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CONTENTS

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"to get there it had to walk through hell"

Rodney Simard

For the title of this introduction, I borrow the last line from Jim Barnes' wonderful poem "Contemporary Native American Poetry," from his *The American Book of the Dead*:

> For one thing, you can believe it:
> the skin chewed soft enough to wear,
> the bones hewn hard as a totem
> from hemlock. It's a kind of scare-
>
> crow that will follow you home nights.
> You've seen it ragged against a field,
> but you seldom think, at the time,
> to get there it had to walk through hell.

This issue is laregly concerned with so-called "transitional" literatures upon which the contemporary are based and from whose study we still have much to learn, as the authors of these essays on Zitkala-Sa, William Apess, Luther Standing Bear, and the Trickster all note. Betty Tardieu's study of *Winter in the Blood* shows this to be true, as does Raven Hail's original contribution, "The Great Spirit Goddess."

Forthcoming special issues of *SAIL* will feature feminism and post-colonialism, pedagogy and theory, Linda Hogan, contemporary poetry, European approaches, and contemporary film and drama. Please let me know if you would like to guest edit an issue.

Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin) A Power(full) Literary Voice

Dorothea M. Susag

> Well, you can guess how queer I felt—away from my own people—homeless—penniless—and even without a name! (Zitkala-Sa June 1901)[1]

Like thousands of other American Indian children from across the continent, Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin 1876-1938) suffered under the post-colonial impact of displacement, (de)culturation, and acculturation. Along with the personal consequences of such policies and practices, Indian peoples on reservations suffered devastating territorial, economic, and physical losses.

For over a century, paternalistic government policies and some well-intentioned reformers exacerbated the problems for America's indigenous peoples by viewing them as powerless victims of the clash between two cultures. Moreover, many proponents of assimilation through education regarded American Indians' bilingualism as a negative condition that inhibited effective communication in the English language–a rather absurd notion considering contemporary multilingual requirements for government diplomats. Nevertheless, these two myths still prevail for many American Indian descendants both on and off reservations. In the cultural purgatories of our public schools, too many children continue to learn and relearn myths of their "vanishing" power and verbal inadequacies in the English-speaking world.

In addition, the power of such myths to perpetuate the victimization of Indian women increases when combined with a common myth concerning the feminine literary voice. According to Patricia Yaeger, feminist critics have "insisted on women's impotence in the presence of 'masculine' language" believing that "men employ language for their own ends while women are contained by the 'masculine' word's authority" (36, 56).

Having established the existence of such myths, I want to focus attention on Zitkala-Sa's three autobiographical essays, first published

in *The Atlantic Monthly*, January, February, March 1900. Relying primarily on the voice within her essays, I have also cultivated available images from her surrounding cultural, sociological, and historical contexts to discover the ways in which we may read her writing as effecting a contradiction of the above myths. Using the insights and critical strategies of Edward Said and Patricia Yaeger, I will argue that Zitkala-Sa's autobiographical essays reveal a powerful feminine and ethnic voice when read against her two cultural influences. I will also argue that Zitkala-Sa's essays demonstrate the way her Native heritage of spiritual power and story works to overcome forces that would suppress the feminine Indian voice, to articulate Zitkala-Sa's personal and tribal experience, and to indict those who had victimized her people.

Gertrude Simmons (Zitkala-Sa) was born in 1876 to a Yankton/ Dakota woman, Ellen Simmons—*Tate I Yohin Win* (Reaches for the Wind), and a white man who deserted the family before she was born.[2] Traditionally, the mother had full responsibility for children until they reached puberty. No doubt Ellen Simmons instructed her child in the Dakota way, expecting her to transmit to her children the same Dakota tradition as Ella Deloria would later articulate:

> The ultimate aim of Dakota life, stripped of accessories, was quite simple: One must obey kinship rules; one must be a good relative. No Dakota who has participated in that life will dispute that. In the last analysis every other consideration was secondary—property, personal ambition, glory, good times, life itself. (*Waterlily* x)

At the age of eight, Gertrude Simmons left the reservation for three years to attend a Quaker missionary school in Indiana where she would learn English and Quaker-American customs. Evidence in the first essay, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," might indicate the child made her own decision to attend an Eastern boarding school, a "Wonderland" where the Indian children could "pick all the red apples" they could eat.

