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Ojibway Creation

Earth-diving after a great flood is a motif widely found in North American Indian myth. The Ojibway story recounts how the earth is flooded by the malevolent underwater being, Michibizieu, in retaliation against the trickster-transformer, Nanabush. The selection presented here describes Nanabush's re-creation of earth, as presented in William Jones, Ojibwa Texts, I. (New York: G.E. Stechert, 1919. AMS. 1974 pp.274-78).

Myth is both immediate and timeless and demands that both its aspects be perceived simultaneously. It is rooted in a particular tradition and cultural setting but it speaks in structures and symbols which transcend barriers of culture, language, even time itself. The performance of myth reinforces this dual aspect. Each individual performance is immediate and contingent on the particular story telling situation. But the story lives through many generations using the story teller as its medium. Only the voice changes. Traditional Ojibway thought accounts for the immediacy and timelessness of myth by understanding that the aadisokan (sacred story) has an existence independent of the storyteller. The aadisokan is viewed as an autonomous being with the power to impress itself upon the anishinaabe (the people).

This translation tells the particular Ojibway creation story; it is also about all creation. Michibizieu steals the wolf-nephew who hunts for Nanabush. When Nanabush retaliates by trying to

kill the underwater being, Michibizieu causes a flood. The flood is associated in many traditions with the re-creation of the world after one of the world's forces becomes so strong as to destroy the essential equilibrium. Here, Michibizieu has stolen Nanabush's source of food and his link to the instinctual knowledge of the animal world. In trying to recover what he lost, Nanabush inadvertently precipitates a flood so that he must make a new earth.

Nanabush reestablishes the link between himself and the animals by making them helpers in creation. He asks them to dive for earth and to discover the size of the new world. It is the fourth, the weakest diver, Muskrat, who is able to retrieve earth. In an Ojibway context the use of four divers has sacred significance symbolizing harmony and wholeness; the success of the most unlikely diver reflects the high respect of Ojibway for each individual's ability to contribute in life. In an Ojibway context the breath which creates earth is also associated with sacred forms of breathing (blowing) in the Midewiwin rites, foregrounded stylistically by the word kuniginin which is ancient and used only in myth-telling.

But what of the significance of this story today --generations, in many cases a language and culture, removed? When Nanabush blows gently, his breath is also the breath of language. Words become stories and stories become whole new worlds. A young man of Cree parentage told me once that he saw in the act of diving for the earth a metaphor for reaching deep down inside yourself to find a tiny grain of sand. When you find it you bring it up and you see a world for yourself. To create meaning one must reach down inside and transform through the breath of creativity. To me, the real mystery is where the grain of sand came from in the first place, and that, I suggest, is the autonomy of the myth speaking to us.

In Ojibway tradition, Nanabush creates earth for people from a world which has always existed. This reflects a vision of this world in the great, ongoing cycles of nature. In Ojibway tradition, Nanabush, the trickster-transformer who is part man, part manidoo, also links the people and their gods to the animals. Nanabush needs the help of animals at first; then he defines the perimeters of the earth with his own creative breath. In this creation story it is an image of man with some manidoo power and some help from the animals who creates our present world out of the ancient earth.

If stories could be arranged in concentric circles, the creation story would be at the center. The initial act of creation is a prototype for every other subsequent creative act and reflects a culture's ideas about itself. The Ojibway creation story reflects a perception of the people as part of a greater natural cycle, linked to the old earth, the animals and the manidoo. It portrays the people, through Nanabush, as defining their own limits through acts of creativity.

The creative act, like storytelling, is limitless. In the ongoing movement of dynamic exchange between storyteller, text, and audience, the myth encourages us to a deeper understanding of our world. Consider now the first creation of Nanabush:

1. Taiya Nanabush! He was really afraid!
2. Oh! then he remembered Muskrat.
3. "Hey, you dive"
4. "Alright, I'll get wet."
5. "Ey! Muskrat, be careful."
6. Taiya Muskrat lifted his tail,
7. then kwack! it sounded like that.
8. Oh! Muskrat swam around,
9. soon he came in sight of trees and
10. he hadn't drowned yet...
11. then he got halfway down the trees and

12. on the bottom he went unconscious
13. but not before he had taken some earth in his mouth,
14. and some in his hands holding tight,
15. and some around his stiff poker.
16. All the while Nanabush was watching for him.
17. Taiya he saw a ball of fur floating on the water
18. and he picked it up
19. and for no reason he opened up the hand.
20. Taiya he held earth clasped in his hand!
21. And again, in the other hand he held earth tight
22. and there on his poker he looked.
23. Still more earth!
24. and there down his throat was lots more.
25. And so Nanabush blew on him and again Muskrat lived.
26. Nanabush dried the earth,
27. "Now I will complete the earth."
28. Nanabush blew on it.
29. kuniginin, a little island floated there!
30. And already the manidoog came out of the water. He spoke to them,
31. "Slowly! later when earth is bigger you will come out!"
32. Again he blew, a great island floated there,
33. and then where he blew was much earth.
34. And more life stirred the manidoog.
35. Again he blew on the earth.
36. He spoke to the one of swift flight, Falcon,
37. "Let's go, fly around the earth, find out how large it is."
38. For some time he was gone,
39. then he arrived back and said,
- 40-41. "It is not so very large."
42. Again Nanabush breathed on it,
43. a long time he breathed on it,
44. again he spoke,
45. "Let's go, you, Raven, learn how large is the earth."
46. Sure enough Raven started out.

