

SAIL

Studies in American Indian Literatures

Series 2

Volume 8, Number 2

Summer 1996

Teaching American Indian Literatures

Julie LaMay Abner, Guest Editor

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Correction: In the Spring issue (8.1) of *SAIL*, the last name of the author of two poems, "[Untitled]" and "East and Forever," was misspelled. Correctly spelled, the author's name is Stuart Hoahwah. My personal apologies to Mr. Hoahwah for this error of mine. —*Robert M. Nelson, Production Editor*

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The Fusion of Identity, Literatures, and Pedagogy: Teaching American Indian Literatures

Julie LaMay Abner

Many circles are around us.
Many circles rule this land.
Many circles cannot be broken.
This I understand.

The Buffalo grass grows in the spring,
To feed the elk and deer,
Who are prey to the timber wolf,
And the lion and the bear.

The purple sage grows in the spring,
To attract the butterfly.
The yellow spider builds a web.
There the butterfly will die.

The blue jays hatch in the spring,
In a nest way up high.
A raccoon eats all but one,
One that's strong enough to fly.

Life means death, and death means life,
To every living thing;
And winter comes to prepare the land
For the coming spring.

Many circles are around us.
Many circles rule this land.
Many circles must not be broken,
This we all must understand.

Larry Sunderland

Today, in the post-*Dances With Wolves* era, to be an Indian is not only to be socially acceptable, but also politically correct; obviously, this has not always been the case. When pondering how to approach the teaching of a course on American Indian literatures, the first important question that must be considered is what is an Indian? Identity for Native Americans is a complex and highly controversial issue and was recently thrust into the academic forefront when novelist David Seals, while reviewing *The Indian Lawyer*, stated that James Welch and Louise Erdrich are not "Indian" enough because they both depict the atrocities that contemporary Native Americans must face but do not demonstrate the strength of cultural values and traditions that have allowed Indians to survive the Columbian trauma and subsequent centuries of xenophobia (648-50).

Is Indian authenticity determined by blood quantum, the ability to speak a Native language, being born on a reservation, or being listed on a tribal roll? Sadly, Native Americans are the only group of people who must prove their heritage and cultural identity by carrying a tribal ID or a Bureau of Indian Affairs blood quantum card. The safest and best definition of Indianness still appears to be N. Scott Momaday's, "An Indian is an idea which a given man has of himself" (162), even though Arnold Krupat calls it hopelessly vague and sexist (186-87).

Another important question that must be addressed is what are American Indian literatures? Is any document that an "Indian" writes considered American Indian literature, or is a text that a "non-Indian" writes using Indian themes and following certain accepted techniques (like polyvocalism, circularity, active audience participation, mystery, and reverence for nature) an Indian text? Are Tony Hillerman's books Indian books, and who is the author (or who are the authors) of *Black Elk Speaks*, Black Elk or Neihardt? Michael Dorris once stated that "there is no such thing as 'Native American literature,' though it may yet, someday, come into being" (147-62).

Not until Momaday's publishing of his Pulitzer Prize-winning text, *House Made of Dawn* (1968), in which he consciously and purposely takes Native oral tradition and successfully segues it with Euroamerican written form, was a new Native American genre created in form and effect. Kenneth Lincoln, who coined the term "Native American Renaissance," calls Momaday the greatest Native American writer of all time, and credits him with creating and defining this new genre—Native American literatures.

Fortunately, a decade later, even Dorris, who chaired the Native American Studies Program at Dartmouth, agrees that such a designation (Native American literatures) does indeed exist. Many authors, such as Leslie Marmon Silko, James Welch, Louise Erdrich, Gerald Vizenor, Paula Gunn Allen, and Louis Owens, are also known for

transforming essential elements of Native American oral traditions into EuroAmerican printed form. These authors share the cloak of creation with Momaday.

Another element that must be considered when teaching Native American literatures is cultural context. Indian texts are not written in the same way or from the same mindset that EuroAmerican texts are. Paula Gunn Allen has asserted:

Traditional American Indian literature is not similar to western literature because the basic assumptions about the universe and, therefore, the basic reality experienced by tribal peoples and by Western peoples are not the same, even at the level of folklore. This difference has confused non-Indian students for centuries. (58)

Although I strongly agree that the cultural context is crucial in both understanding and teaching American Indian literatures, the ultimate goal is for such marginalized works to be mainstreamed into a traditional American survey course, which will eliminate the need for culturally specific ones.

Texts should, of course, be taught based on their individual merits. Unfortunately, the controversy surrounding the literary canon rages on, but most academics seem to favor at least a rethinking of the canon, if not exploding this longstanding "idea" that eliminates women and people of color.

This issue spans many approaches and views regarding American Indian Literatures and pedagogy and is infused with the art and poetry of the well-known Mescalero Apache artist, poet, and writer Lorenzo.

Chris LaLonde ("New Stories and Broken Necks: Incorporating Native American Texts in the American Literature Survey") discusses a general approach to mainstreaming Native American works into an American Literature survey course without just adding one or two "Indian" texts. He asks the profound question, "How do we situate Native American texts within a disciplinary narrative from which they have been so long excluded without either relegating them to marginal and marginalized status or diminishing their intrinsic aesthetic merit?" He proceeds to demonstrate his method of effectively attaining that goal while using *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*.

Sandra L. Sprayberry ("Corners, Walls, and Doors: The Methodology of Exams in a Course on American Indian Literatures") discusses how she altered her approach to teaching American Indian Literatures by replacing her two required written exams with oral exams/conferences. She asserts that the exams "clashed pedagogically with the literatures and cultures we were studying." She successfully demonstrates what she feels to be a more experiential, holistic, and global

approach to assessment and explains that the new process will be similar to the Lakota vision quest, and she goes on to explain her three-part plan.

Susan Gardner ("Not for Publication, or: On Not [Yet, Anyway] Producing Bicultural Lumbee Auto-Ethnography") writes about a very controversial group of people who were declined federal recognition in 1989; according to anthropologist Larry Sunderland, the Lumbee are thought to be possible descendants of the Raleigh "lost" colony and possibly not of original Indian ancestry at all. Gardner takes a group of graduate students to do primary research by interviewing the Lumbee. She discusses the ethical questions of authorship and ownership of stories and the enormous responsibility involved in academic research. As a matter of fact, she respects the individual's stories enough that she does not quote them in her article because she feels that "our research is but a tributary flowing into the river of heritage, and that heritage is the Lumbee people's, not ours." The stories stay with the Lumbee—where she feels they rightly belong.

Jim Charles and Richard Predmore ("When Critical Approaches Converge: Team Teaching Welch's *Winter in the Blood*") discuss the hows and whys involved in team-teaching Welch's text. They begin their discourse by quoting a thought-provoking statement by Larry Abbott: "Along with the obvious revolution in thinking about what constitutes the canon in American literature, there has been a parallel, if quieter, revolution in pedagogy, about *how* we teach what we teach and *why* we teach what we teach." They begin to outline an effective "approach that relies upon the integration of diverse literary critical theories" and demonstrate to their students what Kenneth Roemer calls the "significant ways that Indian and non-Indian texts speak to each other."

This special issue ends with Peter Beidler and his graduate students Melissa Fiesta Blossom, Vanessa Holford Diana, Nora El-Aasser, Carolyn Leslie Grossman, Heather Holland, Jian Shi, Anna Cavanaugh Sipos, and Jennifer A. Thornton ("Silko's Originality in 'Yellow Woman'"), comparing Leslie Marmon Silko's story with one of the traditional Keresan versions of "Evil Kachina Steals Yellow Woman." Beidler then asks his students to write a paper in which they argue what they feel is most original in Silko's version of the story. Beidler's eight students proceed effectively to lend their voices to the story.

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New Stories and Broken Necks: Incorporating Native American Texts in the American Literature Survey

Chris LaLonde

These are wonderful times for teachers of American Indian literatures. There are numerous recent and new anthologies of Native American poetry, prose, and autobiography from which to choose, an ever-increasing number of readily available texts by Native American writers, a heightened awareness on the part of colleagues concerning the quality and value of those texts, and a concomitant acceptance by administrators of the need to study and teach those texts. Even so, Native American literatures are neither the primary area of expertise nor the sole teaching responsibility for many in the profession. As Americanists, Native American literature specialists and non-specialists are in all likelihood called on to teach period courses, genre courses, and survey courses. At the same time, the successful efforts to open up the canon of American literatures creates a fundamental pedagogical problem: how do we situate Native American texts within a disciplinary narrative from which they have been so long excluded without either relegating them to marginal and marginalized status or diminishing their intrinsic aesthetic merit?

The American literature survey course is the place where this problem is most vexing. We do not have the luxury, to quote Marjorie Pryse, of "giving students more exposure to fewer writers in the hope that they will discover a love for reading" (23) if our goal in a survey course is to engage the blossoming canon and give our students a sense of the multiplicity, and the richness in multiplicity, of American literature. Yet, as Carolyn Porter has pointed out, "you cannot simply accept multiculturalism (grudgingly or enthusiastically), adding a few representative texts to your survey course and proceeding as before with the old stories about the Puritans, the romance, the frontier, or what have you" (469). We need new stories for the new stories, for

Native American texts which arc, in the case of the Anishinaabe (to cite just one example), from when turtle presented his back to Grandmother Nokomis so that the island home could be formed for both the Anishinaabeg and the other-than-human land-dwelling people to the contemporary time and place of, for instance, Kimberly Blaeser's "Where I Was That Day." Selections from *The Education of Henry Adams* in the *Norton Anthology of American Literature*, volume two, are critical to the new story I attempt to articulate in my American literature survey course: that story stresses the necessity of context(s) if we are to begin to understand and appreciate Native American texts, and that story also invokes the tendency to marginalize those texts within American literary history in order to unmask and depotentiate it.

First, however, some information about the institution and the course for the sake of context. North Carolina Wesleyan College is a young, small, church-related (but not Christian) institution that purports to have the liberal arts as its foundation. The vast majority of the students major in either business, computer information systems, or justice studies—that is, by and large, how to be an officer of the law. There are few English majors. All students are required to take one literature course from among a group designated by the College as satisfying a graduation requirement in the Humanities. English 204, Survey of the Literature of the United States, 1865 to the present, is one of those courses. Consequently, I can begin the course in any given semester certain that nearly all the students will be in the class because they are required to take a literature course and this will be the only literature course many of them ever take, that most of them will be in this particular course because it fits their schedule and not because of an interest in American literature or American literary history, and that in all likelihood none of them will have taken the first half of the two-course American literature survey sequence.

I, on the other hand, enter the course determined to help the students become better readers, writers, and thinkers; to give them some of the fundamental tools of literary analysis and have them use those tools on a wide range of texts; to expose them to the trajectory of American literary history and the various terms we use to structure and make sense of it; and to compel them to interrogate literature and why and how, if at all, it might be meaningful in their lives.

In the increasingly crowded field of literature anthologies, the *Norton Anthology of American Literature* remains the popular choice for American literature surveys. The recently published fourth edition is noteworthy for its inclusion of a wider range of selections by Native American writers and from traditional Native American texts. For instance, in the opening section of the second volume, "American Literature 1865-1914," the editors have added, in order, a section on

Native American oratory, an excerpt from Charles Alexander Eastman's *From the Deep Woods to Civilization*, John Oskison's short story "The Problem of Old Harjo," and a section of Native American chants and songs. In order to introduce these texts as literature and as part of the expanded canon of American literature I propose that we follow the tacit lead of the editors of the *Norton Anthology* and read up to and then against the final selection in the opening section: "The Dynamo and the Virgin" chapter from Henry Adams' *The Education of Henry Adams*.

We begin by reading and discussing works by Clemens, Howells, and James. We then move on to the other, "minor" realists, the local colorists, and the naturalists. That is, we are for the most part faithful to the order offered by the "Table of Contents": any infidelity consists of skipping the Native American Oratory section rather than turning to it before we discuss James, after we talk about Crane's work to conclude our look at the realists and regionalists, or during our discussion of both texts in the African-American oral tradition and by African Americans. However, the syllabus makes clear that we will read and discuss the Native oratory selections and the songs and chants at the same time later in the semester.

My rationale is simple: I want to expose the students to the authors and works that compose the traditional canon of American literature during the realist and naturalist periods. It is, after all, a survey course. In addition, most of the students have not read most of the authors or the particular works. What is more, we cannot open up the canon until we have defined it, and—taken in conjunction with the section essays, headnotes, and biographical information—the selections we read and discuss give us that definition. From the beginning we read closely, discuss the various dimensions of the texts before us, interrogate their connections to late nineteenth-century America, and familiarize ourselves with the standard literary terms. Nothing new so far. Still, all this is done to prepare the students for the excerpts from *The Education of Henry Adams* and, then, the Native American texts.

Adams' text may seem an odd place to turn in our quest for new stories, but it is a fruitful way to introduce Native American texts in a literature survey course. After all, as the editors of the *Norton Anthology* point out, *The Education of Henry Adams* "is now considered by many critics to be the one indispensable text for students seeking to understand the period between the Civil War and World War I" (906). More to the point, although Adams' first significant publication focused on John Smith's various representations of Pocahontas and their relationship, Native Americans are scarcely present in *The Education*; furthermore, Adams elides twenty years of his education, 1871 to 1892, that, as we know, saw the United States Government and the United

States citizenry wage a war against the first peoples of this continent, which ended with their defeat, removal, and confinement on reservations. Surely that period held extraordinary opportunity for education, but Adams offers nary a word.

I do not wish to take Henry Adams to task in my new story, however, so much as I want my students to come to grips with and internalize the scene in "The Dynamo and the Virgin" chapter of *The Education* in which Adams' narrator describes Adams "after ten years pursuit . . . lying in the Gallery of Machines at the Great Exposition of 1900, his historical neck broken by the sudden irruption of forces totally new" (933). On the one hand, this scene and the chapter as a whole are vital to an understanding of America and western civilization at the opening of the Twentieth Century, for, as Adams writes, in the seven years prior to 1900 "man had translated himself into a new universe which had no common scale of measurement with the old" (933). It is critically important that our students understand this "translation" if they are to grasp modernism in particular and twentieth-century American literature and culture in general. That is, the students must understand the context in and from which Adams writes. Ideally, our previous discussions of various texts, terms, and the times have helped to establish what Adams', and America's, neck was like before it was broken. On the other hand, the scene of Adams with his broken neck and the rest of the chapter are vital to my new story.

We turn from Adams not to the modernists, who dominate the next section of the *Anthology*, or to *Black Elk Speaks*, portions of which constitute the next selection in the text, but to the selections of Native American oratory, chants, and songs. The obvious alternative, and a perfectly legitimate one, is to turn to selections from Gertrude Simmons Bonnin's *Impressions of an Indian Childhood* and a juxtaposition of her education with Adams', followed by the selections from *Black Elk Speaks* in light of both educations. The editors make this progression all the more attractive by placing the texts in consecutive order. I prefer a more radical juxtaposition, toward the ends already mentioned. I ask the students to make sense of the oratory, chants, and songs and to articulate any connections they see between those texts and "The Dynamo and the Virgin." They come prepared to talk about how the "Indians were forced off their lands." They are ready to cite passages from the oratory of Cochise and Charlot to show how the whites misled and mistreated the Natives. They are less ready and eager to discuss either the excerpts from the Navajo Night Chant or the Chippewa songs. I suspect this is so because those texts are like nothing they have read to date for the course. Nevertheless, I argue that we need to turn first to those texts in order to begin to have some sense of some of the worldviews of Native peoples before their necks were broken.

That is, we need to situate the texts in their contexts. Native and non-Native scholars stress the necessity of context if we are to understand and appreciate particular texts. Joseph Bruchac writes, "The Native American view of life as reflected in literature (whether in English or originally in an earlier Native language) is holistic. Remember that, if you are teaching Native American literature well you are not just teaching literature, you are teaching culture. To understand the work—or to begin to understand it—it must be seen as it was *used*" ("Four Directions" 6). Moreover, as Kenneth Roemer makes clear, "Teachers and scholars who ignore the cultural, historical, aesthetic, linguistic, and, in the case of oral literatures, the performance contexts of Native texts risk making ludicrous and even sacrilegious mistakes" ("Heuristic" 8).

Let us take the Chippewa songs in the *Norton Anthology* as a case in point. Situating the songs in their cultural context means beginning by articulating the centrality of song and music to the Chippewa, or more properly the Anishinaabe.¹ Anglo scholars like Frances Densmore (who collected and translated the songs that appear in the *Norton Anthology*), Thomas Vennum, Jr., and Edmund Danziger, Jr. stress the integral connection between song and music and traditional daily life: there were sacred songs, dream songs, love songs, war songs, story songs, songs to accompany various activities. These songs, in the words of Ojibway ethnologist and writer Basil Johnston,

were utterances of the soul. As such, they evoked every theme that moved men's hearts and souls. Songs were poems chanted; they could be praises sung, they could be prayers uplifted to the spirit. Most were of a personal nature composed by an individual on the occasion of a dream, a moving event, a powerful feeling. (*Ojibway Heritage* 148)

Crossblood Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor makes clear that the dream songs were, indeed, "the signatures of personal and communal woodland identities" (*Summer* 3).

Those signatures were and are meant to be heard, often with accompaniment. Thus, our attention to context necessitates that we hear the songs. I have found that playing selections from *Ojibway Music From Minnesota: A Century of Song for Voice and Drum* helps to lift the word off the page and into aurality and orality for students. Once there, it becomes easier for the students not to visualize but to understand that the Anishinaabe impulse to transform life into song and song into life is born of a sense of rhythm's evocative power. Again, Vizenor is instructive: "the poetic images were held, for some tribal families, in song pictures and in the rhythms of visions and dreams in

music: timeless and natural patterns of seeing and knowing the energies of the earth" (*Chippewa* 24-26).

The articulation of those timeless and natural patterns is both their voicing and a jointing together of singer and the natural world, singer and the audience, and audience and the natural world. The song-poems, initially so off-putting to the students because of their minimalism and indeterminacy, need to be understood as powerfully evocative and essentially generative. The connection Vizenor sees between the tribal songs and haiku for instance, referred to but unelaborated by the editors of the *Norton Anthology*, stems from an awareness of the tendency of each to evoke—the freedom both confer—and the role of the audience given that freedom. In the Introduction to his 1984 collection of haiku, Vizenor writes that "In haiku, as a form of meditation, there is a pleasant separation from grammatical philosophies and the implied presence of the author, rather than a separation from the earth" (*Matsushima* 5). This pleasant separation necessitates that the haiku, to quote Donald Keene, "must be completed by the reader" (qtd. in *Matsushima* 3). The same is true of the Anishinaabe songs. Kimberly Blaeser says that "The songs presuppose certain tribal knowledge and seek not to retell, but to allow the listener access to the experiential reality of the song's subject" (190). Later she adds, "The goal is not to understand the author, to 'get' the author's meaning, but to move beyond the words on the page and experience natural, underlying harmonies that are part of our primal memory—to create life from static words" (197). Thus, we spend time discussing how the life articulated by the anthologized songs and the audience is intimately connected to the seasonal rhythms of the natural world and the traditional Anishinaabe lifeways.²

The seasonal rhythm and Anishinaabe worldview are evoked by the first song anthologized in the *Norton*, "Song of the Crows":

Be'bani'gani'
Nin'digog'
Binesiwug'
Nin'wendjigi'miwun'
Andeg'nindigo'

Translation
The first to come
I am called
Among the birds
I bring the rain
Crow is my name (869)

The editor's footnote tells us that Frances Densmore pointed out "that crows are said to have given this song to a young man who was fasting. The crows then became his *manido*, or spirit power" (869).

The note adds that the crows "are thought to bring the welcome spring rain." The song, then, is an example of the stories told by the natural world that are given to the Anishinaabeg to articulate the fundamental realities of life. Traditionally, the Anishinaabeg would know and appreciate the relationship between the song of the other-than-human crow and one's relationship to the world and its people. The song given by the crow, in this case during a vision quest, voices both the peopled cosmos of the Anishinaabe and the interconnections that kept, and keep, that cosmos delicately balanced. The song-poem evokes spring's arrival, without directly indicating it, and thus articulates seasonal promise, renewal, and the end of the trying and difficult northwoods winter for the Anishinaabe. Moreover, because the song is evocative, it articulates the necessary connection between singer and audience and highlights the necessity of experience and engagement to an understanding of both the song and life connected with the natural world, its rhythms, and its peopled cosmos.

It was and is a difficult life, rich with uncertainty and sudden, often unexpected change.³ Blaeser and others remark that the uncertainty and change are articulated in traditional and contemporary Anishinaabe literature by a characteristic indeterminacy. Such is the case with "Song of the Crows." Is Crow called "the first to come," or is Crow called to be the first to come? Gerald Vizenor's interpretation of the second song in the *Norton Anthology* accentuates indeterminacy, and I like to have students hear that text as well as Densmore's translation of the song in order to highlight the indeterminacy in the former and facilitate discussion about what the articulation of indeterminacy, on the one hand, and the suppression of indeterminacy, on the other, can tell us about both the Anishinaabe worldview and the Euroamerican view of an albeit sympathetic Frances Densmore. Densmore's translation of the song includes the indefinite pronoun, only to double it and use a conjunction to definitively fix the sound the singer had heard:

A loon
I thought it was
But it was
My love's splashing oar (870)

Vizenor's interpretation, however, refuses to supplement indeterminacy with determinacy, and is therefore more in keeping with the Anishinaabe worldview and aesthetics:

the sound of a loon
i thought
it was my lover
paddling (*Summer* 54)

Did the singer hear the sound of a loon that he/she initially thought was the sound of his/her lover paddling? Or did the singer hear the sound of his/her lover paddling and initially mistake it for the sound of a loon? The song refuses to say conclusively one way or the other; hence, it compels the audience to acknowledge the indeterminacy that is a part of the Anishinaabe life-world and "complete" the song for him/herself by appealing to personal experience.