However, this first essay and the following two also suggest she based her decision on false dreams painted by evangelicals who intended to "save" the children by "[killing] the Indian" in them.[3] In a 1990 issue of *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, Michael Coleman reported on the motivations of young Indian children during the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries.

> Ignorant of English and with emotions and motivations ranging from obedience to fear to curiosity to desires for white goods and an easier life, they set off into an almost totally alien world. (31)

In an article entitled "Reflections on Exile," Edward Said defines the recent plight of exiles in "alien" worlds and their subsequent roles in the development of literature. Viewing the exile as permanently torn from "a native place" or a "true home," Said suggests the exile can never belong to the present landscape. "Clutching difference like a weapon to be used with stiffened will, the exile jealously insists on his or her right to refuse to belong." Furthermore, Said believes the exile's experiences in the present will always occur "against the memory of another, very distant, landscape." The literary voice then becomes the site of contestation between two languages, two systems, two cultures. Said goes on to suggest that exiles break "barriers of thought and experience," create "new worlds to rule," and use "willfulness, exaggeration and overstatement to force us to recognize the tragic fate of homelessness in a necessarily heartless world" (422-27).

With respect to the "unhealable rift" between an exile and her "true home," Said's definition may easily apply to the life and experience of Gertrude Simmons Bonnin (Zitkala-Sa). Following a three-year separation, the child returned from White's Boarding School to her mother and to the traditional Yanktons on the reservation. But according to Dexter Fisher, she was "highly suspect. In their minds she had abandoned, even betrayed, the Indian way of life by getting an education in the white man's world." Fisher goes on to suggest "Zitkala-Sa was never reconciled with her mother" and that she "suffered intensely her alienation from her own family (Diss. 24).

On the other hand, evidence exists that would indicate Zitkala-Sa did not remain the exile, refusing "to belong." Instead, according to Deborah Welch, Zitkala-Sa "felt pulled toward the Anglo world (8). Furthermore, she deliberately turned away from her Yankton/Dakota tradition and ambitiously moved into the literature, music, politics, and faith of the dominant culture. Having studied voice and violin at the New England Conservatory of Music, Zitkala-Sa proved her musical skills in both performance and composition. In Congress, against the Bureau of Indian of Affairs, and within national organizations such as the SAI and NCAI, she became a self-proclaimed advocate for pan-Indianism, a concept to which many tribal peoples objected. While she insisted on using her adopted name in her formal essay and short story writing, Zitkala-Sa identified herself by her married Anglo name, Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, "in all of her formal correspondence with the Indian Bureau, politicians, and other officials, clearly in deference to Anglo norms" (viii).

Deborah Welch also suggests that Zitkala-Sa sought to "convince [Eastern society] that Indian peoples possessed abilities equal to those

of Whites," implying a regard for Anglo culture as equal if not superior to Indian culture. The following excerpt from Gertrude Simmons Bonnin's essay that won second place in the Indiana State Oratorical Contest of 1896 corroborates this view while it also demonstrates Zitkala-Sa's verbal adoption of the Judeo-Christian faith:

> We come from mountain fastnesses, from cheerless plains, from far-off low-wooded streams, seeking the "White Man's ways." Seeking your skill in industry and in art, seeking labor and honest independence, seeking the treasures of knowledge and wisdom, seeking to comprehend the spirit of your laws and the genius of your noble institutions, seeking by a new birthright to unite with you our claim to a common country, seeking the Sovereign's crown that we may stand side by side with you in ascribing royal honor to our nation's flag. America, I love thee. "Thy people shall be my people and thy God my God." (Fisher Diss. 19)

Seemingly, Gertrude Simmons Bonnin had decisively assimilated into the dominant culture. Yet evidence also exists that contradicts this conclusion. Even as Zitkala-Sa wrote and performed her essays, played her violin before America's elite, published essays and stories in the reputable *Atlantic Monthly*, and consented to the "wisdom" of the "White Man's Ways" in order to win the approval and support of her non-Indian audiences, she remained connected to her Native heritage. With respect to each "success" in the Anglo world, the issues of her own Indianness, of justice for Native peoples, and of the enduring values in Native traditions prevailed, even at the risk of her own personal dignity and health. When she returned to the East having "experienced first-hand the impoverishment of her [Yankton Reservation] family by landhungry Anglos," she found she could no longer tolerate the "anti-Indian educational principles" of Carlisle. And so Zitkala-Sa wrote essays and stories, in spite of Pratt's criticism that her stories were "trash" and she "worse than pagan" (Welch 24-27).

