Such considerations, it seems to me, lie behind the author's making Ray a "halfbreed." The racial makeup of this first narrator (unlike that of the similarly burdened Tayo in Silko's *Ceremony*)⁹ is part of Dorris's statement about the legitimate submersion of tribal or racial identity in the larger identity of Americanness. That the social, economic, and cultural plight of Native Americans is indistinguishable from the more widely recognized situation of African Americans is, then, only one of the messages contained in Ray's half black, half Indian racial makeup. Another, more pointed message concerns an idea of racial synthesis. The point behind Ray's name, which derives from the tag in her mother's gown, "rayon," is not that she is artificial. It is rather that she is, like rayon, "synthetic": she is a synthesis, after all, a braiding together, of two races. Dayton, the man who takes in first her mother

and then her, is also a mixedblood.

Dorris makes intelligent literary use of his professional knowledge, for anthropologists take a special interest in coming-of-age stories. They know that one of the surest routes to understanding a culture is to study the way its young people are initiated into adulthood. Though Dorris claims not to be interested in the theme,¹⁰ all three of these narratives exemplify it. Coming of age in fiction, however, does tend to confer a spurious order on the many phases of growing up, and part of the point about contemporary life in America (as about life in "advanced" cultures generally) is the absence of recognized rituals whereby the young can make a formal transition to the privileges and responsibilities of adulthood. Thus Dorris devises strategies to engage the theme without overdoing it; and, indeed, such maturation as occurs in these stories is tentative, perhaps temporary. The raft surrounded by water that figures centrally in the novel and provides its title is at best an image of problematic coming of age—just as it is in *Huckleberry Finn*.¹¹ It is also, of course, an image of isolation. For Ray, who needs a family and self-respect, the raft and the set of experiences that radiate outward from it become a focus of significance. On the raft she has a sexual encounter, perhaps (the text is obscure) losing her virginity. Of equal if not greater importance, however, is the person she subsequently sees swimming from the raft: Ellen DeMarco, the youthful ideal that, even at their most multicultural, American advertising, film, and television promote. Sleek, attractive, straight-haired, confident, and blessed with a loving and supportive family, Ellen is the person Ray longs to be.

The piece of Ellen DeMarco's letter that Ray finds is an important plot detail, for it becomes a kind of personal talisman. Her pathetic cherishing of the letter reveals the magnitude of her desire for a stable family. The separate stories of Ray and her mother converge and reach their understated climax at the moment in Christine's narrative in which Ray finally discards this epistolary reminder of normative family life (292). When, earlier, Ellen inadvertently exposes the lie told Evelyn and Sky, Ray retreats to the lakeside and stares at the raft as Evelyn comes up behind her in one of the novel's most touching scenes.

I'm not that hard for Evelyn to find. I'm stopped, halfway down the trail, with my eyes fixed on the empty yellow raft floating in the blue waters of Bearpaw Lake. Somewhere in my mind I've decided that if I stare at it hard enough it will launch me out of my present troubles. If I squint a certain way, it appears to be a lighted trapdoor, flush against a black floor. With my eyes closed almost completely, it becomes a kind of bull's eye, and I'm an arrow banging into it head-first. (104)

Much of the novel's title-symbolism comes together in the meaningfully conflicted imagery contained in words like "launch," "trapdoor," and "bull's eye." As the place where she was seduced and where she first saw Ellen, her counterself, the raft is indeed a launch pad: because of what happens on it, Ray strikes out on her own, finds herself cared for by Sky and Evelyn, shows her mettle at the rodeo, and finally settles in with Dayton and her mother. Yet the raft is simultaneously a bull's eye—that which violently ends the flight of missiles launched by the more primitive technology of Ray's Indian ancestors (and contemporary Native Americans are in fact torn between a primitive past and a space-age present). The raft is also a trapdoor, which can be a means of escape or the vehicle of sudden disappearance. It is at once trap and door, something that arrests and denies freedom as well as the opening into fresh experience. It is, in short, the end of the old Ray and the beginning of the new.

The yellow raft, then, is a hub around which the author arranges spokeswise elements of his maturation theme. That it figures only in Ray's narrative makes for a certain asymmetry unless the reader recognizes a thematic signature that carries over to the other narratives. In other words, as an emblem of isolation and problematic coming of age, the raft governs the stories of Christine and Ida as much as it governs the story of Ray. The novel repeatedly, in each of its constituent narratives, engages the theme of growing up in a world where the old instrumentalities for personal, familial, and cultural integration are no longer operative. Christine and Ida, too, are isolates, victims of circumstances Dorris imagines, again, as personal rather than political. The raft has been elided from the picture, but each narrator, like Ray, comes to a crossroads where her future life takes shape. Ida must come to terms with the fact that her life and reputation have been sacrificed to preserve the good name of her shallow and selfish Aunt Clara. She must also come to terms with her feelings about Christine, who is not, after all, really her daughter—and about Willard Pretty Dog, who is the father of Lee and who leaves her once plastic surgery has restored his ravaged face to something like its former comeliness. Christine, on the other hand, must accept the final breakdown of her relationship with Elgin, Ray's father, as well as her own impending death. She must sort out her unresolved feelings about the half sister/half cousin she thinks is her mother ("Aunt Ida") and about the half or quarter nephew she thinks is her brother Lee. She must also face her guilt at Lee's death in a stupid war, for Lee went to Vietnam in part to flee the destructive rivalry of Christine and Dayton, his best friend. When, years later, the rivals stumble into a comfortable cohabitation, Christine finds that her troubled daughter can, with

remarkable ease, be introduced into the new relationship. In Christine, Dayton, and Ray, the readers sees, at last, a functioning family.

The strange blood relationships in this novel contribute to its symbolism. Few characters enjoy uncomplicated familial relationships. The point is not "inbreeding"—there is none—but rather a meaningful disorientation of the familiar patterns of kinship (a subject, Krupat remarks in *Ethnocriticism*, with which "most Native narratives deal substantially" [179]). Though the reader hears nothing about intertribal marriage, the curious relationships—where one's brother proves to be the son of the half-sister one had thought was one's mother—may reflect the distant and tangled consanguinity of all Native Americans. Yet these relationships must also reflect the shared heritage and frequently mixed bloodlines of all the immigrants to America—the black and white as well as those who migrated across the land bridge from Asia.

Dorris, then, does not seem interested in underscoring the Indian otherness of his characters so much as their common humanity. Even though they live out their lives at the cultural margin, they are presented simply as people, Americans. It is not by accident that Ray's friends carry her back to the reservation for the second time on the 4th of July. But *Yellow Raft* is hardly a political tract. It is rather a traditional plea for recognition of the common problems that all Americans share as they negotiate their personal autonomy amid the coercive pressures of life in the Twentieth Century. The reader finishes this book impressed less with the disorder of these lives than with a sense of how infinitely adaptable is the human instinct for familial and societal cohesion. These stories are filled with misery, but the individuals peopling them exhibit an extraordinary resilience, a remarkably inextinguishable thirst for connection, for human braiding. This braiding of lives into something ordered, unified, and strong is the very definition of culture. Dorris views Native American cultures as embattled, but he simultaneously affirms the indestructibility of the cultural braid, whether tribal, pan-tribal, or more broadly American.

NOTES

¹In an interview, Dorris claimed that he was not aware of just how neatly he had woven the braiding motif into this fiction (see Chavkin and Chavkin 202).

²For a discussion of this theme, as differentiated from "lighting out for the territory" in Euro-American culture, see Bevis.

³According to Robert Silberman, "the duplication of episodes is not entirely compensated for by the insights gained from different perspectives" (119n15). It should be obvious that I disagree with this assessment. Dorris pursues empathic fullness, not epistemological iconoclasm.

⁴Another example of this dual perspective is provided by Louis Owens, who notes that Christine is illegitimate only from a Eurocentric point of view. "It is ironic that among many tribes . . . it was once common for a man to take his wife's sisters as additional wives, especially if his first wife was in need of assistance and one of her sisters, like Clara, needed a home. According to traditional tribal values, at one time there might have been nothing at all improper about Clara bearing the child of her sister's husband had the situation been handled correctly" (221-22).

⁵Fiction that appears under the name of Michael Dorris or Louise Erdrich is, by their own account, jointly authored—and indeed, the reader familiar with Erdrich (author of *Love Medicine*, *The Beet Queen*, *Tracks*, and *Bingo Palace*) may recognize "her" style in Dorris's 1987 novel *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water*. Dorris and Erdrich want, according to Vince Passaro, "to make themselves, by mutual consent, into one voice, one vision, one language" (161). Thus a critical description of Erdrich's writing provides a remarkably apt introduction to that of Dorris. When Passaro, for example, describes Erdrich's style as "a technique of accumulated knowledge, of splicing together different dramatic voices in different times in a series of interrelated stories about the lives, spiritual triumphs and physical tragedies of her mythological North Dakota families" (162), one finds that he has characterized the style of Dorris's *Yellow Raft* as well.

⁶Deleuze and Guattari assert something similar: "a characteristic of minor literatures is that everything in them is political" (17). For the Jameson citation, I am indebted to Krupat, *Voice in the Margin* 213.

⁷For the Pope's letter and the expected end of the world, Dorris has drawn on his own recollections of parochial school (see Wong 40-41).

⁸This is one of the reasons the Erdrich-signed novels are frequently set in the past, in a time of magical spirituality.

⁹By the same token, Ray's Uncle Lee, martyred in Vietnam, may remind the reader of Tayo's brother Rocky, killed in the Second World War. Both of the dead men are remembered as exemplary representatives of Native American culture.

¹⁰Dorris told the Chavkins that Ray was originally Raymond, but because he did not want to write yet another boy's coming of age story, he gradually realized, at the prompting of Erdrich, that the character needed to be a girl (201-02), complement to the other female narrators. A story told in women's voices, *Yellow Raft* will remind some readers of Christa Wolf's *Cassandra*, another meditation on survival after a cultural disaster, as experienced and articulated by women.

¹¹This was Dorris's starting point, both experientially and compositionally. As an eleven-year-old boy in eastern Montana, Dorris swam out to a yellow raft and got into conversation with a survivor of the Holocaust, a Polish Jew with a number tattooed on his arm. The author has remarked in interviews

(Schumacher 179, Chavkin and Chavkin 198) that he swam back from the raft a different person from the one he had been when he swam out to it.

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Victims and Survivors: Native American Women Writers, Violence Against Women, and Child Abuse

Roberta Makashay Hendrickson

Violence against women and child abuse have become significant themes of Native American women writers who write fiction about contemporary Indian life. These writers are concerned with violence from within the Native American community, that is, with Indian women who are battered by Indian men and Indian children who are abused by their parents, but they are also concerned with violence from outside the community, by racist white individuals and institutions.

From the work that has been done by American Indian women to recover their past, it seems clear that in traditional Native American cultures women were protected from violence and mistreatment by men, and child abuse was unthinkable. Native American cultures are different from one another but seem to share common beliefs about the treatment of women and children. The lack of this traditional concern, in modern times, becomes an issue in much of the fiction today. By using the insights of the battered women's movement, one can gain a greater appreciation of the fiction's power.

LeAnne Howe¹ has collected oral histories from Choctaw women elders, in an attempt to recover Choctaw women's traditions. These oral histories are part of her research for a book on Choctaw history and for an historical novel in progress, *The Bone Picker*. Traditionally, Choctaw women were not economically dependent on men, since the women of a family owned their property collectively and passed it on to their children. Howe suggests that the word "marriage" is not really appropriate to describe relationships between women and men in traditional Choctaw culture, since men might stay for a while but then leave, and a woman's brothers, rather than the children's father, would have what a patriarchal culture would consider a father's responsibilities to her children. According to Howe, if a man beat a woman he

would be "ostracized," and if he killed a woman, he would be killed. As for childrearing, the Choctaw believed that "discipline must come from within" and taught their children how to behave by example; they would never beat them.

Dakota linguist and anthropologist Ella Deloria wrote her novel *Waterlily* (1988) in the 1940s, though it was not published until the 1980s, years after her death. Her purpose in the novel, as in all her work, was to preserve Dakota culture and to interpret it for whites, who, she believed, would need to understand Dakota values if Indians were to have a chance to survive in the modern world.² *Waterlily* is set in the mid-Nineteenth Century, before whites arrived in large numbers.

In Deloria's novel, Blue Bird marries a jealous, abusive husband:

he was tormented with jealousy over his wife. He continually imagined that other men looked upon her with desire, and accused her of encouraging them furtively. She used to enjoy looking on at the celebrations and dances, but after a time he even forbade her to do that. And when she was with child, he once declared in a rage that it was not his. (15)

It is clear that Star Elk's behavior was considered to be anti-social in traditional Dakota culture: old men try to make him change by expressing "disapproval," and young men through "ridicule," because they know that Blue Bird has been an exemplary wife (15). When Star Elk tries to disgrace Blue Bird by "throw[ing] her away publicly," which "only vain and weak men" would do, and then only to an unfaithful wife, he is himself disgraced and forced, by public opinion, to leave the camp circle (16).

According to Deloria, Dakota women had other protection from mistreatment by their husbands, as well. She explains that a woman (or a man) could end an unsatisfactory marriage simply by leaving; no explanation would be expected, beyond "It was not agreeable to me" (179). Deloria also explains that a woman was not forced to remain with a bad husband out of economic necessity, "to endure in silence," because "She knew that her brothers and male cousins were ready to provide for her, and her own relatives to take her back into their midst" (179).

Like their mothers, Dakota children were protected from violence. In Deloria's novel we learn that Dakotas lived in extended families, in a "*tiyospaye*" or "group of tipis," within the larger camp circle (20). Within the *tiyospaye*, "all adults were responsible for the safety and happiness of their collective children" (20). Dakota children are treated with love, gentleness, patience and respect by adults throughout the

novel. They are taught proper behavior by the example of older children and adults. Deloria says a great deal about Dakota child-rearing practices when she shows how Dakota women react to white women who spank and scold their children. A Dakota woman, who has had contact with white soldiers and their families, describes white childrearing practices to a "speechless" Blue Bird:

those people actually detest their children! You should see them—slapping their little ones' faces and lashing their poor little buttocks to make them cry! . . . you can hear the soldiers' wives screaming at their children. . . . *I have never seen children treated so. . . . Only if a woman is crazy might she turn on her own child, not knowing what she did.* (103; emphasis added)

To Dakotas, then, white childrearing practices violated all that they believed and practiced. To such a people, child abuse would be unthinkable.

About a hundred years passed between the time of Deloria's novel and the birth of Mary Crow Dog. In her autobiography, *Lakota Woman* (1990), Crow Dog attributes the violence of Lakota men toward Lakota women today to the deliberate, racist attempt by whites to destroy Indian cultures, and with them traditional practices, especially the extended family, the *tiyospaye* ("the center of the old Sioux society"), and to the resulting poverty and hopelessness of reservation life (13):

In the old days a man made a name for himself by being generous and wise, but now he has nothing to be generous with, no jobs, no money; and as far as our traditional wisdom is concerned, our men are being told . . . it is merely savage superstition they should get rid of if they want to make it in this world. . . . So some warriors come home drunk and beat up their old ladies in order to work off their frustration. (5)

Crow Dog expresses sympathy for Lakota men—"I know where they are coming from" (5)—but greater sympathy for their wives. She now refuses to accept it as "normal" that "so many Sioux men habitually beat their wives" (245). Men who drink excessively endanger their children, as well: Mary Crow Dog's stepfather "started us kids drinking when I was barely ten years old" (15). According to Crow Dog, many Indian women put up with alcoholism and violence in their men, but some are refusing to do so any longer (245).

Mary Crow Dog is also concerned about rape. She mentions that she was raped as a young teenager. She does not say who raped her, an Indian or a white man, but does say, "I do not want to remember

the details" (67). She is especially concerned today about the rape of young Indian women by racist white policemen: "Rapes on the reservations are a big scandal. The victims are mostly full-blood girls, too shy and afraid to complain" (68). Police arrest them on often false "drunk-and-disorderly" charges and rape them in jail or take them out on the prairie, rape them, and leave them to find their way home. "Indian girls accusing white cops are seldom taken seriously in South Dakota," so few press charges, but "this is changing," as these young women begin to speak out about rape (68).

Mary Crow Dog's discussion of her school days makes it clear that for Indian children of her generation, like her mother's and her grandmother's, school was a form of child abuse. The purpose of the original Indian boarding schools was racist: to make Indian children into white children by taking them away from their family and their culture; children were beaten for speaking their own language. Dakota writer and activist Zitkala-Sa wrote about her own painful experiences as a student and a teacher at Indian boarding schools in the late Nineteenth Century in *American Indian Stories* (1921). Little had changed when Mary Crow Dog went to school in the 1960s. She saw children succumb to depression when they first arrived: "Some just seem to shrivel up, don't speak for days on end, and have an empty look in their eyes" (29). While she was in school she heard about "an eleven year old on another reservation who hanged herself" and a girl at her own school who "jumped out of the window, trying to kill herself" because of things that happened to them in school (29). At Crow Dog's school, "Beating was the common punishment for not doing one's homework or for being late to school" (34). Her school was an old mission school that her mother and her grandmother attended when they were girls. All of them, grandmother, mother, and daughter, tried to run away, and all were beaten; her mother and grandmother were also put in solitary confinement for punishment (32-34). Native American children who attend schools on their own reservation today are less likely to suffer the abuse Mary Crow Dog describes, as Indians assume greater control of their children's schools and make Native American traditions part of the curriculum. But many Indian children live in cities and do not attend reservation schools.

Mary Crow Dog is also concerned about the removal of Indian children from their families by the state and their placement in white foster homes. This is another form of child abuse, another way of destroying children's ties with their family and their culture. She writes:

Many Indian children are placed in foster homes . . . even in some cases where parents or grandparents are willing and able to take care of them, but where the social

workers say their homes are substandard, or where there are outhouses instead of flush toilets, or where the family is simply "too poor." . . . We are losing the coming generation that way and do not like it. (16-17)

Mary Crow Dog's concern with alcoholism, wife beating and child abuse within the Indian community, and with the racist abuse of young Indian women and children by white individuals and institutions is echoed in the fiction of Native American women writers like Louise Erdrich (Anishinaabe), Janet Campbell Hale (Coeur d'Alene/Kootenai), Anna Lee Walters (Pawnee/Otoe) and Vickie Sears (Cherokee).

Louise Erdrich writes about child abuse and wife battering in *Love Medicine* (1984) as one who has seen these things happen in Native American families and understands what she has seen. But the reader of the novel comes to understand what has happened only after piecing together June's story, mainly from bits of conversation and the memories of other characters, after June's death. This is often the way it happens in life.

June seems mysterious, unexplained. But the mystery disappears if we see her as an abused child and a battered woman. Her father is an alcoholic who abandoned her. She is found starving and alone in the woods, at the age of nine, after her mother's death, and is taken in by Marie Kashpaw, who raises orphaned and abandoned Indian children along with her own. June is brought to Marie, "most likely drunk," by Marie's supposed mother and another relation, both drunk: "What I saw was starved bones, a shank of black strings, a piece of rag on her I wouldn't have used to wipe a pig" (64). Marie loves June but realizes, "There was a sadness I couldn't touch there. It was a hurt place, it was deep, it was with her all the time like a broke rib that stabbed when she breathed" (68). That is why June is suicidal as a child. In her most recent novel, *The Bingo Palace* (1994), Erdrich reveals that June was beaten by her mother, also an alcoholic, and raped by her mother's boyfriend (57-60).

In *Love Medicine*, when June grows up, she marries another alcoholic, Gordie, one of Marie's children. She leaves him because he beats her, returns because she loves him, then leaves again, repeatedly. Women who work with battered women describe what they call "the cycle of violence": battering, followed by a "honeymoon" phase, followed by a build-up of tension, followed by more battering.³ This would seem to be June's experience.

Women who work with battered women⁴ have also found that men who beat their wives or girlfriends often abuse alcohol. But these women explain that alcohol abuse does not cause wife beating, though drinking does affect a man's self-control or lower his inhibitions. Men batter, they say, because our culture makes violence an acceptable,

masculine way to express or to deal with feelings of anger, fear, depression, hopelessness, and the like. American Indian men who have accepted the values of the dominant culture (and many have, as Mary Crow Dog has shown) may, like other American men, act violently toward women and children.

When she leaves Gordie, June gets by on her own by accepting white men's racist definition of her as an Indian woman: she is sexually available. In Albertine's words: "to these types, an Indian woman's nothing but an easy night" (9). June is seen by white oil field workers in the same way that white policemen, described by Mary Crow Dog, see the young women they rape on the reservation. June has allowed herself to be picked up by so many white men that she finally gives up and walks into a snowstorm to her death. After June's death, her niece Albertine remembers that "As time went by [June] broke, little by little, into someone whose shoulders sagged when she thought no one was looking" (8). When June walks into the snowstorm, Erdrich writes, "it was unclear whether she was more drunk or more sober than she'd ever been in her life" (5).

After June's death, Gordie is haunted by her bruised face, "Wild and pale with a bloody mouth" (177), and his hands, the hands of a Golden Gloves boxer, "remembered the times they struck June" (173). In his drunkenness and despair, Gordie kills a deer while driving, and, in a moment of drunken clarity, he thinks he has killed June. Gordie is unusual among batterers, in life and in fiction, in beginning to accept responsibility for his actions toward June, in acknowledging that he has beaten her and realizing that he has helped to kill her spirit, that he has contributed to the despair that drove her into a snowstorm to her death. But it takes June's death to make Gordie realize what he has done. It is too late for June in *Love Medicine*, as it often is for women in life.