The new story that emerges as a consequence of situating, in this instance, the Anishinaabe songs in their cultural context insures that the students develop more than simply a general, pan-Indian reading of the Native American texts. It also compels them to relinquish stereotypes about the Indian as stoic, unemotional, inarticulate, and unartistic. Therefore, situating the songs in their context produces a scene roughly analogous to that offered by Adams in "The Dynamo and the Virgin": our students' literary and cultural necks are "broken by the sudden irruption of forces totally new" (933).

Furthermore, Kenneth Roemer has indicated how teaching the Navajo Night Chant, portions of which are also included in the *Norton Anthology*, raises fundamental questions of periodization, authorship, and authority which, to continue my conceit, can effectively break a student's historical, and literary historical, neck as well. The same is true with the Anishinaabe songs included in the *Norton Anthology*. Although the songs are chronologically situated by the editors according to the date of their collection and publication in the first decade of the Twentieth Century, a not illegitimate decision, the songs themselves could be situated much earlier than that. For instance, the songs whose subject is warfare with the Siouan people could be dated any time between the late Seventeenth Century, when conflict first arose between the woodland Sioux and the westering Anishinaabe, and the mid-Nineteenth Century, when bands of both peoples fought in the parkland belt of Minnesota. Other songs could be dated even earlier. Questions about the authority and authenticity of the translations can also be raised, and, as I have suggested, Vizenor's interpretations of several of the songs in the *Anthology* are useful vehicles for exploring these issues. They also help us to think about authorship of the songs in particular and the concept of the author in general.

As was the case for Henry Adams in *fin de siècle* America and Europe, the students in the survey are "translated . . . into a new universe" (933) by the contexts we have established and the questions about authorship, authority, and the identity of the literary text that we have raised. Our interrogations serve to break the students' necks: how they might have viewed literature and literary studies. Consequently, instead of being either incidental or marginalized elements in the survey syllabus and the canon, the Native American texts in the opening

section of the *Anthology*'s second volume assume the most vital role a text can perform: to compel the reader to confront the literary and cultural elements of the work *and* the constructs that are literature and American literary history.

It is now that the broken necks they have suffered can lead to paralysis, or even death. For instance, more than once have students uttered statements like, "Well, then, if we don't know whether we can trust the translations and if this stuff could have been sung before 1865, and it wasn't even written down, then why are we studying it in this course?" or "If it is so difficult to find out what is Literature [with, I take it, a capital L], then why study it at all?" One way to answer these questions and initiate the process of healing, while at the same time keeping the Native American texts in their newly-won position at the center of our discussion and stressing what keeps contemporary Native Americans from succumbing to paralysis, is to have the students recall "The Dynamo and the Virgin."

Adams sees both the dynamo and the Virgin symbolically. The latter is a symbol of a "spiritually unifying force" (906) that had shaped humankind and has been supplanted by the dynamo. Her force was a product of the "reproduction" she symbolized (934), but, according to Adams, by the beginning of the Twentieth Century the idea of the Virgin and her symbolic force "survived only as art" (935). Therefore, Adams turns to art in his search for answers and healing.

Time and again, Native American traditions tell us, the first people turned and turn to ceremony and artistic utterance for celebration and healing. Both are intimately connected to place and are transformative. Kenneth Lincoln writes that for Native Americans "Words carry their essential meanings" and songpoems "sing the origins of people, creatures, things, in local revelations, exactly where they exist. The people hear and glimpse truths unexpectedly, out of the corner of the eye, as nature compresses and surprises with rich mystery. All things are alive, suggestive, sacred, and in common" (46). The act of articulation, then, of giving breath to and jointing together, is revelatory, celebratory, and transformative.

Let me return to Anishinaabe songs and thought to make this point clear. The dream songs articulate identity. They insure connection with place and others: "the meditation would never lead to the common fears of separation, manifest manners, and the loneliness of civilization" (*Summer* 12); rather, the visions that articulate and were articulated "were spiritual transmigrations that inspired the lost and lonesome souls of the woodland to be healed" (*Summer* 9). From the perspective of a literary anthropology, artistic utterance and creation are fundamental human endeavors because they can transform and heal. We turn to art, that is, in order to articulate and make sense of the

world and ourselves. We study literature, or at least we try to in my courses, in a fashion that transforms the classroom into a liminal space, marked by indeterminacy, where we explore together issues of the identity of particular literary texts, the contexts from which they spring, and what those texts tell us about humankind.

The Native American texts, which the students now understand necessitate engagement and are transformative, remain before us for the rest of the course as a point of departure and reference as we engage and discuss particular texts with, I hope, a newfound awareness of their transformative powers, and as we discuss modernism, postmodernism, American society and cultures, and American literary history.⁴ The strategy for helping engage Native, and non-Native, texts is, finally, valuable for all Americanists teaching American literature surveys, particularly if they are using the *Norton Anthology of American Literature*. It gives those without training in reading and teaching Native American texts much to help appease any anxiety they have concerning their ability to teach those texts; it gives all of us a way to tell a new story. Introducing the Native American texts following a discussion of Adams' "The Dynamo and the Virgin" helps professor and students thoughtfully situate Native American texts within the canon, accentuate and interrogate the aesthetic qualities of those texts and the fundamental questions they raise about literature and American literary history, and helps to articulate the nature of the literature survey classroom. Thus, students come to realize that what has been broken is not so much their necks as the casts around them that had kept them from turning their heads, expanding their horizons, seeing well, and hearing well.

NOTES

¹Vizenor notes "The Anishinaabe were nominated the Ojibway, the Ojibwe, the Chippewa, Chippeway, and other names in written translations and historical documents" (*Summer* 20). Their "legal" identity in the eyes of the United States Government is the Chippewa. I adopt Vizenor's spelling of "Anishinaabe" rather than the editor's "Anishinabe."

²On the traditional lifeways see, for instance, Ignatia Broker's *Night Flying Woman*, Edmund Danziger's *The Chippewas of Lake Superior*, Frances Densmore's *Chippewa Customs and Chippewa Music*, John A. Grim's *The Shaman: Patterns of Religious Healing Among the Ojibway Indians*, A. Irving Hallowell's "Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior and World View," Basil Johnston's *Ojibway Ceremonies and Ojibway Heritage*, Theresa S. Smith's *The Island of the Anishnaabeg*, and Gerald Vizenor's *Summer in the Spring* and *The People Named the Chippewa*.

³Let me offer two examples from personal experience. I led a class on an extended wilderness canoe and camping trip through Quetico Provincial Park as part of a course on Anishinaabe literature and culture. While canoeing across Sarah Lake in the early afternoon, we were caught by a wind that suddenly came up in front of an advancing thunderstorm. We abandoned our plan to make a particular campsite on the far side of the lake, had all we could do to make it to an island campsite, and quickly set up tents. The wind was fairly raging by the time we were finished—but the rains never came, and twenty minutes later the sun was out, the wind was gone, and the lake was calm. The ice also comes quickly to northern Minnesota lakes, and I have taken a boat across an open channel one early November morning and walked back across ice too thick to break with the boat the next day.

⁴That is, in addition to coming into play when we discuss the other works by Native writers in the *Norton Anthology*, they are integral to our discussions of the modernist attempt to revitalize culture through art, of the imagist movement, of the postmodern turn to indeterminacy, of the importance of place in the work of such contemporary poets as Lorine Niedecker, Richard Hugo, A. R. Ammons, and James Wright, and so forth.

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ALL EARTH MAKES LIFE
SPRING IS THE TIME OF
THE SUN WHEN

ALL EARTH MAKES LEAVES
FALL IS THE TIME OF
THE SUN WHEN

BRING PRAYERS FOR RAIN
ON SUMMER AFTERNOONS



THE
GENTLY SMILING LADIES
ALL
CLAIMED
TO BE
IN THEIR
MID-LATIES

Lorenzo '96



A SONG GIRL
MET
THE POET MAN
AND
BLESSED HIS LIFE
WITH
HER WARM SONGS
THAT
TURNED HIS DAYS
FROM
GRAY
TO
MANY COLORS
HE WAS ENCHANTED
BY
HER BEAUTY
AND
CAPTURED
BY
HER SMILE

Okreny

Corners, Walls, and Doors: The Methodology of Exams in a Course on American Indian Literatures

Sandra L. Sprayberry

It is not my purpose in this essay to detail the many destructive horrors of Indian boarding school education,¹ but it was in reading and teaching such firsthand accounts as those of Lame Deer and Mary Crow Dog that I began to question my own pedagogy in a course titled Literatures of the American Indian:

In those days the Indian schools were like jails and run along military lines, with roll calls four times a day . . . We were forbidden to talk our language or to sing our songs. If we disobeyed we had to stand in the corner or flat against the wall, our noses and knees touching the plaster. (Lame Deer 23)

I will hasten to add that my students are, in fact, predominantly White and that my own teaching style is far from militaristic. But in teaching American Indian literatures, I had concluded that traditional academic methods of evaluation—particularly written exams—can create corners and walls of punishment.

Having taught for quite some time in a discussion-centered classroom, where my students were encouraged to voice their thoughts, I had already positioned my pedagogy far from the teacher-centered one that Lame Deer and his generation experienced. However, in teaching this literature for several years, I had become increasingly disturbed by the means by which I evaluated my students' progress in the class. Though I had always assigned projects that required oral presentations and collaborative work, and though I had expected class participation, evidenced by verbal and non-verbal engagement in the class, I still required two written exams. Though my broad and open-ended essay questions created a relatively flexible structure that allowed, I thought,

room for my students to take the exam in their own directions, I still felt that the exam situation itself—in which students respond in writing to my questions and submit their answers to me for my evaluation in writing—clashed pedagogically with the literatures and cultures we were studying.

Borrowing from research on American Indian teaching and learning styles, I decided that, even though few in our class had Native American blood, in this course we could learn to develop Native American ways of knowing² and that, in the process, the exams should be more reflective of the literatures and cultures that we were studying. For these reasons, I constructed oral exams/conferences to replace the written exams I had previously administered.

Predictably, most studies of American Indian teaching and learning styles acknowledge the oral tradition and experiential learning as important components of the process. For that reason, I began from the premise that an oral examination would reflect course content more accurately and would also create a more dynamic process. As I explained to the class, the process would be akin to the Lakota vision quest, in which the quester secludes him/herself to seek a vision (exam preparation), presents the vision to a tribal elder for discussion, interpretation, and clarification (the exam/conference held with me), and then returns to the tribe to perform or otherwise share the vision (class discussion after the exams).

My broader goal in revising my exam format was to design an exam that would create a holistic learning experience, particularly since educational research indicates that Native American students are more adept at "global" or "simultaneous processing," a "synthesis of separate elements into a group, or perceiving as a whole—similar to aspects of many traditional and modern Indian cultures" (More 19). Therefore, I designed questions that were even more global than the previous essay questions I had formulated for written exams.

To illustrate my points, I include the midterm exam questions I designed for my most recent class. We had just concluded our study of Lakota culture and of the genre of autobiography and had read three texts: *Black Elk Speaks*; *Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions*; and *Lakota Woman*. I gave the questions to the class in advance of our conferences so that they could think about their responses in advance. They were also allowed to bring their books and one page of written notes with them to the conferences. The questions were as follows:

1. Discuss Native American autobiography. What was the nature of the collaboration between White writer and Native American storyteller? How and why were these stories told and preserved in textual form?
2. Explain Black Elk's, Lame Deer's, and Mary Crow Dog's

concepts of the sacred hoop in its literal and symbolic forms. How/was the sacred hoop broken? How/is it mending?

3. Topic of your choice: Choose any issue you wish to discuss, and discuss it in the context of all three books.

Perhaps I am idealistic about the scope of learning that can occur during such an exam, but in constructing these questions, I attempted to create a process conducive to holistic learning. As educator Paul Marashio asserts:

Presently, most Euro-American education experiences are segmented into a utilitarian educational experience because Euro-Americans place greater emphasis on those skills valuable to the work-a-day world. . . . Euro-American society approaches life from a one-dimensional view; materialistic gain. Unfortunately, humanities are shunted. Contrarily, the Native American implements a full-dimensional educational experience with the learner submerged daily into learning through an inter-disciplinary approach about life, art, music, ethics, laws, hunting, culture, farming and self. From these combined educational experiences, the Native People learn about their interrelationship with the universe, consequently, understanding their role in the universal scheme. (9)

To learn about interrelationships with the universe and our roles in the universal scheme may seem overly ambitious, unrealistic, and impossible objectives for any college course, but the sorts of huge questions that one seeks answers to in a vision quest do not necessarily belong outside the scope of the classroom.

Much of the literature that we read in this course raises just these sorts of cosmic questions, and as Paul Marashio explains, such questions should serve as a "learning model" (8). Marashio goes on to illustrate this life-quest-as-learning-model with the words of Alfonso Ortiz:

"I have attempted to determine, then, how reasonably . . . every man [and woman] would answer for [themselves] questions such as the following: Who am I? Where did I come from? How did I get here? With whom do I move through life? What are the boundaries of the world within which I move? What kind of order exists within it? How did suffering, evil and death come to be in this world? What is likely to happen to me when I die?" (qtd. in Marashio 8)

Particularly in our discussions of the sacred hoop, my students and I have begun to broach such large questions, as we grapple with the

issues of discovery (in its literal and figurative connotations), conquest, assimilation, annihilation, and global healing. Very often our discussion of the sacred hoop concludes with them asking themselves the question, "What can we do to heal the sacred hoop?"

As these questions and the oral format of the exam indicate, the structure of the exam is conversational, dialogic, fluid, dynamic. In essence, I am able to individualize and personalize each student's exam experience according to their particular needs and desires. This aspect of Native American pedagogy—the offering of praise when earned and the offering of further instructional attention when needed—is possible when instructor and student are face-to-face in a conference setting. Such pedagogy is possible, especially when I carefully prepare my students for the process, explain to them that these are evaluative conferences, and read to them this description from Plenty Coup:

"Our teachers . . . were grandfathers, fathers, or uncles. All were quick to praise excellence without speaking a word that might break the spirit of a boy who might be less capable than others. The boy who failed at any lesson got only more lessons, more care, until he was as far as he could go." (qtd. in Marashio 6-7)

As student comments on my course evaluations indicate, the exam is a positive learning process for most students. Most students have indicated that with oral, dialogic exams, they are given the opportunity to clarify and expand their answers in ways that they cannot in a written format. Most students have also indicated that with my guidance, they have learned more in the *process* of taking the exam than they have in written examination situations. I do indeed view my role in the process as their guide, their elder.

Of course, for some students, the exam is a painful process. For those students who have adequately prepared but are uncomfortable verbalizing their thoughts, the situation may create discomfort, but I remind them that silence is communication in American Indian cultures, not the uncomfortable pause of ignorance it is in mainstream American culture. As two educators who had worked with Native American students learned,

In the dominant culture, silence tends to make people "nervous." If a pause is perceived as being too lengthy, someone will say something—anything—in an effort to break the silence. In contrast, silence among Native Americans communicates "oneness." (Boseker and Gordon 23)

Because studies indicate that mainstream American pedagogy emphasizes "impulsive" and "trial-and-error learning," quick responses that are

tested out in the classroom (More 20-21), I have found that my students feel ignorant if they do not respond immediately. Prior to the exam, I remind them that in Native cultures, learning styles are "reflective" (More 20) and "listen-then-do (e.g., learning values through legends taught by an elder) or think-then-do (e.g., thinking through a response carefully and thoroughly before speaking)" (More 21). I also explain that "wait-time," which Boseker and Gordon define as "the length of time a teacher pauses after asking a question and also after a student's response" (23), is to allow time for careful reflection and speculation. These explanations seem to put the less verbally articulate but prepared students at some ease.

For those students who have not adequately prepared for daily classes and for the conference, this exam situation is probably the most painful. Those few students are forced to acknowledge their failure of responsibility in their own and in the classroom community's learning processes, for I have seen vividly illustrated in their facial expressions just how impossible it is for them to pretend to have read the material and to pretend to have prepared answers to the questions when they are facing me. To pretend that such responsibility lies with anyone outside themselves is impossible at this point. To begin to acknowledge their responsibility to the classroom discussion community is, however, possible.

Paradoxically, though this exam format may allow for more individual accountability and growth than the traditional written exam format, I have found that it seems to foster cooperation rather than competition. Because I teach students who are, on the whole, academically superior and goal-driven, I have found that the traditional exam format encourages grade competition in ways that the oral format does not. As research in cooperative learning indicates, both Native and non-Native students may become discouraged during competitive situations (Boseker and Gordon 20). The evaluative conferences, however, encourage cooperation, both between my students and me and also among my students.

Because I intentionally call the process an evaluative conference, I discuss these evaluative and grading issues directly with each student. Pointing out that the class policy statement lists particular expectations for each student—reading all of the material by due dates, class attendance, engagement both verbally and non-verbally with the material in class discussion, substantial contributions to the classroom learning community, preparation for the conference, demonstration of substantial learning during the conference—I then ask the students, at the conclusion of our conference, what grade they would give themselves. I have found that most students' assessments of their progress concur with my own evaluation, but in those cases where we do not

concur, we are able to discuss further the issues involved.

Most students tell me at the conclusion of the process that they had "dreaded" the exam, but after having experienced it they prefer it to the written examination format. In class discussion after the conferences, they share with each other what they have learned. Because I have guided our conferences to assure that everyone has achieved a basic level of understanding of the material we have covered, we can proceed together. But because each exam/conference is also tailored to each individual student, they can also begin to pursue their individual quests in further understanding this material. I like to think that rather than backed up in a corner of the classroom, flat against the wall, they are opening a door.

NOTES

¹For a thorough historical overview of American Indian education, see *Teaching American Indian Students*, edited by Jon Reyhner, and particularly chapter three, "A History of Indian Education," written by Reyhner and Jeanne Eder.

²I borrow this term from the book *Women's Ways of Knowing*, which asserts that women and men have markedly different learning styles. Educational research indicates that Indian and non-Indian students also have markedly different learning styles, but such data has primarily affected current trends in teaching Native Americans. Here I advocate that Native teaching and learning styles would also benefit non-Native teachers and learners.

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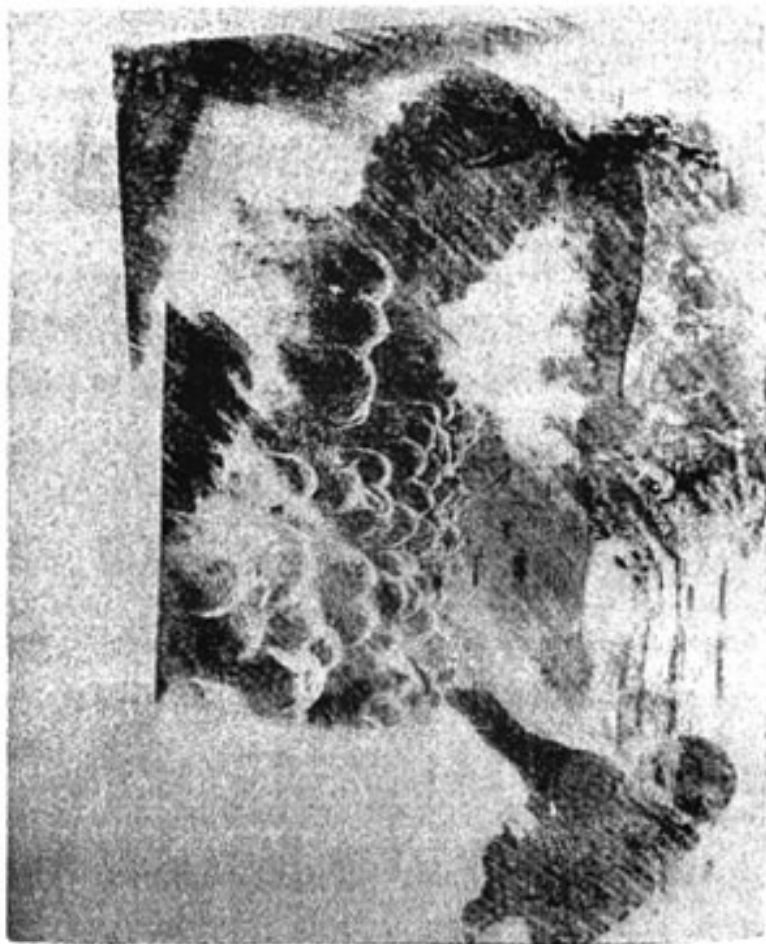
LIFE IS AN ART AS IMITATION OF LIFE

LIFE IS AN ART AS A REFLECTION OF LIFE

TO HAVE PEACE WE MUST WANT

OUR MOTHER EARTH IS

THE SPICE OF LIFE



***Not for Publication, or:
On Not (Yet, Anyway) Producing
Bicultural Lumbee Auto-Ethnography***

Susan Gardner

The investigator is always a person of writing, belonging (whatever his political opinions might be) to the ruling classes and linked to an institution (publishing, newspaper, university, museum); he investigates on behalf of the general reading public or the "scientific community." . . . Every experience is thus collected in an ethnological perspective and is constituted as an object in the gaze, the listening or discourse of a subject who assumes responsibility for it according to his own identity, his own interest. . . . At the same time that it is a form of rescue or help, intervention is an act of violation or voyeurism, a form of abuse of power. (Lejeune 209-210)

[T]estimonio is not a form of liberal guilt. It suggests as an appropriate ethical and political response more the possibility of solidarity than of charity. . . . The narrator in *testimonio* is a real person who continues living and acting in a real social history that also continues. . . . *[T]estimonio* appears therefore as an extraliterary or even antiliterary form of discourse. (Beverley 98-99, 104)

Lumbee Indians, and, by implication, other Federally-unrecognized Native groups in the Southeast (in North Carolina, Coharie, Haliwa-Saponi, Meherrin, Waccamaw-Siouan), are becoming fashionable: in certain "safe" contexts, anyway. In 1994, for example, there was an exhibit entitled "Pathmakers: North Carolina Indian Women of Distinction." In 1995, in conjunction with the traveling national exhibit, "Partial Recall" (curated by Lucy Lippard), the Mint Museum

of Art in Charlotte, North Carolina sponsored "Recollections: Lumbee Heritage," an exhibit of historic photographs, 1875-1945, from the largest group of Indian people (approximately 40,000) east of the Mississippi.¹

These exhibits stand in vivid contrast to what anthropological and literary colleagues had advised before I moved to North Carolina: "No one knows what to do about the Lumbees; no one knows how to classify them"; "I'm always looking in dictionaries of American Indian tribes for the Lumbees, but none ever mentions them." Living here, I've learned that Euramericans especially may have trouble categorizing them, but to Lumbees this is not their problem. Owing their historical survival to cultural adaptation, they insist upon defining their future identity as they see fit.²

In anything I teach—whether sections of composition for Engineering majors, with an international content; a survey of European, West African, and Native American epics; "postcolonial" women writers of the English-speaking Caribbean and southern Africa—I find myself saying to students, "The world is our 'text.' This classroom is the least of it, a launching pad only." Since 1991, when I introduced a junior-level 15-week undergraduate survey of Native North American Indian literatures, a Native Carolinian focus with service work for the local or statewide Indian communities has been integral (albeit tokenistic), a commitment I discuss in "'And Here I am, Telling in Winnebago How I Lived My Life': Teaching *Mountain Wolf Woman*."³

In 1994, as the English Department began reconfiguring both its undergraduate and graduate (MA-level) curricula, I seized the opportunity to introduce a theory-intensive course, Native North American Indian Autobiography, for graduate students. It was the emphasis on theory, rather than the content alone, which legitimated it to the then Coordinator for Graduate Studies. Desiring to continue a "service" dimension in this new offering, after consulting with some Lumbee tribally-enrolled colleagues outside the university, I produced the following syllabus, though vividly aware that syllabi, like curricula vitae, can be among the greatest fictions one produces. What I didn't realize then was that I was proposing a task for students which, if not impossible, might be questionable.