47. It is uncertain how many months Raven was gone.
48. Later he returned.
- 49-50. "I wasn't able to learn how large is the earth,
51. I ran out of earth."
52. So Nanabush spoke to Raven,
53. "So that you will be proud I will create you,
54. how would you be proud?"
- 55-56. "Make me as the blue sky on a clear day Nanabush."
57. So sure enough Nanabush touched him blue,
58. and this now is Raven,
59. created by Nanabush.

1. A'tawa Nanabucul M'isa g'agä't sägisit.
2. Tiwä, ug'imi 'kwäniman ini' wajakwan.
3. "Taga', k'in. Minötc, wajak, kög'in."
4. "Änic, m'inötc mänö kayä, n'in niganisäbäwa."
5. "Ä'ä, waja' ck, aiyängwämisin."
6. Tä, waj 'ck ösö ödöpinän;
7. cayigwa, kwatcak! inwäwägamicinön.
8. A' tä ! waja 'ck pabima kwaciwät,
9. ningutingigu, utäbäbamä mi'tigö.
10. Käw'in änawi ä' pici a' kwanäbäwäs.
11. Cigwa äbi' tawatig mi'tigunk ödödi'tan;
12. m'igu' cigwa' wanäntank tagwicing iwiti a 'k'ing
13. Äjikana kantank 'i' i' a 'ki',
14. kayä änint unintc'ink ugan 'kibi'tön.
15. m'i. i. mä utcitcä' 'kank äjitcängä' kuskänig 'i' i' usö kayä w'inagä'tig.
16. Magwägu Nänbucäwä'kawäbamät,
17. ä'tiwä ningutingigu, undci ä'böcka a gundcisäwan wäntcitögu kápikwä' 'kwataguntcininitigu.
18. M'inötc ödöd'pinän Nänbucu.
19. Änicä tötank, uba'kä kimintcibinan.
20. A'tawa, a' k'i ugikaskä 'kunintcäntamini.
21. M'inawä äcawinitc m'inasab, a' ki uduntcimi 'kamawan.

22. Imā udcitcā'kayānink udici. a. ntawābamawān,
23. kāyābi a'ki umi' kwunamawān;
24. kāyā iwiti pindcikunā 'nawate nibiwa
udōntcimi'kamawān.
25. Mīsa ājibābwadānāt mi. i' mīnawā kā. i.
jipimādisint.
26. Ācibāsank 'i' i' a'ki,
27. Mīsa, 'i' i' kīgā tcig'ci 'toyān 'i' i' a'ki.
28. Nānabucu ācibōdātank,
29. kuniginīn! minisāns kī a gwantāni.
30. Mīgu' āca wī'pimi a gwā 'tanit
'i' i' manidōwānca, ajikanōwāt,
31. Bā'kā, pāmā nawate, mī' tēg agwa 'tā 'kāg."
32. Mīnawā ajipōdādank, kī' tēciminis kī' a' gwantāni.
33. Mīdac imā kī' tēciba 'taninantinink
ka i jibōtātank
34. mīsa cigwa pīādisīwaganimunit
'i' i' manidōwānca.
35. Mīnawā mādci' tā pawatātank 'i' i' a'ki.
36. Ajiganōnāt, īni', kac' sanit kā' k' k' kwan.
37. Taga, kīwitasān o o a'ki amante anigu' kwāgan
oō' aki.
38. Gāgā 't ajimadcat kā' k' k' k'.
39. Kumāgu kīa' pī' tanti,
40. cigwa tagwicinōn ajikanōnigut.
41. Kāwīn ā' pīdci mi 'tasinōn.
42. Mīnawā ācīpōdādank,
43. kabāy. ī' tēci' tababwādānank.
44. Mīnawā oganōnān īnī' kagakiwan:
45. Taga, kīn kīgāgi, wīkī' kadan amante
āniku' kwāgan i' i' a'ki.
46. Kāgā' t ajimādcat a' a' kīgāgi.
47. Amante ītug tasugīsis ānāntit kīgāgi;
48. wī' k' tagwicin.
49. Cigwa tibatcimu:
50. Kāwīn ningīmi' k' zīn amante āniku' k
wāgān 'o' o' a'ki,
51. mīgū i' k' i. cinōntakīwāyān.
52. Nānabucu dac ajiganōnāt īni' kīgāgiwan:
53. Ambāsa, tcīpiciganimoyan kīga i. ci. i. n
54. Ānīn i. i. i' k' i. cīpicigānmoyan?
55. Nānabucu 'i' i' wā kīmicakwā' k k' i. cināgwa' k

- kīyōcāwackwāg,
56. mī' i' ambāgi i' i. i. yan.
57. Mīsa' gāgā' t Nānabucu kī' o. cāwaskunāt.
58. Kāgāgidac kā. i. cināgusit mī. i' īni' o
Nānabucōwan.

Kim Echlin, Toronto

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Hearing the Silence Through Lakota Songs

In Teton Sioux Music (1918. rpt. New York: Da Capo, 1972) Frances Densmore points out a significant difference between Lakota and Euro-American music: "The melodic feeling in many Chippewa and Sioux songs seems to be for the interval between successive tones while the melodies of the white race are based upon 'keys,' which are groups of tones having a systematic and definite relation to a keynote." (p.41) While the white music always returns to a central "known" reference point, the Lakota expression becomes music because it celebrates the unknown silence, the interval. The best songs, inspired and composed by spiritual sources and received in dreams, do not allow the formless to be forgotten, as might be the case in a grandly elaborate symphony or a deafening rock song. These two sound forms reflect the white man's compulsion to build a bigger and better version of everything, to "one-up" other composers.