We may regard Zitkala-Sa as an exile, according to Said's definition. As a child of the nineteenth-century reservation system, she couldn't claim the freedom of a traditional Yankton landscape. As a child removed from her family and transplanted in a boarding school for three years, she couldn't claim the presence of her childhood home and family. As a mixed-blood studying and later working in the East, she couldn't claim the emotional or even the intellectual security of a home in the "White Man's ways." Her experience at the Indiana State Oratorical Contest of 1896 exemplifies this alienation. Even as she closed her speech with "America I love thee. 'Thy people shall be my

people and thy God my God,'" a racist banner labeled "Squaw" hung above the heads of contestants and audience (19). And finally, as an eleven-year-old child returning to the Yankton Reservation with the whiteman's clothes and the whiteman's words, she was forbidden to claim the only home she had ever known.

Zitkala-Sa's three autobiographical essays communicate neither the complexity nor the tension she must have experienced living between two cultures. Instead they reveal a binary opposition between Indian and white, an opposition that further substantiates my claim that she stands in exile from both cultures. According to Said, exiles compensate for "disorienting loss" by creating "new worlds," resembling "an old one left behind for ever," while they demonstrate "intransigence . . . willfulness, exaggeration, overstatement . . . characteristic styles of being an exile, methods for compelling the world to accept [their] vision" (423). These characteristics are apparent in Zitkala-Sa's writing, evidenced primarily in her militancy, her romanticism, and her singular stereotyping of the "heartless paleface."

In *Honey-Mad Women: Emancipatory Strategies in Women's Writing*, Patricia Yaeger provides an extension of Said's argument that exiles "break barriers of thought" and "create new worlds to rule" while she denies the inevitability of feminine literary impotence:

> . . . in women's writing, the incorporation of a second language can function [not as a signifier of lost possibilities], but instead as a subversive gesture representing an alternative form of speech which can both disrupt the repressions of authoritative discourse and still welcome or shelter themes that have not yet found a voice in the text's primary language. (40)

Especially in the essay "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," we will see the way the Dakota language and culture function to disrupt the Judeo-Christian discourse, to dispel its repressive power, and to introduce themes that had "not yet found a [Native] voice" in the English language. Dexter Fisher suggests:

> Language became the tool for articulating the tension she experienced throughout her life between her heritage with its imperative of tradition and the inevitable pressure of acculturation. (*Critical Essays* 205)

In her three autobiographical essays, Zitkala-Sa has constructed a literary voice both from the rhetoric and value systems of the colonizers, and from a remembered Yankton/Dakota landscape, language, and story. But these essays do more than "articulate the tension" between these two systems—they demonstrate Gertrude Simmons Bonnin's refusal to remain the victim. Grounded in Zitkala-Sa's claim that she

was a Dakota woman and not a mixed-blood, we may read these essays as power(full) works that celebrate a feminine Dakota heritage, challenge some of the most sacred Judeo-Christian attitudes and values, and accuse and further condemn those who would victimize Indian peoples.

To begin this analysis, we must first look at a probable literary antecedent for Zitkala-Sa's essays: the Trickster/Transformer tales. Like all humankind, this Indian culture hero is an intensely complex figure capable of functioning—and surviving—as fixer or mischief maker, victimizer or victim, creator or destroyer. In his work *The Trickster*, Paul Radin suggests:

> The symbol which Trickster embodies is not a static one. It contains within itself the promise of differentiation, the promise of god and man. For this reason every generation occupies itself with interpreting Trickster anew. No generation understands him fully but no generation can do without him. . . . And so he became and remained everything to every man—god, animal, human being, hero, buffoon, he who was before good and evil, denier, affirmer, destroyer and creator. If we laugh at him, he grins at us. Whatever happens to him happens to us. (158-59)

Since the Trickster figure varies from culture to culture, I find Ella Deloria's description of Iktomi in Dakota mythology especially useful since she was raised within a Yankton/Dakota heritage similar to Zitkala-Sa's. Appearing in various human disguises, Deloria indicates Iktomi or *Ikto* is the "poser," out to get the best of any situation. "With no conception of sincerity," he pretends to have sincere motives while he works the situation to his own benefit. He is spare of speech, unable to use the more elaborate language of ordinary men. The traditional Iktomi is impulsive, thoughtless, without heart, and his actions represent a wide range of "possible" human behaviors (*Dakota Texts* 5). Zitkala-Sa provides her own description of Iktomi at the beginning of her collection, *Old Indian Legends*, first published in 1901:

> Iktomi is a wily fellow. His hands are always kept in mischief. He prefers to spread a snare rather than to earn the smallest thing with honest hunting. . . . Often his own conceit leads him hard against the common sense of simpler people. (4)

In some stories, the overly enthusiastic Iktomi brings ridicule upon himself when he tries—and fails—to play the role of an extra-ordinary human. From our contemporary perspective, we can now read Iktomi

as suffering dramatic ironic reversals when storytellers such as Zitkala-Sa successfully outsmart him.