Sample Syllabus

Traditionally in Western autobiographies ("self-life-writing"), the individual is depicted over/against society, realizing her or his unique destiny. Thus, we expect an autobiography to be "confessional in form, exploring the inner labyrinth of the psyche, recording the emotional vibrations of the writer as well as the cultural milieu, documenting historic events and the autobiographer's relationships with

members of society, encompassing both the inner and public lives of the subject over a lengthy period of time" (Bataille and Sands 4).

But "writing" (or telling) "the self" is not a traditional indigenous American narrative genre, and the notion of a Native American individual standing out from society would be almost incomprehensible, that person seen as pathologically disordered. Instead, Hertha Dawn Wong suggests terms such as "communo-bio-oratory" ("community-life-speaking" to allow for group identity and oral narrative, since the self-narrated life "told to the page" is a fairly recent development), or "auto-ethnography," "self-culture-writing," to emphasize a sense of self determined by a culture's, rather than an individual's, discourse (6).

This course will examine "pre-literate" traditional life-telling; the case of *Black Elk Speaks* (one of history's more ironic titles), via *The Sixth Grandfather*; bicultural collaborative autobiographies (Native speaker or writer and interpreter, Anglo editor) as exemplified by "Crashing Thunder" and his sister, Mountain Wolf Woman; and two contemporary, self-written narratives, N. Scott Momaday's *The Names* and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller*. We'll also look at briefer narratives of varying sorts in Arnold Krupat's *Native American Autobiography*. Additionally, we will benefit from a tour of the Mint Museum's "Partial Recall" exhibition, which combines biography-through-image (photography) and autobiographical essays by Native people, and an accompanying exhibition from North Carolina's Lumbee tribe.

In addition to meeting the theory-intensive requirement for the master's degree in English, this course involves a fieldwork component as a service to the North Carolina Indian community. You will interview an elderly Indian person and devise your own form to render both your role and the Indian's voice in the narrative you will produce: how will you transform oral recollection to written (and, possibly, video-recorded and -edited) narrative? This project, initiated by the non-profit American Indian Heritage Council of Charlotte, is imperative, due not only to the age of the participants (over 80), but because interviews already collected relate knowledge concerning traditions, oral history, material culture, and environment which is almost wholly unknown to younger generations. With the participants' consent, interview materials will be donated to the Heritage Council and the North Carolina Indian Cultural Center in Pembroke.

Instead of a research paper, then, students would undertake information retrieval for an archival project, joining an endeavor initiated decades previously by the late John L. Carter, Registrar of what is now Pembroke State University (North Carolina's Indian-founded tertiary education institution, serving a people neither "white"

nor "black," as the state defined such falsely homogeneous "categories"). From 1835, when the North Carolina Constitution stripped what are now the Lumbee of their identity as "free persons of color," until 1887 when the General Assembly provided for—but did not fund until later, and then, minimally—separate schools for these Indian people and their descendants, no formal instruction was available for them at all.⁴ Carter's son, T. Vail Carter, founder of the Heritage Council, has continued the project using more technical sophistication (video-recording for eventual storage on laser disc), but working very much on his own so-called "free" time.

Having now taught the course twice—and looking as though I shall continue it as long as the elders, my students, and I are available—this retrospect is an opportunity to take stock of what I thought might happen and what actually has. From the standpoint of theory, I felt on deceptively safe ground, since I had participated in Kathryn Shanley's National Endowment for the Humanities/Newberry Library D'Arcy McNickle Center documentary workshop on Native autobiography in 1992. But a lot has appeared since then, and as the project has evolved, my concept of Euramerican collaboration has altered enormously.

Methodologically, moreover, it would have been difficult to be less prepared. The only "expertise" the students and I brought to bear was conventional literary criticism (and, in my case, a thorough grounding in feminist and postcolonial theories resulting from prolonged work in "Third World" universities). Indeed, we rather prided ourselves on not being professional snoops and voyeurs into other cultures. But this comfortable conscience ignored the hegemony literary critics assume as a matter of course: text-bound, we were confident in our ability and, indeed, authority, to interpret, decipher and redefine, as if texts (let alone their creators) had no rights of their own. What, then, of "texts" solicited by us, orally transmitted but that we then transcribed? "Reduced to writing?" How amenable are they—or, rather, should they even be—to the graduate apprenticeship of what a colleague once called (in unwittingly comic typographical error but profound truth) "post-criticisms?"

As the project developed, I became better read in life histories collected by ethnographers, sociologists, linguists, and gerontologists, very few of whom would have endorsed our good-hearted, inexperienced, unsophisticated, and invariably "biased" research (for my students and I never assumed Lumbee people to be anything but Indians). Had we heeded the admonitions and caveats from these disciplines, we would probably never have had the nerve to speak with anyone. For instance, Charles L. Briggs' *Learning How to Ask: a Sociolinguistic Appraisal of the Role of the Interview in Social Science*

Research was a lively, terrifying introduction to communication blunders generally, let alone cross-culturally.⁵ Nor did we wish to further the scholarly intrusions condemned by Linda Hogan in "Workday:"

I go to the university
and out for lunch
and listen to the higher ups
tell me all they have read
about Indians
and how to analyze this poem.
They know us
better than we know ourselves. (qtd. in Coltelli 85)

My students hardly welcomed the project which, never having interviewed an elder myself, I assured them would be far more challenging and intriguing than the customary library-regurgitated research paper. The two males in the 1995 class, both Euramerican poets, resisted from the outset. Bob informed me that he was interested in neither autobiography nor theory, just in Indians. In any event, he regarded graduate education as an exercise in grovelling. (Ultimately, he was the first to complete his interview—with a traditional healer—and produced a provocative narrative about the interaction to accompany his transcript. Rather reminiscent of two of his favorite writers, Jim Harrison and Adrian C. Louis, it's nonetheless very much his own.) Jeff took me aside to demur that he was a reclusive writer far too shy to interview anyone, let alone an Indian, and veered towards dropping the course. Only at midterm, when I suggested that, in addition to his transcript, he produce free verse from it as a thank-you to his interviewee, was he wholeheartedly converted. Deborah, meantime, preferred to work with children.⁶ No one felt comfortable with theory, especially the two post-bacs routed into the course because no other was open. Yet their sympathies were engaged from the start, since one was a first generation Italian-American and the other, who identified as African-American, was also related to the Saponi people through her mother. Both were acutely, if differently, familiar with bicultural strain and strength. But fearing the seminar would be cancelled if I lost any of the seven students, I cravenly offered the possibility—if they would just hang on for awhile—of a research paper instead of the interview. The research papers were never written.

Initially, we had no predetermined agenda other than an archival one, and this continues to predominate. Models to follow were few. Most of what we had read in the way of bicultural autobiographies came from the Nineteenth Century or ethnically more homogeneous

groups from other areas of the country. We were familiar with injunctions and admonitions such as those voiced by Murray L. Wax, "The Ethics of Research in American Indian Communities" and Vine Deloria, Jr., "Research, Redskins, and Reality" (431-68). In class "we" (who included two African-American women) watched the PBS documentary "Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance," by the National Film Board of Canada and aired by PBS for Black History Month in 1991: the only biography of a Native Carolinian to reach a mass audience that I know of. This served largely as an example of what *not* to do: the re-presentation of Sylvester Long's lifelong, ultimately self-destructive attempt to "play Indian" (Cherokee, then Blackfeet, although he seems to have been a Lumbee African American) portrays Black life in Winston-Salem earlier in the century as fatalistic, pious, resigned, and defeatist. Its overall effect combines condescension with faulting the victim, as if "Long Lance" had any freedom to be himself in Jim Crow society. His is an exemplary, tragic case of what Jack Forbes calls "the manipulation of race, caste, and identity" ("Manipulation" 1) in the classification of red-black peoples.

Otherwise, excepting a few cameo appearances in North Carolina school history texts (e.g., the obligatory chapter about Indians before the Lost Colony, guerrilla leader Henry Berry Lowrie), no extensive biographical research about North Carolina Indians has gained a significant academic or popular audience. Both Karen I. Blu's *The Lumbee Problem: the Making of an American Indian People* (1980) and Gerald M. Sider's *Lumbee Indian Histories: Race, Ethnicity, and Indian Identity in the Southern United States* (1993) date from research conducted in the late 1960s and early 1970s; although certainly based to an extent on interviews, they are theoretical projects. Adolph L. Dial (Lumbee) and David K. Eliades' *The Only Land I Know: a History of the Lumbee Indians* (1975) does not contain oral autobiographies *per se*, although there is a suggestive chapter concerning folk beliefs. Interviews with a few Eastern Cherokee elders appear in Laurence French and Jim Hornbuckle, eds., *The Cherokee Perspective: Written by Eastern Cherokees* (1981), but these concern a federally recognized group, and no methodology is discussed. Out of all the *Foxfire* interviews, only one is with an Indian (Catawba potter Nola Campbell in *Foxfire* 9).⁷

By 1995, beyond the archival aspect, my pedagogical concerns included a mix of ethical and aesthetic considerations, as the syllabus indicates. None of us wanted to be collaborators in the Eurocentric tradition of the original bicultural composite autobiography delineated and critiqued by Krupat. Instead of suppressing their roles and institutional positions, I wanted the students to confront and voice these.⁸ We set out not wishing to "prove" anything, but we did want

to render whatever we "found" in an appealing manner. That was the problem.

I am thankful that our co-workers are Lumbees, a very acculturated people since at least the early Seventeenth Century. No translators or interpreters were needed, for example: indeed, the people who became the Lumbees spoke English before the later Scots arrivals in the region did. Before many of our own ancestors did. What some might see as a hindrance—every Lumbee "speaks English, is Christian, works at similar occupations [to Euramericans], and lives in a house that resembles those inhabited by others. Lumbees have no 'exotic' rituals, dances, songs, or crafts, nor do they dress distinctively" (Blu 134)—was our gateway into a complex, contradictory world where ethnicity is both given and contested.⁹

Twentieth-century Robeson County little resembles the liminal terrain of mysterious (to Euramericans) waterways, channels, and "islands" providing refuge to the notorious Indian outlaw—now a reclaimed Lumbee hero, subject of an outdoor drama, "Strike at the Wind!"—Henry Berry Lowrie. Appropriately enough for a folk hero, he disappeared (in the early 1870s) but never demonstrably died; the state of North Carolina still has a price on his head. For Lumbee acculturation has never been the whole story: the people's history is also occasionally characterized by defensive violence, including notably, in the late 1950s, the only successful routing of a Ku Klux Klan rally anywhere.

Which is a rather lengthy way of saying that we went where our interviewees were, whether people who had relocated to Charlotte and Greensboro (as agribusiness seized their lands, leaving them with no outlet for their traditional farming skills) or those who could survive at "home." Our lack of funding proved to be a blessing: the university administration only grants \$100 towards a graduate student's travel, and the interviews, not constituting a conference, didn't qualify. But ten dollars will buy gas to Pembroke and back, and we were free of any funding agency's stipulations. No Federal strictures bound us, no BIA agencies existed to oversee us, no tribal council needed to approve of us,¹⁰ and the university by and large ignored us (except for insurance purposes). Indeed, before the project developed into curriculum development and research grants for 1995 and 1996, no formal ethics regarding "human subjects" guided us, either. We adapted permission forms adhering to the university's rules (boiling down to confidentiality and anonymity, with the interviewees' right to edit), and guidelines from the Heritage Council. But, as I discuss below, the more we learned from the people we interviewed, the less entitled we felt to disseminate it.¹¹

So we had no externally-sanctioned "authority" (nor did we aspire

to). Our credibility was conferred by Vail and by the coordinator of the Indian Education Program at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools, Rosa Winfree, who had helped design the undergraduate course. Rosa's encouragement and endorsement have sustained me for nearly six years. Named Indian Educator of the Year in 1989 by the United Tribes of North Carolina, and a 1992 delegate to the White House Conference on Indian Education, she has served on the board of the National Indian Education Association, as a trustee of Pembroke State University, and is presently chair of the board of the Native American Scholarship Fund. Vail provided the Heritage Council interview schedule,¹² matched the students with elders, advised us how to behave (informally, respectfully, patiently), and acted as videographer. In effect, we were working through webs of kinship. (I realized I was catching on when I could identify, without prompting, one person's "granddaddy" as someone else's "grandmother's brother.") We also worked through John Carter's status in the Indian community, which Vail has inherited and continued. No one would refuse Vail; the community remembers his "daddy" as "smart."

Only later did I realize that such endorsement kept both the students and myself from scrutinizing *our* agendas (our academic mission seemed so "obvious," so transparent); we took our narrators' cooperation for granted. What, if anything, did they want from us? How did they "edit" what they told us?¹³ And although we followed Vail's format, to what degree did our additional questions reflect fantasies and projections? I believe it is fair to say that some of us, myself included (although I would have denied it), were occasionally motivated by an unrealistic hankering after purity or essences, or an imperialist nostalgia. For example, we wished that someone, if only old enough, would remember an even older relative having spoken an American Indian language.

In a way, then, we were reflecting the history of Lumbee relations with Euramerican society and its institutions: they weren't the ones instigating or desiring contact, we were. In noting our initiative (rather: our feeling we had the "right" to take it), I don't intend to imply that our narrators were victims, with little choice but to "sing": their people have a long history of dealing with intruders. Rather, I need to note our lack of more critical self-reflection about what we were doing, as if our interviews took place apart from history or politics.

As the project developed, we found—no doubt because of the Lumbee passion for education—that our association with the university could be an asset. We neither denied nor emphasized it. As the project expanded (through word-of-mouth as much as anything) we found ourselves working with Indian (and, often, very Southern)

institutions, such as regional church conferences or home church gatherings. (I had never envisaged driving over 100 miles to attend a church breakfast at 7:30 in the morning. Nor did we anticipate that meeting at people's convenience might entail beginning at 11:30 p.m.) Many interviews involved travel to events where elders congregate: seasonal festivals, seniors' meetings at urban Indian centers, 90th birthday celebrations, annual homecomings (the town of Pembroke or churches), honor dances for veterans, giveaways and pow-wows; some have taken place at their homes. Vail has rambled on foot throughout the county with an elderly man who pointed out concealed graves from a nineteenth-century smallpox epidemic. We often visit pow-wows and celebrations with no intention of interviewing, only introducing the project and making contacts. Some interviews generate formal follow-up, others burgeoning friendship. The 200-mile round-trip journey, for me, has become nearly as routine as the 20-minute commute to the university.¹⁴ Most valuable has been Vail's contextualization: his information and guidance as we drive to interviews, our processing what was said on the way home, my sometimes bewildered questions, our further discussions once the interviews are transcribed.

At this time, my students and I have collected 20 interviews (some of which do not conform to the original age minimum, but all of which are with people regarded as elders by their communities). The oldest is 90. John and Vail Carter have collected more, pre-dating and going well beyond our contributions.

The question of "suitable" "finished" narrative no longer eludes us so much as it has become beside the point. All the students wrote forewords (usually about their anxieties and expectations) and after-words (usually correlating the interview information with historical or political data) to their transcripts. A number of factors influenced me to renounce the quest for form, as well as quoting any of the interviews here or, for some time, anywhere else. But it was hard. I was coming to identify with Virginia Woolf's emotions about (self-written or publically spoken) British working women's lives, and longed to share accent, idiom, rhythm with other audiences:

How many words must lurk in these . . . vocabularies that have faded from ours! How many scenes must lie dormant in their eye which are unseen by ours! What images and saws and proverbial sayings must still be current with them that have never reached the surface of print, and very likely they still keep the power which we have lost of making new ones. (xxvii-xxviii)¹⁵

But what the project boils down to is that people give information to us which they expect to be returned, and returned unsullied.

Although the students detested Philippe Lejeune's *On Autobiography*, with its confusing Gallicisms and references to works they had never heard of, Chapter Nine, "The Autobiography of Those Who Do Not Write" was, for me, a *crise de conscience*.

Lejeune's elegant, elaborate, detailed exposition of peasant and working class "autobiographies" in France demonstrates the impossibility of such endeavors: "Collaboration blurs in a disturbing way the question of responsibility, and even damages the notion of identity" (192); "[B]ehind these problems of identity are hidden problems of power relations . . . and constraints that come from rules characteristic of different circuits of communication" (192); "In writing, as elsewhere, 'authority' is always on the side of the one who has the power" (197); "If we use the speech of the model, it is less to *give* it to him than to *take* it from him" [emphasis his] (209); and so on and on.¹⁶ But Lejeune does hold out a tentative hope: "The essential choice [is] to abandon *writing* [i.e., publication; emphasis his] and to produce audiovisual life stories, by turning to . . . video techniques," using the product *in situ* for community discussion.

The apparatus that has been set up should not be looked upon as an alibi . . . to assuage [collectors'] guilty conscience, but rather as the search for a compromise, for a lesser evil. . . . Time will tell whether this work of emancipation and distancing will have contributed to changing the game of social relationships, of which the work itself is the product. (215)

So perhaps, in future, the interviews may play their part in other projects. From the start of our working together, Vail and I have toyed with the idea of producing an educational program for UNC TV, and I envisage cooperation in future with initiatives such as the Native American Church History project,¹⁷ with institutions such as the Department of Indian Studies at Pembroke State, as well as the university archives, or with individuals such as Barbara Braveboy-Locklear collecting oral histories on their own. The project may not remain solely oral: a wealth of documentation awaits us, such as with the Lumbee-Cheraw tribe and the Lumbee Regional Development Association. If forced to define it academically, officially, I'd say our research is evolving into a study of the personal experiences of Carolina Indians as affected by Federal and state policies of termination, exclusion, urban relocation, and "Indian [BIA-mediated] self-determination." It may spearhead an investigation of remembered and reconstructed ethnicity: a study of the narrative discourse constructing tribal (or other group) identity in a worst-case scenario of almost total acculturation and annihilation. It definitely will not become another

coffee table book of elders' wisdom. But it may indeed become Southeastern North American Indian *testimonio*, in which "individual stories . . . can be read collectively as one story refracted through multiple lives" (Davies 4). But, as Sistren learned in collecting and compiling life stories of Jamaican women:

Soon it was clear that the testimonies would not fit neatly into an introductory section. They refused to become supporting evidence of predetermined factors. They threatened to take over the entire project and they would not behave. . . . So, in the end, we . . . decided to change the nature of the entire project. (qtd. in Davies 3)¹⁸

So I don't believe either my students or I will write this grand testimonial narrative. We can only facilitate and contribute, leaving the editing and publication to those who, initially, helped us: the roles are now reversed, the biculturally-produced "autobiography" turned inside out. It has come not to matter that we have permission to quote the elders, that they have "released" us to do so. I can't "do it": allow myself a voice-over, become the controller, possessor or interpreter. Our research is but a tributary flowing into the river of heritage, and that heritage is the Lumbee people's, not ours.

As I was completing this interim report after innumerable false starts and discouraging drafts, Vail and I took time out from what wound up being hours of an Indian Education public hearing (at a church, needless to say). Typically, I had a legal pageful of information I needed him to verify, interpretations for him to review, and quotations for him to assent to before sending the manuscript off. (At most, I thought he might delete a quotation or two, or suggest others.) Typically, apart from vetting matters of fact, he offered no advice. Typically, what I envisioned as a formality lasting perhaps a half hour before the hearing developed into a lengthy conversation having little to do, at first glance, with the matters at issue for me. We returned to the hearing, took part in group work and the concluding blessing, folded chairs and prepared to go home. "I don't think I addressed most of your questions," he said in parting. "You addressed the most basic of all," I replied, feeling very much lighter, freer, unburdened, my aching jaw (the infallible marker that something is "wrong," my universe out of balance) unclenching. For the first time that evening, I felt I could breathe. "I've made up my mind. I'm not quoting anybody."