The use of the natural voice, as opposed to the musclebound operatic overstatement, reflects the nondualistic presence of the spirit in the physical body. The white man's music, even in the apparently uninhibited decibel levels of electric guitars, cannot avoid a hysterical fear of nature. Lakota songs, on the other hand, repeatedly celebrate the miracle of spirit manifesting itself as vision matures:

anpetu wi tanyan hina'pa nunwe'
may the sun rise well
maka' ozan'zanyan tanyan
may the earth appear

hina'pa nunwe
brightly shone upon

The song is aware of the ever-present potentiality of vision. The sun, or the newly received perceptive power, illuminates a world not previously in existence. As the song itself is sung, the earth appears. The participant in the creation of the manifest world is always inspired. A man must express the power which has entered into him. Until he does, he will feel possessed or enslaved by it. This feeling is familiar to anyone who, in creating something, has been moved by inspiration, but the Lakota culture encourages everyone to be such an inspired creator, whereas a white person who is moved rather than a mover, is usually a misfit. Among the Lakota, inspired experience and expression are the only means by which a man "lives" as a fully human being:

tate' wan.....a wind
koma'yakelo...wears me
wanyan'ki'ye..behold it
wakan.....sacred
yelo'.....it is (p.169)

tunka'sila....grandfather
to'pakiya.....at the places of the four winds
wakan'nila'pi nunwe...may you be revered
ta'ku koyag' mayaye...you made me wear something
sacred
oyate wan wakan'yan yanke'pi...the tribe sitting
in reverence
niwa'cinpi.....they wish to live (p.121)

The metaphor of a man being worn, of being a garment or form for the spirit to enter, is used repeatedly in Lakota songs. In the myth about the origin of the seasons a similar metaphor is used. The dress of Wohpe is spread over the earth and is frozen when the North wind, Yata, is with her, but it is covered with ornaments (vegetation) when the South wind (Okaga)

drives the North wind away (see James R. Walker, The Sun Dance and Other Ceremonies of the Oglala Division of the Teton Dakota, 1917. rpt. New York, AMS Press, 1979, pp. 174-176). The South symbolizes creation on the sun-wise circuit of the Lakota. Wohpe's ornaments appear when the South wind brings her back into the visible world through its creative love. The invisibility and visibility of her beautiful spirit is cyclical, just as the dormancy and miraculous appearance of the spirit in songs depends upon an organic process which must be awaited with faith; although the spring comes in its own time, it will certainly appear.

The Lakota singer or dancer is the South wind bringing out the beauty of the spirit in the act of performance. At this moment he is not an individual artist performing for approval; he becomes one with the spirit which he may embody through his art. This symbolic pattern is especially evident in the most powerful individual focus of power, the sacred stones, as paramount among individual containers of spirit as the pipe is for the whole nation. The stones were possessed only by holy men. They were used to cure sickness, predict the future, and locate objects beyond the range of ordinary vision. They were small and perfectly round because they incarnated an endless power with no beginning and no end. They could physically fly through the air in a darkened tipi during a yuwipi ceremony, lightly striking disbelievers, or they could cover great distances to bring the holy man the information he sought. They were called tunkan, an abbreviation of grandfather, tunkasila, perhaps because their power manifested the source of all life and created new life in the witnesses of this revelation.

A similar power is naturally incarnated in a human body performing a ritual expression. The body and the form of expression are together the wrappings of the spiritual power. When the individual person "unwraps" the power by performing a ceremony, his individuality disappears; he is only the expression of the spirit at that moment. When the stone is not in

use it is cushioned and wrapped in a cloth containing eagle down so that it "cannot get away." (p.208) When a person who contains spiritual power is not using that power or does not unwrap it in a ceremonial form, such as music, dance, healing, hunting, or war, he must guard his power as an eagle guards its nest by living a disciplined, compassionate life. He must be as gentle with his emotions and his body and those of all other people with whom he lives, as the keeper of the soul must be to protect the spirit of his dead loved one, contained within him during the soul-keeping time.

Another physical form which conveys the invisible is the hoop carried by an elk dreamer. The hoop is often called a rainbow, because "part of the rainbow is visible in the clouds and part disappears in the ground. What we see is in the shape of a hoop." (p. 295) The transitory aspect of the rainbow may be thought of as uniting the known and unknown in a space-time continuum. Again the idea of the vision of this continuum, taking possession of the mind and requiring incarnation, is expressed in a song, "worn" by the singer, as a spectrum differentiating sacred power so it is comprehensible. The witnesses may undergo spiritual transformation when they behold the singer, a familiar member of the community, played by a sacred power.

cangle'ska wan.....a hoop (rainbow)
koman'ya kelo'.....wears me
sito'mniyan.....all
wanma'yank.....behold me
au' we.....coming