Gordie and June's son King learns to abuse alcohol and to be a batterer from his father. Because he also beats his son, it seems likely that King has been beaten by his father, because children who are beaten often become parents who beat their children. King's wife Lynette (who is white) appears in two chapters, and in both she is obviously bruised and battered. In the first chapter Lynette's face is "stained and swollen" (15) and her "tan hair, caught in a stiff club, looked as though it had been used to drag her there" (23); in the last chapter "Her lip was puffed up" (250). King, Jr., or Howard as he prefers to be called because it is not his father's name, hates his father and hopes that the police will come to take him away. Howard is like many abused children: he sees or hears his father beat his mother, and he is beaten, as well. We know that he has been beaten many times, because he has learned to cope with beatings by dissociating: "there were no tears. He lay there stiff and watchful, ready for the hurt. The

sense in his black eyes already had retreated to an unknown depth" (266). In the last chapter Lynette has made King promise not to drink, thinking that if he does not drink he will no longer be violent. Her "surlly look" (250) suggests that perhaps she may one day leave and save herself and her child. King does not seem to have reached the point where he is ready to accept responsibility for his drinking or his behavior toward his wife and child. It is doubtful that he ever will. That is what women experienced at working with battered women might say about women and men who behave like Erdrich's characters Lynette and King.

In *Love Medicine* Erdrich writes about violence against women and child abuse because they are part of the experience of Native Americans living today; their individual lives and their collective history are the subject of her fiction. In *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* (1985) Janet Campbell Hale writes about these subjects partly to come to terms with her own experience both as a child abused by her mother and as a battered wife. Hale faces her abuse as a child and tries to make sense of it in "Daughter of Winter," the longest chapter in her autobiography, *Bloodlines: Odyssey of a Native Daughter* (1993). It is extremely painful reading, because Hale wants to forgive her mother but is still deeply pained by her memories. The relationship between Cecelia and her mother in the novel is like the relationship between Hale and her mother, as it is described in her autobiography. But Hale explains the difference between her fiction and autobiography in *Bloodlines*: "what I write is not autobiography. Yet, really, it is by sharing my own experiences with my fictional characters that I am able to breathe life and authenticity into them" (6). This is a subtle distinction but an important one. In *Cecelia Capture* Hale shares many experiences with Cecelia, but Cecelia is a fictional creation.

In the novel, Cecelia's mother abuses her emotionally and physically, partly because of self-hatred, created by internalized racism. Mary Theresa is Indian and Irish, but looks white; her family is "ashamed of having Indian blood" (49). Cecelia's father is Indian and dark. To her mother, Cecelia is the dark, despised part of herself, the Indian part. To Mary Theresa, Cecelia is her father's daughter, and he is an alcoholic who has bitterly disappointed her. Cecelia is also her last child, born at the end of her childbearing years when she hoped to be free. Mary Theresa's abuse of Cecelia is secret; no one else knows about it, because it only occurs when they are home alone together. When Cecelia was "a little girl of four or five" her mother used to tell her, "'You dirty little thing you! You're nothing. Just a useless thing. That's all you are. No good to yourself or anyone else" (47). If Cecelia "tried to get away she would be grabbed and pulled back, maybe hit or maybe switched, maybe even stuck in the closet" (47).

She would have to listen to her mother and look at her to avoid a beating or worse. Like Howard Kashpaw anticipating a beating from his father in *Love Medicine*, "the sense in his black eyes" retreating "to an unknown depth" (266), Cecelia dissociates: she "let herself float out of her body until she could look down and see her mother and herself and she would think of . . . Carmen Miranda! She loved Carmen Miranda. Carmen Miranda was the most beautiful woman in the whole world. Cecelia imagined that she was really Carmen Miranda's daughter . . ." (47).

Cecelia's father abuses her in his own way by withdrawing from her as he drinks more and more heavily. It is interesting that Hale does not make Cecelia's father a wife beater like her own father, who was "(at times) a vicious, brutal drunkard . . . [who] beat her [mother] when he got drunk" (*Bloodlines* 44). Hale does not make Cecelia's father a batterer, because she wants him to be something of a hero to Cecelia, who experiences pride in being Indian by identifying with her father and his unrealized dream of becoming a lawyer to serve his people. Will Capture does everything he can to encourage his daughter to excel in school in order to realize their dream. But, as he withdraws into alcoholism, Cecelia is left without her father's support, as she attends the white school he has insisted on (so she can compete in the white world) and endures loneliness and verbal and physical abuse from racist white students.

When Cecelia grows up she pretends to be Carmen Miranda and uses the name Carmen when she goes to bars to drink and pick up men, in search of the love her mother failed to give her and the love that was withdrawn by her father and then by her husband. Cecelia's husband Nathan, who is white, sees her in the same racist way as white oil field workers see June in *Love Medicine*, in the same way as white policemen see young Indian women on the reservation in *Lakota Woman*. Nathan tells Cecelia, before they marry, that he has not felt such passion for a woman as he feels for her since he fell in love with Lupe, a whore in Guadalajara, when he was a young man (165). Native American women and other women of color are associated by racist white men in a Christian society with "passion," with the sinfulness of sex. In this way white men justify using women of color for sex. In Hale's novel Nathan compares Cecelia to a whore, and Cecelia remembers that her father was sent to prison for a year when he was young for beating a white man almost to death for asking him to find him "a hot little squaw for the night" (72).

Nathan also abuses Cecelia emotionally, trying to discourage her from going to law school by questioning whether she has the right kind of mind for the study of law, because he wants her to stay home and be a wife and mother (164). Cecelia is determined to become a lawyer

to fulfill her father's and her grandfather's dream of achieving justice for Indians through the courts. Cecelia becomes an alcoholic as her marriage falls apart. When other things go wrong in her life, as well, she considers suicide. But *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* is empowering to abused women and children, especially Native Americans, because Cecelia is able to find the strength within herself to claim her life and because her strength comes from her affirmation of her Indian identity and her determination to fulfill her father's and grandfather's dream of becoming a lawyer.

While Janet Campbell Hale explores connections between racism and the emotional and physical abuse of Cecelia Capture as a child (and her emotional abuse as a woman) in her novel, both Anna Lee Walters and Vickie Sears focus on racism and the sexual abuse of Indian children. In "Apparitions" (1985) Walters writes about a nine-year-old girl, Wanda, who is molested by a white shoe salesman in a department store. Her mother remains unaware of what has happened and is therefore unable to protect her child, because the salesman distracts her with his intimidating manner and sends her away on a bureaucratic errand. He and another department store employee treat Marie Horses in a racist, demeaning manner, because she is Indian and poor. Wanda tries to protect herself from the shoe salesman, but she is unable to, and there are no other people around to help her, as "He grabbed her viciously on one of her thighs" and "His other hand slipped beneath Wanda's underwear" (89). Wanda cannot find the words to tell her mother what has happened to her, and the story ends with mother and daughter agreeing that they do not like to come to town. The story is simple and horrifying. It is important because Walters makes the connection between racism and sexual abuse of Indian children and because she empowers abused children by finding the words to tell what has happened to them.

Vickie Sears's story "Grace" (1989) is about a sister and brother who are the only Indian children in an orphanage; they have been abused sexually and emotionally, beaten and expected to work to earn their keep. Jodi Ann is nine years old, like Wanda in Anna Lee Walters's story, but unlike Wanda she is able to tell her own story, which is also her younger brother Billie Jim's. The reader becomes aware of what has happened to them in the past by Jodi Ann's response to things in the present. Sears is a therapist as well as a writer, and Jodi Ann's story sounds like one a compassionate and patient therapist might hear from an abused child.

Vickie Sears dedicates *Simple Songs* (1990), the collection of short stories in which "Grace" appears, "To all of the children who ever lived in an orphanage or foster home and had a dream" (n.p.). The first thing we learn about Jodi Ann is that she has learned not to dream

and not to trust adults. She cannot believe that she and her brother will go to live with new foster parents who are Indians and who simply want to be their parents: "I guessed they didn't have much money and were needing to get some kids to help them with their work. Probably we'd stay with them until harvest time and then go back to the orphanage. That happened before . . ." (140). And when Grace, their foster mother, tells them about all the children they will meet, including her grandchildren, Jodi Ann thinks she "would have to do lots of babysitting" (143).

Jodi Ann would like to live with Grace and Paul, because they are the only Indians the children have met since being sent to the orphanage, where people have tried to make them feel shame for their Indian heritage. Jodi Ann remembers she was taken to a bar by one of the women at the orphanage "one night to show me where all the Indian women was and what kind of people they are, always being drunk and laying up with men," and she was told, "I will be just like that, too" (140). She is also told that the totem pole in the square "was a pretend God and that was wrong because God was up in heaven and Indian people was bad, especially the ones who made the pole" (140-41). In contrast, Grace tells Jodi Ann and her brother "that the totem pole was to make a song about the dead people and animals, and that it was a good and beautiful thing" (141).

When the children go home with Grace and Paul, Jodi Ann is fearful that her brother will be molested by Paul when he takes Billie Jim to the bathroom or by Grace when he falls asleep on her lap. She is surprised that Grace doesn't stay with her in the bathroom and certain that Grace will "do bad things like the orphanage woman" when she offers to help Jodi Ann put on her nightgown (144). Jodi Ann continues to check with her brother to make sure he has not been molested and waits "for the strange things I was sure they would do. I meant to keep my eyes and ears open just in case we needed to run somewheres" (146). It takes a long time before Jodi Ann feels safe enough to hold Grace's hand.

We learn that Jodi Ann and her brother are used to being beaten as well as molested: "I never cared much about where I went, long as the people didn't beat on us with sticks and big belts" (142). Despite the fact that Paul has told her "'We don't believe in spanking'" (142), Jodi Ann is sure that she will be beaten and returned to the orphanage when "I told a grown-up no and didn't do what she said" (151).

Grace and Paul treat the children with gentleness and respect, and they slowly gain Jodi Ann's trust. The children are restored to their culture: Jodi Ann learns or relearns basket making and beading from Grace; the children's hair is allowed to grow and to be worn in braids; and the whole extended family attends pow-wows together. Jodi Ann

blooms, as Grace shows her the beauty of the natural world. But when Paul dies, the state intervenes, returning the children to the orphanage because Grace is thought to be too old to care for them herself. The state fails to consider Grace's assurance that they will be "fine together" (158) or the presence of her extended family or how important it is for Indian children to be raised by Indians. The decision of the officials at the orphanage reflects the same kind of racist, bureaucratic thinking discussed by Mary Crow Dog in *Lakota Woman*. It is a decision that fails to consider the best interests of Indian children. The story is heartbreaking, because the reader knows how far Jodi Ann has come and what she and her brother will be returning to.

As an outsider, it is tempting for me to believe that Native Americans might begin to deal with violence against women and children within their communities by remembering that, in the past, women were protected from violence in relationships with men, and children were raised with gentleness and respect, not violence. Certainly all of us who are concerned to end violence against women and children have a great deal to learn from Native American traditions. But for Native American women who work with battered Indian women and abused Indian children today, the fact that these women are battered and these children abused means that the cultural values of the past have not survived in their families.⁵ That is part of what has been lost in the deliberate destruction of Native American cultures and the forced acculturation of Indians by whites in the past. The violence and abuse experienced by American Indian women and children, and reflected in the writings I have discussed, are connected to present-day racism; it is impossible to deal with violence and abuse without also dealing with racism. The writers I have discussed write about violence against women and child abuse because they are part of the experience of Native American women and children today. I believe their work can also effect change: it can help to empower women and children by telling their stories, and it can help to put an end to violence and abuse by confronting readers with the experience of victims, those who survive and those who do not.

NOTES

¹I am grateful to LeAnne Howe for the information she shared with me about her work and Choctaw culture in a telephone conversation, 29 August 1993.

²Ella Deloria explains the purpose of her work in a letter to H. E. Beebe,

quoted by Raymond J. DeMallie in his Afterword to *Waterlily* 237-38.

³Their source for the cycle of violence is Lenore Walker's *The Battered Woman*.

⁴I am grateful to Rosean Amaral, former co-coordinator of the Teton County Task Force on Family Violence and Sexual Assault, Jackson, Wyoming, and Laurie Gudim for conversations on violence issues when I taught a class on Literature and Violence Against Women as part of training for volunteers in 1990.

⁵I am grateful to Linda Munnell-Noah (Arapaho/Sioux), Director of the Circle of Respect (which provides shelter and services for battered women, abused children, and rape victims on the Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming) for sharing her views and experiences with me in a telephone conversation, 25 August 1994.

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Mixed Intentions in D'Arcy McNickle's Wind From an Enemy Sky

Daniel Duane

"I would like the reader," D'Arcy McNickle wrote of *Wind From an Enemy Sky*, "to see the Little Elk episode not as an isolated tragedy, about which one need not get too concerned, but as a critical statement about the quality of human behavior when people of different cultures meet" (Parker 225). As the neutrality of this language suggests, McNickle was deeply sensitive to—and deeply invested in—both white and Indian sides of their common cultural conflict, a function perhaps of his mixed identity and experience. McNickle grew up in the early part of this century on the Flathead Reservation in northern Montana and identified himself as an Indian, or "a breed, rather," as he once put it, "for I had a Scotch-Irish father and a French-Canadian (that is, French-Cree) mother" (Owens 61). But he also spent much of his adult life as a bureaucrat and anthropologist for the Bureau of Indian Affairs under the progressive leadership of John Collier. McNickle's career as a spokesman for Native peoples in this country was long and quite illustrious (Owens 108-09). Not only was he a founder of the National Congress of American Indians, a shaper of much government Indian policy, and present at Truman's signing of the bill creating the Indian Claims Commission, McNickle also published widely: three novels—*The Surrounded* (1936), *Wind From an Enemy Sky* (1977), and *Runner in the Sun* (1954); *Indians and Other Americans: Two Ways of Life Meet* (1959), an account of Indian cultures and government policy towards them; *Native American Tribalism: Indian Survivals and Renewals* (1973), a history of Indian peoples, and *Indian Man* (1971), a biography of Oliver LaFarge.

Wind From an Enemy Sky, begun during the first flourishing of interest in American Indian writing but not published until just after

McNickle's death in 1977, expresses McNickle's balanced generosity of spirit, but it also records a perhaps inevitable ideological dividedness between white and Indian worlds. This problem of transculturation, or the negotiation between conflicting worlds—a common one in Native writing—produces a fascinating ideological gulf between *Wind*'s original and published endings. The early manuscript, under the title *The Flight of Feather Boy*, was apparently rejected for publication partly because of poor sales of *The Surrounded* and partly because the editors considered it insufficiently "Indian" (Owens 78). McNickle lived with the manuscript for nearly forty years before completing the version we have now—a substantial revision. A similar process (though over only six years) occurred with *The Surrounded*: in early drafts of both novels, McNickle employs endings that offer blueprints for Indian survival in Euramerica; his protagonists find deeply hopeful compromises between white and Indian paths. And in the published versions of both, McNickle employs deeply pessimistic endings, endings that offer no hope of reconciliation and thus, in a sense, very little hope of Indian cultural survival. There are a series of interesting ironies tied up in these endings: the earlier, more romantic endings suggest an optimistic bureaucrat's view of a functional future, but an inescapably acculturated one with very little element of protest. On the other hand, the pessimistic endings—clearly more appealing to his publishers—offer a more scathing critique of American treatment of Native peoples, but also partly perpetuate the "vanishing Indian" archetype that has relegated "real Indians" to an already extinct past.

The Surrounded was originally submitted for publication in 1929 under the title *The Hungry Generations*; as the title suggests, it traces much of McNickle's own experiences as an expatriate. The mixed-blood protagonist, Archilde Leon, travels to Europe, where he, like McNickle, is educated. Archilde then returns to his white father's ranch with a lovely European wife and settles successfully into the life of a white rancher (Owens 75-76). The published version has Archilde pursuing a more "Indian" destiny, as he gets sidetracked from traveling abroad by a wild mixedblood woman. Together, they run into trouble with the law and are captured in an archetypal doomsday scene: the scared Indians on the run, at last brought in from their mountain hideaway by the diligent white agent.

Wind From an Enemy Sky also had a telling original title—*The Indian Agent*—suggestive of its emphasis on the positive work of a white agent among a fictional tribe. The title under which it was submitted and rejected, *The Flight of Feather Boy*, suggests a shift in emphasis towards the novel's Indian cultural materials, and the final title clearly carries the resonance of the published ending's disaster. *Wind* is essentially about two classic questions of government Indian

policy and their ensuing cultural conflict: the construction of a dam destroying a valley sacred to the Little Elk Indians, and the museumification of their Feather Boy Bundle, the spiritual lodestone of their culture. Both of these events mirror incidents from McNickle's experience at the Bureau of Indian Affairs, his negotiation of the return of a medicine bundle to the Water Buster Clan of the Gros Ventres of North Dakota in 1937-38 and his proposed article to the *New Republic* in 1936 about a Flathead Indian dispute over a dam. Through these two conflicts, the novel offers a meticulously dialectical portrait of Indian-white relations, with an emphasis on mutual responsibility. Louis Owens reports that in the earlier version, "the agent, Toby Rafferty, arranges the successful return of the Feather Boy bundle. Before the bundle is unwrapped, Bull makes a speech:

"I would like our Superintendent to be the one to unwrap this thing. He came to us when the road was crooked and we could not see our way. He talked to us when we would not talk. He held us in his hand. We are ignorant Indians believing in things which my white man friends cannot believe in. Our Superintendent was not too proud to listen to our stories and to let us keep what was ours. We did not ask him to believe and he did not make us feel foolish by trying to tell us that our stories are better than his own. Let the Indian keep what is his and the white man keep his own. Only let us be friends. I think that is how it is best for men to live together. Our Superintendent will decide who is to be the keeper of this bundle and his hands should be the first to touch it." (Owens 81)

The Indians acknowledge fault and accept government paternalism; whites, in turn, let Indians be Indians. The bundle's successful ending of the drought indicates the power of Indian belief, but the Indians' gratitude for paternalistic guidance gives the final authority and kudos to the government bureaucrat. McNickle's confidence in American democracy is clear, and the lionization of the Indian agent may, to a degree, reflect McNickle's well-earned confidence in his own work.

The body of *Wind*, in its published form, still gives credit on both sides for good intentions, and still charts a path for a white and Indian reconciliation, but it ends like *The Surrounded*, with those good intentions going very wrong. Although a liminal Indian reaches out to white characters and the white Indian agent and eastern Plutocrat still undergo profound educations in Indian culture and oppression, their efforts to remedy past wrongs now backfire horribly: the bundle is destroyed, effectively sealing the fate of Little Elk culture, and Bull, the despondent tribal leader, kills the agent and plutocrat in a last blaze

of glory, an act of willful suicide for his people and his way of life. Again like *The Surrounded*, the first ending offered a somewhat sugar-coated vision of the future (and one fraught with unpleasant overtones of paternalism); but this published ending, written nearly forty years after the manuscript's original production, is a tragic portent for Indian cultures (with some important qualifications, which I will address later). My intention is to demonstrate that the novel is incompletely rewired for this later ending, and that the result is a work of fascinating ideological ambiguity. In the two major critical works on *Wind*, there is telling disagreement about the ending's import: Louis Owens has suggested that in the end "the world [McNickle] had spent his lifetime trying to make whole—the Indian-white world of America and the mixed blood world within himself—fell finally and inexorably apart" (89). John Purdy, by contrast, has emphasized that it is only Bull's obsolete world view that dies in the end, and that the novel offers much hope for cultural survival among the more liminal, acculturated survivors (Purdy 132-33). The dissimilarity of these readings reflects the undeniable and perplexing gulf between the optimism of McNickle's narrative efforts to bring these worlds together and the pessimism of *Wind*'s published ending.

As Bull and his grandson take "a walk into the mountains to look at a dam built in a cleft of rock" (1), we learn that no permission to build has been asked, no water rights obtained, and a spiritually important valley has been flooded. We also learn, however, that "[Bull's] relatives had been telling Bull that it would happen" (1), and that he has ignored them and done nothing. The grandson who has learned English has also tried to inform the intransigent old-timer: "Antoine, the grandson, a returned student, had read about it in the newspaper: 'They are doing it, Grandfather. That's what it says'" (1). Gravely misunderstanding the modern world, Bull responded that "They can't stop water. Water just swallows everything and waits for more" (1). When Bull asks Antoine, "Am I talking to you or to a piece of paper?" (1), he reminds us of the gulf between oral and print cultures and brings to mind the vicissitudes of linguistic colonialism: the little boy who can read English understood what was coming; the grandfather, powerful as he once was, did not. (It also reminds us of the piece of paper we are reading, of the medium through which we receive Bull's complaint—a problem Silko resists in *Ceremony* by formally framing her "novel" with verse representative of a communal oral tradition.)

When Bull and Antoine return from the dam, Bull reports to the other Little Elk men that:

"I took my grandson up the canyon today. We climbed all the way up there, where the people used to gather for

the summer dance. We stopped doing that dance, and then we stopped going there, unless somebody went to hunt or to gather huckleberries." (13)

In *The Surrounded*, we see a similar (if much less significant) change when Archilde, home from wandering in the white man's world of the Northwest, wants to go fishing in traditional Indian fashion. Nobody wants to go along, least of all the younger boys he'd hoped to entertain; they have lost interest in the old time pursuits. As James Ruppert points out in his excellent essay "Textual Perspectives and the Reader in *The Surrounded*," it seems as if "the rosy sense of memory and the joyous sense of the experience of nature do not motivate anyone except Archilde" (95). In *Wind*, the loss of traditional ways has tangibly weakened the tribe: because the Little Elk stopped taking this sacred place seriously, they couldn't respond in time to its destruction. Although Bull blames white incursion, telling Antoine that "the white man makes us forget our holy places" (9), and while the dam and the whites who built it are of course the real culprits, the Little Elk are also implicated.