And so I haven't. Not in this context; not for now; not for publication.

NOTES

¹The curator for both is Lumbee oral historian and storyteller Barbara Braveboy-Locklear. "Pathmakers" opened at the Native American Art Gallery in Greensboro, North Carolina. At the Mint Museum, Mark Leach, curator of twentieth-century American art, guided my graduate students through "Partial Recall"/"Lumbee Recollections" and impressed us with his candid, politically-informed, sensitive discussion about "exhibiting a culture." The giant NationsBank is now pitching in: publicity about its April 1996 exhibition of Catawba pottery ensured that the 1995 Catawba annual after-Thanksgiving festival, on their reservation across the border in South Carolina, swarmed with collectors scampering after appreciable investments. Their pottery, says their tribal historian, until recently very nearly a "dying art," is "putting them on the map," however ironically.

²See Dana Milbank's *Wall Street Journal* front-page article, "What's in a Name? For the Lumbee, Pride and Money" and the retorts by (Lumbee) David E. Wilkins, "Wall Street Journal Reporter Was in Error on Lumbee," and Stanley Knick reprinted in *Indian Country Today*. Milbank provides a 1995 example of the dominant culture's continuing refusal to allow Lumbees the basic right of self-identification.

³The article discusses in more depth how teaching Native North American Indian literatures obliges me to redefine the promotion/tenure criteria (especially "service"), and the inappropriateness of academically-defined "objectivity" when a dominating culture "studies" those it has extinguished, "enveloped" (Jack Forbes' term), ignored, or marginalized.

⁴Founded in 1887 as the Croatan Normal School, the university became part of the 16-campus state of North Carolina system in 1972. In truth, our project's origins describe an infinite regress. John L. Carter was an extraordinary man, a polymath. Church historian of the Burnt Swamp Baptist Association for 42 years, as director of special projects at Pembroke State University he became concerned with a "missing link" in Lumbee community history, the generation of c. 1900-1930. (Before and after—although by no means complete or even composed primarily by Indian people—documents in Washington DC and Raleigh delineate the historical portrait and process somewhat.) With students at the university, he compiled an audio-taped interview collection which, some 12 years after his death, his son Vail started listening to. This, then, could be described as the project's genesis, but it probably dates back to Vail's great-great-great-grandfather Cary Wilkins, Esq., owner of a 1700-acre farm and founder of the Burnt Swamp Baptist Association: minister and justice of the peace, his own written documentation dates from 1851, when very few Indian people in southeastern North Carolina had any opportunity to become literate. Unlike many other Indians, these neglected people were not hostile to a cruelly-enforced literacy; disenfranchised, they embraced it.

⁵However, our colleague Boyd Davis' "When Students Collect Data: Ethics, Cooperation, Self-Discovery, and Variation in Linguistic and Cultural Behavior," was somewhat more enheartening: we took the admonition *Primum, non nocere* very much to heart.

⁶Deborah Finch, Rosa Winfree, and I presented a workshop on the interviews at the National Indian Education Association convention in Tucson, 14 November 1995. Deborah was delighted with the feedback concerning her paper "Traditional and Original Stories by Urban Indian Youth: a Written Collection." Anyone interested in her child-centered methodology can contact her at the English Dept., Univ. of North Carolina at Charlotte, 9201 University City Boulevard, Charlotte NC 28223-0001.

⁷Other references include Theda Perdue's *Nations Remembered: an Oral History of the Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Creeks, and Seminoles in Oklahoma, 1865-1907* (1980; 1993 preface). This consists of excerpts thematically compiled from interviews originally collected by WPA workers. K. Tsianina Lomawaima's *They Called It Prairie Light: the Story of Chilocco Indian School* (1994) is most helpful: focussing on a generational cohort at a pan-Indian agricultural boarding school in Oklahoma between the world wars, it suggests sensitive editing guidelines for reported speech.

⁸Our positions are roughly analogous to the discomfort Virginia Woolf experienced at a 1913 conference of British working women:

However hard I clap my hands or stamp my feet there is a hollowness in the sound which betrays me. I am a benevolent spectator. I am irretrievably cut off from the actors. . . . It was aesthetic sympathy, the sympathy of the eye and of the imagination, not of the heart and of the nerves. . . . [H]ow defective [fictitious sympathy] is because it is not based upon sharing the same important emotions unconsciously. (Woolf in Davies xix, xxvi, xxix)

⁹Later I read D'Arcy McNickle's *They Came First* and realized that our point of departure was his conclusion:

What was not anticipated, even by early social scientists, was the tendency of human societies to regenerate themselves, keeping what is useful from the past, and fitting the new into old patterns, sometimes incongruously, to make a working system. Indian societies did not disappear by assimilating to the dominant white culture, as predicted, but assimilated to themselves bits and pieces of the surrounding cultural environment. And they remained indubitably Indian, whether their constituents lived in a tight Indian community or commuted between the community and an urban job market. (283)

¹⁰The "Lumbee" name dates from 1952. (Unlike previous State designations, this was self-determined.) The Council of Elders dates from 1991, the Lumbee Tribe of Cheraw Indians' tribal council from 1994.

¹¹In essence interviewees, in exchange for copies of audio- and/or videotapes and transcripts, agreed to their further use for public and academic purposes. Without Indian intermediaries, I doubt they would have (or should have) consented. In some cases, the intermediaries also asked for copies, cautioning interviewees ahead of time and listening to the tapes afterwards. I was delighted when one urban organizer—supportive but watchful—used a quotation from one of the elders in the 20th anniversary celebration of her

center. The same elder also used my interview with her in a workshop. As far as we're concerned, the Indian communities may make whatever use of the materials they find useful, but any decision to publish rests with them, not with us.

¹²Adapted, interestingly, from a Jewish oral history project. When working for the Metrolina Native American Center in Charlotte, a 1978 community needs assessment further whetted and focused his recognition of the necessity for cultural and historical awareness if the urban Indian community was to survive.

¹³In one matter, at least, this is clear. As both a Euramerican and a woman, I won't be told about the rites of the Red Men's Lodges, a secret society that seems to have disbanded shortly before World War II. Some elders living now were initiated as children, and will discuss the society's rules for living in the most general terms, but no more. Even Lumbee families are sometimes unaware that an older relative was a member until after his death.

¹⁴Although this article focusses on interviewing Lumbee elders, my students have also travelled the 40-minute trip to the Catawba reservation in South Carolina; with Vail Carter I've visited Indian folk, not necessarily Lumbee, in the counties surrounding Robeson; with the help of Cherokee intermediary Freeman Owle—met, not surprisingly, at a Methodist regional assembly—I also interview at Qualla Boundary, a four-hour drive from Charlotte and, once one is guided off the commercialized tourist highways, another dimension. From the outset both Winfree and Carter urged that our research be comparative, of potential interest to all Indian peoples in the Carolinas, whether state- and/or federally-recognized or not.

¹⁵With education and geographical distance, the distinctive Robeson County "'Indian' dialect" is less of a marker than it was formerly. This is how Wilkins describes the "language" issue:

while it is true that the Lumbees do not have a single, pre-contact Aboriginal language, this . . . is understandable because the Lumbees are a melange of several tribes who very early in their collective history were economically integrated into the local and state economy. The Lumbees do, however, have a language. The root language is English, but over time the Lumbee people have put their own linguistic spin on the tongue, and it is nearly as unique as an Aboriginal tongue. (A5)

¹⁶In this instance, of course, it's not that the Lumbee "models" do not read and write, or do not read and write in English, for they do. For "writing" we may substitute "publication." Even those Lejeune would describe as militants—so often political leaders nurtured in Baptist or Methodist faiths—would find their (so far, nonexistent) autobiographies to be "thwarted by the tightness of the channels of distribution to what would be 'their' virtual public, people of controlled classes . . . who read, but read the literature of the ruling class" (201).

¹⁷See Jane and Michael Smith, *The Lumbee Methodists: Getting to Know Them* (1990).

¹⁸Beverly further defines characteristics of such accounts: "The situation of narration . . . has to involve an urgency to communicate, a problem of

repression, poverty, subalternity, imprisonment, struggle for survival, implicated in the act of narration itself" (94); "*Testimonio* represents an affirmation of the individual subject, even of individual growth and transformation, but in connection with a group or class situation marked by marginalization, oppression, and struggle. . . . *Testimonio* . . . always signifies the need for a general social change in which the stability of the reader's world must be brought into question" (103). Any resultant publication, as Kutzinski and Mesh-Ferguson note of Dany Bebel-Gisler's *Leonora: The Buried Story of Guadeloupe*, may well take the form of "something other, something more than a collection of interview transcripts and rearranged for publication. It is something other even than an academic textbook . . ." (270).

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When Critical Approaches Converge: Team-Teaching Welch's Winter in the Blood

Jim Charles and Richard Predmore

Introduction

In a special issue of *Studies in American Indian Literatures* on the teaching of American Indian literatures, Larry Abbott stated, "Along with the obvious revolution in thinking about what constitutes the canon in American literature, there has been a parallel, if quieter, revolution in pedagogy, about *how* we teach what we teach and *why* we teach what we teach" (1). It is an aspect of that quieter revolution, the pedagogical one, that we would like to examine. Based on our experiences team-teaching a course entitled Native American Literatures during a recent semester, and through a careful analysis of the way we taught James Welch's *Winter in the Blood* as part of the course, we suggest a viable approach for teaching American Indian literatures, an approach that relies upon the integration of diverse literary critical theories.

Other than the fact that a separate course in American Indian literatures had never been taught before at our university, there was nothing revolutionary about the structure of our course. The course began with three sessions of general historical background information as well as an overview of United States federal Indian policy from the colonial period to the present. We then spent two sessions on American Indian oral traditions, emphasizing contemporary verbal arts such as songs of the Ponca, Yaqui, and Lakota. Following those sessions, the course took the shape of most literature survey courses. Students read works by several contemporary American Indian poets from Joe Bruchac's *Songs From This Earth on Turtle's Back* (1983) and short stories from Craig Lesley's *Talking Leaves* (1991). They then read five novels in this sequence: Welch's *Winter in the Blood* (1974),

Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* (1968), Erdrich's *Love Medicine* (1984), Silko's *Ceremony* (1977), and Dorris' *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water* (1987). We required an essay assignment on the short stories or poems and a research paper on one of the novels as well as a mid-term and a final examination.

As far as teaching responsibilities were concerned, one of us served as "lead teacher" for each session. The lead teacher was responsible for preparing and presenting the bulk of the material on a given topic or work. The other teacher served various functions, from co-teacher to roll caller and record keeper, from commentator to discussion prompter, from affirmer to clown.

We were aware that many argue against the kind of structure we had established for the course. Those who argue that American Indian material should not be treated in a separate course make a strong and persuasive case. Kenneth Roemer warns us of the creation of "literary ghettos" where "too much separate treatment could trap the teaching of Native American texts in a purgatory of special topics courses and 'Indian units'—at best treated on a separate but equal basis, at worst isolated and ignored" ("Study" B1). Much of the pedagogical discussion on the teaching of American Indian literatures has focused on the appropriate degree of "separateness" and how the literature can be successfully integrated into the canon. One pedagogical technique, suggested by Helen Jaskoski, Roemer, and others, pairs Indian texts with "classic texts" as an effective means to integrate American Indian literatures into the curriculum.

As we planned the course, our discussions began to center on questions of similarities and differences between American Indian and other American literatures. In a team-teaching situation where one member argues primarily from the perspective of similarity and the other from difference, students benefit by coming to understand what Roemer calls the "significant ways that Indian and non-Indian texts speak to one another" ("Heuristic Powers" 8).

Two Literary Critical Approaches

Charles' role in the course was to approach the literature from the perspective of difference, to place emphasis on certain sociocultural variables, what he called "the Indianness" of the literature, in order to provide general insight on the basis of the American Indian experience and specific insight on the basis of the authors' tribal backgrounds. Welch's Indianness is of paramount importance to a "sociocultural critical" interpretation of the novel.

According to Corey and Motoyama, who trace the history and development of what they call "sociocultural criticism," sociocultural critics argue that "it is possible to discern a great deal about the

attitudes, compulsions, and values of a people by analyzing their stories, even if the stories are fictive. A literary text can reveal the life of its human community just as an organic cell 'shows the condition of the tissue'" (75). Grebstein (in Corey and Motoyama) further contends that "a literary work cannot be understood apart from its milieu, textual ideas are as important as literary form, morality is inherent in literature, [and] society is manifested in literature" (78).

Predmore, on the other hand, taught the literature from the perspective of New Criticism, emphasizing objective and formalistic criteria. In so doing, he focused on the similarities and "goodness of fit" between American Indian literature and other American literature. He placed "special emphasis on the literary work as distinguished from an emphasis on the writer or the reader" (Cleanth Brooks, qtd. in Atkins and Morrow 38). He stressed the intrinsic worth of Welch's literary art in *Winter in the Blood*.

Sociocultural Critical Approach: The Indianness of *Winter in the Blood*

James Welch's *Winter in the Blood* (1974) contains a significant amount of American Indian content that would be lost on a typical group of students such as those in our class—mostly junior and senior English majors—were it not pointed out to them. Teaching *Winter in the Blood* requires that the instructor be aware of and sensitive toward what can be called an American Indian point of view, a set of American Indian cultural assumptions. According to Alan Velie, "American Indian writers . . . in addition to their white American culture . . . have an Indian culture, a set of myths and models to draw upon that their white readers are generally unfamiliar with. . . . [T]hey have another set of norms to use as a reference point in their work" (320). In the novel Welch utilizes images, motifs, and metaphors from American Indian life, particularly from the Blackfeet traditions of his tribal heritage. Through the characters of the grandmother and Yellow Calf, Welch relates the importance of personal, familial, and tribal history to Indian people. Welch describes situations readily recognizable to American Indians as aspects of "the Ind'in way," and he expresses a unique orientation toward the Montana landscape—all this while weaving "Indian humor" in and out of the bleakness and fatalism of the novel.

Metaphors, Motifs, and Images

As Velie has pointed out, a controlling metaphor in *Winter in the Blood* is the protagonist as trickster figure. Trickster tales exist in virtually all American Indian tribes, from the Iktomi tales of the Lakota to the Ictinike tales of the Omaha and Ponca to Sendey tales of the

Kiowa. The trickster takes various forms— Coyote, Rabbit, Monkey, and Raven. Among the Blackfeet, the trickster Napi, or Old Man, is described by Grinnell as follows:

This. . . Na pi is a mixture of wisdom and foolishness; he is malicious, selfish, childish, and weak. He delights in tormenting people. Yet the mean things he does are so foolish that he is constantly getting himself into scrapes, and is often obliged to ask the animals to help him out of his troubles. His bad deeds almost always bring their own punishment. (150)

Velie further comments, "[Trickster] plays a number of roles in tribal mythology, ranging from creator and savior to obnoxious con man, amoral violator of taboos, and buffoon or clown" (324).

The nameless protagonist of *Winter in the Blood* resembles the Trickster in the duality of his character. Early in the novel, the protagonist's life is characterized by wanderlust, dislocation, and disconnection from a sense of himself and from meaningful relationships with others. He states:

But the distance I felt came not from country or people; it came from within me. I was as distant from myself as a hawk from the moon. And that was why I had no particular feelings toward my mother and grandmother. Or the girl who had come to live with me. (2)

Further, the protagonist feels "no love, no guilt, no conscience" (2). However, by the novel's end, the protagonist comes to know better who he is. He re-anchors himself to a place, reconnecting himself to it and to his people. By the novel's end, he sees the need for productive relationships with others. As in many trickster stories, revelations and wisdom come irreverently and from unexpected sources; in this case, it comes on the wind:

Bird farted.

And it came to me, as though it were riding one moment of gusting wind, as though Bird had had it in him all the time and had passed it to me in that one instant of corruption.

"Listen, old man," I said. "It was you. . . . He wasn't Teresa's father; it was you, Yellow Calf, the hunter." (158-59)

Throughout the novel, the protagonist is both fool and sage; he is both disconnected from and reconnected to himself, his people, his land.

Purdy suggests that the main structuring device for the novel, the Highline, or US Highway 2, has parallels in Blackfeet oral literature.

Bullchild describes the role of Kut-toe-yis, or Bloodclot, as one who rectifies the mistakes of Napi and saves the Blackfeet from destructive monsters. These monsters limit or impede the movement and progress of the people. Bloodclot recognizes the inherent flaw in each monster's evil, turns that evil against itself and saves the people. In much the same way, towns and bars line the Highway traveled by the protagonist. From Yellow Calf, at a location far removed from the highway, the protagonist

learns of other alternatives to assimilation or death: his grandfather and grandmother survived in a very hostile environment and isolated from their people. The protagonist finds his future in an understanding of the past with its connections to the tan land, not on the Highline, and he also finds the confidence he needs to recapture his Cree girlfriend. (Purdy 20-21)

Welch uses the motif of intertribal conflict and rivalry in the novel in order to establish the character of the protagonist's grandmother. She becomes the voice of Blackfeet pride and tradition, a potential anchor for the wayward and drifting protagonist. Early in the novel the Cree woman is referred to as "wild." Later, in reference to the protagonist's wife/girlfriend, his grandmother launches into an anti-Cree tirade:

She was a Cree and not worth a damn. Not worth going after. . . . Crees never cared for anybody but themselves. Crees drank too much and fought with other Indians in bars, though they never fought on the battlefield. . . . Crees were good only for the white men who came to slaughter Indians. Crees had served as scouts for the mounted soldiers and had learned to live like them, drink with them, and the girls had opened their thighs to the Long Knives. (33)

This intertribal conflict motif explodes the generic Indian stereotype so prevalent in the modern American popular culture. Our students were amazed that two groups of Indians might hold such feelings toward one another and that there might be a lack of total unanimity among the diverse American Indian peoples.

The grandmother fulfills another important function in the novel. Through his grandmother, the protagonist learns Blackfeet oral traditions and his own family history:

This woman who was Teresa's mother told me many things, many stories from her early life. My brother, Mose, had been alive at the time when, one winter evening as we sat at the foot of her rocker, she revealed

a life we never knew, this woman who was our own kin. She told us of her husband, Standing Bear, a Blackfeet (like herself) from the plains west of here, just below the Rocky Mountains. . . . When the old lady had related this story, many years ago, her eyes were not flat and filmy; they were black like a spider's belly and the small black hands drew triumphant pictures in the air. (36)

The grandmother reflects Welch's belief in the importance of the oral tradition among Indian peoples.

Welch employs a set of motifs which deal with everyday life in Indian country, aspects of living the "Ind'in Way," sometimes referred to as "life on the rez." Welch's description of a pickup truck, a typical "Indian car," is a good example: "There was no wiper on my side and the landscape blurred light brown against gray. . . . I had placed a piece of cardboard in my side window—the glass had fallen out one night in town last winter—to keep out the rain" (39). Later, he describes another "Indian car":

It didn't start. The salesman got a mechanic from the Ford garage who fooled with the wires, took the distributor cap off, then hit the solenoid a couple of times with his screwdriver. Everything seemed to be in working order. The three of them pushed me out onto the gravel shoulder beside the highway, grunting, swearing, building up speed. I popped the clutch and the motor coughed two or three times—then to my everlasting surprise, it caught. (100)

Another aspect of "life on the rez" is the ostensibly benevolent and usually ridiculous "Friend of the Indian." In the scene where the professor gives the protagonist a ride, the essence of this character type, well-known to Indians, is captured beautifully. In his typically laconic fashion, Welch has the professor ask two questions, which to most students seem innocent enough. However, to Indians there are no more familiar or loaded questions: "Do you Indians eat them?" and "Can I take your picture?" (129). In short space, Welch explodes the stereotypes of Indians as savages, as exotic curiosities, and as members of a dying race through a pathetic, albeit supposedly knowledgeable, non-Indian professor (probably of anthropology). By joining our bi-critical approach, students can make the leap from one side of the discourse to the other.

No group of people abhors laziness more than American Indian: this despite the vicious stereotype of them as a lazy people. In his careful analysis of the Omaha narrative "The Young Chief and the Thunders," Larry Evers (1976) points out that "[t]he emblem for the

young chief's personal disequilibrium at the outset of the story is his laziness; his father indicts him for not acting like a man. Alice Fletcher recorded some conversations among the Omaha which give us a sense of the way in which laziness . . . would [be] regarded. . . . '[A] lazy man and the feet of the lazy man were upon the descending road that led to crime and social disgrace'" (655). Welch's characterization of Long Knife echoes this Indian attitude toward laziness. Of Long Knife, the protagonist says, "He had learned to give the illusion of work" (24). Later, the protagonist remarks:

Long Knife folded his arms and leaned against the rear fender of the pickup. It was clear that he wasn't going to work anymore, no matter what happened. We were wasting time and I wanted to get the field cleared. It was the last field.

"Listen to me, Lame Bull—let's let him go. You and me'll work twice as hard and when it's done, it's done."
(28)

Another Indian aspect of *Winter in the Blood* centers on characters' relationships to the particular landscape of Blackfeet Country in northern and western Montana. Welch conveys the Indian orientation toward landscape through his use of distance as a metaphor. He also expresses this particular orientation through his portrayal of non-Indian intrusions on the landscape.