Like folktales from many cultures around the world, Trickster tales are both attractive and dangerous. Within the traditional tribal setting, they provided good entertainment for long winter nights. But Iktomi stories also warned the listeners to watch for scoundrels who would establish themselves as oppressive powers over others. Storytellers would make asides aboutthe stupidity of those who mindlessly followed the Trickster, and children would learn to be wary whenever an elder would caution, "He is playing Iktomi."[4]

Indian peoples knew well these Tricksters and their disguises. In the mid-Seventeenth Century, English magistrates would play "deed games" with tribesmen. After getting an Indian drunk, the officials would have him sign a deed he couldn't read. Another game involved the magistrates' imposing fines for various offenses. When the fines were not paid in time, they would then require forfeiture of Indian lands. "These were devices to put a fair face on fraud," suggests Francis Jennings (144-45).

The Indian people on Zitkala-Sa's home reservation also knew the "fair face" of fraud. Between 1874 and 1895, several Yankton Reservation agents reported the government's failure to fulfill annuity payments, and scouts who in 1864 had aided General Sully against the Santee Sioux were not paid until 1895, after most had died. Ostensibly, the Dawes Severalty Act of February 8, 1887, was passed to promote the Western-European idea of self-sufficiency, but in reality, the Dawes Act contributed to the further loss of Indian territorial integrity when much of the "surplus" land was purchased and leased by non-Indians (*Annual Reports* 1874-1902).

Like other Dakota children, Gertrude Simmons had been raised on Iktomi stories. Evening after evening, until she boarded the "iron horse" for school in the East, she would "pillow" her head in her mother's lap while listening to the "old people" tell Iktomi stories. I suggest we can read Zitkala-Sa's autobiographical essays as following this tribal literary tradition, although I would agree with Dexter Fisher as she delineates the differences between autobiography/short story and the oral tradition, indicating the "writer [of autobiography] by necessity stands apart from his subject and comments on it" (Diss. 159). However, when accompanied by a Dakota belief system, these traditional Iktomi stories no doubt provided an explanation for human behavior that Zitkala-Sa would later apply to her own experiences both on and off the reservation. In her Preface to *Old Indian Legends*, Zitkala-Sa herself suggests these tales may apply to "wise grown-ups," both "patriot" and "aborigine":

> A study [of Indian folklore] . . . so strongly suggests our

> near kinship with the rest of humanity and points a steady finger toward the great brotherhood of mankind. (vi)

Like the traditional Iktomi storyteller, Zitkala-Sa was nobody's fool. She no doubt knew the "brotherhood of mankind" could encompass all possible human behaviors. She also knew the Trickster's many disguises and oftentimes fraudulent words. And Zitkala-Sa knew the ways to outsmart the Trickster, to practice her own trickery on him, and to disrupt his universe. Reading the essays as a contemporary Iktomi story, we can see how the storyteller works her trickery on the Trickster himself, even as he prowls beyond the page in the daily lives of Zitkala-Sa and her people. And she works her trickery on her non-Indian literary audience as well. Using Yaeger's strategy, we can see how the image and language in these essays function to "disrupt the repressions of authoritative discourse . . . [and to] shelter themes that have not yet found a voice in the text's primary language" (40).

From the very beginning of "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," Zitkala-Sa gives voice to a theme that Euro-American society had previously ignored or suppressed: the strength and essential value of women in the traditional Lakota world. Behind the printed images of women roams the wily Iktomi, disguised as a white cultural imperialist, who would have Indian women believe they are the "quiet and passive drudges" of society, "beasts of burden," and inferior to Indian men, as long as they remain "uncivilized" (Weist 29). However, despite Gertrude Simmons Bonnin's life-long conflict with her home community, and especially with her mother, these essays work to outsmart Iktomi, by defending and honoring her mother, and by celebrating the strength of Indian women, even as they live midst the clash of two cultures.