From this starting point of mutual responsibility, of a dialectic in fault, McNickle then constructs equally dialectical discourse realms within each camp. Both white and Indian worlds in *Wind* have voices that are outdated, voices that are destructive, and voices that offer hope. These voices meet in conversations that are rather oblique ideological exchanges and clashes. The struggle between positions within each camp reads like a prescription for how positive new paradigms overcome outmoded ones. The primary tension in the Indian camp is between Bull, the traditionalist leader, and Henry Jim, his estranged older brother. Bull, we learn, has kept the Little Elk camp in the same place in the mountains, despite government attempts to talk him into farming; he has held on to the old way of life through hard times, resisting the dissolution of allotment.¹ Henry Jim, by contrast to Bull, took the bait of allotment, and "moved away from our camp in the mountains and built a white man's house in the flats" (18). He was rewarded with "a wagon, a team and harness, and a plow" (18). In his bitterness over the tribe's rejection of him, Henry Jim gave the Feather Boy bundle—literally embodiment of the tribe's faith—to the "dog faced man" (18), a missionary priest. By pitting Bull's strict adherence to tradition against Henry Jim's too-willing adoption of white ways, this brief family history forms a tidy metaphor for allotment's divisiveness of family and tribe. Early in the novel Henry Jim comes back from exile and suggests that the Little Elk try to recover the Feather Boy bundle and restore their strength; his emphasis is on forgetting past quarrels—clearly, neither of their previous paths will function in the present. The middle road, the functional ideology

the tribe must adopt (and which McNickle appears to advocate) will make use of both an adherence to Indian identity and a proper understanding of white power.

The strongest argument against Bull's traditionalism is his vision of what they should have done long ago. Incapable of imagining transformative survival, Bull sees death as the only way out; his only available vision of freedom is exactly that of the vanishing Indian—tribal suicide:

"We never fired our guns at these people and that was our mistake. . . . If we had only killed a few, they would have come with their big guns and killed us all. They would be walking over our heads today, but we wouldn't have to care anymore." (136)

And just as Bull's traditionalism has become a liability, Henry Jim's liminality has become an asset. Where once Henry Jim divided the Little Elk, now his understanding of whites allows him to enlighten the new agent Rafferty and bridge the cultural gap. When Henry Jim goes to ask Rafferty for the return of the bundle, it is the perfect combination of elements: an Indian used to communicating with whites but committed to his Indian identity asks for help from a new kind of Indian Agent. Henry Jim's song to Rafferty is an exhaustive representation of colonialism; it traces the intrusion of Euramerican culture from martial discipline—"when the soldiers dragged guns over the road and turned them toward the people" (30)—to cultural discipline—"you must build fences" (30)—to modes of production—"Plow up your sod and plant wheat and oats and you will do well" (31)—and finally to the exercise of power over the body itself: "A man said: 'Dig a hole then build a little house, back of our living house, out of sight of the road. There you can be private and sit in comfort, instead of squatting in the bushes'" (31). As the result of this intrusion, Henry Jim explains to Rafferty (in a sharing of blame between whites and Indians) that "Kinship lines were broken. Children went against their own relatives" (31). The narrator's argument is a syncretic one; things change: the brother who was so harmful before is now the one the Little Elk need most. As with Bull's grandson, the liminal figures—those who can translate between worlds—are marked as increasingly important.

Iron Child, another Little Elk, gives a similar version in his attempt to explain the tribal predicament to Rafferty; he sees the tension as arising from a bad quarrel among the Little Elk and is frank about Indian weakness in the face of oppression:

"Some say Henry Jim was at fault for starting this quarrel. I think it just started because we were losing out, we were weak. White men were coming into our

country, taking our land, killing the game, and sending our children away. We knew the white man was too strong for us, we couldn't fight him, so we began to fight among ourselves and we blamed Henry Jim." (85)

Iron Child sees the white role in breaking down Little Elk culture, but, like the narrator, also faults the Little Elk for a flawed response to aggression and loss. (Iron Child also uses rhetoric here much like that of Jacksonian Indian Removal from the 1830s.) While McNickle doesn't by any means whitewash this history of exploitation, he does insist upon an Indian role in the current impasse, in the daily minutiae that lead to disaster. This is especially true of the novel's catalyzing action, the shooting of a man on the dam by Bull's nephew Pock Face. While the quiet negotiations for the bundle represent the kind of dialogue that *allows* change, the shooting is the kind of violence that hinders it. It is worth quoting the narrator's representation of the incident, the example of empty rebellion versus what McNickle has offered as sensible negotiation:

He was standing on top of the dam, gloves off, making marks in the notebook, when Pock Face drew him in the sights of his rifle.

The bark of the rifle was muffled in the roar of wind and water. Even the smoke from the barrel's end blew away without a trace.

On the dam's catwalk, the man simply dropped and never moved. His notebook fell from his hand and the pages fluttered in the wind. (46)

Note that McNickle emphasizes the banal reality of the event, its lack of intrinsic meaning. It has consequence only in the human terms in which it is interpreted.

In the Little Elk interpretation, the killing is to a degree a genuine protest, perfectly comprehensible in Little Elk terms, impossible to translate—the very figure of a cultural misunderstanding. But when Pock Face makes the fatal decision to go look at the dam, McNickle portrays in him a certain doubleness in political and spiritual intent. Pock Face explains before he leaves that

"Somebody said the old-timers used to go there all the time. But I didn't know why that was. I want to see it full of water. I want to look at it. Maybe I'll get mad at it, like the old man the other day. Only white people go there now. They put fish in there, just for the white people. . . . I'll ride my horse until I come to the rocks. After that it's a short climb. I'll take my gun. Maybe I'll meet the man who built the dam, then—" He extended

his arms in the manner of aiming a gun. "Pow! Right in the belly!" He laughed. It was a good thought. (42)

We have learned, of course, that Pock Face listens to the speech of his elders in silence, that "it often seemed that he paid no attention when the older men were talking in camp, but in fact he heard everything, and would talk about it afterward" (44). Pock Face is described as often expressing in violent behavior his people's suffering: "he would go off on a tear, drink a bottle of whiskey, fight anybody who happened to be near, drag a woman into the bushes—and come home singing a war song with everybody laughing with him" (44). In this sense, the shooting of the man on the dam translates group emotion into public action, but McNickle makes Pock Face a problematic agent for the tribe, one who has adopted a myriad of white ways: he follows local rodeo and horse races, "could talk about horses like a white man" (41), and wears "cowboy boots" and a "high-crowned cowboy hat" (46). In keeping with Bull's sense of the sacred place as out of use, Pock Face is not personally attached to it at all—he sees it as somewhere "old timers used to go," and doesn't remember who told him so, just that it was "someone." And while his actions may be justified in Little Elk terms, Pock Face appears to understand their white context as well: "Uncle," Pock Face explains to Bull, "I shot a man. He was the one who takes care of the dam up there. He came out to measure the water, I think, and I shot him" (66). Pock Face's partial whiteness also causes him to pay the price of discovery—his high-heeled cowboy boots leave tracks that allow the US Marshall to follow him. Not only has Pock Face, like Bull, violated the prohibition against angry thoughts in this place, but his not wearing moccasins—not walking softly as Bull coached Antoine to do—is indirectly responsible for the coming misfortune of his people. In this sense the killing occurs not between tragically divided Indian and white worlds, misunderstanding each other's gestures and codes (in what would be a clichéd version of this narrative), but rather in a painfully mixed one. Because McNickle marks Pock Face as distinctly liminal, not a stereotypical "pure" Indian acting in a "purely" Indian causality, the killing does not derive strictly from an Indian sense of justice. (I use the term "pure" strictly in terms of the novel's dialectic, not at all to essentialize in any broader sense.) McNickle offers here an important vision of different cultural codes incongruously layered over one another; the result, however, is that the killing becomes an ineffectual remedy driven by haste and anger in a man out of touch with the very way of life against which the dam offends.

U.S. Marshal Sid Grant prosecutes Pock Face's actions, and just as McNickle complicates Pock Face's protest with his rashness and acculturation, so he balances Grant's belligerent racism with his

unwavering competence. At the scene of the shooting, Grant makes the apparently racist assumption that an Indian pulled the trigger; Rafferty and Doc Edwards (a reservation doctor sympathetic to the Little Elk), by contrast, assume the contrary and try to sidetrack the investigation. But, as he will with all the other white characters, McNickle rescues Grant from any real vilification: while the reader is inclined to side emotionally with Rafferty and Edwards—to applaud their helping Bull frustrate this belligerent cop—McNickle makes them appear foolish. As Grant—persecutor of Indians—makes very accurate conjectures based on clues, Rafferty and Edwards—defenders of Indians—offer consistently inaccurate opposing ones. After Edwards incorrectly describes the probable path of the bullet, Grant calmly looks at the same data and announces that "The killer was waiting up there" (68), indicating just the place on the hill where Pock Face really stood. Doc Edwards, meanwhile, argues that the gunman could have been at "the other end of the catwalk or the bottom of the cliff" (68). As Grant goes off to prove his point, Edwards sneers that "That bag of wind couldn't find his socks with his boots pulled on over 'em" (69). But of course Edwards is dead wrong: Grant walks to the right spot and finds both the spent .30/30 shell and the prints from Pock Face's cowboy boots; even Grant's racist assumption that he will find an Indian on the other end of the trail is correct. And at the Indian camp, Grant's infuriatingly patronizing assumptions about Indian behavior turn out to be impeccable, as he predicts that the Indians will all pretend not to speak English, and intuit that someone has not emerged from the tepees. By contrast to the Marshall's acuity is the Indians' grave miscalculation: Two Sleeps says of Grant that he is "a nothing cloud. . . . Nothing clouds blow away. . . . Just let this one talk until he blows himself out" (76).

The symmetry McNickle creates between white and Indian response to the killing is also remarkably complete. When the tribal policeman tells Bull of the investigation, Bull recognizes its racism, remarking that "Every time a white man is killed they look for an Indian" (88); but Bull knows very well that an Indian really did kill this particular white man. Notice how this balances Grant's interpretation of the scene: Grant recognizes Bull's evasiveness, but his recognition is motivated, as Bull understands, by racism; Bull recognizes *Grant's* racism, but *his* recognition is motivated by evasiveness. (Of course, both Grant and Bull derive their savvy less from observation than from the template they impose on white-Indian relations; they know the "story," as it were, before it happens.)

If white and Indian discourse in *Wind* can be seen as separate discourse realms, they are also equally heteroglot ones, full of their own tensions and inconsistencies. McNickle appears committed to

breaking down neat ideological binaries as he maps out a range of white positions, from outdated bigotry to a commendable respect for Indian difference. Like the tension between Henry Jim and Bull, the play between these white positions—as embodied in various characters—models the way a good white discourse might emerge. Characters such as Doc Edwards, Sid Grant, the missionary priest, and even Henry Jim all bring the two central white characters—Rafferty and Adam Pell—toward understanding the Indian predicament. Agent Rafferty's evolution is the most pronounced, occurring at the local level of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, while Adam Pell's is less complete, but occurs at the very highest levels of American power. Rafferty's ideological starting point is explicit:

His appointment, and others made at the same time by the new administration, was announced as a repudiation of the military-political missionary tradition that had prevailed in the past. He represented what was described as "the new settlement house humanism." (33)

James Ruppert has noted in his discussion of *The Surrounded* that "for McNickle, the implied reader was the conventional reader who held the values of the white, literate public of the early 1930s, a public with limited preconceptions of Indian life and values" (92). Rafferty, as a valid agent for change and a moral bellwether, gives that conventional reader a refuge, a position with which to identify. In this capacity, he makes palatable the novel's critique of American colonialism. As McNickle's benevolent and helpful representative of the U.S. government, Rafferty's innate impulse is toward respect; he sees Henry Jim as wiser than himself and abhors that part of his job description which involves doing away with "nonproductive dances" (35). Son Child notices at one point that Rafferty "had a darker skin than most white men" (79), and much later, while the Little Elk men are being held in the basement of the Indian Agency station, they mention that Rafferty "talks good" and "looks like a good man." Rafferty has already broken with his predecessors in not trying to get Bull to come down out of the mountains. His rejecting the "eight-room superintendent's residence" (34) in favor of "the smallest of cottages, at the very edge of the fenced-in compound" (34) marks him as anti-materialist, as different from the bureaucratic culture through which he operates. Even the positioning of the cottage at the "very edge" spatializes a cultural periphery and suggests that while Rafferty remains just inside the white fence, he at least yearns to cross borders.

Doc Edwards, a devoted doctor who has turned down promotion in order to remain with the Little Elk, makes the most positive contribution to Rafferty's thinking. His respect for difference informs

Rafferty's progressivist desire to help. (In Raymond Williams's terms, Rafferty and Edwards could be said to be generating an "emergent ideology" [123] to compete with older, more dominant ones, like those of Sid Grant and the missionary priest.) Both men recognize the inadequacy of government conceptions of the boundaries between cultures. As Rafferty complains,

"Nobody in Washington tells you about medicine bundles or culture heroes or folk ways. The emphasis in the instructions we get is on the mechanics of the job we are expected to do—as if these other things don't exist and won't get in the way of doing the job." (35)

The practical example of this dilemma comes when Henry Jim asks Rafferty's help in returning the bundle. Rafferty laments that he "wasn't sent here to rescue bits and pieces of the past" (37) but rather to help "improve" the Indian way of life—this attitude being, of course, a straw man, an obviously flawed attitude out of which Rafferty will evolve. When Edwards questions the premises for such improvement, Rafferty retorts that, "I have a commitment—to somebody. Maybe it's to myself. Maybe it's to the twentieth century. Otherwise, what am I doing here? . . . If these people don't need what a white man has to offer, then we should all get out" (38). This conflict between helping the Little Elk and preserving their identity is the white counterpart to the conflict between Bull's traditionalism and Henry Jim's modernity. Edwards's advice represents just such a compromise between denial and total assimilation: "If you want to bring these people around to ranching and farming," Edwards explains,

"I suggest you start by taking this request seriously. If you can bring that medicine bundle back to the Hanging Mountain mother lodge, the rightful custodians, these people will be walking in your moccasin tracks, as they say. They'll be dirt farmers, shepherders, grocery clerks, anything you ask." (38)

Note the clear vision here of assimilation as compatible with unity and tradition. The missionary priest to whom Henry Jim gave the bundle takes a very different position. "The Indian people," the priest remarks,

"start from origins about which we speculate but know next to nothing. We do know they are a people unlike us—in attitude, in outlook, and in destination, unless we change that destination. . . . Regardless of what we white men have attempted, the Indian has always remained beyond our reach, just beyond our reach. He is always slipping away into the distance." (51)

The priest insists here on what Lyotard would call a "differend" between Indians and whites, a space of incommunicable difference,² a gap between linguistic universes that precludes common terms. As "a trickle of saliva seeped from the corners of his mouth" (52), the priest exclaims that "the Indian is anti-civilization!" (52) and argues that Indians "can only choose what they have always known, and that choice means extinction for them" (52). This is the colonizer's version of what Gerald Vizenor has called "terminal creeds":

... beliefs which seek to impose static definitions upon the world. Such attempts are destructive and suicidal, even when the definitions appear to arise out of revered tradition. (144)

Both the priest and Bull are caught in an outdated vision of colonialism and have accepted what Vizenor terms the "hypotragic" view, the view in which the comic—or transformative—element of syncretic survival is denied (11).

The counter-discourse to the priest, of course, comes from Rafferty. Thus it originates in the U.S. government, in the very institution responsible for this "vanishing species" hypothesis (much as the Collier administration, in which McNickle worked, came to change this hypothesis). This is very important coming from McNickle, in that an author-cum-bureaucrat offers a vision of bureaucratic salvation: in the neo-Marxist terms of Frederick Jameson, the dominant culture, in this case the government, has produced the site for its own subversion. The priest's way of thinking is also comfortably marked as the outdated past of white thought—in the "mist," in Rafferty's eyes, "from another age, of frankincense and chasubles" (52). (To use Williams's terms again, the priest's position could be said to be a "residual" ideology in failing competition with Rafferty's "emergent" one.)

From this starting point, ideologically correct but experientially weak, Rafferty commences to grow, his increasing understanding of Indian life indicating McNickle's optimism for valid white response to Indian problems. Out at Henry Jim's farm, where Henry Jim is dying in a teepee outside his farmhouse, Rafferty enters the "'oldtimer' teepee" (123), observes the etiquette of waiting before speaking, and passes around his pack of cigarettes in an understated peace offering (123). On his death bed, Henry Jim has "forgotten" English, returning to his native tongue as did Archilde's aging mother in *The Surrounded*; as Henry Jim talks, Rafferty's mind opens into a broad observation of the Indian world. "Here in a teepee world," he realizes, "the parts fitted together," and "The answer, obviously, is that we do not speak to each other—and language is only a part of it. Perhaps it is intention, or purpose, the map of the mind we follow" (125). Rafferty here also

balances Henry Jim's slip into incommunicable difference—thus no net loss of communicability; as Henry Jim widens the gulf between Indians and whites by "turning his back" on the English language, Rafferty narrows it.

Adam Pell, the wealthy man from the East, completes the novel's representation of benevolent white authority. Designer of the offending dam on Little Elk land and director of the museum that holds the Feather Boy bundle, Pell is also uncle to the slain young man. Thus he is an implausible embodiment of the American social and political establishment who has finally been hit at home by the Indian problem. The personal injury leads him, like Rafferty, to questioning American policy towards Indians. In discussing a Peruvian friend's work with Peruvian Indians (142-43), Adam recognizes that his own interest in indigenous peoples initially ignored the presence of such people at home. He even understands the museumification of culture: "we were rushing into the future and had no place for the surviving artisans and creative minds; their artifacts, labeled relics or curios, could be stowed away in a museum and safely ignored" (150).

The resistance of Pell's conservative friends lets the novel introduce imperialist rationalizations for colonialism. The judge, for example, catalogs its legality, starting with

"John Marshall: By common accord, the nations of the world recognized the right of each to chew off what it could, and to keep what it could hold; [and] Vattel: The nation with superior skill could appropriate to its own use the domain of a less accomplished people." (190)

Pell, however, perceives in these arguments the interested constructedness of morality and law. "Indian lands," he realizes with proper irony,

had been taken because they would be put to a higher order of use, because they would contribute to the advancement of a higher order of society—and the law had legitimized such taking. The law was in society and society was in the law. (190)

The judge argues back that "A great nation, one of the powers of the modern world, has been built on this continent," then asks Pell a rhetorical question: whether we should have "left it in virgin forest where the red man chased his dinner through the undergrowth" (191). Pell properly sees this as "chauvinism" (191). When Pell at last points out the injustice of allotment, the judge claims—"advancing his white head" (193)—that these rip-offs were just ill-considered, hasty action; Pell insists that they were rather deliberate and calculated (193), then Pell pulls "away from the confidential *tete-a-tete*" (193) signaling a split

in white hegemony. His reasoning, like Rafferty's with Edwards, extends the white mind's self-critique to the halls of power; just as with Rafferty's disagreement with the priest, the challenge to the colonial discourse comes from within colonial culture. The novel propels these two white characters—Pell and Rafferty—ever closer to actually crossing the culture line, to breaching the differend. As Rafferty approaches Henry Jim's funeral, he surprises Indian expectations by not objecting to their burying Henry Jim's horse with him; he even lies to the priest about the practice to forestall objection. Rafferty also finds himself able to imagine the conversations the Indians must be having in the absence of Henry Jim: "This too," we learn, "was part of the consciousness [Rafferty] was experiencing. Quite suddenly, and effortlessly it now seemed, he had begun to get the feel of their perceptive world" (176). He explains that, "It had to do with their way of talking and that followed habits bred in the senses themselves and made the world the way it is to a seeing and hearing and feeling man" (176). Rafferty actually realizes the social construction of reality by comprehending a different "map of the mind."

McNickle has, thus far, set us up for a happy ending in which whites and Indians finally understand each other and get along. We have a perfect model for the process: the destruction of another sacred place leads a liminal Indian and his conservative brother to realize that they must combine their respective wisdom; the liminal one then enlightens the good agent, who in turn enlightens those truly in power—precisely the ending of *The Flight of Feather Boy*. Wind of course ends very differently, producing a series of interesting ruptures in the text. Pell tries to return the medicine bundle, hoping for that ritual absolution of the white American soul provided by *The Flight of Feather Boy* (and by the actual Gros Ventres negotiation on which McNickle worked), but the bundle turns out to have been destroyed by neglect. Just as the dam's construction was perpetrated by whites but permitted by the Little Elk, so the bundle was given away by a Little Elk but destroyed by whites. Further, if the bundle was a symbol for an older unity in tribal life, the possibility for that unity is now a thing of the past; there's no going back. Pell decides to substitute a golden Peruvian statuette from his collection, and the apocalyptic overtones for the Little Elk are clear—the statuette is from a now completely vanished South American people.

But it seems peculiar that after all Pell's understanding of colonial injustice he could go so suddenly blind. He even loses his sensitivity to the commodification of culture: where thirty pages before Pell recognized that this statuette, "torn from its socio-cultural setting" (213), was nothing more than "a piece of merchandise" (213), now he imagines that it could restore "something of what they lost through [his]

carelessness" (234). And, in further contrast to this ridiculous substitution, Pell simultaneously has the following revelation:

The notion that the dam in the mountains, with which he was now identified, had killed the water had troubled him. An irrational conceit, but the minds that conceived the notion were the minds of rational men. They worked with different data and a different order of reality. An urbanized man arrived at other conclusions only because he had a wider range of information and theory. What at first seemed bizarre became on reflection a valid ordering of experience. The dam was an unnatural disruption of a functioning universe, a kind of crime against life. (210)

When Pell returns to the Little Elk—without the bundle but with such thoughts in mind—he and Rafferty again appear to be converging. When Pell confesses that it "mortified me to discover that I had been part of the fraud against these people, " Rafferty has "an unexpected sense of communication" (228) with him. Rafferty sees that "the troubled state [Pell] spoke of was genuinely felt" (228). Pell's revelation culminates in his looking across a valley and remarking on the "monstrous" impact the grid survey farm lines have on the landscape; the great white father comes home to the frontier with twentieth-century eyes at last.