Early in the novel, the protagonist is alienated from others. The great distances between places in Montana, between the Indian way and the non-Indian way, and between the rez and the city are reflected in the lack of meaningful relationships between the protagonist and others. It is only after he exits the world of the cities and the bars and visits Yellow Calf that his self-awareness grows. It is then that life takes on some meaning, some purpose. As Purdy puts it, at that point, "he is, for the first time in the book, taking control of his own future" (21). Welch makes it clear that what non-Indians refer to as "progress" and "development," from an Indian perspective, are destructive and unnatural. According to Purdy:

. . . the difference between Euramerican and Blackfeet ways of moving in this land is clearly drawn with the central, structuring device of the novel: the Highline (Highway #2), "the straight ribbon of black through the heart of a tan land" (39). The highway is an imposition upon the natural and traditional landscape of northern Montana; it is an artificial surface rolling from east to west across the plains, through the hills, over the rivers. It is a surface built upon the dominant culture's belief that

science, geometry, and technology are absolute and universal. The antithesis of this . . . is a logic shaped by one particular landscape and the associations that it holds for the indigenous cultures who inhabit it. (16-17)

Purdy further comments: "the modern life Welch depicts along the Highline . . . is restrictive. . . . The life along its black surface and in its dark bars is a never-ending cycle of hopeless wandering . . . that takes people nowhere" (17).

New Critical Approach: A Close Reading of *Winter in the Blood*

There are two main reasons for approaching American Indian literatures from a traditional literary critical standpoint. First, if you want to make the case that a novel like *Winter in the Blood* should be taught not only in an American Indian literatures course but also in a course on the contemporary American novel, then it would be smart to show that the novel contains all the complexity and richness of great literature. The best way to demonstrate this is to subject American Indian literature to formalistic analysis. Secondly, failing to combine formalistic literary analysis with a sociocultural critical approach can lead to mistakes and misemphases, which can be demonstrated through a careful analysis of the main character of *Winter in the Blood*.

On an obvious level there are aspects of the novel other than the main character and the story of his full development that are amenable to formalistic analysis. The five-part structure of the novel correlates with the developmental stages of the protagonist. Welch's "sparse" style is darkly, grotesquely, and absurdly comic. In addition, there are numerous stylistic connections to Eliot's "The Wasteland" in *Winter in the Blood*. These include the identity-changing consciousness of the no-name narrator, allusions to dryness and the coming rain, environmental pollution, alienation, the emptiness of modern urban life, and innumerable references to fishing. Other features of the novel lending themselves to formalistic analysis include the abundance of minor characters used by the author to develop the character of the protagonist as well as Welch's use of imagery and symbolism. For example he uses dryness, the color blue, fishing, scatology, coldness, and distance as major symbols in the novel.

Velie, in his criticism mentioned earlier, misses the main point of *Winter in the Blood* when he states, "There is no resolution at the end of the novel, the narrator does not find himself, or develop a new sense of identity" (317). *Winter in the Blood* is built around the Blackfeet tradition of the narrator protagonist, who goes on a vision quest and takes a wife, enterprises that imply character development. For much of the novel, the protagonist quests in the wrong places—the nameless wasteland towns of northcentral Montana—and he quests for the wrong

things: the gun and the razor stolen by his Cree girlfriend.

A complex array of problems besets the protagonist. He is battered by the white world, the "great earth of stalking white men." From a drunken white man, the protagonist receives his "wounded knee." The narrator protagonist suffers from guilt related to the death of his brother Mose. He has an on-again-off-again relationship with his father and a cold mother. His Cree girlfriend has left him.

A good portion of the novel is devoted to describing how lost the narrator is. At home, he is lost in his relationship with his mother and her new husband, *Lame Bull*. In the towns, he is surrounded by absurd conversations, nihilistic events (death in a bowl of oatmeal, for example), and sterile sexual encounters.

In the beginning of Part II, the narrator visits *Yellow Calf*, old and blind, and jokingly referred to as a "wise man." But *Yellow Calf* proves to be wise, and the wisdom he imparts to the protagonist provides direction for the protagonist's impending regeneration. First, the narrator comments on how "clean and spare" the old man's shack is (in marked contrast to the other indoor locations in the novel that are described as messy). *Yellow Calf* says, "It's easier to keep it sparse than to feel the sorrows of possessions" (66). The deficiency of material possessions is a lesson that comes relatively easily to the narrator who says to *Yellow Calf*, "'Possessions can be sorrowful.' I agreed, thinking of my gun and electric razor" (66). The dawning growth in character contrasts sharply with the possessiveness of *Lame Bull*. Secondly, through *Yellow Calf*, the narrator is exposed to Welch's suggestion of a traditional American Indian outlook on nature. This culminates with the narrator's recognition of *Yellow Calf's* ability to understand animals: "*Yellow Calf* was facing off toward the river, listening to two magpies argue" (70). The old man's third lesson is the simplest of them all. He tells the narrator, "You must say hello to *Teresa* for me. Tell her that I am living to the best of my ability" (70). In contrast, as he wanders through the wasteland towns, the narrator does not live to the best of his ability.

Distance is a metaphor that Welch uses to describe modern alienation: "none of them counted; not one meant anything to me. And for no reason. I felt . . . nothing but a distance that had grown through the years" (2). Distance is a condition of life in northern Montana. According to the narrator: "The country had created a distance as deep as it was empty, and the people accepted and treated each other with distance" (2). This distance dominates the lives of the people in the town sections of the novel. The sordid *Malvina* keeps photos on her night table, "all [of which] were of *Malvina* alone in various places" (83). The man in the khaki suit, with whom the narrator spends the most time in the town passages of the novel, is most often identified as

"the man who tore up his airplane ticket" (86). We cannot figure out where he really comes from, who is family is, or why he wants to go to Canada, if indeed he really does. One of the first things he says to the narrator is about fishing: "I'll take you out with me tomorrow and if we don't catch any fish, I'll buy the biggest steak in—where are we?—Malta!" (46).

In the town sections, the Cree girl represents the opposite pull from the distance and coldness of the man who tore up his airplane ticket. In her eyes the narrator sees "the promise of warm things, of a spirit that went beyond her miserable life of drinking and screwing and men like me" (113). The narrator increasingly realizes that if he should go with the airplane man, he "would become somebody else, and the girl would have no meaning for me" (102). He says, "I wanted to be with her, but I didn't move" (102). In a signal moment in the novel, in Havre the narrator sees the airplane man standing in front of the Palace Bar and then sees the entrance to Gable's Bar, into which the Cree girl has just gone. The narrator throws the keys to the Falcon into the air, indicating the narrator's choice. Tossing the keys signals his growth and development: he steps toward the warmth and closeness of a relationship with the Cree girl.

There are clear indications that the narrator is on the mend, that his quest is leading him out of the wasteland. He leaves town and drives to his mother's farm, where he describes bathing himself, a cleansing of the towns from his life. By this time, he has ceased worrying about his gun and razor. Cold and unemotional to this point in the novel, the narrator demonstrates true feelings—for Marlene, for the Cree girl, and for the professor's daughter. He sees their childlike vulnerability.

In the episode where the narrator and Bird pull the cow out of the mud, the protagonist gets mad for the first time in the novel. Immediately following his healthy outburst, he says, "I crouched and spent the next few minutes planning my new life" (169). Through memory, he relives the death of Mose and seems to be making progress in ridding himself of the "final burden of guilt" (146). The narrator has warm and loving memories of both First Raise and Mose. He throws his grandmother's old medicine pouch into her grave, an act of closeness to the distant old woman. Another indication of the narrator's growth is indicated in the story of his favorite horse, Bird. He explains how brutal the training was and how hard Bird's life was. In his own way, the narrator, like Yellow Calf, respects the life and wisdom that animates nature: "You have grown old, Bird, so old this sun consults your bones for weather reports" (146). The narrator no longer mocks the old man's sympathetic relationship with nature, and he certainly has outgrown the Michigan professor who "spoke about the countryside as if it were dead" (127).

Given the tough life the narrator describes as the old cow horse's lot, and given Bird's valiant work and sacrificing his life to pull the stupid cow out of the mud, it is clear that the narrator is thinking about Yellow Calf's earlier advice about living life to the best of one's ability. His hard work to save the cow represents a change for him because it is only the second time in the novel readers have seen him work.

After his grandmother's death, the protagonist rides the three miles to inform Yellow Calf. In his third conversation with the wise man, he learns that Yellow Calf was his grandmother's lover, which makes Yellow Calf the father of the narrator's mother; it makes Yellow Calf the narrator's grandfather. The narrator's growth here parallels the growth of Jack in *All the King's Men*. Both learn their real lineage. Just as important, the narrator learns his grandmother's full story, that she was widowed as a young woman during the brutal winter of 1883-84 and was ostracized from the tribe. It was the teenaged Yellow Calf who hunted game for her through the winter, insuring her survival.

The best way to see the narrator's growth is to realize that his Cree girlfriend is just as lost and ostracized and just as in need of help in the Montana towns as the grandmother was during the desperate winter of 1883. At the end of the novel, when he thinks of marrying the Cree girl, the narrator is obviously thinking of following in his grandfather's footsteps.

Finally, the meaning of temperature and distance and the title of the novel are all made clear. The narrator has always seemed to have winter in his blood; that is, his character has seemed as cold and distant as the Montana winter. But what we learn at the end is that Yellow Calf had given "winter in the blood" a different meaning. Yellow Calf's life showed that even in the worst of times, distance and coldness can be overcome by closeness and warmth. The novel demonstrates the narrator's new warmth: he has genuine feelings for the Cree girl, Marlene, and the professor's sickly daughter; he rescues the stupid cow; he loves First Raise and Mose. All these actions and thoughts show that Yellow Calf's "warmth in the blood" runs through the narrator's veins and that he may indeed end up being able to "live to the best of his ability."

Conclusion

As we team-taught the course, an understanding emerged: our students were better served because they were exposed to each of the two predominant critical perspectives. Our students learned that Welch's work advanced a particular vision, one shaped by the Montana landscape and the culture of the Indian people living there. They also

learned that his work, when measured against literary critical standards, fares beautifully and deserves its place in the American literary canon.

Clearly a teacher can enhance his/her own and his/her students' appreciation of James Welch's artistry through attention to images, motifs, and metaphors drawn from the American Indian experience as well as the broader American literary experience. The characters' motivations can be more properly understood only when the reader gains such insight. Our experience as team teachers validates the conclusion that teachers enhance their treatment of *Winter in the Blood* when they recognize Indian and non-Indian elements at work in the novel. The novel is more thoroughly taught when both sets of elements and assumptions are directly addressed through instruction.

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OUR CHILD
WILL BE STRONG
IN
HIS HEART
OUR CHILD
WILL BE GENEROUS
WITH HIS LOVE
OUR CHILD
WILL BE SINCERE
IN HIS SMILE



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THEY CHASE YOU

TE. THEY GET YOU

AND THEN

THEY TRY TO CHANGE YOU

BUT

DON'T YOU EVER

LET THEM

CAUSE THEN

THEY'LL LET YOU GO

People always want to say "How" to an Indian. . . One day, this Paiute guy, Charley, and I were at the park, just standing around -- when a Hippie guy walks up to me and says, "How." Well, I look at Charley and say, "What?" and Charley looks back and says, "Who?" and I say, "When?" -- He says, "Where?" I look straight in the blue eyes of this bearded Hippie and say, "Why???" He just stared at the ground as he walked away saying, "Oh, Wow!"



Obenry '96

Silko's Originality in "Yellow Woman"

Peter G. Beidler, ed.

Introduction

Peter G. Beidler

What is most original in Leslie Marmon Silko's story "Yellow Woman"? In an effort to discover the answer to that question, the eight students in my spring 1992 seminar on American Indian Women's Fiction at Lehigh University decided to write a series of short papers in which they compared Silko's 1974 short story with one of the traditional Keresan versions of the Yellow Woman story.¹ Each student, focusing on a different character or theme, would compare Silko's modern treatment of that character or theme with the parallel feature in the Cochiti tale entitled "Evil Kachina Steals Yellow Woman." The eight papers below are the results of the students' work.

It is important to note that the writers do not assume that "Evil Kachina Steals Yellow Woman" was Silko's direct source. It is impossible to say with any accuracy what that source was. Indeed, we should be cautious about using the term "source" at all in connection with Silko's story, since "Yellow Woman" results from an extraordinarily complex blending of tradition, personal experience, and originality. Silko was only 20 when she wrote "Yellow Woman," and it is unlikely that she had made a thorough study of the written versions. There can be no question, however, that she knew about the anthropological reports containing written versions of the stories of the Laguna people. In an interview not long after "Yellow Woman" appeared, Silko spoke of the collections of traditional Indian tales as collected by ethnologists:

I have looked at them myself, but I've never sat down with them and said I'm going to make a poem or a story

out of this. . . . The things in the anthropological reports looked dead and alien. I couldn't do anything with them anyway, even though theoretically they came from here. . . . I've always been real leery of the kinds of things that the ethnologists picked up. (Evers and Carr 30)

In a short preface she wrote for a recent anthology printing "Yellow Woman," Silko suggests that much of her knowledge of Yellow Woman came to her directly from stories told by members of her family and by other members of the Laguna community:

When I was a little girl, Aunt Alice used to tell us kids the old-time stories. . . . There is a whole cycle of Kochininako–Yellow Woman–stories which Aunt Alice seemed to enjoy a great deal. In most of the stories, Kochininako is a strong courageous woman, sometimes a hunter bringing home rabbits for her family to eat; other times she faces dangers or hardships and overcomes them. But in some of the stories Kochininako is swept away by forces and circumstances beyond her. All realms of possibility are open to Kochininako, even that of sorcery. (Rubenstein and Larson 1086)

Clearly Silko's knowledge of the traditional Yellow Woman story is eclectic and not precisely recoverable.

The writers of the eight essays below, then, do not pretend that "Evil Kachina Steals Yellow Woman" is "the" source for Silko's "Yellow Woman." They refer to it only as a more or less representative expression of one of the several and shifting versions of the story. They recognize that they are being somewhat arbitrary in selecting this one written version as the basis for comparison in an attempt to show what is most distinctive, most modern, and most original in Silko's retelling of the story.

Readers not familiar with "Evil Kachina Steals Yellow Woman" may profit from a quick summary of the Cochiti story:²

One day Yellow Woman leaves town and goes with her jar to the river to fetch water. She sees a kicking stick and hides it in her dress. Evil Kachina comes up to her and, after a brief conversation about who owns the kicking stick, tells Yellow Woman that she must come with him. He carries her on his back to his house in the sky, then leaves her to grind corn and make wafer bread (probably *piki*) while he goes hunting. When he brings a deer back Yellow Woman gives Evil Kachina corn wafers to eat and gives the dead deer an offering of sacred corn meal.

Meanwhile Yellow Woman's husband returns to their

house in town and finds his wife missing. He is determined to find her. He goes to Old Spider Woman for help. She feeds him a cooked snowbird head, in return for which he hunts several more snowbirds for her. Then she takes the husband to Evil Kachina's house, where he finds his wife at home alone. She hugs him and he takes her home.

When Evil Kachina comes home and finds Yellow Woman gone, he angrily pursues her. When he gets to their house he threatens to kill both her and her husband. He does not kill them right then, however, because Yellow Woman is pregnant with his child. After it is born he comes to get the child. He had already taken many Yellow Women away and killed them by throwing them down on the ice, leaving them to freeze to death. Evil Kachina kills this new Yellow Woman and her husband. He is very bad, this Evil Kachina.

That traditional Yellow Woman story seems strange to modern tastes. Why does Evil Kachina carry off women, and this Yellow Woman in particular? Is there something Yellow Woman or the husband might have done or should have done to stop him? Does she at some level *want* to join him to escape domination at home? What happens to the baby? Do we know Yellow Woman enough to care that she and her husband are killed in the end? What lesson, if any, is the tale supposed to teach?

The writers of the essays below did not directly concern themselves with trying to answer these questions.³ They were more interested in using the Keres version of the Yellow Woman story as the basis for trying to answer a series of rather different questions about Silko's "Yellow Woman," a modern short story with a modern setting, aimed at least partially at a non-Indian audience.

In talking about the process of writing "Yellow Woman," Silko has suggested that she had uncertain, or at least shifting, goals in writing the story:

I did not know, at the time I began writing this story, what the story would be about; all I had was the notion of this sensuous woman who leaves her family responsibilities behind for a handsome stranger. Then, when I was about one-third of the way into the story, suddenly I remembered all the Kochininako-Yellow Woman stories I had heard while I was growing up.⁴ (Rubenstein and Larson 1087)

Quite appropriately, Silko has avoided answering direct questions about her own version of the story. Her silence, however, has left the

writers of the papers below with little to go on except the text of Silko's modern version as compared with the traditional Cochiti version. Out of that comparison they attempt to answer—not always in harmony with one another—these questions: Is the woman in Silko's story abducted and raped, or is she a willing victim of Silva? Is Silva a brutal rapist or a dispossessed Indian trying to right the wrongs of a dominant white society? Why does Silko virtually eliminate the role of Spider Woman in her version of the story? What of that white rancher, a character not present in the traditional story? And what are we to make of certain thematic changes in Silko's story—changes involving gender roles, boundary crossing, moisture, and seeing?

The writers of the eight papers below wish to emphasize that, although their method requires that they draw distinctions between the early version of the story and Silko's later version, Silko's "Yellow Woman" is not entirely separate from earlier versions. Indeed, much of the power of Silko's story lies in its unique "intertextual" blend of the traditional and the modern, and in the resulting ambiguity that so dramatically enriches it and gives it its most original complexion.⁵

1: The Woman as Willing Victim

Heather Holland

There is no question that the Yellow Woman of the Cochiti story is abducted. Evil Kachina gives her no choice. He forcibly carries her off on his back and locks her in his house in the sky. She has no apparent opportunity to leave, and when her husband comes to her rescue, she leaps happily to him and goes home with him. The woman in Silko's story, on the other hand, is not forcibly made to accompany Silva. She has several opportunities to leave, opportunities she does not—and does not want to—take advantage of.

In the Cochiti story, Evil Kachina takes Yellow Woman away immediately to his house in the sky. It seems clear in that story that the wife is an unwilling victim. In an interview with Kim Barnes, Silko was asked: "Do you see the myths concerning her as having arisen from the need for escape on the part of the woman from a kind of social and sexual domination?" Silko's reply about the meaning of the traditional Yellow Woman story is unequivocal:

No, not at all. The need for that kind of escape is the need of a woman in middle-America. . . . The kinds of things that cause white upper-middle-class women to flee the home for awhile to escape or get away from domination and powerlessness and inferior status, *vis-a-vis* the

husband, and the male, those kinds of forces are not operating, they're not operating at all. What's operating in those stories of Kochininako is this attraction, this passion, this connection between the human world and the animal and spirit worlds. . . . There's a real overpowering sexual attraction that's felt. The attraction is symbolized by or typified by the kind of sexual power that draws her to [her abductor]. (Barnes 95-96)⁶

Silko has been less explicit in interpreting the ambiguous meaning of her own modern-day version of the story, but the woman's "overpowering sexual attraction" for Silva is clearly present in her story. When the woman in Silko's story comes upon Silva sitting on the river bank cutting the leaves from a willow twig, she is not "abducted" by him. Rather they sleep together on the river bank that night. Although the scene is not described directly, the next day she remembers it: "He undressed me slowly like the night before beside the river—kissing my face gently and running his hands up and down my belly and legs" (58). Upon waking, the woman realizes that because Silva is still asleep she is free to leave and return to her family. After mounting her horse to leave, she changes her mind when she thinks of Silva sleeping in the sand. She dismounts and returns to wake Silva up and tell him she is leaving. His reply is, "You are coming with me, remember?" (55). She easily allows him to persuade her to go with him, and they again make love on the sand by the river. Far from resisting these actions, she is a willing participant in them.

When they do leave the river bank, the woman in Silko's story acquiesces when he puts his hand on her wrist. She does so not because he is stronger than she, but "because his hand felt cool" (56). Again she lets him take her away with no resistance. She does not feel that she *must* accompany him. Rather, she *wants* to accompany him. She is far more seduced by Silva than raped by him. To be sure, she seems somewhat afraid of him some of the time, but it may be that that fear is part of the fascination. In any case, at other times she looks lovingly at him. The second evening they are together at Silva's house the narrator tells us that "I was afraid because I understood that his strength could hurt me" (58), and there is evidence of some coercion in their love-making. Yet later that night she reaches out, touches him, and kisses him: "While he slept beside me, I touched his face and I had a feeling—the kind of feeling for him that overcame me that morning along the river. I kissed him on the forehead and he reached out for me" (58). These actions are those of love or infatuation, not fear. Rather than escaping when he sleeps, she again deliberately wakes him up. She knows his power over her, yet seems more attracted to than repulsed by that power.⁷

The woman in Silko's story wonders whether she will ever see her family again, but she seems to enjoy her new situation. This modern Yellow Woman thinks less of her family than of her present situation with this mysterious and attractive Silva. When, after the night at Silva's house, she wakes to find Silva gone, she again misses an opportunity to escape. She thinks of going home, but takes a nap instead outside on the rim of the canyon. She thinks of her home and of what may be happening because of her disappearance. She is not remorseful, but accepts, almost eagerly, this new life with her mysterious new lover. She believes that her mother and grandmother will take care of her baby, and that her husband will eventually find someone else. These are not the thoughts of someone who has been abducted against her will. Rather than run off from Silva, she returns to Silva's house. She remembers that she had meant to go home, "but that didn't seem important anymore" (59).