The brevity of Lakota songs prevents this spirit voice from being obscured by the melodic glare or vocal acrobatics that reduce much Euro-American music to the merely dramatic or aesthetic. These sounds assert the efforts of the performer or composer to excel--the antics of Iktome. Such artful work recalls how Iktome was reduced to talking only to his own kind, the wolf and the coyote, with whom he conducted a perpetual

competition: those successful in industry, the academy, or the arts, are confined to a narrow range of experience as they obsessively carry on their busy-ness. Lakota songs do not resemble a spider web, devised in order to seize prestige. Instead they express the confidence of people who do not fear their ability to obtain spiritual food. When Harry W. Paige in Songs of the Teton Sioux (Los Angeles: Westernlore Press, 1970) asked an old Lakota why his songs were so short, he was granted the following reply: "because we know a lot." (Paige, p.49) Perhaps such knowledge could not come without words, but people who speak "as friends" (a translation of "Lakota") rather than as competitors, will intuitively know that the words are precious and that only a few should be offered as gifts. The white man uses words, musical notations, and balletobatics just as he uses ballistics in his ongoing subjugation of existence. People of a dominant society, might not need to over-elaborate their efforts to conquer the land, other peoples, or their own souls if they could redirect their attention to breathing and listening and away from pursuing spectacular accolades. The song of Ben Eagle, recorded by Densmore, in which the human voice bears the spirit of a healing root might begin the cure.

maka' kin coka'ya...at the center of the earth
nawa'zinye.....I stand
wanma'yanka yo.....behold me
tate'yo coka'ya....at the wind center
nawa'zinye.....I stand
wanma'yanka yo.....behold me
pezi' huta.....a root of herb (medicine)
ca.....therefore
nawa'zinye.....I stand
tate'yo.....at the wind center
nawa'zinye.....I stand

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Dennis Tedlock. The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983. ix. p.365)

The book practices the "dialogical anthropology" it preaches: this "armchair dialogue is something we all do, listening, puzzling, questioning, and, as it were, talking back....But so far we do it mainly prior to publication, rather than in publication." (pp. 323-24)

Though the quotation comes from chapter 16, first published in 1979, subsequent listening, puzzling, and questioning did not confute the idea of dialogue, for the introduction subscribed 14 July 1982 still affirms: "My own project in mythography begins from meetings with storytellers from two communities whose languages and cultures are indigenous to the New World. The most concrete practical purpose of earliest meetings was the recording of what I once took to be the monologue of performers, but by the end of this book I come to consider storytelling as situated within a larger dialogue that reaches even beyond the immediate audience. In between are talks and essays addressed to various combinations of anthropologists, linguists, sociolinguists, folklorists, oral historians, ethnohistorians, philosophers of religion, literary critics, semioticians, dramatists, and poets over a period of a dozen years." (p. 13 and compare p. 19)

Though dialogical anthropology supersedes what Tedlock calls analogical anthropology, he speaks up for and has greatly improved the analogic, which turns out to supersede what I call the digital.

As Tedlock has it, analogical anthropology "involves the replacement of one discourse with another. It is claimed [falsely] that this new discourse, however far removed it may seem to be, is equivalent or proportionate, in a quasimathematical sense, to the previous discourse" (p. 324). But elsewhere he insists on replacement, equivalence, proportion-- "a finality of contour in the speaking of one language is translatable into a finality of contour in the speaking or another" (p.13); "fusion

moves to the cosmic level when the time of day or weather or season of the story is compared with what it is right now" (p.11); "the written and spoken arts of the English language may turn out to have more moments of analogy with the arts of remote storytellers than anyone would have expected" (p. 13, emphasis mine); there are linguists who recognize the problem tone of voice, but they tend to separate it from the 'cognitive' realm of language proper and exile it to the 'affective' realm of the individual speaker's psyche, overlooking hidden affective implications of particular choices of wording or syntax, on the one hand, and the obvious fact that a performer may deliberately simulate an emotional tone, on the other" (p. 10, emphasis Tedlock's) --rejecting reduction into a particulate, or digital, code: "It is not just that the phenomena of contouring, timing, and amplitude have somehow been overlooked and present a new domain for decipherment, but that they have always resisted reduction to particulate units of the kind that can be ordered within a closed code" (p. 9).

Tedlock does nothing less than "begin to free ourselves from the inertia, from the established trajectory, of the whole dictation era, an era that stretches (in the West) all the way back to the making of the Homeric texts," and begin "to construct an open text--not a text whose notation closes in upon features that can be assigned certified membership in self-sufficient codes such as those of syntax and scansion, but a text that forces even the reading eye to consider whether the peculiarities of audible lines might be good speaking rather than bad writing" (p.7). But despite tantalizing surges beyond, or behind --"a [visible] record will not be necessary if the sole aim of the listener is to engage in an electronically aided apprenticeship, like that of a musician who learns new riffs not by reading them or having a teacher repeat them but by imitating tape-recorded sounds" (p.5)--not only does he keep coming back to texts (open or otherwise), he believes we always will: "Just as a musician must parallel the staff notation of a song with a text of the words of the song, so the

acoustical phonetician resorts to writing in words below the squiggles on a strip of graph paper. If the notation of the audible text of a storytelling event is to provide a performable text, it will have to follow a path between the conventions handed down in literate tradition and the purely hypothetical goal of total notation." (p.6).

So it matters that for his "ethnopaleography" wherein ancient texts "would be directly presented to consultants for interpretation" (p. 128), Tedlock sorts out the paleography less well than the ethnography. For instance, "ideally all reporting of paleographic research (ethnopaleographic or otherwise) should leave it perfectly clear what a document actually says, without the readers having to go back to the document itself" (p. 146). But what a document says depends on how it says it. Tedlock's edition of the opening of the Popol Vuh from the unique copy made by the Dominican friar Francisco Ximenez in the seventeenth century has no "how" indication of, e.g. MS capitalization, erasures, corrections, word division, line division, foliation (pp. 146-55).