But then, after all his self-critique, after understanding the dam as a kind of crime against life, the novel makes a gesture back towards the disastrous ending. Pell announces in a "casual" tone—unaware of the tragedy he communicates—that the bundle is lost. As if Rafferty too has noticed this strange reversal he thinks to himself that Pell is

not the man who rode into the countryside and spoke with feeling about fences and land losses. His senses were alive then; now he seemed remote, untouched. Professional, perhaps, was the word. Maybe it was his way of speaking, but somehow he had removed himself from communication. (232)

Rafferty, like the narrator, does not even try to reconcile the new Pell with the old; he does not suggest that Pell's past feeling and commitment was false. Instead, he sees Pell as having actively and suddenly changed. This supports a reading of the novel as simultaneously entertaining two contradictory versions of white response to the Indian problem—one legitimately sensitive, the other remote and incomplete. And even as the novel invalidates Pell, it does so with a white voice. Rafferty remarks that

"This is not a question of your preference, of what might save your feelings. It wasn't just a museum curio, a

display piece you destroyed, and you can't make it up with a substitute. Your pretty piece belongs in a museum, since the people who produced it no longer have their lives tied up in it. They are gone. When you tell Bull what happened, he will be gone too." (236)

McNickle is, in a sense, having it both ways in his representation of white discourse: whites are both ultimately culpable, through Pell's misunderstanding, and given credit for perfect understanding through Rafferty's rejection of him. As Bull shoots Pell and Rafferty at the end of *Wind*, it's as if all of McNickle's early confidence in progressivist change had gone into creating these two white characters, and his later disappointment had killed them off. (The similar change in *The Surrounded*—from happy ending to tragic—occured over only six years, rather than forty; this might, I suppose, suggests that the editors at Dodd and Meade just didn't know what to do with a novel in which a Native American protagonist becomes a Lost Generation expatriate, then ends up in a successful interracial marriage on his own large ranch. Perhaps they weren't interested in a vision of a syncretic Indian future, would only buy the narrative they already knew, the one in which the Indians die at the end.) The current ending of *Wind* further destabilizes the novel's symmetries, appearing to lean toward a more profound indictment of colonialism and a deep pessimism about the future: if Bull had taken only Pell with him, the old orders would merely have canceled each other out, but the death of Rafferty suggests a wholesale rejection of white paternalism; his very effort to help has led to the destruction of a world.

But if the shootings at the end are the evidence for McNickle's rending these worlds apart, declaring the differend unbreachable, it is rather ambiguous evidence (especially from an author whose initial compulsion went twice in the opposite direction). As Two-Sleeps and Veronica watch the shoot-out from afar, Two-Sleeps predicts of Bull that he will return to this obsolete *modus operandi*, that "the days of anger will come back, as when he rode wild horses and we waited to see who would be hurt" (246). Further, Two-Sleeps and Veronica witness the shooting as "a small puff of white smoke, like breath in frosty air, followed by a second puff. Then in quick succession, the flat sound of two gunshots" (246). They don't notice the third puff at all—the one that marks Bull's death. McNickle's emphasis on the bald, undramatic reality of the moment links this shooting explicitly to the one at the dam, in which the victim just quietly falls over. Further, and most importantly, we experience the ending initially as a puff and noise that in no way bring about the end of the world. Thus when we read the tragic last words—that "No meadowlarks sang, and the world fell apart"(266)—they seem to refer to Bull's world, the past world of

the Feather Boy bundle, but they also give us the *Last of the Mohicans* even as they take it away: life, we already know, will go on.

In terms of Bull's murderous intent, Pell's Peruvian shell game is so stupid one can't help but cheer Bull; he has at least struck back. The deaths may not solve anything, but Pell is adequately demonized to be expendable. On the other hand, Bull has acted again in anger, in the way he and Pock Face did at the dam. Just before shooting, Bull cries to his grandson that Pell "can die like the rest of us! Now let them walk over our heads! We won't have to care anymore!" (266). Bull echoes here his earlier statement to Antoine about communal tribal suicide in warlike defiance. The nihilistic aspect of this reading—its "terminal creed" of seemingly inescapable tragedy—is perhaps the most powerful narrative trope with which Native authors contend: Welch's Jim Loney, for example, finds himself trapped in this story's ending without even knowing it's a story, standing alone like the fugitive of Steinbeck's "Flight" to receive the final bullet of his destiny. But one thinks also of Momaday's Abel in *House Made of Dawn*, coming home at last to his place in the world after an agonizing journey through modernity; or of Silko's Tayo, in *Ceremony*, consciously resisting the entropic narrative by not striking the final, rash blow that will lead to his own extinction. An understandable preference for this more hopeful version of the future leads John Purdy to argue that Bull's actions and death are those of an individual, not a people or a way of life—"It is the death knell of one Indian whose journey, begun with angry words in a sacred place of power, reaches its logical conclusion in anger and violence" (132). Purdy points out that those who remain, "men of vision like Antoine, Henry Jim, and Two-Sleeps," are the men "who pick up the pieces of shattered worlds" (132). Little Elk culture—and Native American culture in general—will, in Purdy's reading, endure, particularly through the restorative power of narrative.

Louis Owens agrees on this point, seeing "some hope for future generations" in *Wind*'s ending, noting that liminal characters like Bull's grandson Antoine will perhaps be able to translate between worlds. Owens sees this hope, however, as being for "cultural heterogeneity and cross-cultural survival" (88), not for the world of Feather Boy. This is, he argues, the only kind of hope available: recovery of identity, but with change. But *Wind*'s last words—and, as Owens has pointed out, McNickle's last words—"No meadowlarks sang, and the world fell apart" (266)—offer a conundrum to any hopeful view of an Indian future, syncretic or otherwise. In order to support his more positive reading of the novel's end, Purdy suggests that these words were added by the editors after McNickle's death (132); Owens, who rejects that possibility, sees them as overshadowing any hope the book may have had to offer. He points out that "McNickle has given us a

tantalizing glimpse of the possibility of a merger of white and Indian worlds," but finally "pulls the rug out from under his characters, suggesting that the schism between worlds is simply too enormous" (88). That we have arguments for two such different readings of the text, and that Purdy and Owens both qualify their interpretations with a bit of the other's view, testifies to just how divided the novel finally feels. While certainly a world falls apart, we've seen that it is only Bull's world; while certainly the bundle is lost, we feel McNickle's admiration for Rafferty's enlightenment, however limited. Although the resolution of the dialectic between worlds is resisted by the final deaths, there has still been great communication between sides. Perhaps most confounding of all, while the final act is in a sense cataclysmic, it is also, in the sense in which Two-Sleeps and Veronica see it, just a puff of smoke.

We can only, then, read the novel as irreconcilably divided between its early and late endings, and thus between two very different readings of Indian/white relations. McNickle certainly had a profound sense of the ambiguities and ironies of history—perhaps it finally ran deeper than his revisionism. Although committed to syncretic cultural survival, McNickle's investment in government paternalism was quite strong. A man of his time and his profession, McNickle advocated helping Indians grow into the future, even if they wanted to assimilate into the white world (Parker 76). Himself fully acculturated, McNickle predicted at one point that all Indians would eventually learn to live with, if not within, white society, and the watchwords of his era in the BIA were "adaptation" and "gradualism" (Parker 125) in establishing tribal autonomy. He once even stated that "Indian administration must make increasing use of methods of the social sciences in resolving the basic problem of assisting the Indians to adjust their lives to a dominant culture" (Parker 126). His eleventh-hour revisions of *Wind* may well have updated the novel from its 1930s optimistic romanticism, but it is not surprising, given this past, that McNickle's ultimate version of Indian-white affairs would incompletely reject his former one. *Wind From an Enemy Sky* is finally a very Bakhtinian "heteroglossia" (272), rife with both the centrifugal and centripetal forces of language.

NOTES

¹The Dawes Act of 1887 called for the division of tribal lands into family and personal allotments, with all "extra" lands becoming Federal property. One result of allotment was the division of families and clans, particularly as

whites found ways to buy or take individual allotments within what had once been unified tribal property.

²See Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Differend*.

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[Untitled]

Stuart Hoawah

Ah, the words I've read,
Pews I was thrown to.
Children's braids severed,
Schoolmaster's box engulfed every strand.
Growth and culture in the lips of scissors.

Our familiar songs without tongue now.
Implanted in us is that foreign sound
Of conquest.
Soap bubbles we sing.
Wooden kisses purple the little hands,
Heavy shoes sound the pain
Reshaping our feet.

Tonight, I'll crawl over those hovering
Shoulders of school
Escape in quiet grass to my grandmother's
Band.
Just escape with the knowledge:
We caught death from Spanish sails.

Artifact and Written History: Freeing the Terminal Indian in Anna Lee Walters' Ghost Singer

Erika Aigner-Alvarez

Anna Lee Walters, in her 1988 novel *Ghost Singer*, writes about the desecration of Indian artifacts and how the life within them—in the form of ghosts—strikes out against both Anglos and tribal people. Much of the story takes place at the Smithsonian's Natural History building where Anglo museum employees continue to misunderstand the spiritual element of the artifacts that bonds them with the individuals and communities from which they came. The museum becomes a gathering place for tribal peoples, both modern day and spirit peoples, to (re)member tribal mythologies and identities. Older generations of tribal people reach out to the younger ones to educate them about the living element embodied in the artifacts, stories, prayers, songs, ceremonies, and their own understandings of their heritages. Having knowledge of both Anglo and tribal worlds, members of the younger generation must negotiate their identities. The search for identity as a mystery motif is examined by Melissa J. Fiesta in "Solving Mysteries of Culture and Self," the only critical article published on *Ghost Singer* to date. Fiesta identifies "opposing epistemic views" as the reason for misunderstanding between Anglos and tribal people in the novel (372). The sources of the conflicting Anglo and tribal epistemologies must be examined to explore why they elicit very different treatments of artifacts, history, and "Indians."

Walters addresses a very real controversy concerning the benefits of collecting and exhibiting Indian artifacts rather than returning them to the tribes from which they were taken—so real, in fact, that she includes a disclaimer stating, "Although the Smithsonian Institution is a real place . . . references to it, including its collections and employees, are fictional." Through the medium of the novel, Walters deconstructs the dominant society's educational justification for

acquiring and displaying Native American items such as medicine bundles and other sacred objects, mummified bodies, and body parts. She shows that few people in the dominant society take more than a dismissive glance at the objects, and all fail to see the history and living power contained in them.

Ghost Singer portrays how Anglo society, through its linear conceptualization of time, has banished American Indians from the present by classifying them as relics of the past. Indian artifacts are collected and displayed in museums and oral histories are recorded and written down only to be objectified and commodified in museums and written texts—in isolation from tribal people. Walters protests the interpretation of Indian artifacts and history "solely in terms of the dominant society," one that does not recognize cyclical, communal, and ceremonial perspectives of time that empower "the living spirits" embodied in the artifacts (*Spirit* 19, 26).

In an interview published in the *American Indian Quarterly*, Walters says, "My future is my past, the values and vision of a collective past" (Carroll 72). These values and visions are kept alive through media belittled by the dominant culture that privileges literacy: stories, ceremonies, prayers, and songs. In *Ghost Singer*, the modern day Indians who tell their tribal stories, learn and conduct the ceremonies, say the prayers, and sing the songs advance the wisdom of their tribal ancestors. Orally communicated tribal knowledge is the key to survival for both Indians and non-Indians who come into contact with the spirit people who exist among and within the Native American collection in the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History. Walters uses the ghost singer, an angry warrior spirit, to "reach across time and space" (Walters qtd. in Carroll 64), to protest the misappropriation of Indian artifacts and history, and to metaphorically harmonize with ceremonial singers of the past, present, and future.

The linear conceptualization of time by Anglos throughout the novel sanctions separation of the individual from community and environment. This separation prevents the Anglos from understanding and respecting American Indian cultures. Time is meticulously divided and sorted into days, hours, and minutes. This partitioning of time not only governs the Anglo world's activities but also serves as the foundation of the underlying philosophy of the industrialized Anglo world, as Laguna writer Paula Gunn Allen has suggested: "Chronological organization . . . supports allied western beliefs that the individual is separate from the environment, that man is separate from God, that life is an isolated business, and that the person who controls the events around him is a hero" (Allen 149).

The Anglos who work in the attic of the Museum of Natural History are followers of this philosophy of individualism and manipula-

tion. For example, Geoffrey Newsome, an employee who packs and restores the Native American artifacts, claims the attic as his personal territory. He has abandoned his wife and children to devote his life fully to "sorting out the fragments of history" to recreate the "specimen[s] of extinct Indian culture" (36, 40). Newsome isolates himself from not only his family but all people. He has made his job the sole focus of his life since all else is simply distraction. He considers himself a hero for reconstructing Indian artifacts, for controlling what is added to the dominant culture's history. Newsome is the author's vehicle for "illustrat[ing] . . . James Clifford's contention that 'collecting—at least in the West, where time is generally thought to be linear and irreversible—implies a rescue of phenomena from inevitable historical decay or loss'" (Owens 28).

The assumption that the objects being reconstructed are from a culture that is extinct is shared by all the Anglo characters in the novel. Newsome divorces himself from the living in order to memorialize the "departed Indian." He is, however, "thoroughly disgusted by the appearance and presence" of George Daylight, a Creek and Cherokee researcher and tribal official, who "dressed in a manner that left no doubt that he was an American Indian" (41). Newsome has no interest in the surviving Indians, especially those "[un]educated and [in]tolerant" ones who consider his collection to be "highly controversial" (39). Newsome is "the kind of man who . . . playfully put[s] on a necklace of twenty human fingers"; he completely dissociates the living Indian from the artifact.

Newsome's utter disregard for Native American cultures and the power inherent in the objects he reconstructs makes him a prime target of the angry ghost singer. Ultimately, Newsome's fear of the ghost leads him to dive off his thirteenth-floor apartment balcony. Newsome's equally ignorant successor at work, Donald Evans, shares the belief that the presence of American Indians, of "Daylight and his kind" in the present day, is anachronistic. Evans is amused that Daylight, as "a practicing heathen," can exist "in a fast-paced society that hurled itself toward high-tech and outerspace" (108). Evans' opinion is based upon Daylight's attempt to persuade him to recognize the power of the sacred objects in the museum collection. Daylight tells him: "The people who created these things exist—they're still here! . . . Like a child that is molded, groomed, and taught to become a particular kind of person, so were these items made. . . . As long as these articles exist, these characteristics, this nature, and their power are embodied in that creation" (112). Evans responds with a scowl and dismisses Daylight's beliefs by privileging Christianity and the linear time frame it depends on: "time . . . unfolds unidirectionally . . . progressing from past into the future, until the eschatological end of

time foretold in Revelation as Christ's second coming" (Lake 127). Time, as defined by Christianity and applied to the quest of individual salvation, makes it "imperative that one use the most direct methods to amass wealth, prestige, and power" (Deloria 83). This approach to time and life posits a lack of "progress" among Native peoples in the areas of religion, education, and outlook. Evans classifies Native Americans' views as backward and implies a Darwinian oversight for their survival when he says: "It was simply an accident that such simple heathen-types made it . . . to the twentieth century. . . . By all odds, sooner or later, all the groups would be sucked up into one big vacuum" (109).

The "big vacuum" is created by death or assimilation, which Evans equates to education. He separates the Indian from the artifacts in his collection, just as Geoffrey Newsome did, and mistakenly presumes that Native peoples share his opinion and are embarrassed by their cultural past: ". . . many Indian people no longer desire to be reminded that they ever created items such as these" (110). He does not recognize the living, "educated, acculturated" Indians as extensions of past generations; the vacuum already exists.

Opposing Evans' ethnic vacuum hypothesis, the ghost singer—the wrathful warrior spirit in the museum—"reach[es] across time and space in anger and frustration" (Walters qtd. in Carroll 64) to proclaim his existence and the existence of others within the artifacts. The implication is that if the ghost singer can convince the employees or researchers who work with the Indian collection of its power, they would lobby to have the materials returned to their tribes. Walters uses the character of George Daylight as her mouthpiece when he tells Evans: "American society don't even pretend to know what all these objects here are by name or use. . . . To own it [a religious or sacred item], one must be able to make use of it . . . the collection [here] sure as hell don't benefit Indian people none" (110-11). Evans responds that educated, acculturated Indians have "wisely chosen to put this hocus-pocus behind them [because] . . . these objects . . . are from dead cultures" (110). "Real Indians" are dead and gone in Evans' eyes.

Evans concludes that tribal people who are educated and acculturated are no longer Indians. By claiming that all educated Indians reject these objects as relics "from dead cultures," he is suggesting that Indians are electing to deny and erase their ethnic identities (110). That George Daylight is standing before him, challenging his position, makes no difference. Instead of re-examining his views, Evans dismisses Daylight as an uneducated "heathen-type" who is "here on borrowed time" (108-09).

Walters briefly inserts one Indian character who fits Evans' stereotype. George Daylight's girlfriend, who remains significantly

nameless in the text, chooses to reject her cultural heritage in order to move up the social ladder within the white world. As a student at Georgetown University, a prestigious institution of higher learning, she is unconcerned about her ignorance of her tribe's history and that of "other Indian people" (63). Her interests lie in obtaining "a castle in a town like D.C., and shiny cars" (78). Because castles and shiny cars do not fit into the Anglo stereotypes of Indians, she dissociates herself from her ancestry in order to accumulate status and wealth as an individual. The relationship between her and Daylight is short-lived because he realizes that their priorities clash: "She ain't right for me. . . . Hell, she can't even make fried bread, or dance. . . . But I ain't right for her either. She wants a castle . . . [and] a castle is the last thing on my mind" (78). She is Evans' model of the "educated, acculturated Indian" who refuses to "revive the dead" by putting faith in tribal traditions (110). It is the model that he believes all Indians should aspire to since the "fast-paced society that hurl[s] itself toward high-tech and outerspace" has rendered tribal knowledge and tradition obsolete.

Walters uses Evans to represent the majority of American society that believes "real" Indians are extinct. Evans acknowledges the existence of the objectified, dead Indian exhibited in the museum—one that was never part of his reality, a figure in history. His detachment toward "real" Indians of the past is illustrated by the way he handles a string of two-hundred pairs of "dry and leathery" Navajo ears (83). Other than in their texture, he has little interest in them. Whose they were and how and why they were obtained is not his concern. Evans fingers the ears, sips some coffee, and decides that they must be Indian, since everything else in the collection is.

Evans' indifference toward the articles in the collection is linked to his feeling of superiority over the stereotypical noble savage. By erasing tribal peoples from existence and, thus, social conscience, the dominant society is free to commodify Indian artifacts for the sake of historical study, profit, or plain amusement. A note describing the acquisition of and the irreverence for the string of ears, among other things, is later discovered by Evans at the bottom of the trunk where he found them:

Get what you can for this Indian stuff. It should be worth something in \$. Try a museum first. . . . I don't know what the red stones are, but they came outta a woman's grave in Nebraska. Those people are extinct. I doubt the stones are worth much, because no one knows what they are. . . . We had a lot more of this stuff [tiny animal fetishes and jewelry], but our kids often played with these and broke a lot of them. . . . Daddy ran across the ears

in New Mexico and won them in a poker game about 1890. They're Indian ears all right. They won't be of much use to anyone, except to someone who may want to hang them on a trophy mantle—a conversation piece for sure. . . ." (84)

In this passage, museums are named as the principal market of stolen artifacts. The idea that the value of Indian materials cannot be determined without knowing what they are is reiterated; those seeking a price for the materials do not recognize or respect them as "the living spirits that they are . . . transcend[ing] single lifetimes and countless generations" (Walters, *Spirit* 26). In the note, two generations of parents pass along to their children their ignorance and disregard for tribal people and culture by allowing the children to play with the "Indian stuff." Sacred objects and Indian body parts are diminished as toys, trophies, and conversation pieces. The attitude expressed in the note extends itself through Evans' actions; after reading the note he "[hangs] the ears in coils on the key-ring nail" next to his desk when he forgets to repack them (84).

In a separate hand-written message packed away with "a mummified body of a prehistoric Indian woman," George Daylight discovers the "savagery" of Anglo ignorance in the explanation of the acquisition of the corpse. Daylight expresses his outrage to his friend, Navajo researcher Willie Begay: ". . . the guy who . . . dug her out of the cave and had the nerve to stuff her into the trunk of his car and then sell her for a handsome profit . . . said that *he* found the *woman grotesque* . . . This is [first class] savagery. His act, his mind, his existence scares the shit out of me. *This is what we're up against*" (73). Daylight realizes that the thief's ignorance of the immorality of his act is not just a threat to the integrity of Indian burial grounds; the thief and people like him jeopardize the very existence of Indian tribal people today. Walters is asserting that the theft of and affront to Indian history are acts of cultural and spiritual genocide that affect present and future generations.

The lack of understanding reflected in the notes explaining the procurement of artifacts is also contained in what are treated as historical records. Walters mentions, but does not describe, some manuscripts that negatively affect tribal people in the novel; Daylight relates his reaction to Begay after discovering them in the archives: "I was reading these unpublished manuscripts that were left here by writers decades ago . . . the ideas they had 'bout 'red Indians' [are] enough to scare the crap out of you . . . people acted upon these ideas, made decisions based upon them, decisions that still affect us guys. Willie, you and me's lucky to even be sitting around here at all" (72). Since Indian histories were traditionally oral, the early records that

exist are written by non-Indians and contain skewed definitions and interpretations of Indians and Indian cultures. The prejudices and inaccuracies in these documents are perpetuated by the modern-day historians in the novel, who rely only upon "facts" that may be substantiated with written proof: they believe that "without records, there is no history" (198).

Walters uses the character of David Drake to represent Anglo historians. Setting out to navigate an uncharted Navajo perspective in the academic arena, Drake asks Navajo Willie Begay to guide him—verify written Navajo history—so that he may claim an authentic Navajo perspective. Begay suggests that Drake commission his grandfather, Jonnie Navajo, a tribal historian, to tell him the real story of the people. Drake agrees and Begay attempts to convince his grandfather to cooperate by explaining that this white man's ideas about the people—Navajos—come from "books and old papers . . . boxes and boxes of them . . . in buildings . . . in Washingdoon," that may or may not be accurate (23, 24). Jonnie Navajo wonders what the people in Washington could want with this information. His suspicions alerted, he asks what else "besides paper" is stored at the museum where Begay is conducting his research. "Old photographs, records of people singing and talking, . . . clothes . . . shields, gourd rattles, and medicine bundles" is Begay's reply (26).