Yellow Woman in the Cochiti story runs eagerly toward her husband when he arrives to rescue her from Evil Kachina. She hugs him, is happy to be with him again, and wants him to take her home. On the other hand, when the woman in Silko's story finally does leave Silva after the incident with the white rancher, she is sad rather than joyful. When she arrives back at the river where she and Silva had met, she remembers their first meeting. The sight of the willow branches Silva had trimmed makes her want to return to the mountains to find him again: "I wanted to go back to him—to kiss him and to touch him" (62). She believes that "he will come back sometime and be waiting again by the river" (62). That belief enables her to rejoin her family.

Silko, then, has almost totally shifted the focus of her modern-day version of the Yellow Woman story. Rather than a story about a happily-married wife who is abducted by an evil and dangerous murderer and who then is happy to be rescued by her heroic husband, Silko tells a story about a restless woman who enjoys the romantic adventure that Silva offers her. Although in some sense she is the victim of her mysterious abductor, she becomes, at least temporarily, all too willingly—even eagerly?—his victim.

2: Silva as Brutal Rapist

Ann Cavanaugh Sipos

While the woman in Silko's story *seems* at times to be a willing participant in her own abduction, a closer look at the character of the lover suggests that she may not be quite so much in control. In fact,

I would suggest that the woman is so confused, intrigued, and frightened by her mysterious lover that she scarcely realizes that he brutally abducts and rapes her. Damaged by his overpowering of her, she self-protectively romanticizes his violation of her by temporarily imagining that she has become the Yellow Woman of Pueblo legend.⁸

The Evil Kachina of the Cochiti Yellow Woman story is, as his name suggests, an evil supernatural being who comes to the earth to kidnap a helpless mortal woman. He forcibly abducts her, takes her to his house in the eastern sky, forces her to grind corn, to cook for him, and to have sex with him. When her husband courageously rescues her, Evil Kachina temporarily spares them because she is pregnant with his ill-conceived child, but in the end he does with this Yellow Woman and her husband what he has done with all previous ones—throws them down on the ice to freeze to death.

The Evil Kachina character in Silko's story is transformed from this cruel supernatural being into a mysterious and strangely attractive cattle rustler. Although he does not carry the woman away on his back, he nevertheless does find a way to force her to go with him. She *seems* to have a choice, but that choice is ambiguous. "I don't have to go," she tells Silva after they have sex and he gets up to leave. "Let's go" (56), he replies. And she does. Is that force or choice? As the woman puts it later, "I did not decide to go. I just went. Moonflowers blossom in the sand hills before dawn, just as I followed him" (58). Do moonflowers *decide* to bloom? Of course not. It is their destiny to do so. The woman in Silko's story does not sound very much in control here. She sounds, rather, captivated, transfixed, even hypnotized by him, *destined* to go with him to his house in the mountains. When they leave to go up into the mountains, the woman says, "I walked beside him, breathing hard because he walked fast, his hand around my wrist. I had stopped trying to pull away from him" (56). Notice that they are not holding hands as they walk. Rather, he is holding her wrist, and she tries to pull away. Just how much physical choice does this young woman have in dealing with this mysterious stranger?

It is easy to overlook an important difference between Evil Kachina and Silva. Evil Kachina is a supernatural spirit who descends from the cold north to abduct a mortal woman to work for him. Is there not a certain spirit license that comes with such a being, or at least a certain inevitability in his repeated actions in abducting pretty young women? By making the lover mortal, however, Silko brings him into the realm of human morality. What the gods and spirits do is above and essentially beyond moral censure. What mortals do, however, is not. We cannot help but find the mortal Silva to be brutally cruel in his treatment of his fellow humans.⁹ He steals their cattle, apparently

murders an unarmed white rancher with four shots from his powerful .30-30 rifle, and forces a reservation woman to have sex with him.

Forces? Is their sexual encounter seduction or rape? Modern feminist thinking, of course, suggests that there may often be little distinction between seduction and rape. In any case, in the first of two sex scenes we are shown in Silko's story, there is good reason to think that it approaches rape: "Come here" (55), he tells her, however gently. Then, "I felt him all around me, *pushing me down* into the white river sand" (56, *italics mine*, here and below). The woman tells us that immediately afterward "I was *afraid* lying there on the red blanket" (56). The second sex scene seems even more obviously to be a rape:

I *pulled away* from him and turned my back to him.

He pulled me around and *pinned me down* with his arms and chest. "You don't understand, do you, little Yellow Woman? You *will do* what I want."

And again he was all around me with his skin slippery against mine, and I was *afraid* because I understood that his strength could hurt me. I lay underneath him and I knew that he could destroy me. (58)

If that is not rape, what is? If that is *choice* on her part, what would *coercion* sound like?

These sexual encounters seem even more brutal when we recall that in the Cochiti Yellow Woman story there is no sex scene described. We know that Evil Kachina does have sex with Yellow Woman, but we know that only because she later turns out to be pregnant with his child. Silko, however, deliberately shows us the sexual encounters in scenes in which the woman seems to have very little choice. In theory she might have escaped him, but in fact she knows that he is far stronger than she. In any case she fears him and yet feels mysteriously compelled to stay with him.

The woman does escape from Silva when they are on the way to Marquez to sell the stolen beef. She looks at him and notes that there is "something ancient and dark—something I could feel in my stomach—in his eyes, and when I glanced at his hand I saw his finger on the trigger of the .30-30" (62). She is obviously afraid of this mysterious man, and when she comes to the fork in the trail who can blame her for disobeying his instructions and going home. "I went that way," she says, "because I thought it was *safer*" (61). If I am right to suggest that the woman had originally justified her powerlessness in the face of Silva's power over her by fantasizing that she was the Yellow Woman of Pueblo legend, then she has apparently by now had her fill of such role-playing. That fantasy had served her well to justify the helplessness-

ness she felt when in Silva's power, but his apparently brutal murder of the unarmed rancher makes her realize just how dangerous her own situation is.

Because Silko has transformed the demon lover of the Cochiti story into a brutal and fearsome man, the woman in her story seems less willing than some readers have found her to be. Perhaps she is more psychologically than physically captivated than the Yellow Woman in the traditional story, but she is captivated nevertheless, and during her captivity she undergoes the indignities of forced sex with a mortal and very physical man who insists on calling her "little Yellow Woman" (58). She is so small and powerless, I suggest, only because he is made even stronger and more brutal than the traditional Evil Kachina abductor of Cochiti legend.

3: Old Spider Woman Eliminated

Jian Shi

In the Cochiti story Old Spider Woman plays a key role in helping the husband rescue his abducted wife. Indeed, as many lines are devoted to the doings of the grandmother as are devoted to Yellow Woman herself. In Silko's version the role of Old Spider Woman is eliminated. Silko's elimination of Old Spider Woman has two important effects on her story. It takes the story out of the realm of myth and makes it a modern story with human motivation; more important, it makes the Yellow Woman character a more important and commanding central character.

Old Spider Woman, sometimes called Grandmother Spider, is one of the most important mythical figures in traditional Indian storytelling. Indeed, she provides the "web" that joins various mythological stories into one large pattern. She often intervenes in the affairs of humans, and she is often the central character in the story, the one who makes things happen. She controls the action to such an extent that the mere human characters often seem helpless and downright insignificant. Furthermore, when she appears in a story, she often introduces a certain amount of confusion about whether the story is about mythological or human characters.

By removing the character of Spider Woman, Silko reduces that kind of confusion. We *know* when we read Silko's "Yellow Woman" that this is a modern, not an ancient, story, and that it is about human beings, not mythological ones. The setting is contemporary and the action involves real people with real rifles and horses and cars and coffee pots, people who eat potatoes and beef and dried apricots rather

than the heads of snow birds. The tangled confusion present in the traditional Yellow Woman story is also present in Silko's modern story; significantly, however, the confusion is far more in the mind of the woman in Silko's story than in the minds of listeners or readers. We *readers* know that this is a modern story. The *woman* who plays a role roughly parallel to Yellow Woman, however, is not so sure: "I only said that you were him and that I was Yellow Woman—I'm not really her—I have my own name and I come from the pueblo on the other side of the mesa" (55). She says that what is happening to her and Silva is not what happened in "the old stories about the ka'tsina spirit and Yellow Woman" (57). In fact, however, we know that she is not really so very sure, and her confusion functions to help us to understand her. She half-wants to believe that she really is Yellow Woman, and that the story of her adventure with Silva will be told and retold through time. The confusion between fact and myth in this story, then, becomes a characterizing device that helps to make the woman a stronger and more vivid literary figure.

That brings us to my second point about the elimination of Spider Woman in Silko's story: that it makes the woman a more central figure. We recall that in the Cochiti Yellow Woman story, Old Spider Woman plays a dominant role. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine the story without her in it. After Yellow Woman is abducted by Evil Kachina, her husband tries to search for her on his own, but fails. Then Spider Woman enters the story to help her "poor grandson" (212) in his quest. She feeds him a snowbird head, gives him the task of hunting more snowbirds, makes him a special medicine, and leads him personally to Evil Kachina's home, where his wife is held captive. Then she waits for him and guides him and Yellow Woman home.

By eliminating Spider Woman, Silko makes the woman in her story a more commanding character. Instead of being someone whose fate is controlled by Spider Woman and whose rescue is dependent on the effective magic and guidance of Spider Woman, the woman in Silko's story is very much in control of her own fate. She tells her own story in the first person. She voluntarily goes along with Silva, makes love with him, and willingly stays with him. And when it is time for her to leave and go home, she does so voluntarily. She is not the shadowy, powerless, and dependent figure that she was in the Cochiti story.

It might be argued, of course, that Silko does not entirely eliminate Spider Woman or Spider Grandmother from her story, because she *does* give us a grandmother figure in her story—the woman's own grandmother. But that grandmother figure is so strikingly unimportant that she might as well not be there at all. She stays home and accomplishes nothing. The most important thing she does in the story comes in the final, almost comic, scene. When the woman returns

home, her grandmother is learning from her daughter how to make Jell-O.¹⁰ Surely this grandmother is no Spider Woman figure, and her very insignificance underscores my point that by eliminating Spider Woman, Silko transforms a mythological story about a traditional Yellow Woman who has little control over her own life into one about a Yellow Woman who is of interest to us primarily because she is allowed to take control over the events in her own life and to tell, in her own words, about her own actions, feelings, frustrations, and confusions.

4: The White Rancher Added

by Nora El-Aasser

The Cochiti Yellow Woman story ends with Evil Kachina killing Yellow Woman and her husband by throwing them down on the ice. Silko's story also ends with the abducting lover murdering someone, but in this case it is not the wife or her husband who dies but rather a white rancher. Why did Silko make this change? I suggest three reasons: first, to remind the woman that she is living in the modern world; second, to remind readers that the real enemy of the Indian is the white man; and, third, to exonerate Silva for fulfilling a quite understandable desire to destroy his enemy.

On the first point, that the white rancher reminds the woman that she lives in the modern world, it is interesting that in Silko's version of the Yellow Woman story, Silva tries to be an "old-time Indian." He refuses to face the reality of modern life, and he tries to make the woman think that he is an old-time kachina and that she is Yellow Woman. Rather than honoring modern land boundaries and modern ownership laws, he pretends that he is living in a time when there were no legal land boundaries and when Indian hunters were free to kill any animals they found. When the woman in Silko's story notices the "ancient" look in Silva's eyes (61), that look suggests that she recognizes him as an ancient, pre-white Indian.

The woman herself is confused about what era she lives in. She is not sure whether Silva is an ancient kachina or a modern mortal, whether she is a mythological figure or a modern woman.¹¹ As they go into the mountains, the woman thinks, "I will see someone, eventually I will see someone, and then I will be certain that he [Silva] is only a man and I will be sure that I am not Yellow Woman" (56). The first "someone" she sees is the white rancher. He is the first real proof she has that Silva is a modern mortal living in twentieth-century white America rather than a mountain spirit; the first real proof that she

is not Yellow Woman. If the man had been another Indian or a Mexican, the confused woman might not have been so sure what era her adventure was taking place in, but when she sees a *white* man, there can be no doubt. No white men lived in Indian country in ancient times, so the rancher's whiteness signals to her with absolute clarity that she is a modern woman. Because his whiteness brings her back to the reality of her situation, it is no accident that immediately after she sees the white man she decides to return home to her family.

Another reason Silko makes the rancher white is to remind her audience that there is a parallel between the fate of Yellow Woman and the fate of the Indian people in general. Just as the coming of whites in American history signaled the end to the old Indian way of life, so the coming of whites into this previous all-Native story signals that the magic and adventure of the old Indian way of life must end. Whatever her ambiguous and confused reasons for following Silva into the mountains, the presence of the white rancher is a clear clue that the adventure is over. She knows now that she has to go back home to Al and a grandmother and a mother and a baby. The arrival of the white rancher on the scene talking about ownership of cattle and about summoning the state police brings an end to the woman's nostalgic journey back to a time when Indians controlled the land and hunted the range freely.

As Silko describes the white rancher, he is not at all attractive. His fat face is sweaty, and his cowboy shirt is "stuck to the thick rolls of belly fat" (61). He pants from the mere effort of talking, and he smells "rancid" (61). He is unfriendly and arrogant, automatically assuming that any Indian with fresh meat must have stolen it. Why does Silko describe the white rancher as so physically repugnant and so obnoxiously arrogant? Perhaps it is because she wants the reader to despise the white man because he, rather than Silva, is the real enemy of Indian people. Certainly there is no doubt in Silva's mind that the white rancher is the enemy, just as there is no doubt that the arrival of the whites brought on the destruction of tribal life and the devastation of the Indian people. And certainly no reader can feel very sad that this fat and smelly white man soon is killed.

And that brings up my third suggestion about why Silko introduces a white rancher into the story: because she wants to kill him off. After four shots the white rancher is presumably dead. Is it not fair to suggest that Silko uses those four shots to manifest her desire to rid her people of their antagonist by erasing the white man? Perhaps Silva is a brutal killer, but is not the brutality softened by the fact that it is a *white* man he kills? And are we not to see Silva as at least in part a culture hero for standing up to the white capitalist ranchers who have done so much to destroy the communal living that the Indians had

known for centuries? If I am right, then of course this story is not merely a nostalgic modernization of a traditional Yellow Woman story, but also a denunciation of the role of whites in Indian life. If I am right, then the story itself exonerates Silva for symbolically killing off the fat, smelly, and greedy white man.

5: Hunting, Cooking, and Gender Roles

Melissa Fiesta Blossom

In the Cochiti story evil Kachina is a hunter of Yellow Women and deer, while Yellow Woman is a corn grinder and a cook. The abductor and his victim have what appears to be a workable and mutually beneficial arrangement, one apparently common in traditional Indian societies. Silko also describes the traditional roles of hunting and cooking, but she makes some interesting changes that reflect her quite different emphases and the more modern setting of her story.

In the Cochiti story, the morning after Evil Kachina steals Yellow Woman he goes hunting for deer. He orders Yellow Woman, while he is gone, to grind corn. She obediently does so, putting the flour into a basket. Then she makes the flour into wafer bread or *piki* for him to eat when he comes home in the evening. Meanwhile, Evil Kachina successfully hunts his deer and brings it home for her to prepare. The domestic scene in the Cochiti version is worth looking at in some detail:

He arrived in the evening. Then Evil Kachina told her that he had killed a deer which he had brought to his house. Then Yellow Woman went out and took the deer. He gave it to Yellow Woman to eat. Then she put it down in front of the fireplace and Yellow Woman took sacred corn meal. Then Yellow Woman gave sacred meal to the deer to eat. Yellow Woman inhaled. "Thank you," she said, "you killed a deer, thank you," said she to Evil Kachina. He was eating. Then Evil Kachina finished eating. "Thank you," said he. "I have eaten wafer bread," said Evil Kachina. (212)

That scene in the traditional Yellow Woman story is interesting from a number of points of view—the friendliness of the male and the female, for example, and their polite gratefulness for the food they have provided for each other. I would call particular attention, however, to the gender roles. Evil Kachina and Yellow Woman provide each other with sustenance by doing what is required of them as men and women. He provides meat; she prepares *piki*. Except for

the dark undercurrent in the story, where he *orders* her to grind corn and is known to kill Yellow Women who do not grind fast enough, this might well be any domestic scene in a traditional Pueblo home.

The hunting and cooking in Silko's modern version of the Yellow Woman story are rather different. Instead of Silva's hunting Yellow Woman, the woman might more accurately be said to be the hunter, because he is merely sitting on the river bank when *she* comes upon *him*. To be sure, she is not really "hunting" him in the usual sense, but it is interesting to note that instead of *his* actively seeking *her*, as Evil Kachina does in the Cochiti story, Silva just sits there by the river bank when she finds him. At least initially, then, she plays the more aggressive role. Silva does have a hunting knife with him, but all he does with it is passively cut leaves off a willow twig.

Later, in his mountain cabin, instead of going out to hunt while she cooks, this modern-day non-hunter tells her to cook him a meal and then sits and watches her while she cooks:

He pointed at the box.

"There's some potatoes and the frying pan." He sat on the floor with his arms around his knees pulling them close to his chest, and he watched me fry the potatoes. I didn't mind him watching me because he was always watching me—he had been watching me since I came upon him sitting on the river bank trimming leaves from a willow twig with his knife. (57)

The division of labor here is clear—and much more stereotypically modern: *she* cooks while *he* sits and watches.

To be sure, later on Silva does "hunt," if killing domestic cattle with a .30-30 rifle can be called hunting rather than "rustling," and if using his knife to cut up the beef carcass can be called a hunting activity rather than a "butchering" one. But then, instead of bringing the spoils of his "hunt" back for Yellow Woman to eat, he takes it to Marquez to sell for money. Again, this activity can more accurately be called "stealing" or engaging in "capitalism" than hunting to provide food for his family.

The other quarry for this modern-day "hunter" is, of course, the white rancher. When the woman hears the shots, those "four hollow explosions . . . reminded me of deer hunting" (61). It may remind the confused woman of deer hunting, but of course, it reminds us readers that this murder of an unarmed man is anything but the deer hunting that traditional Indian men engaged in to bring in food for their wives and families.

Silko's story serves, then, as a reminder of how far Indian men have come since the early days—or how far they have *not* come. Evil

Kachina in the Cochiti story, for all his abduction of women and his forcing them to grind corn, was at least a successful hunter, able to provide meat for them. And he was at least polite enough to thank Yellow Woman for cooking him *piki*. In the more modern times of Silko's story, the lover Silva is not really a hunter and does not provide meat for his new woman to eat. Instead he rustles domestic beef for money and murders an unarmed rancher. And unlike his traditional counterpart in the Cochiti Yellow Woman story, Silva never thanks the woman for cooking for him. All he does after he eats is wipe the grease from his fingers on his Levi trousers.

It may be going too far to suggest that the woman in Silko's story takes on the role of both hunter and food preparer, but it is not going too far to suggest that Silva, for all of his "manly" toughness, is neither an old-time hunter nor a modern-day co-sharer of kitchen duties. He may have reasons of his own to want to seduce or rape the woman who finds him along the river bank, and reasons of his own to murder the white rancher, but in the end he is still not a hunter but a seducer and a murderer. And the woman, whether she is his willing or unwilling sexual victim, is in every way that counts his superior—not merely in hunting and cooking, but emotionally and morally, as well. By altering the gender roles, Silko has subtly shifted the focus of the traditional Yellow Woman story away from the kachina's hunting skills and toward the woman's more diversified skills.

6: Boundaries Crossed

Carolyn Leslie Grossman

We find little emphasis on physical or psychological boundaries in the Cochiti Yellow Woman story, except for the one between the human and the supernatural. Evil Kachina, for example, comes down from the spirit world to seize Yellow Woman and carry her across the boundary to his house in the sky. In Silko's retelling of the story, on the other hand, not only are boundaries crossed by the woman, but the boundaries between "life" and "story," between "fact" and "fiction," are often eliminated. In addition to these crossed boundaries within the story, the continued interest in the story of Yellow Woman, both the traditional one and the modern one, is evidence that the story itself crosses boundaries of time and culture.

Let me begin by defining what I mean by "boundary": a limit or edge or rim or border that is usually not crossed. One of the first of several boundaries crossed in Silko's story is the boundary of marriage. When she has sex with Silva, Al's wife crosses the boundary into

adultery. She thinks of leaving Silva the next morning to go home and recross the moral boundary she had transgressed the night before, but in the end she does not. Her hesitation comes in part when the boundaries of her own existence are blurred. She is not sure whether she is just a modern housewife having a fling with a mysterious stranger or a reincarnation of the Yellow Woman of myth.

She decides to stay with Silva. As she travels into the mountains with him, she hesitates and looks back to find that the geographical boundaries that once had meaning for her have all but disappeared: "The pale sandstone had disappeared and the river and the dark lava hills were all around" (56). Silva then points out to her some new boundaries:

"From here I can see the world." He stepped out on the edge. "The Navajo reservation begins over there." He pointed to the east. "The Pueblo boundaries are over here." He looked below us to the south, where the narrow trail seemed to come from. "The Texans have their ranches over there, starting with that valley, the Concho Valley. The Mexicans run some cattle over there too."

"Do you ever work for them?"

"I steal from them," Silva answered. (58)

The boundaries of the woman's world have shifted dramatically, yet she learns that these new boundaries are ones that Silva crosses at will, stealing whatever he wants. In doing so, of course, he crosses the boundary of the law.

In crossing that legal boundary he winds up in confrontation with the white rancher. They are close together physically on the trail, but culturally and politically Silva and the white rancher are miles and centuries apart. That confrontation is what finally causes the woman to leave Silva. Apparently the gulf between them looks so wide that she feels endangered and knows that she will be safer back within her old boundaries. She is still ambivalent: "I thought about Silva, and I felt sad at leaving him. . . . I wanted to go back to him—to kiss him and to touch him—but the mountains were too far away now" (62). Yellow Woman has recrossed the boundary for home and knows that the mountains, once the haven for her romance with Silva, are now a boundary between them.