Tedlock prints, and comments on, ah raxa la3 and ah raxa tzel as three-word phrases (line 10). His informant, don Andres, "recognized la3 as 'plate,' but he did not know tzel, which, I then told him, is classical Quiche for 'bowl.' He immediately commented, 'Then this must be the ah awas, ah warabalha' --that is, 'master of the shrine' and 'master of the foundation,' titles referring to the head priest-shaman of a contemporary patrilineage (and titles which don Andres himself holds for life)" (p.137). And for all we know, Ximenez wrote the two-word phrases ah raxala3 and ah raxatzel.

Ethnopaleography resembles free-writing (take a pad and pencil and start scribbling), and not just during "those moments when the three-way encounter between don Andres, the Popol Vuh text, and myself sent him into a lengthy aside in the form of a story" whose "contents have little to do with the text at hand" (p. 141): some Quiche diviners use "Oraculo novisimo o sea el libro de los destinos (printed in

Mexico City), an occult text whose title page claims it was copied from an Egyptian book owned by Napoleon. This work contains hundreds of prognostications, chosen through chance operations in which the Quiche diviner may or may not follow the printed instructions. The results are read out of the book in Spanish, but when their relevance to the problem at hand is not apparent, they may be interpreted in the same way as the results of traditional divination, through metaphor and sound play rather than literally" (p. 134).

Not surprisingly, the learned reviser must still intervene, as Tedlock does, convincingly, e.g.: like many other translators, Adrian Chavez, a Quiche speaker from Quezaltenango, "reinterprets the first consonant of the manuscript's 4ucumatz as 3, shifting it from a glottalized velar to a glottalized uvular position, but instead of attending to the abundant ethnohistorical reasons for regarding this name as a compound of 3u3, 'quetzal,' and cumutz, 'serpent,' he instead reads the first syllable as 3uu, 'cover,' translating the name as a whole as 'ocultador de serpiente.'" In so shifting, Chavez, as Tedlock points out, "severs one of the Popol Vuh pantheon's most obvious ties to the larger culture of the pre-Columbian Mesoamerica" (p.131).

Such dismissals, however, as "But the Zunis have no such oaths" as some found in Cushing's major collection (p. 35, emphasis mine) and "A good deal of what Austin calls [Cushing's] 'color ...so delightfully rendered' (including the oaths) looks more like Victorian quaintness on close examination" (p.36) seem themselves to illustrate the other of "the two main pitfalls of ethnopaleographic research: the underestimation of linguistic and cultural change, leading to commonsense solutions based on current usage" (p.131).

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Sacred Reversals: Trickster in Gerald Vizenor's
Earthdivers: Tribal Narratives on Mixed Descent
(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1981)

"Earthdivers," says Gerald Vizenor at the beginning of Earthdivers: Tribal Narratives on Mixed Descent, is "an imaginative metaphor." The vehicle for this metaphor is a culture hero (sometimes trickster, like Wenebojo in the Ojibwe story Vizenor cites in his preface) found extensively in Native American myth. This figure directs animals to dive into the great flood until one finally returns with grains of dirt from which the hero creates the present earth mass. The tenor of the metaphor is Vizenor's protagonists, the mixedbloods, or Metis, tribal tricksters and recast culture heroes, the mournful heirs and survivors from that premier union between daughters of the woodland shamans and white fur traders. "The Metis of mixedblood earthdivers in these stories dive into unknown urban places now, into the racial darkness in the cities, to create a new consciousness of coexistence." (ix) Traditionally standing between two cultures, the Metis earthdiver will integrate man's divided anima. Furthermore, "in the metaphor of the Metis earthdiver, white settlers are summoned to dive with the mixedblood survivors into the unknown...to swim deep down...in search of a few honest words upon which to build a new urban turtle island."(ix)

To lead us to such creative realization, the Metis earthdiver must also be a trickster, for "the world must be realized through inversions and opposites, sacred and secular reversals" of the sort associated with tricksters. (123) Because Vizenor refers frequently to his characters as tricksters and to their reversals and "contradances," the trickster element is apparent throughout the twenty-one mainly satirical narratives of Earthdivers. Because the association of the halfblood with the earthdiver trickster is Vizenor's own rather than one found in the oral traditions, what might be less apparent is that Vizenor's tricksters are very much those of

Native American oral traditions, even if their trickery is in the contemporary world.

Whether Vizenor's rendering, or that of the oral tradition, trickster is an elusive figure. Like a subatomic particle, he defies final definition of time, place, and character. Perhaps the Dakotas were suggesting as much when they ended stories about the trickster Ikto with "and from then on, who knows where Ikto went next." Vizenor acknowledges this elusiveness by rejecting the trickster of categorized and defined properties: that is, the trickster who is gluttonous, lascivious, greedy, deceptive, creative, destructive. He demonstrates that ultimately trickster is best experienced as dramatization of event and process, not fixed in the amber of description. Trickster is, after all, always travelling, and we might add, almost in apposition, transgressing, becoming, transforming, making. In Vizenor, we can see that an authoritative discussion of trickster would be carried on in verbals, not in terminal adjectives. No doubt, this trickster is no less elusive, but we can better comprehend the nature of his power.