At this point, Begay has not encountered the mummified bodies and body parts that are also part of the collection. Traditionally, Navajos "fear . . . the dead and all their possessions" (Underhill 10). This fear of the dead is based "upon the fear of ghosts . . . [who] plague the living . . . to avenge some neglect or offense" (Kluckhohn and Leighton 184-85). Although Begay may not be aware that bodies of the dead are part of the collectibles, he must know that the other objects were once possessions of people who are now dead. Begay is breaking with the traditional beliefs of his people by associating with any possession of the dead.

Jonnie Navajo responds to his grandson's mentioning of the medicine bundles by protesting their appropriation. The significance and role of medicine bundles is explained in another book by Walters titled *The Spirit of Native America: Beauty and Mysticism in American Indian Art*: "our most cherished possessions [are] the sacred bundles that contain objects endowed with inherent powers. The bundles are spiritual beings . . . alive . . . giv[ing] back life and meaning to our existence" (88). Jonnie Navajo is deeply troubled by the separation of the bundles from their people and by his grandson's lack of concern about the issue. The old man silently considers the ills and benefits of his grandson's association with Washington D.C. and the white historian, as is shown later in his request to Drake to try to track down

a lost family member.

Jonnie Navajo leads the white man and Begay to a place in the forest to tell the history of the location, of his family, and of a loss to the Navajo people. The story relates the tragedy of a raid in which Jonnie Navajo's great aunt was stolen as an infant and sold into slavery. The raiders tried to scalp his great grandfather and they cut off his ears in order to collect a twenty-dollar bounty offered on Navajo ears in Santa Fe. Drake does not recognize the significance of the story; he has no knowledge of the power of story as a living "map . . . designed to help . . . [the participants] to remember . . . and recover . . . together" (Silko 59, 64). Jonnie Navajo shares the story with his grandson and Drake so that they may empathize with this tragedy that was common among tribal people and specific to Jonnie Navajo's family. The story has no ending because the infant was never found, but Drake and Begay have access to documents that may provide an answer to the mystery, and thus a recovery.

Drake demonstrates his ignorance and irritates Begay by saying, "'I don't get it. Why is he telling us all this?'" Begay frowns and replies, "'This is a part of the history of the people. Weren't you going to write a history of the people? From their side?'" (28). Drake tries to listen patiently as the old man and Begay speak in their native tongue. Begay later translates to Drake that Jonnie Navajo wants him to find records of that raid in the archives in order to track down what became of his great aunt. Drake is shocked by the request because he believes that unearthing information about such a localized, family calamity will be very difficult and not worth his time. He is not aware that localized, individual experiences do not occur in "cultural isolation or separated from the essence of tribal communities" (Vizenor, "Native American Literature" 227); the suffering and healing of one family or individual contributes to the affirmation, recovery, and continued survival of the group (Silko 59).

Jonnie Navajo loses confidence in Drake's ability to write Navajo history since he has no understanding of the People except through government documents. Jonnie Navajo's impression proves to be true since Drake ends up "writing what other histories had already said many times over"—from an Anglo perspective (197). His ambition to impress his colleagues and for his work to "stand on its own merits in [their] eyes" wins out over his desire to write the history from a Navajo perspective. Drake claims sole authorship of his text, creates a history that exists divorced from the people it portrays, and writes to an audience that excludes the Navajo people—ideas antithetical to Indian history, storytelling, and art.

As Walter's contrived model of the elitist Anglo academic, Drake is unwilling to risk his professional reputation by writing Navajo

history from a Navajo perspective. In the hierarchy of Western knowledge, a Navajo perspective is regarded as "sentimental . . . romantic . . . uneducated . . . [from] myths of monsters and half a dozen worlds" (198). Drake does not reach beyond his epistemological map despite the mysterious conditions surrounding the death of his sister, Jean Wurly, a museum employee; she claimed to have seen Indian spirit people among the Native American collection shortly before her death, which occurred at the Smithsonian's Natural History building. To have given credence to his sister's story as he did to Jonnie Navajo's tale of the stolen infant and Navajo enslavement would have "caused him a great[er] deal of inconvenience" than it already had to "rethink his own history" of tribal people (200). Rethinking and revising established inventions of Indians and Indian history is the last risk that Drake is willing to take both personally and professionally.

"Let them write their own history when they become literate. Writing a history from the time of dragons is what you'll be doing if you get their input," is the advice that Drake takes from a colleague on his project. The issue of literacy becomes a scapegoat for the appropriation of Indian history. In this context, literacy is "more than merely reading and writing; it is a way of thinking . . . and transforming culture" (Blaeser 231). Drake's colleague links illiteracy to "a perspective from the time of dragons," thus implying that literacy in English will change that perspective. "Literacy" can be synonymous with "cultural destruction" (Blaeser 231).

Drake decides to obtain the Navajo perspective on history from Jonnie Navajo for future use, because "once in his possession, he could reject it in its entirety or in part, and he could even alter it, to suit his needs" (200). Because "accounts of Indian people collected and written by outsiders are accorded more status than those spoken or written by Native peoples themselves," members of the dominant society—in this case, Drake—can get away with "appropriat[ing] . . . tribal identities . . . from the perspective of colonial culture" (Blaeser 230). He plans to use "artistic license" to invent a "real Navajo culture" that will not upset the status quo in academia. His "enshrinement" and manipulation of the English language "accomplishes the preservation of the values of dominant white culture" (Blaeser 231). Walters uses this one-dimensional character to illustrate how, as N. Scott Momaday asserts, writing causes people to "become blind to the . . . sacred aspect" of words (Richter 383).

Static constructions of Indians in documented history and the artifacts in the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History affect the way that Native peoples see themselves in the novel and in present day society. Chippewa writer Gerald Vizenor has asserted that the contemporary meaning of "Indian" comes from "terminal creeds"—

static, traditional beliefs that "the rest of the world" has used to "invent the Indian" (*Bearheart* 195). The terminal or invented Indian is "not a person of real experience and critical substance" (*Bearheart* 196). In an interview, Vizenor says, "'we [Indians] are stuck in coins and words like artifacts. So we take up a belief and settle with it, stuck, static'" (Bowers and Silet 45-47 qtd. in Owens 233). The rigidity of the "invented Indian" identity sets up a binary system in which "Indian" represents the past and the Anglo represents the present and future.

Walters provides an alternative to the "terminal Indians" contained in the artifacts, manuscripts, handwritten notes, and in the Anglo written histories by bringing spirit people to life from those objects. The angry warrior ghost serves to bridge the gap between tribal people of the past and those in the present. His first appearance occurred thirty years before the current setting in the novel when Wilbur Snake, a member of the Ioway tribe, was helping white researchers in Washington D.C. by "look[ing] at old photographs of Indians, and other stuff" (17). Snake had felt uneasy upon entering the Natural History Museum where the collection was housed and sensed a power emanating from someplace in the building. From the main hall, he "heard a . . . 'crying song,'" and later the ghost of the warrior appeared to him with "a look of rage—pure hateful and mean" (18). Snake felt that "he had to sing" the song he had heard earlier, "so the song would let him go" (18). The warrior circled him as he sang, and soon disappeared.

Snake respected the anger and hatred within the warrior spirit. By singing his "own song" back to him, Snake signaled to the ghost that his attempt to communicate with them had been successful. That evening, back at his hotel, Snake found "a tiny buckskin bag" in his coat pocket. He opened it and found a bear claw inside. He returned the bag to the museum the following day, only to have it reappear in his pocket that evening. One interpretation is that the warrior spirit is angry about the appropriation of the items in the collection and is trying to send them back to tribal people. The warrior spirit people breaks out of his "terminal" state by obliterating the boundaries of past and present, artifact and life, and spirituality and physicality; he acts as a person of "real critical substance" by transcending the binary encapsulations used by Anglos to classify their world and the place of Indians in it.

Russell Tallman, the mixedblood grandson of Wilbur Snake, admits that he, too, has seen spirit people in "the halls of the Natural History Building" (19). He also acknowledges witnessing an encounter between Jean Wurly and the spirit people sometime before her death. Tallman does not explore the meaning of his experience until his friend Willie Begay is affected by the ghost. The warrior spirit appears to Begay

after he accidentally touches a Navajo scalp with the ears attached and gets a layer of oil from it on his fingers (45). Whether the ghost arranged for the scalp to be delivered to him is unknown, but the irony is that the scalp could have belonged to Begay's great, great grandfather "if things had turned out differently" (181). After his encounter with the scalp, Begay is unable to keep food down and the warrior becomes visible to him on a regular basis; he has what the Navajos call ghost sickness. To heal himself, Begay plays tape-recorded protection songs that his grandfather sings. Both Russell Tallman and George Daylight witness what might be called Begay's crossing over into the spirit world and call upon ceremonies from their own respective tribes to try to help him. They burn Tallman's cedar sprigs as Begay speaks in Navajo to an unseen presence in his apartment. In order to help his friend and to get beyond his own fear, Tallman begins to explore the mysteries of Indian beliefs and calls upon his grandfather Wilbur Snake to help him.

Tallman explains to his grandfather that his friend Willie has already been affected by the poison and that he needs Snake's help because Tallman himself and Daylight do not know what to do: "Me and George, we've gone to school. We've had years and years of school. Don't do no good now, though. We don't know nothing. Old man, please" (68). "Best thing to do is for you boys to pack up and come on home" Snake advises, but agrees to assist and guide him because without the power and knowledge of a medicine man, Tallman is susceptible to the wrath and poison of the spirit peoples (68). Although Snake possesses the power of a practicing medicine man, he warns Tallman that the spirit peoples there are bigger than the both of them, especially the "giant man" whose "heart is all black" (69). Until that point, Tallman had felt that the spirits "couldn't touch [him]; [that he] was smarter than ghosts"; the warning brings him to a new understanding (78).

In *Ghost Singer*, songs, ceremonies, and oral stories/histories create a bond between tribal people, giving them a sense of identity and community, as in the case of Tallman and Snake. Another example is when Jonnie Navajo "chant[s] in a sing-song voice" that all medicine men have: "[one] could not tell where the old man's own voice separated from all the voices of other medicine men. . . . Yes, they all sang as one, the melded voices drifted down . . . through time" (120). Not only do the melded voices represent the sense of community achieved through song, but they also stand for the guidance and healing from the past reaching into the present and future. Jonnie Navajo asserts that it is the ceremonies that "insure that our bodies and minds work . . . in harmony" and provide the "advice . . . on how to live, how to think of our Mother Earth and Father Sky, and how we should

address one another in a system of kinship" (121).

In this system of kinship, Jonnie Navajo conducts a protection ceremony for his grandson Willie Begay. The ceremony is held in Begay's hospital room where white medicine men have not been able to cure him. Jonnie Navajo explains the cause of his grandson's illness as having come into contact with the modern-day slavery of their people who "are still being bought and sold even though they are dead" and are "in bits and pieces" (181). The atrocity of the theft and commodification of Indian remains, according to Wilbur Snake, lies in the fact that people without an understanding of Native American cultures do not recognize the holiness of the bodies and the body parts in the collection. He contends that "any part stands for the whole," including the "unseen part of the man . . . his memory, his mind, and his spirit" (176). Snake not only links what is "seen" and "unseen" in people, but also fuses people with their culture and nature's cycles. This holistic perspective of time, identity, community, and environment is crucial to understanding the living aspect of the artifacts in the collection and the ramifications of Begay's contact with the scalp.

The power of the protection prayer, Jonnie Navajo tells his grandson, derives from an understanding of "its age, its meaning, and the existence of such prayers and people." For the prayer to work for Begay, he must understand its context within Navajo culture. His grandfather tells him that the power of the prayer is lessened simply by invoking it in a foreign land and that he must "have a ceremony for [him]self on [his] return home." It is only then that Willie will be able to "go forward with [his] life." The ceremony serves to decontaminate him from his association with the dead. The old man's advice afterwards is that his grandson return home and "have a ceremony" for himself so that he may "go forward with [his] life" (181). The beliefs and power are thus handed down two generations.

The power of ceremony causes Russell Tallman to re-evaluate his own approach to life. He participates in a ceremony that his grandfather, Wilbur Snake, conducts in the attic of the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History to try to appease the spirit people. During the ceremony, Tallman sees spirit people from different tribes, the physical strength of the warrior spirit, the fear and skepticism of Donald Evans and his girlfriend who are also participating, the power of the ceremony and his grandfather, and the failure of the ceremony due to the inability of the Anglo participants to trust and believe. Tallman realizes afterwards that he has spent his life "on the sidelines of his people and frequently crossed over to the other side—the Anglo side—which demanded . . . that he deny this part of himself" (188). He also admits to himself that until the ceremony,

he hadn't really believed his elders, their stories or their

philosophies of life. He had doubted and even feared them and the ideas that had shaped the elders. The road Russell chose was easier. . . . He didn't have to confront any mysteries. Everything was decided for him: this is right, this is wrong; this is true, this is false; this is good, this is bad; this is the "real world," this isn't . . . (188)

Tallman has thus tested the sources of "new" and "old" information and is working toward integrating the two. He realizes that by choosing one and excluding the other, he denies a part of himself. He deconstructs his own idea of the terminal Indian and the educated, acculturated Indian to reconstruct himself syncretically to exist in the very real Indian and white worlds he lives between.

Tallman understands that the dualistic arrangement of the Anglo world has influenced him to decontextualize the artifacts in the collection. He comes to accept that he cannot separate the artifacts from the people who created them, nor can he separate the people from himself. He understands how his grandfather's source of strength comes from "the earth, dreams, power, and people, the dimensions of people, time and space" (210-11). Tallman chooses to leave D.C. to work in Kansas which "ain't home, but it's close enough to it" (211). He acknowledges and respects the evil in the attic and believes that his survival is dependent on his departure; he "knows when to be afraid." Tallman's movement toward home is a destiny that the artifacts in the attic will probably never fulfill.

Tallman reconciles the predicament that Jonnie Navajo identifies as a "prone[ness] to accept . . . things . . . we hear about ourselves from outsiders . . . more quickly than we accept old information . . . given to us by our relatives" (121). Jonnie Navajo believes the knowledge acquired in the hogan is vital, but he does not discredit the importance of formal education: "I, myself, have nothing against school. The young people are going to need it. . . . A great deal depends on our relatives, what they teach us. If we are willing to pay the cost for what we learn from them, then there is much to be gained" (122). The advice that Walters gives the reader through the character of Jonnie Navajo is to continue testing the old ways through ceremonies and songs and to test and try the new information as well (121).

All the present-day tribal people leave Washington D.C. to break contact with the spirit people, especially the angry ghost singer. Willie Begay goes home to his people to learn the stories told in the hogan, stories that reveal the past that has led to the present and will shape the future. Willie Begay, educated in both the Anglo and Navajo worlds, resists being sucked up into "the vacuum" through his survival and resistance to assimilation by returning home, learning the stories, and adopting a holistic outlook.

A holistic vision of self, community, spirituality, and environment is only possible through a cyclical, ceremonial perspective of time. It is a vision and perspective that the Anglos in this novel never come close to respecting or understanding. Their linear delineations of time and reality serve to separate them from their families, their communities, and the environment, as well as to fragment themselves as individuals. Walters sets up the most educated Anglo in the novel—historian David Drake—to fail through his inability to escape his conditioning. Though unconvincingly portrayed, Drake shows how even the best-intentioned Anglo chooses personal gain over the opportunity to allow tribal people to speak out beyond the boundaries of time to reclaim their history. His plan to include a Navajo perspective in his research on Native American history falls to the wayside when his colleagues dismiss it as "uneducated," "sentimental," and "romanticized" (198). Just as in the case of the artifacts, Native American histories become objects that Anglos manipulate and validate through separation from tribal contexts.

The present-day tribal people and the spirit people in *Ghost Singer* avoid or resist falling into the confines of the terminal or invented Indian disseminated by outsiders' renderings of Indian artifacts and history. Walters examines and rejects static, essentialist definitions and interpretations of Indians as extinct peoples of the past by constructing characters who confront and negotiate their identities as Indians in the present by learning from experiences, stories, and ceremonies of the past. According to Walters, in the words of Jonnie Navajo, the terminal Indian is imprisoned within "papers . . . written by men. That we exist, that we are here, this is the one thing that cannot be refuted. . . . We can continue to live . . . with our prayers and songs" (217). The novel ends on a less optimistic note with the natural, peaceful death of Jonnie Navajo, and Begay pondering whether "his grandfather's grave would be safe . . . in the sandstone valley near his winter home" (219-20). The threat of desecration and artifactualization continues, as does the need for resistance to it.

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East and Forever

Stuart Hoawah

They garb me for exile,
Where trees sag from
Thick humidity pressing on limbs.
Non-mutable accents will stretch
My vocals to mutate.

Away from my red dirt,
I suffocate in endless, wet cotton
Gasping to become more than cargo.
Is this how Ft. Marion felt?
Mildew blossoms in every corner of this.
Only now, lanking pine needles crash
Into my stars instead of salty waves.
I stole neither horse nor life.
After century-long cackles
Of snatching trains,
I arrive on a mother's cry.

FORUM

1995 President's Report

As we roll into 1996, I would like to thank you all for your support of ASAIL, especially those faithful sponsors who keep on giving financially, those who contribute their support by attending our meetings and offering their input, and those who circulate and promote our publications. Our mailing lists continue to grow, and so does our responsibility to provide information and share ideas central to the study of American Indian literatures. Without this joint effort, we would not be able to sustain the important intellectual work we do.

As I step down as president, I am happy to announce to those of you who have not heard that Susan Scarberry-García was elected to serve a two-year term as president. Susan will guide the organization well, with your help. Special thanks are extended to Bob Nelson and John Purdy, both of whom have made my tenure as president much easier and more fun than I had imagined. Bob and John work hard at producing *SAIL*, at maintaining its high quality and keeping it rolling on schedule, and they deserve all our thanks and praise. Thanks, too, to Betty Louise Bell and Inés Hernandez for their work on the Executive Committee as consultants in times of need.

This year's MLA sessions, both those sponsored by ASAIL and those sponsored by the Division, were well-attended and provocative. The first night we launched our activities with "Native American Voices of the Midwest," a reading held at the Newberry Library and organized by LaVonne Ruoff. We applauded the fine performances of Betty Louise Bell, Kimberly Blaeser (with a guitar accompaniment on one poem by Craig Womack), William Penn, Roberta Hill Whiteman, and Carter Revard. Thanks to LaVonne and the Newberry for making it happen! The interest in the teaching sessions we offer is most

gratifying, drawing an audience that spills out of the room every time.

At our business meeting, in addition to electing Susan Scarberry-García (Navajo Preparatory School) as president, we re-elected Bob Nelson (U of Richmond) as treasurer. Robert Dale Parker (U of Illinois-Urbana) and Ruth Rosenberg (Kingsborough CC, CUNY) will appear on the ballot for the next seat on the Executive Committee of the Division for American Indian Literatures; Alanna Kathleen Brown (Montana State U) was elected this year. Fred White (UCLA) will replace Betty Bell when she steps down as delegate to the Assembly. Ofelia Zepeda and Kenneth Roemer shared in the leadership of the meeting.

Hertha Wong reported on the status of our move toward incorporation. The papers are in the works and will assure us a more official status, so that once we are an incorporated organization we will not be marginalized within the larger MLA organization. We'll keep you posted.

A special committee met to come up with ideas on how to increase ASAIL membership; John Purdy, Susan, and Bob will be consulting about the ideas generated at that meeting. We agreed to continue offering small grants to American Indian graduate students attending MLA; this year Janice Gould and Fred White will be recipients of grants. Although we have not had an overwhelming response to our plea for special sponsorship of our free subscriptions to tribal colleges, we agreed to continue that service for another year. Bob Nelson is working on expanding and updating Franchot Ballinger's 1993 guide to Native American Studies programs, which will eventually be available on the internet free of charge. ASAIL also supports this service.

Next year's MLA will be held in Washington, D.C. ASAIL will be sponsoring two sessions: "Elders in American Indian Poetry" (organized by Janice Gould [U of New Mexico]) and "A Performed Play by William Yellow Robe" (organized by Gloria Bird [IAIA]), the details of which are being worked out. The Division will be sponsoring three sessions: "Speaking to be Heard: American Indian Oratory" (organized by Malea Powell [Miami U]); "Teaching Native American Literatures to Various Audiences" (organized by Susan Scarberry-García); and "Voices in the Distance: The Teaching of Native American Languages" (organized by Ofelia Zepeda [U Arizona] and Roberta Hill Whiteman [U of Wisconsin-Madison]). Please contact the organizers if you have questions, suggestions, or proposals.

Thanks again for your support and encouragement. May 1996 bring you joy and prosperity.

Kate Shanley

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Upcoming Sessions at ALA (San Diego, 30 May-2 June)

ASAIL is scheduled to present two sessions at this year's American Literature Association conference, to be held at the Bahia Resort Hotel at Mission Bay, 30 May-2 June 1996. Our thanks to Catherine Rainwater of St. Edward's University for serving as the ASAIL liaison to ALA this year. The sessions are:

Native American Identity

Chair: Eric G. Anderson, Oklahoma State U

1. "Author as Insider, Author as Outsider: Representations of Racial Identity and Oppression in Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona* and Mourning Dove's *Cogewea*"—Vanessa Holford Diana, Arizona State U
2. "'It Pays a Woman to Be Greedy': The Poetics of Native American Women's Autobiography"—Lisa J. Udel, U of Cincinnati
3. "Recovering the Self: Knowledge and Authority in *Winter in the Blood* and *The Death of Jim Loney*"—Anna Krauthammer, CUNY

Native American Literature Negotiates Boundaries

Chair: Helen Jaskoski, California State U, Fullerton

1. "'He Pushed His Mind Through and Pulled His Body After': Permeable Boundaries in James Welch's *Fools Crow*"—Eric G. Anderson, Oklahoma State U
2. "Wolfgang Iser, Boundary Crossings, Liminality, and Native American Literature"—Christopher LaLonde, North Carolina Wesleyan C
3. "Eternal Triangles: Summer, Winter, and the Medicine Women of *Ceremony* and *Tracks*"—Kristan Sarvé-Gorham, Emory U

Calls for Submissions

SAMLA CONFERENCE, SAVANNAH GA, 8-10 NOV. 1996

For the third year, there will be a special session on American Indian literature at the 1996 South Atlantic Modern Language Association conference, to be held 8-10 November in Savannah, Georgia. Send papers/proposals by **1 May 1996** to:

Sandra Sprayberry
Department of English
Box 549028
Birmingham-Southern College
Birmingham AL 35254

or inquiries to SSPRAYBE@BSC.EDU.