In having an affair with Silva, the woman in Silko's story has crossed several boundaries. She has crossed the moral boundary of marital fidelity; she has crossed the physical boundary by leaving her home and her river; she has crossed another physical boundary by allowing her body to be mingled with his in sex; she has crossed a temporal boundary by escaping from the bonds that tied her to the

present; and she has crossed a psychological boundary that tied her to a narrow existence as a daughter, granddaughter, wife, and mother in the little house in the pueblo. In returning to her home she recrosses most of those boundaries and becomes contained again.

But there is another boundary that she need not recross. Having crossed those other boundaries once, she escapes the temporal world of the mundane and joins the world of myth. Having become the Yellow Woman of the modern world, she will always be that Yellow Woman, because the stories endure. The Cochiti Yellow Woman story is an early version of the story; Silko's is a later version—changed, expanded, reconsidered, but still *essentially* the same. It is the story of a woman's journey across boundaries. Because the journey is taken by many, the story will have a lasting appeal.

The woman says at one point to Silva, "I don't believe it. Those stories couldn't happen now" (57). He replies, in words that turn out to be prophetic: "But someday they will talk about us, and they will say, 'Those two lived long ago when things like that happened'" (57). That we are now talking about Silva and his brief affair with a young Pueblo woman suggests that he was right. The woman in Silko's story recrosses most of the boundaries she had crossed. The most important boundary, however, the artistic boundary between fact and art, she need never recross.

7: The Power of Water

Jennifer A. Thornton

Water is essential for growing food and for human life, yet water plays almost no role in the Cochiti Yellow Woman story. Aside from the initial abduction beside the river, neither water nor moisture are mentioned again, unless we consider the ice on which she dies to be a form of moisture. Silko's version of the story, on the other hand, is awash with water and moisture imagery. Water is important in several ways in Silko's story.¹² It serves in a minor way as a cleansing agent, but more importantly it contributes to love and sex and procreation, to the growth of food, and to the essential power of myth in Indian life.

As for the cleansing powers of water, we notice that Silva kneels on the "low, sandy bank, washing his face in the river" (55). Again, after the beef butchering, he washes his hands in a water bucket. When the woman looks into the bucket, she sees the "bloody water, with brown-and-white animal hairs floating in it" (59). By washing the sweat and blood and lingering smell of love and work and death from Silva's body, water has the power to transform him into a person: if

not better, then at least cleaner. If we believe that Silva is a rapist, a thief, and a murderer, then the water enables him to change at least his appearance, to give the impression of cleanness and purity.

Much more important, and certainly more positive, than the cleansing power of water is the association of water with love and sex. Silko's story opens with the haunting line, "My thigh clung to his in dampness" (54). The woman and Silva have just made love on the bank of the river, and afterwards she can hear the water at their feet, "where the narrow, fast channel bubbled and washed green ragged moss and fern leaves" (54). When Silva takes the woman to his house in the mountains, they again make love, and she again specifically associates sex and love with moisture: "And again he was all around me, with his skin slippery against mine" (58). The dampness of sex is fused with the procreative power of sex. Sex is the root of human existence. By linking moisture with sex, Silko emphasizes the power of water as the root of human existence. Sexual images remain coupled with those of water throughout the story, thus reiterating the life-giving potential of both sex and water.

When the woman in Silko's story becomes hungry, she follows the river south, reminding us of the relationship between water and food. In a land where Indians do little large-scale artificial irrigation, the growing of food is dependent on either the natural water of rivers or the natural water of rainfall. To the extent that it provides moisture for growing corn in the arid desert, water not only has the power to satisfy thirst, but the power to satisfy hunger as well. If Yellow Woman is on some level symbolic of the sacred Corn Mother of Pueblo Indian myth, then in sustaining Yellow Woman, water has the power to give sustenance and hope to the Indian people who rely on corn for their nourishment. Thus, water is powerful in its ability to satisfy both literally and symbolically, for it both sustains Pueblo agriculture and gives support and meaning to Pueblo myths.

The river-setting is of course important in Silko's story.¹³ The woman first meets Silva on the sandy river bank, where she has come to fetch water. This meeting brings life to a bored housewife by giving her some pleasure and excitement. Little could she have known that the quest for a bucket of cleansing and life-sustaining water would bring her so much new life. Whether or not she is made pregnant by her sexual encounters with Silva—and Silko's story remains silent on this matter—this water carries with it the power to bring new life into this woman's world.

The river-setting is important again at the end of the story. After Silva kills the white rancher, Yellow Woman decides to escape from him. Significantly, she escapes to the river: "I walked *to the river* on a wood-hauler's road. . . . It wasn't very far to walk if I followed *the*

river back the way Silva and I had come" (62, italics mine, here and below). Just as the river had brought her new life and excitement at the start of the story, so it also provides the way for her to escape back to the safety of her old life. The first thing she does when she gets back to the river is take a drink: "The river water tasted good" (62). Of course, being human, the woman in Silko's story clings to the hope that Silva will come back to see her again. It is significant that she associates his return with the river: "He will come back sometime and be waiting again *by the river*" (62) That hope of a mysterious lover returning to wait for her at the river will sustain her as she returns to what she fears will be a dry and meaningless existence.

The moisture imagery, then, lends additional and significant depth to Silko's story. Silko does not merely retell an old Pueblo story about Yellow Woman; she changes it by linking water with the power to cleanse, the power of sex, the power of agriculture and fecundity, the power of excitement, the power of love, the power of myth, the power of hope.

8: Looking and Seeing

Vanessa Holford Diana

In the Cochiti Yellow Woman story we find not a single reference to looking, seeing, or perception. Yellow Woman is seized, made to work, and eventually killed, but she is never said to *look* at anything or to *see* anything. One striking difference in the Silko version of the story is that the woman's first-person narration includes more than 65 verbs of visual perception, such as *looking*, *seeing*, *staring*, and *watching*.¹⁴ For the woman, visual perception is symbolic of various forms of inward search. At first, her looking is a search for understanding. She seems to ask, "Why am I with this man? Who is he? What mysterious force drives me to stay with him instead of returning home to my family?" But as the story progresses, the woman's visual perception becomes a medium through which she will modify her own self-perception, making room within herself for her own Indian heritage. Throughout, her sight is selective, and what she chooses to see makes up a telling picture of her own struggle for affirmation of her Indian spirituality despite her modern-day skepticism.

The story begins with the woman waking and looking at the sleeping Silva, who is wrapped in a red blanket: "I *looked* at him sleeping on the white sand" (54, italics mine, here and below). Then the woman walks down along the river, apparently on her way home. She tries to see her home: "I tried to *look* beyond the pale red mesas

to the pueblo. I knew it was there, even if I couldn't see it" (54). Unable to see the pueblo, she remembers Silva "asleep in the red blanket" (54) and returns to him. Visual perception of the red mesas seems to trigger her memory of Silva in his red blanket. What she cannot see—the pueblo—reflects what she no longer really wants to see. She sees physical reminders of home as pale, dim, or fading, while she sees Silva and his surroundings as colorful and sensual. The contrast comes to represent the difference she discovers between the colorless technological world of her home life and the vibrant Indian culture from which her learned skepticism has separated her.

Again, vision seems linked to memory when she describes an attempt to make sense of her situation: "I *stared* past him at the shallow moving water and tried to remember the night, but I could only *see* the moon in the water and remember his warmth around me" (55). She resists making sense of her motivations from the night before. She remembers, instead, what sparked life in her during that night. She seems confused, as if she were just waking from a dream. In a sense, Silko's story is about awakening, about seeing oneself in a new light.

If the woman's looking represents a search for memory, it also represents a search for proof. On the surface she looks for tangible proof that this time spent with Silva is not actually a dream: "For a long time I sat there on the blankets and *looked* around the little house for some object of his—some proof that he had been there or maybe that he was coming back" (58). Paralleling her search for visible proof is her search for a more spiritual proof. She senses a change within herself, a sensual awakening, during her short stay with him. But her modern-day skepticism prevents her from believing that this new feeling of vitality is in any way connected with the truth of the Yellow Woman stories. As she looks for proof of Silva's existence, so she looks for proof of the continuing validity of the stories of her people.

The woman seems almost aware of a connection between what she sees and what she knows. She predicts that vision will finally be the key to her making sense of the mysterious Silva and her strange fascination with him: "I will *see* someone, eventually I will *see* someone, and then I will be certain that he is only a man—some man from nearby—and then I will be certain that I am not Yellow Woman" (56). When the woman and Silva come across the white rancher, she does indeed "*see* someone," and modifies her perception of Silva: "I *looked* at Silva for an instant and there was something ancient and dark—something I could feel in my stomach—in his eyes" (61). In that instantaneous look, the woman sees the strength behind Silva's eyes. He is a representation of the power present in Indian myths. At that moment he is Evil Kachina to her, and the stories suddenly become real. When she hears the four shots from Silva's rifle, she is reminded

of deer hunting, a connection to the original Yellow Woman story. With that connection she has the proof she has been looking for. The association is complete. She sees that she has lived a modern version of the Yellow Woman story, and now she sees that she, like the traditional Yellow Woman, can go home.

She does go home, but her leaving is not a rejection of the living heritage she has uncovered. Instead, she reaffirms her belief in the stories and she will now preserve them in herself while living in the modern world. Before meeting Silva, this modern Yellow Woman had seen herself in a limited way. Her self-perception had been limited by the rational skepticism she had learned in school. With that kind of training, it is no wonder that her home and family looked pale and dull to her. Her modern schooling had made her an incomplete woman, and as a result her home "life" had seemed lifeless. At the end of her stay with Silva, she achieves a vision that unites the traditional power of her people with her own modern education. She accepts her Indian heritage despite the skepticism of a scientific world full of pick-up trucks, highways, and .30-30 rifles. With this new acceptance of a vibrant Indian myth, and with this renewed vision of her role in it, she will be able to add color to her formerly drab existence, to find new life in what had before seemed dead.

NOTES

¹These essays were presented orally, in somewhat different form and order, at a conference on American Women Writers of Color in Ocean City, Maryland, 26 May 1992. This introductory section was expanded, and the notes were added, for publication. We should perhaps point out that for the Keresan words "Kochininako" and "kachina," we have used the most common spellings except where something we are quoting uses a different spelling.

²A number of versions of traditional Yellow Woman stories are available. See, for example, Franz Boas's *Keresan Texts*, John Gunn's *Schat-Chen*, and Ruth Benedict's *Tales of the Cochiti Indians*. The version we have used is conveniently published in Paula Gunn Allen's *Spider Woman's Granddaughters*, pp. 211-15. Quotations from "Evil Kachina Steals Yellow Woman" are from this edition. Allen also reprints two shorter written versions of the Yellow Woman story, "Sun Steals Yellow Woman," pp. 216-17, and her own "Whirlwind Man Steals Yellow Woman," pp. 217-18, from *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*.

³For a helpful discussion of the near-impossibility of non-Indian readers achieving a meaningful interpretation of the traditional Keres Yellow Woman stories, see Paula Gunn Allen, "Kochinnenako in Academe."

⁴There is a certain playfulness in some of what Silko says of "Yellow

Woman": "A warning has to go along with this story: in 1976, a Navajo woman who had been a student of mine reported that after six years trying and failing, she had become pregnant during the week our literature class had read and discussed 'Yellow Woman'" (Rubenstein and Larson 1087). Scholars, of course, would do well not to disregard the possibilities for more playful interpretations of Silko's fiction.

⁵"Yellow Woman" has received more attention than most of Silko's short stories. It has recently, for example, been the subject of a separate casebook designed to introduce undergraduates to significant short fiction by American women writers. Edited by Melody Graulich, *"Yellow Woman"* was published in 1993 by Rutgers University Press in its series on Women Writers: Texts and Contexts. It contains the text of the story, an introduction by Professor Graulich, a 1986 interview with Leslie Marmon Silko, and reprints of eight articles about Silko.

⁶Silko's words suggest that she might not agree with Linda Danielson that "Through her adventure [the wife in Silko's story] livens up an apparently dull existence. She identifies with the freedom of Yellow Woman in her grandfather's stories, reminding us that modern women embody the potential of Yellow Woman, bring the vitality of imagination to everyday life" (25).

⁷I am in general sympathy with Per Seyersted's reading of the woman in Silko's "Yellow Woman." He says that

we understand how she is ruled by an overpowering sexual attraction and why she does not use earlier opportunities to escape, and Silko's artistry lies in the subtlety with which she shows us how the woman is confused as she tries to make and excuse the fact of her adultery by seeing through the haze of the old story, thereby lifting a somewhat everyday occurrence into the realm of the supernatural. In this warmly vibrant tale the author tells us just enough of the old myth itself so that we can follow the delicate shifts in this profound psychological study. (19-20)

⁸I am not persuaded that Edith Blichsilver is right to suggest that the woman in Silko's story is "a contemporary, liberated Erica Jong heroine who leaves a devoted husband to satisfy her sexual desires with a handsome man whose name she has not even bothered to learn. . . . [She ignores] family-tribal identity to seek sensual pleasure with a stranger, justifying her rejection of her duties as wife and mother by linking her lust with the ka'tsina spirit's power to shape her destiny" (154-55). Perhaps I should point out that the woman is never said to be Al's "wife," though it seems reasonable to assume that she is.

⁹I cannot agree with Linda Danielson that "Silva, of course, is more opportunistic than evil" (25). His crushing attitude toward anyone who does not either submit to him or get out of his way can scarcely be called merely tricksterish opportunism.

¹⁰Blichsilver reports that Ruoff had told her that "Jell-O has symbolic significance because it represents for Laguna Pueblos the Anglo's attempt to satisfy the Indian's craving for sweets" (159 n4). The significance may, however, be more generally and more simply that Jell-O is an artificial food that shows how far the Lagunas have come from the traditional native foods—

deer, fish, rabbits, corn, beans, squash—of the Laguna people. Whatever the specific significance of the kitchen scene, it is clearly ironic that instead of teaching her children the old ways, the grandmother here is having to learn from them some of the most artificial of the new ones.

¹¹I agree with A. LaVonne Ruoff, who notes that "The farther away she goes from home and family, the more powerless she is to prove to herself that she is not Yellow Woman. She hopes to see someone else on the trail so that she can again be certain of her own identity" (13).

¹²The importance of water in desert country, of course, is obvious. Silko herself comments on the key role of water and springs in Pueblo life. "Natural springs," she says, "are crucial sources of water for all life in the high desert plateau country. So the small spring near Paguate village is literally the source and continuance of life for the people in the area. The spring also functions on a spiritual level" ("Landscape" 91). Scholars have generally not commented on the water images in the story, though in the introduction to her casebook on "Yellow Woman," Melody Graulich speaks of the river as invoking "sexual desire" and "the female body" (15). My own reading is less Freudian in orientation.

¹³Silko talks about the importance of the river in her early life at Laguna: "I was always attracted to it as a kid. I loved the river very much. . . . The river was a place to meet boyfriends and lovers and so forth. I used to wander around down there and try to imagine walking around the bend and just happening to stumble upon some beautiful man" (Evers and Carr 29).

¹⁴Ruoff briefly mentions seeing, but has little more than this to say about it: "Reaching a ridge, she tries to see where she left Silva but cannot, just as she was unable to see her pueblo at the beginning of the story before she began the journey up the mountain. Her inability to see what she is seeking signals the end of her interlude with Silva" (14).

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REVIEWS

Ke-ma-ha: The Omaha Stories of Francis La Flesche.
Eds. James W. Parins and Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr.
Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1995. \$25.00 cloth, ISBN
0-8032-2910-0. xli + 134 pages.

Add this book to the growing list of recent publications that are significantly altering the landscape of American Indian literary history. James W. Parins and Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr. have brought together eighteen stories written by Francis La Flesche, the Omaha ethnographer who was best known in his own time as the aide and collaborator to Alice C. Fletcher. These stories—sixteen of which have never been published before—should establish La Flesche as one of the major observers of the Native American scene of his time.

The stories, however, represent an unfinished effort. In the years immediately following the completion of *The Middle Five* (1900), a slightly fictionalized account of La Flesche's experiences at a missionary boarding school, La Flesche labored to assemble a volume of publishable stories on Omaha life and culture. An editor who rejected the manuscript of *The Middle Five* had told La Flesche that "the burden should be thrown upon the other *wilder* existence," and Parins and Littlefield suggest that these stories represent La Flesche's attempt to render, if not a "*wilder* existence," then an "other" one. The projected volume, which La Flesche referred to as "Ke-ma-ha" in his notes,

never came to fruition. What remains of his work from this period are two published stories and over fifty unpublished pieces of writing, some that appear finished and others that are merely fragments.

Parins and Littlefield have done valuable work here. While they admit that there is no way of knowing exactly what the composition of La Flesche's original volume might have looked like, they have selected the most polished and most likely choices for this edition of the stories. At its best, La Flesche's fictional work sparkles with the same gentle humor and sensitivity that marks *The Middle Five*. To that end, he shows that the traditional cultural education of an Omaha boy occurs as often through miscue and misadventure as through simple instruction. In "A Buffalo Ride," for example, an elderly storyteller reminisces about a joke that he and a friend tried to play on a buffalo herd by sneaking up on it in the early dawn. All goes well until the narrator decides to mount one of the bulls, which springs off "like the wind": "A horrible thought rushed through my mind; what if the beast did not stop running until he dropped dead!" (19).

La Flesche, like some of his contemporaries, also rendered traditional stories of his tribe. La Flesche had assisted ethnologist James Owen Dorsey in collecting many of these tales, and his efforts to retell them suggest something about how he may have envisioned this project. These renditions display some of La Flesche's finest narrative work as he fashioned the stories for a wider, less scholarly audience than the one that would have read either Dorsey's work or La Flesche's own monumental *The Omaha Tribe* (1911; U of Nebraska P, 1992), which he co-wrote with Fletcher. At the same time, the act of retelling demonstrates a desire to reappropriate these cultural texts and place them into a different contextual space. La Flesche presents these legends as an intimate of Omaha culture, not as a government employee (which both he and Dorsey were). Several of the stories in *Ke-ma-ha*, in fact, detail the act of storytelling itself. La Flesche is grappling with not only what stories he should tell, but how.

And the work presented in *Ke-ma-ha* does represent genuine struggle. As Parins and Littlefield are careful to point out in their introduction, it would be disingenuous to characterize La Flesche as an entirely successful writer of fiction. La Flesche never completed the "Ke-ma-ha" collection that he envisioned, and this failure should be part of any critical context in which this collection of largely unpublished work is read. Parins and Littlefield are careful to do this; they are necessarily speculative about the reasons why La Flesche abandoned fiction writing, but fruitfully so. Their study of the manuscripts suggests that fiction never came easily to La Flesche, who had carefully trained himself in the more scientific writing of ethnography. Moreover, the entire pursuit may have, at some level, been engaged at

the prodding of Fletcher, with whom La Flesche had a complicated relationship about which we still know too little, despite Joan Mark's fine biography (*A Stranger in Her Native Land: Alice Fletcher and the American Indians* [Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1988]). According to Mark, La Flesche was eager to be recognized independently of Fletcher, and Fletcher seems to have shared his wishes. She wrote to him in 1899, "I stand for science, rather than letters . . . letters will, I trust, be your avocation in the future" (qtd. in Mark 273).

La Flesche, however, would come to stand for science, too; not only did he co-author *The Omaha Tribe* with Fletcher, but he went on to write a complete ethnography of *The Osage Tribe* (1928). In the meantime, *The Middle Five* was his only literary book to reach the public. Of his other endeavors Parins and Littlefield write, "His literary leavings are full of brilliant beginnings, bright flashes of language, and narrative fits and starts that rarely move to climax or conclusion. Having generated as many fictional fragments as he did, La Flesche must have recognized his limitations" (xxi). Yet the flashes here are often as bright as those that appear in *The Omaha Tribe*, where, as Jarold Ramsey has noted, "La Flesche is allowed to break into the standard scholarly format . . . from time to time with short personalized accounts of Omaha rituals, anecdotes about the difficulties of collecting material, and so on" ("Francis La Flesche's 'The Song of Flying Crow' and the Limits of Ethnography" [*boundary* 2 19:3 (1992): 180-96] 181n). La Flesche had come to recognize that "standard" ethnographic writing had its limitations, and the stories in *Ke-ma-ha* stand as a testimony to that recognition, as an attempt by a dedicated ethnographer to discover what could be accomplished through a separate genre with its own standards and requirements.

Reading *Ke-ma-ha* against La Flesche's own ethnography shows how fruitful questioning the relationship of fiction to ethnography can be. Consider the following passage from *The Omaha Tribe* describing a buffalo hunt:

The advance to the herd was by four stages. At the close of each stage the chiefs and the director sat and smoked. This slow approach to the herd was for definite purposes: First, to afford opportunity to make prayer offerings of smoke to Wako"da, to secure success; second, to check haste and excitement among the hunters; third, to insure an orderly progress toward the buffalo so that each person might take part in the chase and obtain his share of the food properly. (281)

In the *Ke-ma-ha* story "A Buffalo Hunt," La Flesche describes the same events, but this time his narrator is a young boy who is following

the hunt with his friend:

Greatly to our disgust, the chiefs, followed by the hunters, made four pauses for religious observances on approaching the herd. After the fourth, we pushed on rapidly and were ascending a hill when a strong breeze struck us. Instantly, the hundreds of horses pricked up their ears, arched their necks, and became difficult to control. (22-23)

La Flesche's story subtly (and more concisely) conveys the same cultural phenomena as his ethnography. To make such a comparison is not to suggest that his fiction and ethnography are the same; on the contrary, it shows that they can possess many of the same goals and still differ in important ways. While the non-Omaha reader may be able to reach many of the same conclusions about Omaha culture that are spelled out clearly in *The Omaha Tribe*, it is not without some effort. The narrative problem that La Flesche faced lay in making this inductive labor neither too obvious nor too onerous for the general audience that Parins and Littlefield tell us he desired.