To begin with, we must consider a major cause of trickster's power --his ambiguous marginality. Vizenor treats this theme in terms of the dynamic. Trickster is a transgression of the "purities" of society's accepted strata and conventions. To be sure, Vizenor's tricksters are marginal first of all because they are mixedbloods and thus act between two worlds, while the traditional trickster is marginal because he violates established rules and values; nevertheless, marginality is fundamental to the powers of both. From the reversals and transgressions of Coyote and Wenebojo often come creativity, magic power and other special benefits. From the mixedblood marginality of Vizenor's tricksters can come the realization of a new turtle island. The world regards such figures ambivalently because mixedblood and the concomitance of rule-breaking and creation are themselves ambiguities. But by quoting Donald Davidson on metaphor, Vizenor suggests that ambiguity

is itself a force: "perhaps, then, we can explain metaphor as a kind of ambiguity; in the context or a metaphor, certain words have either a new of an original meaning; and the force of the metaphor depends on our uncertainty as we waver between two meanings...."(xvii).

Similarly ambiguous, Vizenor's Metis tricksters, as they "waver and forbear extinction in two worlds...are the force in the blood and the uncertain word..." (xvii) The ambiguous marginal trickster brings new meaning and force to the language of experience, liberating us in the process from conventional notions, just as the ambiguity of metaphor infuses perception with creative meaning and reveals the limitations of stereotyped seeing.

Metaphor also figures significantly in Vizenor's treatment of trickster's defiance of accepted categories and norms. Vizenor quotes Susan Stewart's Nonsense: "The systematic violation of categories and norms of behavior that the trickster presents appears as a negation, a reversal, an inversion of those cultural categories and behavior norms that make up common sense....As the embodiment of disparate domains, trickster is analogous to the process of metaphor, the incorporation of opposites into a new configuration." (105) Thus in the Ojibwe earthdiver myth the creative joins the scatological as Wenebojo creates earth to escape his own feces floating in the Deluge. In other stories, some capricious act of Coyote's brings permanent death to humans, but he gets himself out of trouble with them by rationalizing that without death the world would become too crowded: a caprice rationalized becomes a sensible part of the scheme of things. In the contrary behavior, Vizenor's tricksters, like traditional tricksters, repeatedly stand akimbo the established categories and codes, freeing us from spiritual and imaginative enslavement to what Vizenor calls "terminal creeds." Captain Shammer says in "The Chair of Tears," "The trickster seeks the balance in contraries and the contraries in balance," (20) and "in the white face of the obvious, the opposite must be done." (9). In "Blue Moon

Ceremonial," a Lumbee economist shows through his satirical inversions (for example, his insistence that laughter is a dance) that Indianness is a "way of doing and being that is 'Indian,' not what is done or the blood quantum of the doer." (67) Similarly, Pink Stallion teaches his students (who are "invented" Indians, that is, living the image of Indians invented by whites) more authentic tribal ways of seeing. For example, he negates his student's solemnity about their Indianness when to Token White's protest that "satire is not sacred" he responds, "Mother Earth is satire" and, incidentally, legitimizes the satirical mode of Vizenor's book as a sacred reversal of opposition. (171)

The new "configuration" that the traditional trickster's contrary behavior brings about realizes our, and the world's creativity. This makes trickster a literary representation of the forces dramatized ceremonially in Native American sacred clowns. In their trickster-like bufoonery, Navaho and Pueblo clowns topple the conventional and defy the formal outlines of ritualism to contribute to the creative power of ceremony. We should also note that their ugly, poor, bedraggled appearance belies the power they possess. Similarly, the contrary behavior of the Heyoka, which violates all definitions of "common sense," conceals the power they possess. Like trickster, the clowns do not appear suited for the creative powers they in fact possess.

In "Natural Tilts," Vizenor reveals the powers of his shaman-trickster-clowns: "Some shaman sprites and tricksters are spiritual healers, with warm hands and small medicine bundles loaded with secret remedies, and some shaman spirits are clowns who can tell and reveal the opposites of the world in sacred reversals, natural tilts in double visions, interior glories. The shaman clowns and tricksters are transformed in familiar places and spaces from common grammars, the past and the present are shapes of animals and birds." (89) While there are few transformations of the latter sort in Earthdivers, reversals are clearly part of the shamanic powers of Vizenor's trickster-clowns.

In "The Chair of Tears," a title whose tragic allusion is the contrary of the story's satirical content, Captain Shammer appears on campus the first time "dressed in the uniform of a general, ritual clowns bearing the estranged mask of General George Custer." (4) Appointed chairman of the Department of American Indian Studies, he proposes to save the department by selling it to the highest bidder. In the middle of a comic exchange with Ramon, the mixedblood black departmental secretary, Shammer quotes one of Black Elk's more elegiac pronouncements. All of this is a sign that Shammer, like a sacred clown, is a contrary and a "person of magical ethos, Shammer, [revealing a] connection of satire with magical power." (4)