***CIMARRON REVIEW* SPECIAL ISSUE**

The Cimarron Review, a national journal of arts, letters, and opinions published at Oklahoma State University, will devote an issue to American Indian poetry, fiction, criticism, and essays in the Fall of 1996. In this issue, the editors hope to combine the works of established writers with the works of emerging contemporary American Indian writers. The editors therefore strongly encourage poets and writers with little or no publication experience to submit their work for this upcoming issue.

Please send your work to the following address before **1 July 1996**:

Michael Wilson
Dept. of English and Comparative Literature
PO Box 413
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Manuscripts will be returned when accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

In the Tradition of Native American Autobiography? Janet Campbell Hale's Bloodlines

Frederick Hale

Bloodlines: Odyssey of a Native Daughter.

Janet Campbell Hale. New York: Random House, 1993.

\$18.00 cloth, ISBN 0-679-41527-0. 192 pages.

Rpt. New York: HarperCollins, 1994. \$11.00 paper,

ISBN 0-06-097612-8.

Autobiography as typically understood in modern Western thought was not an indigenous Native American genre but, under widely varying degrees of Euroamerican influence, aboriginal peoples of North America have nevertheless made hundreds of contributions to it since the Eighteenth Century. This participation can be traced at least as far back as Samson Occom's "A Short Narrative of My Life" in the 1760s. Indeed, owing to the popularity of such works as Charles Eastman's *From the Deep Woods to Civilization: Chapters in the Autobiography of an Indian*, the memoiristic volumes by Luther Standing Bear, and *Black Elk Speaks*, no other general form of Native American literary expression is better known to the reading public than autobiography.

In their theoretical and descriptive analyses of this subject, Krupat and Brumble have subdivided it into "autobiographies by Indians" (i.e., those written by the subjects themselves with little or no editorial intrusion) and "Indian autobiographies" (i.e., collaborative treatments in which the Native Americans whose lives are recounted have in one way or another served as informants to Euroamerican editors whose involvement has ranged from relatively innocuous structuring of seemingly disjointed episodes to heavy-handed rewriting in which the indigenous subjects rest transmogrified beneath one or more layers of

foreign culture).¹ Either with or without prompting from nontribal people, Native Americans have recorded their lives, or at least partial treatments of them, for a variety of religious, legal, psychological, and other reasons. Though often fragmentary and, from a Western intellectual perspective, unpolished, their testimonies collectively form a rich lode in which argonauts with a wide spectrum of interests can mine tons of paydirt. Historians have used narrators to provide new perspectives on historical events, while anthropologists have sought insights into indigenous folkways by focusing on the life accounts of people who were raised in accordance with them.

Autobiographies by female Native Americans, one of the most marginalized and stereotyped groups on this continent, comprise a noteworthy sub-genre which was long overlooked and has never been given its scholarly due although recent investigations by especially Kathleen M. Sands and Gretchen M. Bataille have begun to reverse this heritage of neglect.² These accounts form a separate literary tradition from those by their ethnic brethren in that they tend to concentrate more on private lives and personal development than on personal deeds and involvement in previously recorded historical events. Like their male counterparts, however, Native American women autobiographers have usually straddled two cultures, and the relative strength of indigenous and Euroamerican influences on them has shaped the memoirs of each such person. From Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins' politically conscious *Life Among the Paiutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* in the 1880s to Leslie Marmon Silko's multi-genre *Storyteller* a century later, well over 100 American Indian women have written accounts of their lives, often in collaboration with Euroamerican editors.

Janet Campbell Hale's *Bloodlines: Odyssey of a Native Daughter* is one of the most recent additions to this little-explored tradition, a markedly self-revelatory volume in which an acclaimed Native American author both plows familiar furrows and breaks new ground. In this often dissonant literary suite Hale retraces many of the steps through the journey of her life which she took in her second and emphatically autobiographical novel, *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture*.³ Critics have praised *Bloodlines* as "mesmerizing," "deeply moving," and "a beautifully written memoir."⁴ Like most of her female predecessors, Hale focuses on her private life while casting only occasional glances at historical events as associative mileposts for her memory without attempting to discern the impact the latter made on her. Furthermore, like many earlier Native American autobiographers on whom Euroamerican cultural influences have been determinative, she emphasizes the centrality of personal relationships and the impact of turning points in her life on her psychological development, if in a generally haphazard way, rather than episodically relating individual

achievements. *Bloodlines* is thus light-years removed from the male Native American traditions of *inter alia* coup tales and accounts of successful vision quests. In terms of narrative technique, moreover, Hale's volume is partly conventional. As Krupat and Brumble have correctly generalized, "the closer the Indian autobiographer is to his or her tribal traditions, the more the writer tends to rely on pre-literate autobiographical traditions."⁵ Conversely, Native Americans who have taken their cultural cues chiefly from Euroamerican civilization write according to the conventions of Western autobiography. Hale's tent is clearly pitched in the latter camp, although she ventures outside the confines of its well-defined perimeter with regard to structure and compass.

As Bataille and Sands have noted, "a wide range of personal intentions and experiences" have fueled the sub-genre of female Native American autobiography.⁶ A consideration of purpose is essential to an informed reading of *Bloodlines*. In what might be one of the most revealing lines in this book, Hale cites Wallace Stegner in a brief, solitary quotation printed on an isolated page before beginning her own account: "The guts of any significant fiction—or autobiography—is an anguished question." She seems to pose two questions that form the obverse and reverse of the same coin. First, Hale seeks to come to grips with the dysfunctionality that she believes has been passed from her miscegenated family of origin to her own life and, secondly, understanding her estrangement from her Coeur d'Alene tribal heritage. Most of *Bloodlines* can and probably was meant to be read as a quest for answers to these twin queries, and much of this exercise in emotional catharsis reads less like a historical account than one dictated from a psychiatrist's couch as Hale seeks but never really finds the solution to her own two-edged "anguished question." She explains late in the book that after marrying as a teenager she retrospectively created a happy childhood that she could share with her own offspring, a sanitized version of the reality that had burdened her own early years. After her son and daughter had attained their majority, however, the time had come to re-examine the skeletons in the Campbell closet which continue to haunt her and alienate her from her ethnic roots (166-69). Indeed, in her preface Hale acknowledges bluntly, "Once I longed to belong to the family I came from. Not anymore. I'm one of its broken-off pieces now" (xxxiii). Similarly, she explains that "some families will, if they can, tear you down, reject you, tell you you are a defective person. . . . If you come from such a family and you have no one else to turn to, then you must, for the sake of your own sanity and self-respect, break free, venture out on your own and go far away" (xxi). Furthermore, in Hale's first chapter, "Autobiography in Fiction," in which she describes the creation of a quasi-autobio-

graphical character about whom she feels compelled to write, she confesses, "I am in fact really doing this for therapeutic, not artistic reasons" (5).

As severe as this judgment may initially seem, it is inescapable when one reads Hale's bleak account of her childhood and adolescent years. Coming immediately after the previously mentioned chapter in which she explores the relationship of autobiography and fiction and a very brief one touching on her father's tribulative early life, in which she seems to find the roots of his alcoholism, Hale begins her own life story with a chapter of more than sixty pages, "Daughter of Winter," which sheds enough light on her disastrous early relationship with her mother to destroy whatever positive reputation the older woman had enjoyed. Writing not long after the death of her mother, Hale makes no effort to veil either her own enduring bitterness or her failure to resolve long-standing tensions in their relationship. The older woman was well past forty when Hale was born and had lost whatever personal happiness she had had before entering into two disillusioning marriages. Hale describes at length how her increasingly arthritic mother repeatedly fled her occasionally abusive husband on the Coeur d'Alene Reservation during the early 1950s and, with Janet in tow, rode buses from one locale to another in the Pacific Northwest, taking temporary jobs while living in poverty and never providing a secure familial base. Hale dwells on the consequences of being "so damned, damned poor" during her nomadic years—living in housing barely fit for human habitation, eating boiled barley, and at times not having adequate clothing to shield her from the penetrating chill of winter.

Her physical tribulations, however, paled in comparison to the pain caused by the barbs that flowed from her mother's mouth. Hale calls her mother "a master, an absolute master of verbal abuse" (61) who, rather than seeking to bolster her flagging self-esteem as a Native American, reminded her that she had been her worst pregnancy, swore at her repeatedly, inflicted guilt feelings on her, and briefly expelled her from their modest apartment in Omak, Washington, when Janet was seven years old. Small wonder, then, that Hale appreciated their periodic returns to the reservation and her parents' short-lived reconciliations, as she found her father, despite his sporadic drunkenness, generous and mild-mannered. His employment as a carpenter provided them greater sustenance than her mother could earn as an itinerant menial laborer.

The tensions in Hale's formative years become more understandable, she believes, when seen against the backdrop of her family tree. Her mother, Margaret Sullivan, we learn belatedly, was the daughter of an Irish railroad man from County Clare who had married an Anglophone Native American of Kootenay, Ojibway, and British-

American extraction, a granddaughter of "the Father of Oregon," John McLoughlin. Hale's light-skinned mother thus inherited at least a shadow of Hibernian identity, although by Hale's acrid testimony this did not extend beyond being nominally Roman Catholic, speaking with a brogue on Saint Patrick's Day, drinking heavily and serving as her alcoholic second husband's enabler until becoming a teetotaler, frequently peppering her language with vulgarities, and having an unfulfilled lifetime wish to set foot on the old sod. Worse than her mother's sins of commission in this regard, Hale believes, and more consequential for her own development, was her mother's failure to harmonize with her father's Coeur d'Alene tradition after fleeing her first husband and their two children in the 1930s. Indeed, Hale relates how her maternal grandmother never accepted her father and—despite her partially Native American lineage—resented the fact that Margaret, alone among her siblings, had not taken a Euroamerican spouse. Owing both to this enmeshed family background and her years of itinerancy away from the Coeur d'Alene Reservation (which the Campbells left permanently when Janet was ten to live in and near Tacoma, the Yakima area, Portland, Pocatello, and various other places), Hale never spoke her tribal language or inherited more than a smattering of its rapidly fading traditions. Eventually she left her family of origin at age fifteen, dropped out of high school without graduating, became pregnant and married while still a teenager, bade the Pacific Northwest adieu, and settled in San Francisco.

Lacking both appropriate self-esteem and the foundation of a well-nurtured childhood, Hale found young adulthood in the Bay Area challenging and disillusioning. Giving credence to her belief in the tendency of familial dysfunctionality to manifest itself from one generation to another, she married a somewhat older and much better educated Euroamerican (Harry Arthur Dudley III, whom, however, she does not identify by name in *Bloodlines*) who ridiculed her ethnic identity and relative lack of formal education. His employment as a social worker did not prevent him from beating her until she fled to a welfare hotel in San Francisco and eventually divorced him at age eighteen. A second marriage, this one to another Euroamerican, Stephen Hale, produced a daughter, Jennifer, who was born in 1971, but this union also ended in divorce.

In the meantime Hale had begun to find her temporal salvation through education. Unable to secure permanent, adequately remunerative employment while caring for her infant son, this high school dropout worked at a variety of ungratifying temporary jobs while living in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood of San Francisco in the mid-1960s before gaining admission to the City College of San Francisco and eventually transferring to the University of California across the bay in

Berkeley. Receiving sorely needed financial aid, she completed her baccalaureate degree and continued to gain a sense of direction and greater self-respect at that renowned institution, in whose intertribal Native American community she became involved.⁷

In the remaining chapters of *Bloodlines*, Hale explores her later search for her Native American identity, a quest that led to such repositories as the D'Arcy McNickle Center for the Study of the History of the American Indian at the Newberry Library in Chicago and to the wilds of northern Montana to visit a monument to the battle of 1877 in which the United States Army defeated Chief Joseph of the Nez Percé and probably came close to killing her young paternal grandmother in a massacre of more than 400 indigenes. Eventually Hale taught at the University of California, Northwest Indian College in Bellingham, Washington, and other tertiary institutions before leaving the American West to settle in New York City with her third husband, Muhammed Ashraf. These matters, however, she covers only fleetingly as they relate to her primary concern in *Bloodlines* of coming to grips with the twofold "anguished question" of her cultural identity and personal alienation. Hale informs readers, though, that even when living in the exotic habitat of the East Coast she remains a Coeur d'Alene, as she assured the personnel at the tribal school on a visit to her home reservation in 1992 (xix).

In various respects, that range beyond her burdened relationship with her mother, much of what Hale reveals in *Bloodlines* contributes to an understanding of Native American living conditions in the Pacific Northwest during the 1950s and, indirectly, to a more informed reading of her fiction and poetry. One finds in the pages of this volume a fair amount about life off the reservation at that time, though very little about growing up there—not surprisingly, considering that Hale spent an aggregate of only a few years on her tribal land before her family left northern Idaho permanently in 1956. Her childhood relations with Euroamericans were strained. Hale relates that when she and her mother were living briefly in Omak, Washington, around 1952 or 1953, white children ostracized her on the playground of Christ the King Elementary School, a Roman Catholic establishment where she claims to have been "manhandled by sadistic nuns." Precisely what form this alleged physical abuse took and what prompted it Hale does not specify. Her chief accusation is directed at her peers at Christ the King: "They refused to touch my brown Indian's hands," she recalls, "even when the nuns tried to make them" (32, 139).

Hale is far more concerned, however, with the painful influence of other Native Americans on her early life. In describing them, she paints a generally gloomy group portrait in which alcoholism and verbal abuse stand out as dominant characteristics. Hale refuses to gloss over

their shortcomings and thereby sacrifice truth on the altar of ethnic pride. In this regard she pens some of her scant words of gratitude to her mother, whom she describes as an avid reader despite having received only three years of formal education. While drafting her first novel, *The Owl's Song*, in the late 1960s at age 23, her fear of producing a denigrating picture of Native Americans temporarily inhibited her writing. "The protagonist's family was poor and the father and the sister drank a lot. . . . I was torn between writing a novel that was true to my own vision and one that presented a positive image of Indian people." Hale's mother argued cogently for the former option, and her talented daughter followed her advice to put her own vision on paper as candidly as possible and not to "write some nonsense to please someone else" (xxii).

Hale's representation of Native Americans is thus frank and, in *Bloodlines* as in certain previous works, to a great extent unflattering. Her description of her mother's sisters illustrates this more succinctly than any other paragraph in her publications to date: "They were rude and crude. They smoked and drank. They swore and said 'shit' a lot. They made stupid, snide remarks about Indians, too, whenever they could" (116).

Hale's candor reaches its apogee on the private level, however, when she describes her initial menstruation at the age of ten and a half. The incident takes place when the Campbells are living in a rural area near Tacoma while her father is employed at McChord Air Base. Hale is sent out to spend her first time-of-the-moon alone in a musty woodshed on the property while her mother and other relatives entertain themselves in the main house (36-38). Her narration of the painful episode echoes accounts of the Plateau Indian custom, shared with tribes of various other areas, of relegating girls on those occasions to menstruation lodges. But it contrasts with an earlier Plains Indian pattern in which older women of the tribe join their younger relative to counsel her on her powers of creation and on tribal and family traditions. In the context of Hale's memoirs, this initiation into biological maturity is the most graphic example in *Bloodlines* of a turning point in her life that influenced her emotional development. It was, moreover, one that she had to face alone without the potential comfort of her mother's or considerably older sisters' presence and thus serves as a typical microcosm of her tortuous odyssey towards adulthood.

By contrast, what is particularly disappointing to one who reads *Bloodlines* in search of greater insight into the origins of Hale's career and her evolution as a literary artist is that she gives this potentially pivotal subject a wide berth. To be sure, she remarks that as a teenager she read works by such Afro-American authors as James

Baldwin and Richard Wright and recalls that at the same time she wrote and submitted to *Ingenue* and *Mademoiselle* lyrical creations, though without enclosing stamped, self-addressed envelopes. This "great flood of poetry" which, typically, her mother and one of her sisters ridiculed, thus apparently led to nothing, and Hale cannot remember the contents of her early poems (50-51). In her revised and enhanced autobiographical account in *Contemporary Authors*, however, published in 1995, Hale reports that she won first prize in the Vincent Price Poetry Competition and a New York Poetry Day award in 1963 and 1964, respectively.⁸ Apart from Baldwin and Wright, one is left wondering which *littérateurs* made impressions on Hale's development. She declares flatly that as a teenager she did not read any Native American literature (50), but when and where she first encountered it, if not during her undergraduate years at the University of California, she does not disclose. This is particularly unfortunate, because her initial ventures into the world of fiction-writing apparently came in the late 1960s when authors like N. Scott Momaday were beginning to gain national attention. Hale's place in the Native American Renaissance is thus difficult to locate with precision.

The impact of recent Native American history on Hale's literary career also remains unnecessarily murky. The American Indian Movement was founded in Minneapolis in 1968 and quickly spread to other cities. An intertribal coalition of Native Americans occupied Alcatraz the following year as an act of protest which galvanized many of their ethnic fellows in the San Francisco-Oakland area. By her own account, Hale began to write her first novel, *The Owl's Son*, which deals with the experiences of an adolescent Coeur d'Alene boy in a West Coast city during the late 1960s, in 1969. Did these and other historical events stimulate Hale to take up her pen as a novelist?

Hale describes her auspicious if belated *entré* into higher education in detail, presumably because it served as an escape from poverty in San Francisco and gave her the tools to pursue her career as a writer. But, beyond stating that she studied at the City College of San Francisco (where she took a course in social psychology) before transferring to the University of California (where she studied law and eventually English), she relates virtually nothing about her university years. Other sources indicate that she studied at the Institute of American Indian Arts and pursued rhetoric as an undergraduate in Berkeley. Why did she select these various subjects and change from one to another? Again, what, if anything, did she gain from them that affected her writing?

Of no less potential importance, one wonders about the role of both indigenous Native American spirituality and Christianity on Hale's mind and her writing. Some of her works, such as *The Owl's Song*,

evinced a deep indebtedness to Native American religious beliefs and traditions. About this, however, Hale holds her piece in *Bloodlines*. She does comment that she was reared Catholic, apparently owing both to her mother's quasi-Irish identity and her father's nominal Roman Catholicism as a member of the Coeur d'Alene tribe, much of which Jesuit missionaries led into the Church of Rome during the latter half of the Nineteenth Century. Hale further comments disparagingly on her mother's religiosity (which included belief in a "cruel" God) and hints that she herself, in contrast to her own daughter, is an atheist or in any case a nontheist (58, 83). The contours of her spiritual road through the phases of her life remain unilluminated, however, as does the impact of whatever her religious beliefs have been on her literary production. The same might be said of her roles as a parent and wife. On the larger stage of American politics and social policy, one wonders how Hale responded to the civil rights movement of the 1960s, military involvement in Southeast Asia, various shifts in the strategies of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and numerous other matters that affected Native American life and, indirectly, letters.

As indicated earlier, a familiar refrain in the criticism of Native American autobiography has been that editors have transformed authorial voicing beyond recognition when shoehorning unpolished manuscripts into conventional Euroamerican forms for publication. This objection is hardly relevant to *Bloodlines*, however, whose editing at Random House seems to have been as loose as a goose in the spruce. All manner of linguistic and logical blemishes mar Hale's memoirs and could have been obviated with minimal editorial intrusion. At the most rudimentary internal level, too often the grammatical and orthographic standards fall short of what Hale generally attains as one with a master's degree in English. To cite but a few illustrative instances, she describes the splendor of the Snoqualmie Pass "as the ice and snow of winter begins to melt" (71), confesses that "I don't have a right to say anything like that nor to kick anyone out of Mom's room" (73), relates how her maternal grandfather's mother "snuck out of Ireland" (123), and has at least one incomplete sentence: "When I was six or seven years old, at Christ the King Elementary School in Omak, Washington, a little town adjacent to the Colville Reservation" (139). Gaffes of this sort obviously should not mar a work issued by a major publishing house. Nor can they be excused as reflections of Hale's ethnic heritage.

Similarly, a more demanding editor might have excised the redundancies that burden *Bloodlines*. The fascinating legend about ravens warning the Coeur d'Alene people in the mid-Eighteenth Century about the challenges that the advance of Euroamerican settlement would pose to their very existence, for example, is related

both at the outset of the Preface and on page 173. Hale informs readers twice within the space of twenty-four pages that her father was not a model Roman Catholic (151, 174). She explains on page 170 and again on 186 the etymology of her maiden name Campbell, which was derived from a Salish word for "dust." Twice Hale recounts nearly identical details of her mother's disastrous first marriage (xxiii-xxiv, 43).

On only a moderately more challenging editorial level, numerous geographical and historical inaccuracies in the text were overlooked. They detract from the overall cogency of *Bloodlines*. The Okanogan River in northern Washington, for example, becomes the "Okanagan River" in *Bloodlines* (34). Also within the geography of the Pacific Northwest, Hale's account of her father driving all the way from Worley, Idaho, to Osoyoos, British Columbia, merely to purchase alcohol legally, then leaving that Canadian town late the following day to drive back to Worley defies comprehension by anyone with access to a map representing that region of North America (176-79). Motoring in the opposite direction, Hale seems to believe that one can drive 500 miles south from the Coeur d'Alene Reservation and still be in Idaho (38). Her assertion that in 1879 young Native Americans were transported by freight train to the recently established Carlisle Indian School contradicts contemporary testimony by such participants as Luther Standing Bear, who wrote that the passenger car in which he rode across much of the country was "a beautiful room" with "many cushioned seats,"⁹ although she correctly points out that the primary purpose of that institution was one of acculturation. On the other hand, Hale homogenizes the complexities and inconsistencies of federal policies regarding indigenous peoples by asserting that "the government's intention all along was to get us to assimilate into the mainstream of America and to a large extent we have" (xx). In fact, even in the Twentieth Century the federal government has wavered on the question of assimilation; during the New Deal, for example, Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier advocated policies of cultural pluralism which countered previous efforts either to persuade or coerce Native Americans to give up many of their traditions.¹⁰ Moreover, Hale insists on two occasions that her father was buried in March 1969 on the date of the first Apollo moon landing (21, 182). In fact, the *Eagle* landed in the Sea of Tranquility and Neil Armstrong made his "one small step for [a] man, one giant leap for mankind" on 20 July 1969.