One need not, in fact, look beyond the *Ke-ma-ha* volume itself to find illustrations of this problem. For each of the stories, Parins and Littlefield provide incisive headnotes that often draw on La Flesche's own ethnographical work. For example, before "A Discovery and an Experience," they tell us: "Children were often trained in an elaborate system of proper forms of kinship address, which made clear the relationships between individuals. . . . The deliberate breach of etiquette by the two boys in this story reflects the mischievousness to which they are prone as they lie idly about the lodge . . ." (26). La Flesche's story then begins:

Ke'-ma-ha lay with his cousin in the back part of the lodge on a rude couch covered with bear skins and buffalo robes. Being sons of two sisters, they should have addressed each other as brother according to the system of kinship among their people, and as etiquette required, but they called each other friend. (26)

Parins and Littlefield have made the connections that La Flesche hoped for, but the real question is whether La Flesche's reader would have made them without Parins and Littlefield. In other words, although the editors' notes are welcome and useful (and their absence would have surely been deplored), La Flesche originally believed the stories in *Ke-ma-ha* would stand in place of, not alongside, ethnographic detail.

To make the leap from La Flesche's fiction to ethnographic conclusions requires real work, but work that brings the reader to an appreciation for the intrinsic value of Omaha culture. And such an

appreciation was one of the goals that makes this volume such an important addition to the published work of the period, for La Flesche held a distinctly different political position than those of the more widely read American Indian authors of the period. As Robert Allen Warrior's recent book shows, writers such as Charles Eastman (Sioux), Zitkala-Sa (Sioux), and Carlos Monetzuma (Yavapai) endorsed a program of assimilation and integration for Native peoples; "these figures believed strongly in doing away with special educational and health programs for Natives, abandonment of Native traditional government structures, and full participation in mainstream U.S. life," Warrior writes (*Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions* [Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1995] 7). While La Flesche may have endorsed such a program earlier in his life, before he began writing these stories, both he and Fletcher began to argue that traditional American Indian life should not be so quickly dismissed. Such a stance required La Flesche to cede the political field to others, but it makes *Ke-ma-ha* an even more important addition to the published writing of the time. *Ke-ma-ha* will make the already fertile critical ground of the turn of the Twentieth Century even more so, and should secure La Flesche's reputation as one of the most versatile and intriguing writers of his time.

Michael Elliott

Life and Death in Mohawk Country. Bruce E. Johansen. Golden CO: North American P, 1993. \$23.95 cloth, ISBN 1-55591-906-5. xxxii + 188 pages.

Life and Death in Mohawk Country is an often compelling documentary account of the tension and violence that gripped the Mohawk reservation at Akwesasne during 1989-1990. Bruce E. Johansen, who authored two previous works on Iroquois history, has had access to many of the participants in the conflict, and he uses his sources skillfully to narrate the complex events that forced thousands

of Mohawks to flee their homes temporarily and resulted in two shooting deaths that left Akwesasne occupied by state police forces. The dispute ostensibly centered around the presence of high-stakes gambling in Akwesasne—casino and bingo halls that had the approval of neither federal, state, nor tribal authorities. While some saw the casinos as sources of employment and economic self-sufficiency, others feared that they benefited only select individuals and were contributing to the deterioration of Mohawk culture. Johansen, however, is careful to show that the conflict and its eventual violence were about much more than gambling; their roots were entangled in issues of sovereignty, environmental destruction, and cultural survival.

Akwesasne, regardless of the question of gambling, is a highly complicated political community. Home to approximately 8,500 Mohawks, the reservation straddles the U.S.-Canadian border at the St. Lawrence seaway in upstate New York; moreover, part of the Canadian territory is considered to be part of Quebec, while the other lies in Ontario. Add to those five external governments (U.S., New York, Canada, Ontario, Quebec) three *internal* governments—one recognized by the United States, one recognized by Canada, and a traditional, international one recognized by neither—and one can begin to grasp how any kind of division within Akwesasne can be exacerbated by the precarious political structure. This same political geography has long played a key role in the economics of the region. "Buttlegging" (cigarette smuggling) and other smuggling operations have long utilized the border privileges that the Mohawks claim here and, according to Johansen, may have provided part of the capital needed to finance the high-stakes bingo halls and casinos, along with the guns used to defend them. At the very least, the geography of the border created a climate in which an activity deemed illegal by two federal governments (smuggling) could be considered by many Mohawks to be a blow for national sovereignty.

One of the keys to Johansen's book is that he is skeptical of such arguments and often casts those who make them as opportunists looking to capitalize upon issues of sovereignty for personal gain. "Some of the smugglers who formed the nucleus of the progambling forces took the concept of native sovereignty and turned it into a legal and public-relations tool to further their business interests," he writes (xxvii). This attitude most forcefully manifests itself in Johansen's treatment of the Akwesasne Warrior Society, a "paramilitary" group (Johansen's term) that refuses to participate in any kind of externally sanctioned political process and claims to have revived the long-abandoned traditional ways of its people. While Rick Hornung's account of these same events, the Canadian best-seller *One Nation Under the Gun* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1991), was sympathetic to the Warriors ("these

men and women mixed the lore of the great, prehistoric civilization with the street smarts of a modern underground economy that smuggled cigarettes and fuel oil," Hornung writes [3]), Johansen is not. *Life and Death in Mohawk Country* suggests that the Warriors attempted to take advantage of the stand-off between antigambling and progambling forces to establish themselves as a reservation power through excessive force and intimidation.

Yet Johansen is too good—and too subtle—a reporter to be so blunt himself. He makes use of the published writings of both pro- and antigambling activists, files from the various organizations to which he has had access, and interviews with key figures in these events. In fact, his most penetrating analysis of the Warrior Society, which argues that the Warriors have capitalized on the profound alienation and despair faced by many Mohawks without viable economic activities, relies heavily on articles from *Indian Time*, an Akwesasne antigambling newspaper (116-17). Indeed, the book is most powerful not when it delivers blow-by-blow accounts of the violence, but when it enables those involved to voice their understanding of the events so crucial to their lives.

These first-hand accounts ensure that *Life and Death in Mohawk Country* remains a complex (though occasionally confusing), densely-textured narrative; Johansen is interested in neither pointing fingers nor easy solutions. Two villains, though, do emerge: then-Governor Mario Cuomo, who attempted to ignore the rising tide of reservation violence until it claimed two lives, and environmental destruction. Johansen begins his narrative with a chapter entitled "The Toxic Turtle," showing how the industrial toxic dumping along the St. Lawrence Seaway made the area "number one on the EPA's 'most-wanted' list as the worst toxic dump in the United States" (14). Pollution and toxic waste not only led to birth defects among the Akwesasne Mohawks, but it destroyed their hunting, fishing, and farming, traditional economic activities upon which many Mohawks, at least in part, relied. In a telling moment, Johansen describes the 1985 capture of a female snapping turtle—an animal of special significance to Iroquois cultures—whose body fat contained 15 times the concentration of contaminants necessary for the turtle to be federally classified as toxic waste.

Johansen, a professor of communications and Native American studies at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, argues that it is impossible to comprehend what unfolded at Akwesasne without realizing the extent of the damage to the environment and subsequent erosion of the community's economic base. "Even at the height of the violence in 1990," he writes in the introduction, "Mohawks on both sides steadfastly maintained that a solution lay in the rehabilitation of the earth" (xxiii). Unfortunately, Johansen's discussion of the effects

of environmental destruction ends with his first chapter, a shortcoming that is indicative of much of what is frustrating about the book. Johansen is too caught up in furnishing a complete, accurate documentary record of the events at Akwesasne to provide a sustained analysis of what those events might mean. Such moments of insight surely occur, as in his discussions of Mohawk sovereignty as a public-relations hook or his analysis of Warrior ideology, but they are too few and too brief. Johansen weaves a cautionary tale, but does not go far enough in explaining what exactly he is cautioning against.

But there are real lessons to be learned from *Life and Death in Mohawk Country*, and they come not a moment too soon. News reports suggest that smugglers are taking advantage of the open border as often as ever and that liquor and guns are joining cigarettes as main staples of the trade. Meanwhile, the opening of a casino on the Akwesasne reservation, this one recognized by both state and tribal officials, is imminent, but many of the divisions that plagued the Akwesasne Mohawks remain. Doug George-Kanentiio, the former editor of *Akwesasne Notes* and *Indian Time* and a central figure in the fight over gambling at Akwesasne, was recently quoted as saying, "Five years have passed and you'd think there would be calm, but it's just below the surface and could be explosive as five years ago" (Michael Gormley, "Mohawks Find Peace, Wonder If It's For Real," [Albany NY] *Times Union* 23 April 1995: A1+). Given the level of violence, hatred, and destruction that Johansen describes, one can only hope that George is somehow mistaken.

Michael Elliott

The Feathered Heart. Mark Turcotte. Chicago: Abrazo, 1994. \$7.95 paper, ISBN 0-877636-12-6. 61 pages.

The epigraph of Mark Turcotte's poetry collection invokes the forest rustle expressed in the Ojibwa word "siisiigwaad." Ignatia Broker's *Night Flying Woman* made that sound emblematic of Wood-

land identity when she wrote that, "In each generation of Ojibway, there will be a person who will hear the si-si-gwa-d, who will listen and remember" (33). Turcotte, the son of an Ojibwa father, grew up on Turtle Mountain Reservation, where Louise Erdrich is also an enrolled member. Her novel, *Tracks*, set on that small North Dakota reservation, also refers to the tree murmur and leaf whisper. Erdrich endorsed Turcotte's poems as "sound-vision stirring echoes of an Earth-based relationship in urban places." Several of Turcotte's poems are set in Chicago where he now lives with his wife, Kathleen, and his son, Ezra.

The Feathered Heart presents 36 poems and four striking illustrations. Turcotte works with short lines, unpunctuated and mostly uncapitalized, achieving his effects with two or three words. The simple diction becomes incantatory through repetitions and slight variations. The ever-changing refrain of "Horse Dance" shows how effective this can be. The persona is dreaming of Crazy Horse's pony "its nervous neck / painted with / a hail of stones." In the first stanza, it is "twisting / in a field / of yellow hair." In the second stanza, it is "dancing / in a field / of greasy grass." In the third, it is "leaping / in a field / of horses grazing / riderless."

Turcotte's technique serves a religious purpose. The refrain, "stomp / step step / stomp," of "Horse Dance" becomes a response to George Custer's widow by the end of the fourth stanza. The reiterated verb "recognized" in the next poem is addressed to the stepfather who had mistreated the persona. Now seventeen, the speaker, having escaped the brutality, recognizes that he must kill the perpetrator, yet also "that you were too broken / to break." The poem ends in the speaker's recognition that revenge against the man he had hated is impossible as he is filled with pity for his enemy. "Hands" is another powerful poem of forgiveness. The speaker reaches toward the folded hands of an old man in a casket recalling how he had been lifted high to look for angels by the dead man's hands one summer day.

In "Song for the Endless Others" the echoed phrases recur in the last two stanzas. The "Endless Others" both watch his nights and guide his days. They inspire his song. They "give me voice and give me voice / chant and chant / within my feathered heart." They guard the sleep of those he loves. "Flying with the Wind" shows how repetition can take the place of the comparative and of the superlative. It is about the dispersed dust of a laughing, beadworking, Cree-speaking elder who is gone "into the far and the far and the far." The narrator summons him from the farthest reaches of the cosmos through a pipe ceremony.

The poem called "Motherdrum" exemplifies what Erdrich has called the stirring of echoes "of an Earth-based relationship in urban

places." Each of its four stanzas begins with the same line: "sirens kill the night." Each ends with the beating refrain: "motherdrum motherdrum." The final stanza says: "sirens kill the night / the city / chases away / spirits from my hair / dreams from my reach / hope from my eyes."

The longest poem in the volume is "Ten Thousand Thousand Bones." It is an impassioned plea to return "Grandmother" to the ground from which she had been disinterred. The persona hears the bones rattling in fear on a dusty museum shelf. Then he hears those who wait for her "here in the wood / where you belong." Tree roots long for her, river moans for her, grass and stone mourn for her, "wings of hawks / call out your name."

Turcotte has just completed a second collection, *Songs of Our Ancestors*, which is to be published soon by Children's Press. His strong narrative voice is a welcome addition to the growing pantheon of Anishinaabe authors.

Ruth Rosenberg

Eagle Drum: On the Powwow Trail with a Young Grass Dancer. Robert Crum. New York: Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division, 1994. \$16.95, ISBN 0-02-725515-8. 48 pages. 69 color photographs.

Although the author of this book is not Indian, he has presented powwow history and procedure respectfully, relying upon advisors on the Flathead Reservation in Montana: the Pierre family and Joe Whitehawk. No bibliography is listed although there are excellent sources, such as George Horse Capture's "The Powwow Circuit" in *Native America* (Singapore: APA, 1992); Charlotte Heth's *Native American Dance: Ceremonies and Social Traditions* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution National Museum of the American Indian, 1992); William K. Powers' *War Dance: Plains Indian Musical Performance* (Tucson: U Arizona P, 1990); Alan P. Merriam's *Ethnomusic-*

ology of the Flathead Indians (Chicago: Aldine, 1967); and the special powwow issue of the *National Geographic* (June 1994).

Crum's book has been beautifully designed, from the deep brown, earth-toned end papers to the arrowhead borders that frame the pictures, to the apricot, turquoise, or yellow backgrounds on which many of the photographs are mounted. On the title page is the drum, being struck by nine mallets, on whose head are painted two eagles. The words "Eagle Drum," in red, are repeated in larger letters on the next pages below an incandescent whirl of dancers moving to that drumbeat. It seems right that no individual is identifiable, that instead they seem fused by the pounding of the drum.

Focusing the story on a bright-eyed nine-year-old with whom elementary school students can identify is a positive way of sending the message that Indian cultures remain compelling. Louis Pierre, a member of the Pend Oreille tribe in Montana, is shown practicing hook shots for his basketball team in the gym. He also plays third base for his Little League team. In addition to these activities, he is learning grassdancing from his grandfather. Pat is a revered tribal elder who is often called upon to give the opening prayer at powwows since he is one of the few remaining speakers of the Pend Oreille's language. Pat teaches his grandson the history of his tribe, helps him learn the dance moves and the songs, and shows him how to prepare his outfit, from eagle-feather headdress to bustle to beaded moccasins to deer-antler staff. By sketching and stitching and beading, the boy becomes adept at traditional crafts. The grandfather tells stories about how valuable such outfits are; from him Louis learns respect for the ways of his ancestors.

As the family drives to the many powwows held in the Northern Plains during the summer, attending 15 to 20, Pat warns them not to think of the prize money. He urges them always to dance for others now too old, or too sick, or in mourning. When they dance to make someone else happy, then they dance better. They keep the dance arbor full of good thoughts that way. There are far more important reasons to dance, Pat reminds them, than to win a contest.

Crum's text and photographs serve also as a useful guide to the order of events at powwows. Readers can follow the setting up of the encampment, the raising of the tipis, the lining-up for the Grand Entry, the opening speeches, the honoring songs, the smudging ceremony with a burning braid of sweetgrass, the respect shown a fallen feather, the parades, giveaways, stickgames, jingle dancers, women's traditional, the shawl dances, the intertribals, the fancy dancers, and, finally, the grassdance competition in which Louis wins second prize. The officials hand him an envelope with ten dollars for which he thanks them by saying that it is just enough money to buy beadwork for his outfit.

The book closes, as it began, with the birds, fish, and animals that live near the Mission Mountains in Montana. Louis falls asleep, exhilarated by three days of dancing, listening to the splash of salmon, the calls of coyote and cricket, the pounding hoofbeats of an old elk with a huge rack of antlers. On the opening pages, bison, whooping cranes, deer, and fish danced, and people, observing their graceful motions, learned how to dance from watching them.

Although this book is intended for a juvenile audience, it is visually sophisticated enough to bring pleasure to readers of all ages.

Ruth Rosenberg

Indians, Franciscans, and Spanish Colonization. Robert H. Jackson and Edward Castillo. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1995. \$32.50 cloth, ISBN 0-8263-1570-4. 214 pages.

In 1773, Father Junipero Serra met with Viceroy Antonio de Bucareli of New Spain to define the economic role of the Franciscan mission system in the newly-established colony of Alta California. It was agreed that in exchange for supplying Spanish military garrisons with surplus agricultural production and manufactured goods, the Franciscan order would be given full control over mission temporalities (production and labor), including the authority to confine and discipline a work force of "converts" taken from local Indian tribes. Although this arrangement operated with some success prior to mission secularization in the 1830s, its impact upon the area's indigenous cultures was devastating. Robert H. Jackson and Edward Castillo chart the progress of this tragedy in a concise, meticulously documented analysis of a period in European/Native relations that all too often has been obscured and distorted by romance and apology.

Called by its authors a "brief ethnohistoric overview" (8), *Indians, Franciscans, and Spanish Colonization* draws upon archival sources from both Mexico and the United States to paint a detailed portrait of mission life and economics in the coastal regions of the present-day

state of California. Jackson and Castillo provide generous appendices (with endnotes and bibliography, making up half the book) that include tables documenting grain production, livestock numbers, building construction, and births and deaths among labor forces—year-by-year and mission-by-mission—from 1771 to well into the 1830s. These, with additional tables contained within the text and citations from reports, letters, judicial actions, and other contemporary documents, provide an authoritative, enlightening, and fascinating data-store through which the authors skillfully examine the effects of mission policy and practice upon the Native peoples who were impressed or cajoled into its labor force.

Questioning the "romantic mission mystique" (4) propagated by such historians as H. H. Bancroft and Zephyrin Engelhardt, Jackson and Castillo depict a system that, while effective in providing much-needed stores for the garrisons manning the Alta California frontier, was instrumental in destabilizing and depopulating Indian tribes in the coastal areas south of San Francisco Bay. The Franciscan practice of *congregación* contributed to horrific mortality rates by concentrating Indians in compact mission communities where poor sanitation and insufficient diet facilitated the rapid spread of smallpox, measles, and respiratory ailments. Single men were separated from single women as a form of social control, each locked in segregated dormitories after working hours—a precaution as much to prevent the ever-present threat of fugitivism as to discourage impious sexual congress. Squalid, crowded, and poorly ventilated, these "dungeons" (so-called by a Russian explorer visiting the Santa Clara mission in 1824) contributed not only to the frequent epidemics that plagued mission communities, but to the disintegration of tribal culture among those Indians who lived and worked on mission lands. Confinement prevented most mission Indians from participating in ceremonial dances and other traditional religious practices, and baptized infants and children often were segregated from their families until the parents themselves agreed to be baptised.

If the existence of the mission system was justified by its ability to supply Spain's Alta California garrisons, its spiritual reason for being was the conversion and acculturation of the Indians who worked its lands. Consequently, Franciscan policy called for the eradication of any behavior in mission Indian communities perceived to be pagan. Corporal punishment, recognized from the beginning as a Franciscan prerogative, "was one key element used in the effort to convince converts to abandon their religious practices" (52). Administered through floggings, stocks, and irons, it was also used to force labor, prevent flight, and punish resistance. One friar in the mission of San Gabriel was reported to have whipped, shackled, and shaved the head

of a woman whose crime was bringing forth a stillborn child. Convinced that she was guilty of infanticide, the friar capped her punishment by forcing her "to appear every Sunday in Church on the steps heading up to the altar, with a hideous painted wooden child in her arms" (83).

Jackson and Castillo counter the recent "apologist" scholarship of historians Harry Kelsey and Doyce Nunis by suggesting that "Franciscan missionaries achieved the goals of social and cultural change [applauded by these scholars] only in the face of resistance and the physical enforcement of social control" (86). Resistance of mission Indians to Franciscan authority, the authors conclude, was widespread, and could be either active or passive, covert or overt. Although large-scale revolts were uncommon, Franciscan-appointed *alcaldes* (Indians elevated to positions of leadership) often broke with their masters to organize resistance among mission Indians. Estanislao, an *alcalde* from the mission of San José, led hundreds of mission refugees in an unsuccessful guerrilla war in 1828. Four years earlier, the Chumash Revolt had seen the missions of Santa Inés and La Purisma occupied for more than a month before it was put down by a military expedition sent to restore order.

Far more common than open rebellion was resistance by flight. The open frontier of Alta California offered ample opportunity for mission Indians to flee into the interior, where they often became active in more overt forms of resistance. Among women, abortion and infanticide were practiced if the child was thought to be mixed-race (a reaction to the frequent rape of Indian women by the Spanish soldiery attached to the missions). Theft was not unusual, and on occasion missionaries were assassinated, usually by poison. Perhaps the most effective means of resistance to the Franciscan policy of conversion and acculturation was a conspiracy of silence among mission Indians regarding their religious practices, based upon the assumption that what the culturally ignorant Franciscans did not know, they could not forbid and punish. In the end, however, even this would not save cultures whose societies had been weakened by disease, warfare, and upheaval.

Although the secularization of the mission system by the Mexican government in the 1830s resulted in the emancipation of mission Indian communities, the damage had already been done. Mission lands were broken up into ranches upon which Indian laborers continued the service they had originally given, or been forced to give, the Franciscan Order, and following the absorption of California into the United States in the middle of the Nineteenth Century, Indians were "increasingly marginalized and identified by Anglo-Americans as being a part of an unwanted and despised Mexican underclass" (111). If there is a bright note in this compelling, grimly realistic work, it is that even

small numbers of Indians were able to survive the mission system with their cultures preserved—if not entirely, at least as much as was possible in the face of overwhelming odds.

Larry Ellis

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