Father Bearald One ("The Sociodowser") is another trickster-shaman-clown. Dressed in the clothes of a cleric (his father was rumored to be a Roman Catholic Priest), Bearald One also wears in the summer one conventional shoe and one "plain black rubber zipper overshoe." When an Indian Center board member asks to see his foot, Bearald One refuses, but Heyoka-like his "no" quickly seems to become "yes," for almost immediately he moves to comply. "But rather than showing his foot in the overshoe, he removes the shoe on his other foot, his normal foot, because no one specified which foot. Then he removes his sock and stretches and wriggles his angular toes in the direction of the board of members." (154) Yet this apparently doddering, foolish man is himself a reversal, for he possesses sacred power. Father Bearald One moves with jibayag, tribal spirits, "on the wind from the dark woods," hears voices and visits "distant places in his dreams." (144) He also engages his powers in somewhat more secular activities: divining the whereabouts of the Indian Center vans after their confiscation by the government and mysteriously fixing Center bingo games in favor of the most needy. First his strangeness and then his powers make corrupt members of the Center board uneasy, but Bearald One is quite comfortable; for this trickster, the Center is "an appropriate place in the world of chance to outwit evil and balance the

universe." (159)

Native American oral traditions have proved very resilient in the face of their world's imbalance caused by white incursions. This is obvious in their adapting traditional themes to contemporary circumstances. Vizenor's placing earthdivers or tricksters in the contemporary urban world is, then, within the tradition. And like the Navaho Ma'i, who Yellowman told Barre Toelken, reveals what is possible, Vizenor's tricksters too reveal the possible. Standing at the brink between tribal tradition and modern colonial America, seeing all of its imbalance, they challenge us to dive. The challenge accepted, we discover that the inspiration and power of life are in the world of contraries, the trickster's world. We discover, as Vizenor says in another context, that "respiration and transpiration are possible under water." (166)

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Dell Hymes. "In Vain I Tried to Tell You": Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 1981. 402 Hb \$35, Pb \$12.95

The title of this important book will set off significant resonances for readers who remember Hymes' "The 'Wife' Who 'Goes Out' Like a Man: Reinterpretation of a Clackaman Chinook Myth" (first published in 1968, and expanded as chapter 8 of the present volume)--or who remember the further study of the same myth in Jarold Ramsey's "The Wife Who Goes Out Like a Man Comes Back as a Hero: The Art of Two Oregon Indian Narratives" (PMLA 92:9-18, 1977). The myth in question originally transcribed by the anthropologist Melville Jacobs from the famous Chinook storyteller Victoria Howard, is the horrific tale of a young girl who realizes that her uncle's lover must be a transvestite --since when he "goes out" (i.e. urinates) at night, the sound is that of a man. The girl's warnings that something is amiss are ignored, however, until at last the uncle is found murdered.

As the family grieves, the girl says "In vain I tried to tell you..." As Hymes points out in his Introduction (pp.5-6) Native American narrators have indeed been trying for decades to convey something important to the anthropologists, linguists, and folklorists who have recorded their traditional texts, namely that these narratives are more than ethnographic documents: they are also worlds of verbal art --or of oral literature --and that, in the original native versions, they are cast in linguistic structures (phonological, morphological, syntactic, lexical, and semantic) which may legitimately be seen as poetic.

For many years, clues to such structures were provided by Indian narrators "in vain": except for interpolated songs, which were printed in conventional verses and stanzas, traditional narratives were presented in run-on, wall-to-wall format, like that of European prose. After the 1950's, however, when tape recorders became standard fieldwork tools, it became increasingly difficult for scholars to ignore the most obvious signals of narrative structure: the systematic occurrence of major and minor pauses, associated with characteristic intonations, and functioning in a manner parallel to the line, verse, and stanza divisions of European poetry. Important attention was drawn to this phenomenon in Dennis Tedlock's book Finding the Center: Narrative Poetry of the Zuni Indians (1972) and in the periodical Alcheringa: A Journal of Ethnopoetics, which began publication in 1970 under the joint editorship of Tedlock and Jerome Rothenberg.

The contribution of Hymes to the understanding of Native American oral literature --especially that of the Northwestern peoples --began as far back as 1953; but his first major contribution to the poetic study of American Indian narrative was his analysis of "The Deserted Boy," a Wishram Chinook story recited by Louis Simpson to Edward Sapir in 1905; Hymes' paper appeared in Poetics 5:119-155 (1976) and a revised version constitutes chapter 4 of the present volume. The text as published by Sapir of course lacks

detailed indication of pauses or intonations; however, Hymes notes a striking feature of Simpson's narration --the fact that "initial particles" (short words translatable as "and," "and then," "and so," "so then" etc.) occur not at random, but in a systematic way which marks structures definable as verses. Within each such verse, smaller units identifiable as lines are again definable in linguistic terms such as the presence of a verb, or lexical and syntactic parallelism. Hymes points out that, in comparing literatures of the world, poetic form is specifiable in various ways: in terms of phonological regularities, such as rhyme and meter, of Japanese syllable-counting, but also in terms of grammatical and semantic regularities. It is the latter type of criteria which, of course, occurs in "poetic" books of the Hebrew Bible (and of its English translations); which has increasingly characterized metrically "free" poetry in English from Walt Whitman down to the present day; and which is also typical of Chinookan myth. Hyme's useful label is measured verse.

A second paper by Hymes which has had wide influence is his "Discovering Oral Performance and Measured Verse in American Indian Narrative," originally published in New Literary History 8. 431-57 (1977), and revised as chapter 9 of the volume here reviewed. In this essay Hymes reconsiders the Chinookan narrative of "The 'Wife' Who 'Goes Out' Like a Man," and shows that although Victoria Howard's rendition lacks the initial particles found in many Northwestern texts, it nevertheless meets the criteria of semantic and grammatical recurrence and parallelism which identify it as measured verse.