Fundamental details of Hale's own life also crop up contradictorily in *Bloodlines*. She states that she was born at an undisclosed location in southern California in 1946 and that she spent the first six months of her life in Oceanside before her parents and older sisters returned to

the Coeur d'Alene Reservation in June of that year (xvii). Yet in her autobiographical data in *Contemporary Authors*, published initially in 1975 and reprinted without modification in that series twenty years later, Hale stated that she was born in Plummer, Idaho (a village on that reservation), on 10 January 1947. She cannot decide whether it was in 1965 or the following year that she spent the summer in an attic room in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood of San Francisco (91, 94). Hale also seems confused as to whether her visit to her parents' home near Yakima on the eve of her enrollment at the City College of San Francisco was in 1967 or 1968. She apparently began her studies there in 1967, but she indicates that her father's death occurred "in March of the following year" (103), which suggests that this trip, on which her parents gave her financial assistance and a typewriter for use in her academic pursuits, was in 1968. Hale's memoirs cry out for a chronological table to assist confused readers.

One does not wish to quibble interminably about such *faux pas*, some of which are clearly of secondary importance. On the other hand, a reputable publishing house with a competent editorial staff is hardly advancing the cause of Native American literature by the careless editing of any author's work. With regard specifically to the present volume, a more demanding editor could have heightened the cogency of Hale's captivating memoirs, whose contradictions too often leave the impression of unreliability.

The place of *Bloodlines* in the recent history of Native American autobiography is not easily located. Referring principally to *The Way to Rainy Mountain* and *The Names*, in which N. Scott Momaday adopts an oral style in relating brief episodes with little connective material, Brumble and Krupat have asserted cryptically that "Momaday's autobiographical work has done a good deal to establish the form of the present generation of Indian autobiographers."¹¹ They cite Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller* as the most obvious heir of this new use of a venerable form. *Bloodlines* would not corroborate their generalization about Momaday's influence, however. To be sure, Hale also writes episodically in this work, and her style is largely oral, but these attributes can be more readily ascribed to the fact that *Bloodlines* is consciously a compilation of essays written over a relatively long period of time than to the sway of Momaday's early works, notwithstanding the impact that the mythic aspect of his *House Made of Dawn* made on her first novel, *The Owl's Song*.

Precisely how valuable writing *Bloodlines* was to Hale is impossible to determine. As indicated earlier, she stated that writing it was primarily a therapeutic exercise. Hale acknowledges, however, that there were "no resolutions" in her strained relationship with her mother (86).

What merit does *Bloodlines* have for the Euroamericans who presumably comprise the majority of this volume's readership or, for that matter, for those from other ethnic backgrounds? No doubt the multiple answer to that question rests in part on the expectations and needs of those who read the book. Like many other autobiographical accounts by Native American women, *Bloodlines* focuses on private rather than public events and vividly reflects the bicultural matrix in which it was conceived. From the pages of these essays one can glean much about certain phases of and difficulties in the first two decades of Hale's life, miscellaneous data about her ethnic background, the tribulations that urban life has posed for Native Americans, not least those who accepted "relocation" in order to become vocationally educated and to secure employment in the cities of the United States, and various kinds of relations between Native Americans and members of other groups. In these respects, Hale's book is quite revelatory, if generally sketchy and anecdotal.

The weaknesses of *Bloodlines* are equally manifest, however, and can hardly be overlooked by any specialist in Native American literature. Appropriate editing undoubtedly could have improved Hale's text, but no editor could have filled the lacunae in it. Unless Hale decides to rewrite her memoirs in a decidedly more comprehensive and carefully organized way, students of American Indian letters must await whatever further information about her personal life and literary career this sometimes quite candid author decides to reveal through various other channels.

NOTES

¹For an incisive treatment of the general subject, see David Brumble and Arnold Krupat, "Autobiography," in Andrew Wiget (ed.), *Dictionary of Native American Literature* (New York: Garland, 1994), 175-85.

²See particularly Gretchen Bataille and Kathleen M. Sands, *American Indian Women: Telling Their Lives* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1984), and Gretchen Bataille, *Native American Women: A Biographical Dictionary* (New York: Garland, 1991).

³New York: Random House, 1985.

⁴For examples of reviews that have focused almost exclusively on the merits of Hale's book while overlooking its faults, see those by A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff in *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 17.4 (1993): 128-31, and Andrea Higbie in *The New York Times Book Review*, 22 August 1993: 16.

⁵Brumble and Krupat, "Autobiography" 179

⁶Gretchen M. Bataille and Kathleen M. Sands, "Women's Autobiogra-

phy," in Wiget, *Dictionary of Native American Literature* 187.

⁷The difficulty in ascertaining the dates of Hale's undergraduate studies at the University of California typifies the frustrations that encounter anyone pursuing research on her life and illustrates the danger of uncritically accepting her own testimony without verification. Hale does not state in *Bloodlines* when she received her undergraduate degree there, but according to the autobiographical data she gave in *Contemporary Authors* in both 1975 and 1995, it was conferred in 1972. However, the Registrar at the University of California at Berkeley states that Hale received her Bachelor of Arts with a major in Rhetoric on 23 March 1974. Frederick Hale Private Archives, Janet Campbell Hale files, Susanne A. Castillo-Robson, Registrar, University of California at Berkeley, to Dr. Frederick Hale, 17 July 1995.

⁸"Hale, Janet Campbell," *Contemporary Authors: New Revision Series* 45 (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1995): 184.

⁹Luther Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1928) 128-29.

¹⁰For an incisive account of inconsistencies in federal policies regarding urbanization, see Larry W. Burt, "Roots of the Native American Urban Experience: Relocation Policy in the 1950s," *American Indian Quarterly* 10.2 (Spring 1986): 85-99.

¹¹Brumble and Krupat, "Autobiography" 182.

REVIEWS

The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents. Ed. and Intr. Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green. Boston: St. Martin's Press, 1995. \$35.00 cloth, ISBN 0-312-08658. 185 Pages.

In *The Cherokee Removal*, Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green attempt to demonstrate through the use of historical documents the complexity of the issues surrounding the Cherokee removal and the forces that led to it. This book will be greeted with great interest by the historical scholar and enthusiasm by the instructor. While the Cherokee Removal itself has been detailed in dozens of historical tomes, and the series of hardships endured by the Indians on the Trail of Tears has been recounted frequently, the reasons for the removal are usually summed up in a couple of sentences, if they are even mentioned.

Many factors, some of which are still unclear, came together to result in the removal. Of the reasons usually given, some were mere justifications for greed or revenge. Paternalism played a part, as did fear. All these factors form a complex web of interconnecting threads of motivation, desire, and belief.

Perdue and Green succinctly describe Cherokee life and beliefs before the advent of the whites. Cherokee life was based on the idea of balance. A Cherokee who committed an evil act could expect little

help from his own kind, for the Cherokee believed that the world must be put back into balance by the punishment of the offender. "Because all Cherokees accepted the same view of a balanced cosmos, clans stood back from the guilty party and did not retaliate for his or her death. Failure to restore balance, after all, threatened them as well" (4). This is contrasted to the whites' belief in the God-ordained rightness of their own culture. "To most Americans, 'civilization' was not an abstract concept. Rather, to be 'civilized,' Native Americans must dress think and act exactly the way rural United States citizens, ideally, did" (10). The reader is advised to keep these two very different philosophies in mind when reading later chapters, for it was, at least in part, the clash of two very different worldviews which eventually led to the tragedy known as the Trail of Tears.

As whites moved into Indian hunting grounds and the game disappeared from the forests, the Cherokee economy collapsed and they were forced to embrace the white way of life. Informal, clan-based law became codified. Farming, traditionally the province of women, became a male occupation. All those things that signified manhood to the Cherokee male were lost, women lost status and their place in government, and the world turned upside down. In the first two decades of the Nineteenth Century, many Cherokees voluntarily emigrated to the West where they could follow the only lifestyle they had ever known. Partly as a result of this emigration, the movement for removal gained impetus about 1820.

The authors believe several other factors were especially important in shaping the debate on removal.

The tide of public opinion in the South shifted in the 1820s and 1830s from a belief that the Cherokee were culturally inferior to a belief in the Cherokees' racial inferiority. The Cherokees' land was largely in Georgia, a state that justified its use of slaves through a belief in racial differences and the moral superiority of white Christians to all others. The Cherokees had proven to be able traders and excellent farmers. Many white Christians must have felt envy and resentment when "heathen" Indians, through industry and intelligence, became wealthy. Greed also must have played its part.

Some Cherokee families owned large estates with beautiful homes which could be had very cheaply once the Cherokees were removed. One such home is pictured in *The Cherokee Removal*. The Vann House is an enormous mansion of red brick. The house, along with "cabins, barns, mills, smokehouses, corncribs, a blacksmith shop, and eight hundred cultivated acres" (49) was seized by the State of Georgia in 1834. Many white land speculators appear to have made fortunes out of Indian homesteads seized by the states. Against these powerful forces for removal were pitted the federal government, the missionar-

ies, the tribal councils, and one Cherokee leader in particular: John Ross.

How this colorful melange of belief, motive, self-interest, philosophy, religion, and greed combined to force the Cherokees off their land is an epic story that can only be hinted at in this short book. *The Cherokee Removal*, like other books in the Bedford Series on History and Culture, is intended to be covered in a college course in a single week. For that reason, the book has two unavoidable drawbacks that must be considered by the instructor who contemplates assigning it.

The first drawback is that, for a large percentage of the students who are assigned the book, the hundreds of references compiled by the authors will have no use. In a one- or two-week course section, the student hardly has time to order the suggested books through inter-library loan before the section is done and he/she must move on to other studies. However, for those few students who choose to continue their studies of this important and fascinating period of American history, this book's citations will prove invaluable.

The second drawback is that the book had to be short. In a book which attempts to cover such a complex subject in so few pages, deficiencies are inevitable. It is simply impossible to cover all the relevant areas with any degree of thoroughness in such a small book. Some will be disappointed that the discussion is not more comprehensive. Some factors that may have played an important part in the sentiment toward removal are given short shrift or barely touched upon. This could not be helped as space was an important consideration.

The Bedford series feels the pinch more than other books of the same size since these books devote a great deal of space to presenting documents or portions of documents which could have been summed up in a couple of sentences.

Still, the value of these documents to an understanding of the subject should not be underestimated. The authors have included many documents of undoubted historical importance that can help the student to understand not only the complex issues involved but the logic guiding both the pro-removal and anti-removal factions. The editorials and pamphlets of Cherokee chief John Ross and *Cherokee Phoenix* editor Elias Boudinot are especially helpful in this regard, since they allow the reader to discern which issues and fears weighed most heavily upon the minds of each man and how each reasoned from them to his own pro- or anti-removal position. Instructors should find it easy to generate a lively classroom debate with this material.

But, of much greater interest—and importance—to most students will be the diaries and letters of ordinary Native Americans. These documents are one of the book's main strengths. While leaving out the

documents would have created space for more data, these documents cry out to us in a way that mere names and dates cannot. The letters and diaries make it possible for us to understand some of what the authors of these words felt as their world and their way of life was slowly taken from them. The documents can be especially important in helping casual readers or students advance beyond their own stereotypical images of American Indians. Through their own words, these people come alive and speak to us of their hopes, dreams, and fears. They cease to be abstractions and become human beings.

Finally, a close study of the historical documents included in this book will reward the reader who wishes to understand the status of Indian nations within the borders of the United States today. The federal government conducted treaty negotiations and recognized the sovereignty of the Cherokees and other groups for decades before the removal. That recognition is the basis for many of the suits being heard in various courts throughout America today.

Taken as a whole, *The Cherokee Removal* may be well worth a week of study for even the casual student; it is certainly worthy of extended perusal by anyone desiring a deeper understanding of the nature of culture change or a broader historical perspective on the Cherokee nation and its relations with the United States.

Ermal Eston Henderson

Dirt Road Home. Cheryl Savageau.

Willimantic CT: Curbstone Press, 1995.

\$11.00 paper, ISBN 1-880684-30-6. 92 pages.

"She carries her ninety years like a good joke," Cheryl Savageau says of her grandmother in a memorable line from her new collection of poems *Dirt Road Home*. Of Abenaki and French Canadian heritage, Savageau's poems of poverty, family, and mixed ancestry show her to be an adept storyteller and genealogist in verse. The title is from her poem "Trees," dedicated to her father: "Driving down the dirt road

home, / it was trees you saw first / all New England a forest." The collection speaks to those of us who have to travel more than one humble dirt road to find ourselves.

In the July/August 1995 issue of *American Poetry Review*, Michelle Cliff writes, "The Indian writer needs to reckon with the past again and again—Reenacting the past is part of the process of decolonization." Savageau's reconstruction of her family's past encompasses the complexity of mixed heritage, and this tension is apparent throughout the volume. The opening poem of the book is "Henri Toussaint," the story of a French Canadian ancestor with a specific name and clear identity, famous for his healing hands. It is followed by a poem to her unnamed Native grandmother, asking, "Grandmother, why are there no stories about you?" In a poem to her mother, she says: "my mother will be imagined / invisible as the Indians / my grandmother has expunged / from the family memory" (55). The work of reconstructing the Indian part of her identity is clearly the task she has been working at both literally and metaphorically since childhood, as she shows in her poem "Looking for Indians":

Each night my father
came home from the factory
to plant and gather
to cast the line out
over the dark evening pond,
with me, walking behind him,
looking for Indians (19)

There are memorable poems of her Roman Catholic childhood, such as "Crèche" and "Infant of Prague" in which a poor mother dresses a statue of Jesus more richly than she can dress her own children. In "Crèche" Savageau recalls her childhood wish: "I wish / with all the babies my mother keeps having / she would have one at Christmas, our own winter child / blessed by all the animals, breathing the life of stars" (57).

On the back cover, Marilyn Nelson Waniek says the book offers us a woman's celebratory vision, and the collection is indeed a celebration of the whole story of her heritage, including the dark blotches. In some poems Savageau blends past with present as many Native American writers do. In her poem "Sound of My Mother Singing" she recounts the story of her mother's childhood, juxtaposing images of a threatening father, who used a knife to force his daughter to sing for his entertainment, with images of his now grown daughter similarly abused in the workplace. Her woman's celebratory vision is most apparent in poems of domestic detail, where everyday things become art—cooking, laundry, the sweet and vinegary taste of life,

which she calls "the mystery / flowing from the earth / through her hands / to our open mouths" (72).

In later poems of the collection Savageau gives voice to the landscape, alive with dream and ancestors, showing that those who tried to expunge her family's Native memory did not succeed. At her father's death she sees him walk into the bright autumn woods, who welcome him back, "his relatives, green of heart, / and rooted, like him / in the soil of this land / called Ndakinna" (88). In the penultimate poem she writes to her grandmothers and grandfathers:

your blood runs thin in me
I catch sign of you
sideways in a mirror
the lines of nose and chin
startle me, then sink
behind the enemy's colors

You are walking the trails
that declare this body
Abenaki land
and like the dream man
you are speaking my true name
Ndakinna (90)

Janet A. Baker

First Indian on the Moon. Sherman Alexie.

Brooklyn, NY: Hanging Loose P, 1993.

\$12.00 paper, ISBN 1-882413-02-4. 116 pages.

This collection of poems joins Alexie's growing oeuvre. Since his first book, *The Business of Fancydancing*, received a *New York Times Book Review* Notable Book of the Year award following its publication in 1991, his audience has been expanding, and the popularity of his recent collection of short stories, *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight*

in Heaven (1993), published by Atlantic Monthly Press and subsequently featured by the Quality Paperback Book Club, ensures he will continue to reach more and more readers. Although at times the sense of cohesion breaks down for some of the poetry cycles embedded within this work and, on a larger scale, for the thematic units that comprise it, *First Indian on the Moon* again demonstrates Alexie's gift as an imagist, his lively interweaving of Native American and broader popular culture icons and metaphors, and his dignity, hope, and humor in the face of bitter realism. He returns to themes that drove his earlier writings: the great ironies of historical relations with the white man, reservation life, and the levels of impact of alcoholism on the individual, the family, and ultimately, on the survival and regeneration of his culture.

The poetic musings in this collection are interspersed with prose entries. When Alexie controls the theme the two flow together seamlessly, but sometimes the shifts create uncomfortable interruptions. One poem, "Fire Storm," is weakened by what would appear to be demonstrations of poetry workshop techniques: drawing on dictionary definitions to set up an aesthetic counterpoint, repeating the same sentence over and over but changing line length each time for effect. Poems intended primarily to demonstrate cleverness rarely succeed. Luckily, Alexie seldom falls into this trap. Much more often, the reader of this book will be delighted to come across an image, an epiphany, or an emotion conveyed with fresh, clear language.

First Indian on the Moon is divided into five sections: "Influences," "A Reservation Table of the Elements," "Tiny Treaties," "The Native American Broadcasting System," and "All I Wanted To Do Was Dance." Each section is named for a poem included therein that helps convey the theme for the grouping of poems, though Alexie often speaks to all the major themes mentioned above in a single poem.

From the outset he is poignant. In "Influences" he sketches the childhood nights he spent with his sisters in a car parked in front of a bar, waiting for his well-intentioned but alcohol-driven parents to return and take them home. In those long, often cold hours waiting for last call, he created stories to entertain and calm his siblings. "[T]his is not about sadness," he wisely notes; he was constructing "landscapes and imaginary saviors" (9). Alexie found his calling early on. He not only describes experience artistically, he also suggests fusions of old and new myths to regain a truer history of the past, endure the disgraces of the present, and build for possibilities in the future.

Alexie deftly confronts traditional art history with a wonderful one-page essay entitled "Scalp Dance by Spokane Indians," narrated by the central subject of the Paul Kane painting by the same name. Christopher Columbus pops up in several poems; the Ghost Dancers are

referenced reverentially; and Mary Rowlandson is thoughtfully revisited in "Captivity." Recurring references to Lester Falls Apart, Crazy Horse, and fancydancing help tie together the range of poems in this book. Even more dynamic is the way Alexie evokes a wide array of contemporary pop culture icons such as Elvis, John Coltrane, Bruce Lee, the Three Stooges, and Robert de Niro. The references are not strained; they flow naturally. One poetry cycle that works well is "Split Decisions," a fifteen-unit poem that celebrates Muhammed Ali as a cultural symbol, a timely exercise in light not only of deteriorating race relations in the '90s but also of the farce that Don King seems to be making of professional boxing these days. For me, most touching of all of these poems is a passage in "Citizens," a description of Patsy Cline haunting an old tribal school. I swear I could hear her voice on that moonlit reservation, plaintive and searching.

As mentioned earlier, many of the poems deal with the impact of alcoholism on self, family, and society. This can be a touchy subject for anyone in the '90s. For a Native American who certainly enjoyed his party days but has sworn off alcohol—which is the dominant but not constant stance of the narrative voice in these poems—it can mean walking a tightrope between maudlin self-victimization and the born-again-to-twelve-stepping hectoring of those still enamored of firewater. Thank goodness Alexie doesn't whine; he describes. The pains of alcoholism are very difficult to discuss in prose; they are more difficult to address in poetry. In the former category I would recommend Pete Hamill's *A Drinking Life* (Little, Brown, 1994); in the latter category, Alexie is honest, concerned, and usually more effective with understatement than many others who approach this topic with jeremiads and lamentations. Of particular interest here are two poems: "The Alcoholic Love Poems" and "A Twelve-Step Treatment Program."

The final poem of the collection gives its name to the entire book. It is a poem of strength, commitment, and sensitivity, a fine choice for this position of power. "First Indian on the Moon" invites comparisons to fairy tale Rapunzel, to Oedipa Maas standing before Remedio Varo's "Bordando el Manto Terrestre" in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, or to ancient hymns to Ishtar Diana, Selene. Beyond the erudite analysis, it is a rhythmic and personal love poem.

Not yet thirty, Alexie continues to strengthen his position as a spokesperson for Native American perspectives, someone that the *New York Times* and other journals of equal prestige can call upon to respond to new museum handlings of Native American cultures or the appropriation of Native American symbols and customs by other forces in society. James R. Kincaid has called him a "major lyric voice" and I strongly agree. Alexie has insight, he has wit, and his ability to quickly and effectively convey a precise and powerful image demon-

strates the skills sought by those who work in haiku or tanka. He also has messages that all Americans need to hear. We can look forward with pleasure to his ongoing development as a writer.

Scot Guenter

The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture. Daniel Francis. Vancouver BC: Arsenal Pulp P, 1992. \$15.95 Paper, ISBN-88978-251-2. 258 pages.

The imaginary relish is so sweet
That it enchants my sense.
Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus* III.ii [17]

The issue of image for the original inhabitants of this continent continues to be a source of tremendous conflict. Self-image amongst the First Nations of Canada is a subject that few address, and fewer still ever successfully confront. Perhaps the most influential factor that constantly sways the idea of image for First Nations people is their history. History, as Euro-Canadians chronicled mythology, paintings, and pictures of the various First Nations People, often conflicts and creates more false images of what an "Indian" is. Daniel Francis wonderfully captures the struggle to identify what those images have been historically and how such images have been only superficial in trying to capture the personhood of the First Nations people.

In *The Imaginary Indian*, we experience the power of those images as Francis traces Canadian culture as it comes into contact with the First Nations cultures. He presents the impact of the images in a fourfold approach: "I. Taking The Image"; "II. Presenting The Indian"; "III. Appropriating the Image"; and "IV. Implementing The Image." The first section presents the harsh reality of the historical setting in which the imaginary Indian originated in an interpretational painting of the death of James Wolfe, an English general. In the painting, Wolfe, well known for his lack of fondness for Indians, lies on the battlefield surrounded by army officers as his life expires. At his feet an Iroquois

warrior sits, chin in hands, looking intently at the hero. The facts that Wolfe actually died away from the battlefield and that he despised Indians provide the irony of the moment that the artist, Benjamin West, feels is unimportant; thus begins a legacy of imaginary portrayals that pervade Canadian culture.

Francis argues that the small First Nations population during the Nineteenth Century conjured the image of the vanishing Indian (16). This fact motivated an attempt to capture a record through painting and chronicling of the peoples by Paul Kane, similar to (and perhaps even imitating) George Catlin's work in the U.S. among its tribes. Though praised for accuracy, Kane would manipulate details of setting and landscape for impact (21). The result was a romanticizing of not only the scenery, but of the people themselves as they were extraordinarily depicted. With the arrival of photography, the images captured by photographers had the same effect. Highlighting the background and focusing on traditional dress and lifestyle, and thus eliminating the presence of Euro-Canadian culture, photographers easily froze the image of what they thought Indians should have looked like prior to white contact (41). And since the camera never lies, the images presented must of course be true—such was the flavor of the images in the paintings and pictures bestowed upon the world to see, to believe, and never to question.

The final chapter of this section deals with the historical advent of the Northwest Mounted Police in Canada. The image of the police, as they encountered the First Nations, portrays the belief that it was destiny for the First Nations to be the inevitable villain (61). With the establishment of the law and "civility" in Eastern Canada, the west would soon follow. The paternalistic image of First Nations as "child" then ensnared the foundling colony. It was also at this time that many of the First Nations communities had exposure to and subsequent difficulties with alcohol; thus, the image of the drunken Indian, wild and always fighting, emerged and provided the N.W.M.P. with plenty of justification. The images, written, photographed, and filmed, all romanticized the N.W.M.P. as honest, daring, brave, and equitable. In contrast, it stereotyped the First Nations people as drunkards and brawlers: lawless and gullible (81).

In the second part, "Presenting The Image," Francis addresses four aspects of images: "Performing Indians," "Celebrities and Plastic Shamans," and "Childhood Indians." The first section, of course, deals with the origins of the traveling Western shows in which many of the "attractions" were "real live Indians" (85). The prototype of this image is the cigar-store wooden Indian and its association with tobacco. The image of woodenness implied no emotion and no capacity to feel emotions in First Nations people (86). The shows, such as Buffalo

Bill's Wild West Show, reenacted scenes from history in which the First Nations people attacked white settlements while the star of the show would save the day. Francis claims that the image of a blood-thirsty savage pervaded the show, from the posters to the performances (91). Francis comments on the irony of the shows' impact on Canadian Society as politicians tried to restrict the attendance of First Nations people even though, for the most part, they were the main attraction. This is the same period in which the government implemented various laws banning such cultural practices as the Potlatch on the West Coast and the Sun Dance in the Plains (99).

It is no surprise, therefore, that the next chapter, "Celebrity Indians and Plastic Shamans," follows. The public need to see such anachronistic images and lifestyles set the stage for wannabes. Francis explains an important reason why such blatant displays of chicanery exist: "NONNATIVE CANADIANS have always formed their impressions of the Indian without much reference to actual Native people, and especially without hearing what Native people might have to say about their own situation" (109). He goes on to suggest that an inability to discern inauthentic First Nations voices stems from the fact that such voices conform to the popular image of what an Indian should be, thus, it goes without being questioned. The extent to which some of the "celebrities" and sham artists effectively pull the wool over the eyes of their admirers is also ironic; it merely reflects what the public wanted to think about First Nations people (142). The result of such fiascoes was a silencing of the real First Nations voices because the Canadian public, too busy tickling their ears with the inauthentic voices, did not want to hear the truth concerning the real issues (143).

Francis addresses the "Indians of Childhood" by reviewing the images that Canadian children learned as they grew up in their society. He suggests that the some of the images were not true images, but "images of the Indian created by various White writers and educators" (145). Though some images were actually positive, they still did not reflect the First Nations issues; rather, they only voiced what the Canadian society wanted to hear. It became evident for Ernest Thompson Seton, during the 1920s, that there were some traits that the First Nations people could instill in Canadian society (157). These traits were precontact traits, only a residue extant at the time of Seton's endeavors, traits of harmony, bravery, wisdom, and spirituality (156). The image of the self-reliant and harmonious brave, conjured up in the various camp experiences, soon faded in the reality that most First Nations did not, at that time, have that form of existence. Furthermore, images in Canadian history taught in school suggested that First Nations people were a threat to the Canadian nation and thus invoked both fear and pity (168).

The result leads to the next section, "Appropriating the Image," in which marketing plays an intricate role in extending the imaginary personas into the present. The marketing of Native images is one of the most difficult factors to control. Francis begins the section with the use of Pontiac as a name for an automobile and how this resulted in appropriating "an actual historical character and turn[ing] him into a commercial icon of the industrial age" (171). Francis nicely documents the early Canadian interest and fascination with the First Nations people and how tourism had much of its main selling point focused on "Indian Days" in which many could visit the cities and see the Indians in their "original settings" (180-81). From posters to movies, the images of the First Nations communities beckoned people to gawk at anachronistic lifeways, and still do (187). The irony is that the marketing attempts do not allow the First Nations communities the humanity that accompanies most other world communities. In a very incisive conclusion, Francis writes that, by marketing First Nations images, non-Natives can vicariously assume a sense of belonging to the land (190).

The final section, "Implementing the Image," addresses the consequences of the images forced on the First Nations people and how government policies address the images, not the people. The penultimate chapter addresses governmental impositions and how its favors benefited the communities or individuals that conformed to the popular images. The changing of their ways to conform to the assimilative bents of missionaries, educators, and the governmental officials always met with positive reactions, but at the same time, reinforced a dichotomy for those who did not conform; it perpetuated an image of discontent and an inability to conform, thus implying the superiority of the Western culture in the minds of the dominant culture. Not much has changed since then.

The final chapter reviews the processes that institute images as well as some of the most dominant images that the media construes of current personalities. Francis reveals that the impulse to reduce people to images is very alive and well in Canada, images that ultimately have no voice or power. Francis writes "the fantasies we told ourselves about the Indian are not really adequate to the task of understanding the reality of the Native people" (224). He suggests that as the images dissolve, the chasm between reality and fantasy will also dissolve.

In a moment of reflection, I pondered why Francis did not address what the real image looks like. He never actually defines what the "authentic" First Nations personality is. He never provides an image to verify the truthful character of the First Nations people. Then I realized that he could not provide such an image; it would only perpetuate the thousands of other images that currently compete with the First Nations' ability to exemplify or to challenge. The onus of

reality falls on the First Nations person; he/she must exemplify the reality of being an individual, and the First Nations communities must exemplify their realities as well, as the Nation observes.

The imaginary powerfully influences fantasies of the original inhabitants that both Canadians and Americans alike perpetuate. Francis proposes that now is the time to confront those historical and current images and allow the First Nations/American Indian to be real. There is no time like the present.

Frederick H. White

Ocean Power: Poems from the Desert. Ofelia Zepeda.
Sun Tracks 32. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 1995.
\$ 9.95 paper, ISBN 0-8165-1541-7. 91 pages.

Ofelia Zepeda's *Power Poems: Poems from the Desert* is a strong addition to "Sun Tracks—An American Indian Literary Series." An associate professor in the Linguistics Department at the University of Arizona, her poetry captures the incandescent relationship between water, weather and the Tohono O'odham people of "southern Arizona and northern Sonora, Mexico" (Zepeda 85). In the introduction, the author states "many of the pieces in this collection are about events around rain—rain in the desert and events that result" (4).

"The best rains . . . are the summer rains . . . also known as 'the monsoons.' These rains come in mid-July and last into August. This is the time of renewal for the O'odham" (87). Zepeda builds on this theme of cyclical renewal by extending it from the natural environment to the day-to-day, season-to-season existence of the Tohono O'odham as well as to herself as a modern day Tohono Native American woman, while "other [poems] are about people, my extended family and relatives" (4).

The path to renewal and ultimately to growth in Zepeda's poems involves looking to the past to see how the cycles of daily life—seasonal as well as climactic, familial as well as personal—cause one

to mature and shape the present and future. Memories move like the weather in Zepeda's cosmology; they "run into each other" (4) to create poetry which itself influences the memory, according to Zepeda (4). As she states succinctly and with insight: "I don't know why. It is just that way" (4).

Life's cyclic patterns are integral to Native American literatures as expressed in the chant-like nature of tribal songs and the repetition of specific lines which have a hypnotic effect. "The regular occurrence of repetition creates a state of consciousness best described as 'oceanic'" (Allen 11). Zepeda uses these characteristics in stunning and spellbinding ways as in "Ba:ban Ganhu Ge Ci:pia" (Zepeda 59-60):

Coyotes moving along over there
 Coyotes moving along over there
 Someone go over there and ask them . . .
 Where are you guys moving to? . . .
 with baby's new tenny shoes
 And her Merle Haggard and Hank Williams tapes
 In the Basha's grocery bags (ll. 8-10, 12, 17-20)

The poem begins with the first six lines written in O'odham where the repetitive feel is experienced:

Bu:ban ganhu ge ci:pia
 Bu:ban ganhu ge ci:pia
 Kut 'am hema medk 'am ha-kakk'e
 Kut 'am hema medk 'am ha-kakk'e
 Ba: mt o ci:pia?
 Kut 'am hema medk 'am ha-kakk'e
 Wa sa 'an wo:po son 'oidag (ll. 1-7)

This incremental repetition is subtle and involving, ensuring attention by using "variations" of a phrase. However, in Zepeda's cosmology, the universe is a neat juxtaposition of the past as expertly shown by her repetition of chants indicating the interaction between the narrator and the coyote and their coexistence within a modern world of tennis shoes, country western albums and "cowboy boots . . . / All worldly goods / Packed up" (ll. 21-23). The flow between the natural and man-made, spiritual and materialistic as well as the anthropomorphic and literal is encapsulated adroitly here, reinforcing the oceanic theme Zepeda wishes to explore in this volume.

In "Black Clouds" (20), the repetition in the lines "Like black buzzards, flying, far away" (l. 2) and "Like black buzzards, flying, so far away" (l. 6) is a fine example of how variation in a phrase can insure the reader's attention. The addition of *so* to the sixth line intensifies the nuance of the buzzard's flight. Ever so slight variations in the rhythm, meter or tempo of a line (musical or poetic) intrigues the

mind and the reader participates with the poetry on a much more mentally active level since "participation [in a ceremony] is a matter of attention" and "not of [physical] activity" (Allen 12).

Zepeda uses accessible imagery to involve the reader in "Black Clouds" as well:

Black clouds
drifting off in the distance.
like black buzzards, flying, so far away.
Rumbling, thundering.
Slowly they descend. (ll. 4-8)

Sparse, everyday language adds to the poem's ominous nature: the ironic interplay and stark opposition between the clouds (life) and the buzzards (death). This Shakespearean-like ironic collision is neatly drawn to a whole in the last line: "Slowly they descend," where life and death (rain and the buzzards) touch the earth simultaneously and the encapsulation of the passage from birth to death (buzzard) is compressed expertly into three words.

Zepeda's poems also evoke a chant-like incantatory nature that "serves to hold the society together, create harmony, restore balance, ensure prosperity, and unity and establish right relations within the social and natural world," to borrow from Paula Gunn Allen's definition of ceremonial (including chant) literature (19). In her afterword, Zepeda indicates man and nature work harmoniously "to establish right relations" (Allen 19) when Zepeda states O'odham dancing "is quiet barefoot skipping and shuffling on dry dirt—movements that cause dirt to rise quickly toward the atmosphere, dust that people believe helps to form rain clouds" (89). Human beings influence nature, and nature responds to influence humankind.

This point is exemplified in "Ka:cim Su:dagi" (81-82), with its chant-like, prayer-like feel:

Red-colored blossoms
Green-colored blossoms
Purple-colored blossoms
All float above the laying water . . .
Toward it we extend kinship
We touched this laying water
and then we left it alone (ll. 10-13, 16-18)

These lines illustrate the rhythm and incantatory nature of the poem, reinforcing the idea that people and nature are inextricably tied together and one's "kinship" with water is a respectful one where one treats water with reverence and does not exploit it needlessly. This mutual blessing is shown by the blossoms floating or being supported by a body of water which sustains them: a river, lake or ocean. Human

beings depend (float) on rainfall to survive so "Toward it we extend only good thoughts / Toward it we extend only good feelings / Toward it we extend kinship" (ll. 14-16), so the rain will reciprocate and extend its goodness toward humankind.

In "Cewagi" (26) the chant-like nature of certain lines blends with the repetition of specific words to give the piece a building tension, between the stillness of clouds, their gathering strength, and their final explosion in peels of thunder which hopefully portend a bountiful rain:

Summer clouds sit silently.
They sit, quietly gathering strength.
Gathering strength from the good winds.
This strength that becomes the thunder.
The thunder so loud it vibrates the earth.
The thunder that surrounds us. (ll. 8-13)

Each successive line is linked to the preceding and subsequent line by words or phrases showing the incremental link between the collection of clouds and the storm that ultimately follows. For example, the word "strength" links lines nine, ten and eleven, showing the growing power of the approaching storm. The word "thunder" in the last three lines is interlinked to show its growth (line 11) to its cacophonous manifestations and physical shakings of the ground (line 12) to its engulfing of people caught at the moment the thunderstorm comes to life. The incantatory tenor of the poem again shows the ties between humanity and nature and how "right relations within the social and natural world" (Allen 19) form the O'odham universe: "The thunder that surrounds us" (l. 13). Thunder brings rain, rain brings life to the desert and allows the O'odham to live in this environment.

"Na:nko Ma:s Cewagi (Cloud Song)" (15) is another example of how the repetition of words in successive lines relates to the growing power of an approaching rainstorm:

Greenly they emerge.
In colors of blue they emerge.
Whitely they emerge.
In colors of black they are coming.
Reddening, they are right here. (ll. 5-9)

The approaching storm clouds "progress towards" the reader as the poem develops and engulfs her or him in the last line, since "they are right here" (l. 9). Zepeda's use of "Greenly" and "Whitely" gathers our attention because of the odd adverbial structure of the words. These invented forms are intriguing and unusual, much as rain in the desert would be to the O'odham, whose "making rain [is called] 'fixing the earth'" (Zepeda 88) which "breaks the tension for the desert. Relief. Cycles [life] continues" (4).

By using these created forms, Zepeda has shown the importance rain plays in O'odham tribal life: its rare appearance and how the search to capture and control this sporadic occurrence makes us look at the universe in unique ways.

Zepeda also explores the role her "extended family and relatives" (4) played in influencing her growth into the person she has become: "those right relations within the social world" (Allen 19). In these poems we observe how Zepeda's environment has helped mold those individuals and the poet into iconoclastic personalities through the daily experiences they have gone through, as in "Hot Tortillas" (46-7): where "the air temperature is 115 outside, / inside her kitchen this heat is magnified by a wood-burning stove" (ll. 2-3). The intense heat does not deter the woman who "throws the spherical, airlike dough back and forth. / Dough, paper-thin and perfectly shaped. / They say a measure of a good tortilla maker is if you can read a newspaper through it" (ll. 9-11).

The special blend of personal talent and environmental circumstances has coalesced to produce a rare combination: the perfect atmosphere to produce the perfect tortilla. This specific moment is admired by onlookers in a reverent way since, "Most of us know better than to disturb her" (l. 19). The mixture of unique environment and individual industry is to be respected, according to Zepeda, as "the right relations within the natural and social world" (Allen 19).

An excellent example of "right relations" between natural elements and one's personal environment is captured in Zepeda's "Moon Games" (73-74). Here the link between moon and woman is drawn with an expert hand: "At night my daughter and I sleep well, / oblivious to the games going on outside our tent. / Our bodies in comfortable rhythm with the movements of oceans and moons" (ll. 4-6). The peaceful co-existence of women and lunar tidal rhythms is brilliantly and ironically mirrored in the actions of the narrator's restless husband who ". . . turns in his sleep at every thundering crash of wave. / The noise is deafening to him" (ll. 14-15), indicative of the male's alienation from the physical world's cyclical nature. The point is driven home in the poem's concluding lines where "In the morning he asks, 'Did you hear the ocean last night?' / He'd say 'I got up and looked at it to see what was wrong'" (ll. 17-18). The husband is the one out of sync with the ocean. He is not in harmony or in "right relations" with the natural environment: the same ocean that lulls and rocks his daughter and wife "like babies" (l. 12).

The last major motif Zepeda explores concerns the mystic reverence of Native American women toward their unshorn hair as developed over a "suite" of five poems: "Her Hair is Her Dress," "Hair Stolen," "Don't Be Like The Enemy," "Long Hair," and "Hair-

pins." These five pieces center primarily on a woman's relationship with her hair and how "Long Hair" (38) is seen and viewed by those of this world and those in the afterworld:

On the other side they sing and dance in celebration.
When we get there our hair must be long so that
they can recognize us.
Our hair is our dress.
It is our adornment. (ll. 1-4)

This piece succinctly captures how the length of one's hair is a badge of identification for one who belongs to a particular group of people—the O'odham. It is their heritage and must be "long so they [our ancestors] recognize us" (ll. 2 and 5).

If the hair is cut, as in "Hair Stolen" (36), victims are doomed or exempted from joining their ancestors on the other side since they have to "search the ashes for their hair when they leave this earth" (l. 10). They then lose their ability to become "one with the universe" (Allen 11). The principles that tie O'odham society together, to "create harmony, ensure prosperity and unity" (19), will literally be severed or cut, with the shorn individual forced into a netherworld of searching and lamentation.

This fear is again addressed in "Her Hair is Her Dress" (34-35) where a woman over a hundred years old has saved her hair all her life since she doesn't want to be, ". . . scratching through the ashes looking for" (l. 4) it after she dies. She wants to be in "right relations" with both the spiritual and natural worlds (Allen 19). Her hair is her insurance she will be allowed into the world on the other side.

In "Don't be like the Enemy" (37), the way hair is worn identifies one as being O'odham. If one's hair covers one's face, one will be like one's adversary, since untied hair makes one "like a savage" (l. 2). The face should be uncovered so the enemy can "know the light in your [the O'odham person's] eyes. / But don't stare. / Cover your face by lowering it slightly" (ll. 3-5). Zepeda wonderfully captures the pride of her people and how they understandably react to their adversary/oppressor with a spark of defiance, perhaps, but with an invulnerability that bends but does not break: an inheritance and result of their perilous life on the hard, serene and rain-dependent desert.

I have some problems with Zepeda's volume, albeit on a more philosophical, academic level. One of the poems, "Kots," is written entirely in Tohono O'odham with no English translation following the original, as Zepeda has done with all her other poems where O'odham is presented first and is then followed by the English equivalent as in "Na:nko Ma:s Cewagi (Cloud Song)," "Cewagi," "Bu:ban Ganhu Ge Ci:pia," and "Ka:cim Su:dagi." Zepeda defends the lack of an English

translation for "Kots" by stating some of her pieces are designed "for the small but growing number of O'odham speakers who are becoming literate in their native language. Here, then, is a little bit of O'odham literature for them to read" (4).

The exclusionary nature of "Kots" has great political clout, a sly commentary on Native American/Anglo relations with many far-reaching ramifications, but on the poetic level, the lack of translation runs counter to the purpose of poetry as I see it—a means of communication to bridge gaps between cultures. "Kots" separates the potential readers into two categories, O'odham or non-O'odham, and thus reduces the universality of the poem to a panache or occasional piece.

In her afterword, Zepeda takes a slightly pedantic, directive attitude toward her audience. I find this slightly bothersome since in several instances Zepeda offers interpretations of her work: "'The Floods of 1993 and Others' [which] is the story of a harsh winter that flooded the desert" (87). These directives are inappropriate in a book of poems where each piece should be allowed to stand on its own. The reader should form his or her own interpretation so each piece has relevancy—so it interacts with the reader on the reader's own level and allows him or her to "read in" or react to the poem so he or she gets as personalized a message as possible within the parameters the poem establishes.

As I see it, in her afterword, Zepeda tries to dictate how one should view some of her poems; she does not show, without editorializing, a universal situation one can relate to on one's own. She has reversed the old adage "show, don't tell" in her academically informative and overall interesting afterword.

I applaud her desire to introduce "readers not familiar with the Southwest tribe of people who call themselves Tohono O'odham, or Desert People" (85), the tribe "formerly known as the Papago" (85) and to supply "references for those interested readers who want further information" (85). But I feel this should be done in a separate scholarly book or article on the relationship of the O'odham to the environment, especially rain, and the poetry the rain inspires. Poetry should educate subtly; academic discourse should teach directly. Zepeda's need to serve both masters in *Ocean Power* makes her restrict the range of possible interpretations of the three poems noted above. This is too intrusive and controlling for the reader and should be left to textbooks, critical studies, scholarly articles, etc. but not through an original book of poems where the interplay between text and reader is based on his or her own experiences.

Ofelia Zepeda's *Ocean Power: Poems for the Desert* is a strong group of poems. Zepeda explores the inter-relationship of humans and nature, the O'odham and the Southwest desert, individual and group.

This is done with perception and cleverness. Her work reminds me of Gary Soto, Simon Ortiz, Pat Mora, and Paula Gunn Allen at their best. In "One-sided Conversation" (53) Zepeda states we and she "talk twice as much, / with a hope that we may capture the whole" (ll. 5-6). Her work encapsulates the essence of a people's experience showing how their lives are inter-dependent on weather, culture and the self. She is an innovative poet and let us hope, as she puts it, she continues to grow and will "go about my [her] business, / carrying the morning air ("Morning Air" 65, ll. 4-6).

Mike Cluff

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