The research cited above has been the foundation of much subsequent work, by Hymes himself (reflected in further chapters of the present volume) as well as by others who have contributed to the growing field of "ethno-poetics." I have myself experimented with the analysis of a narrative tape-recorded in the Karok language of northwestern California in 1950, and have been gratified to discover that a breakdown into lines and verses, based on audible pauses and intonations

patterns in performance--following Tedlock's work on Zuni poetics --coincides some 95% of the time with an analysis in terms of Hymes' measured verse: furthermore, the very cases where coincidence does not occur prove to be of heuristic value in indentifying significant ambiguities either of performance or of linguistic structure (cf. Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology 1: 117-23. 1979)

However, ethno poetics holds some pitfalls for those less skilled and cautious than Hymes and Tedlock. The pioneering work of these researchers was based on intimate knowledge of the languages concerned, and on minute linguistic analyses. Yet, from around 1970, an increasing number of English-language poets who lack all knowledge of American Indian languages, or indeed of general linguistic principles, have tried their hand at "translating" American Indian oral literature --which means, of course, that they have taken as starting points not original texts in Navajo or Nootka, but rather the more-or-less literal translation of those texts as published by linguist/anthropologists such as Sapir. These they have "rewritten" in a different idiom, i.e. that of 20th century English-language poetry. The result --as anthologized in, e.g., Jerome Rothenberg's Shaking the Pumpkin (1972) --has been a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it has certainly made a large number of non-specialist readers aware that traditional Native American literature was something more than quaint bedtime stories for children; it could be taken seriously as literature and as poetry. On the other hand, the contents of Rothenberg's collection are often quite uninformed as to the native cultural background, and they give the reader little sense of how the original texts may have achieved their poetic impact. They are in fact simply English-language poetry, of varying quality --perhaps "inspired by," but in no sense "translated from," Native American sources. The situation is not much different from that which existed when H.R. Schoolcraft's translations of Algonkian myths were converted, in Longfellow's Hiaiwatha, into a mid-19th century dialect of English

poetic language --though Longfellow had the honesty to call himself the author, not the translator, of the work.

Even for scholars who have a linguistic knowledge of their American Indian sources, ethno poetic research can raise questions, especially when one is working from material already transcribed (rather than from "live-on-tape" performances). The reader of Hymes' work can get the impression that all American Indian mythic narratives, or at least all those of the Northwestern culture area, are in measured verse. However, identifying poetic structures is not always easy --especially in texts where initial particles are not present as signposts. Considering some Californian tribes with which I am familiar, I have no trouble finding lines and verses in the myths of the Karok (who are, after all, on the fringe of the Northwestern culture area); but I cannot do it in myths from Uto-Aztec peoples of Southern California, such as the Cahuilla --these seem to me to display a relatively "flat" style, something like the prose of European folktales.

From such considerations, a number of questions arise. Presumably all oral literatures contain at least one genre which we can identify as song; but apart from that, how universal is the existence of poetry, as contrasted with prose? If the Northwestern tribes use a poetic form for their own narratives, did they use some more prosaic form for non-sacred narratives? At this point my Karok data may be relevant: in one text, the narrator tells how she drove upriver, had a flat tire, and got it fixed --with all the structural characteristics of measured verse! Would it be meaningful to say that, for some cultures, all narratives have a poetic form, while "prose" is reserved for non-narrative discourse, e.g. conversation? Again, many English-speaking whites (as well as Indians) perform narratives, jokes, personal anecdotes, etc., in which initial particles --"and then," "and so then"--as well as other structural features, suggest that "measured verse" occurs in English, though it has not up to now been

generally identified as such.

A hint as to an escape from such dilemmas is provided by Anthony Woodbury's work, as yet unpublished, on structural characteristics of diverse discourse styles among the Eskimo of northern Alaska: traditional narratives have one such set of features, but various other uses of language also have their own distinct characterizations. It may be that distinctions like "poetry" vs. "prose" are too simple to be useful everywhere (cf. the intermediate concept of the "prose poem" in English). In that case, a major task for the "ethnography of communication" a research area developed by Hymes over many years --will be to identify as many styles as may be structurally and functionally distinguished within particular cultures, and then to consider what categories, such as "poetry," are identifiable on a universal, cross-cultural basis.

The essays in Hymes' volume were, for the most part, published earlier; but the revisions and expansions incorporated in the present volume give it the status of a new and unified work. The entire book provides an exemplary foundation for the continuing research that needs to be done in ethnopoetics. Hymes' qualifications are suggested by the fact that he was previously President of both the American Anthropological Association and the Linguistic Society of America; he is also an experienced poet. In the space of this review, it has not been possible to do justice to the richness of detailed facts and insights which Hymes' work provides in the areas of ethnography, of linguistics, and of what he has aptly called "anthropological philology." I should add, however, that his own English versions of Northwestern oral literature are not only solidly founded, but instead will quote his translation of the Kwakiutl "Song of Salmon" (pp.55-56):

Many are coming ashore, they with me,
the true salmon that were.
For they come ashore to you,
to the post at the center of the heavens.

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Dancing from the far side ashore with me,
the true salmon that were.
For they come to dance with you,
at the right side of the face of the heavens.

Overtowering,
surpassing,
outshining,
the true salmon that were.

It happens that I am writing this review in British Columbia, at the height of salmon season; and I conclude with strong feelings of gratitude: for the salmon that have one more arrived, and for the wealth of Native American traditional literature, handed down not entirely "in vain," after all, since Hymes has taught us to experience it with a new awareness.

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* Notices *

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