As we read these essays against the memory of a traditional landscape, the voices of Lakota women resound to defy the Trickster with their own definitions of Indian women. A Santee woman once told Ella Deloria the characteristics of a "good [Lakota] woman":

> . . . devoted to her children, industrious and skilled in womanly arts, genuinely hospitable and generous, and a strict follower of kinship etiquette. She should think much but say little, and she should stay at home and occupy herself with her own business. (DeMallie 260)

Beatrice Medicine, a Lakota anthropologist and niece of Ella Deloria, considers the traditional roles of Indian women not as subservient to men but complementary, equally powerful, and viable today; she provides a more comprehensive definition of Lakota feminine power:

> "We are the carriers of culture." This belief may provide

> Indian women a mandate to transmit cultural viability, engendering a sense of identity with a unique and satisfying cultural group. It is this that gives Lakota women the strength to operate in both the native and the non-native life spheres. (171)

Against the memory of a Dakota landscape, the word and image of the Euro-American's patriarchal and paternalistic belief system explode into Dakota metaphor. From the very beginning through her word and presence, *Tate I Yohin Win* sends her power and the power of her feminine Dakotah ancestors to her daughter, Zitkala-Sa.

> . . . she patted my head and said, "Now let me see how fast you can run today." Whereupon, I tore away at my highest possible speed, with my long black hair blowing in the breeze. (*Stories* 8)

It is the power manifested in her name and in the feminine Wind, *Tate*, the extraordinary and no less powerful Lakota force that moves in connection with the masculine Sky, *Skan*.[5] It moves in their "dwelling," when "cool morning breezes" sweep from the prairie. With her hair "blowing in the breeze," the child physically knows this power that whispers to clouds, roars around mountain tops, and drives her spirit as she runs "free as the wind . . . no less spirited than a bounding deer." With pride, her mother watches her daughter's "wild freedom and overflowing spirits." In Zitkala-Sa's recollection and recording of this image, she acknowledges her mother's personification of this most powerful force, and she affirms the continuity between the Wind, her mother, and herself.

In her second essay, "The School Days of an Indian Girl," Zitkala-Sa again admits this power when she defines her Indian nature. It is "the moaning wind" with power to stir memories—Dakota memories of flowers and fruit, of soft laps and bent grandfathers, boarding-school memories of scissors and bells, and Reservation memories of hunger and shame and death. Later, in her third essay, "An Indian Teacher Among Indians," she returns to the Reservation to see her mother and her brother. Just as she "alights from the iron horse," she's struck by a "strong hot wind . . . determined to blow [her] hat off, and return [her] to the olden days." This recurring image of personified Wind and its accompanying power to move spirit and memory appears throughout Zitkala-Sa's early writing. Likewise, the absence of wind from the Eastern boarding-school landscape demonstrates the significant loss of power she and thousands of other Indian children must have felt when separated from families and home.

In further subversion of Iktomi's manipulative power, Zitkala-Sa tells the story of her mother who teaches her "little daughter" the

practical skills of a traditional Dakota woman, as well as the wisdom for living at peace with others:

> Frequently she asked, "What were they doing when you entered their tepee?" This taught me to remember all I saw at a single glance. Often I told my mother my impressions without being questioned. (14)

The child must watch and listen in order to learn: "I ate my supper in quiet, listening patiently to the talk of the old people." From her mother the child learns to value and practice hospitality and generosity to friends and strangers, and to respect the rights of others. Most importantly, she herself should never intrude:

> My mother used to say to me, as I was almost bounding away for the old people: "Wait a moment before you invite any one. If other plans are being discussed, do not interfere, but go elsewhere." (13)

Likewise, the mother herself respects the rights of others. Leaving her daughter to her "own taste," she treats her as a "dignified little individual" as long as she is on her good behavior. She chooses not to impose her will on her child but instead—with a warning—allows her to go to the "land of the big apples" in the East. To the traditional Dakota, children are *wakan*, sacred, and an old grandfather demonstrates that traditional respect for the child when she serves him. Neither he nor her mother would have criticized the child's cold, muddy coffee. Instead, they "treated [her] best judgment, poor as it was, with the utmost respect" (28). Zitkala-Sa's trickery goes beyond contradiction of such an entrenched belief system. The mother in these essays is not the "quiet drudge"; she has a voice that teaches her daughter about the "paleface" forces she must battle. Warning the child of beguiling threats such as the poison in porcupine quills and in "white man's lies," she says, "Their words are sweet, but, my child, their deeds are bitter" (40-41). This mother tells her people's stories of the fraudulent "paleface" who drove them "like a herd of buffalo" to the reservation. And she tells her own story of an older daughter's death at the hands of Iktomi, who wears the mask of a US Government agent responsible for enforcing the Indian Removal and Reservation policies:

> With every step, your sister, who was not as large as you are now, shrieked with the painful jar until she was hoarse with crying. She grew more and more feverish. Her little hands and cheeks were burning hot. Her little lips were parched and dry, hut she would not drink the water I gave her. Then I discovered that her throat was

> swollen and red. . . . At last when we reached this western country, on the first weary night your sister died. (10)

Again this Euro-American rhetoric used by Zitkala-Sa explodes into multiple images when read against the Yankton Reservation landscape. By 1858, 431,000 acres remained for the Yanktons from the original 13.5 million acres they had used in the previous century. From a population of 2,600 in 1857, the numbers of Yanktons and mixed-bloods on the Yankton Reservation dropped to 1,678 in 1902, because of epidemics of sore eyes, influenza, consumption, scrofula (tuberculosis), measles, chicken pox, and whooping cough. In order to use Indian land for their herds of cattle, white men would marry Indian women, women like Ellen Simmons (*Annual Reports*). While the language in these essays works to honor the strength of women, it also revives the near-smothered voices of a suffering people to tell their own captivity stories. Iktomi, disguised as a proponent of (de)culturation, would also have Indian people believing in the words of Thomas McKenney: "the *Indian* tongue is the great obstacle to the civilization of the Indians" (Sheehan 136). But Zitkala-Sa knew how to use the English language of her time, and she tricked her readers into believing she had left behind her Native tongue and culture. Readers today might object to the stiff formality in words like "greatly vexed," "impudence" and "insipid hospitality." Nonetheless, this vocabulary impressed Zitkala-Sa's contemporary non-Indian readers and critics who admired her proficiency with the English language, and who ultimately were responsible for publishing and promoting her work. In May of 1900, *Outlook* published an article entitled "The Representative Indian" by Jessie W. Cook. Sounding like a Jeffersonian philanthropist,[6] Cook began with the question: "when will [Indians] become Americanized and be of use to the world?" With acknowledgement of Zitkala-Sa's "unusual musical genius," the writer assumes Zitkala-Sa's readiness to assimilate and become part of the eastern "social, political, or literary life" (80-83). According to Dexter Fisher, she had "fascinated the eastern literary world" because she was a "savage" who had not only learned to read and write in English but had published as well (Diss 158). Again, trickery persuades the Eastern literary audience into believing Zitkala-Sa had moved away from the "Indian in her."

On the other hand, Zitkala-Sa's expertise with the language would have impressed the elders from a number of tribal traditions. Brian Swann refers to John Stands in Timber (Cheyenne) who describes the sacredness of the word to the Cheyenne people:

> Someone who used language without "absolute correct-

> ness," he says, was "relegated to an outcast in the tribe." (xi)

Elizabeth Luther Cary cites Francis La Flesche, a member of the Omaha tribe and a contemporary of Zitkala-Sa:

> The Omaha child was also strictly trained in the grammatical use of his native tongue. No slip was allowed to pass uncorrected, and children soon spoke as accurately as their elders. There was nothing corresponding to slang, to localisms, or to profanity. (23-25)

Not only does Zitkala-Sa use English correctly, but she manipulates the language to convey the sounds and images of her ancestral Dakota landscape. Like water rippling through rough-piled rocks, parallel consonants, vowels, and phrases flow from the lyrical Native voice. "My mother stooped, and stretching her left hand on the level with my eyes, she placed her other arm about me" (9). Through the repetition of "s" and "l" sounds, the words flow as her mother moves, releasing feminine energy and power through her eyes and hands. Later, the child moves with the same fluid power: "Standing straight and still, I began to glide after it, putting out one foot cautiously" (23). Parallel participles communicate the urgent determination in the child's voice as she runs after her shadow, "faster and faster, setting [her] teeth and clenching [her] fist" (23). Although Zitkala-Sa may have been imitating other Euro-American writers of the time, the lyric quality in her writing strongly resembles the fluidity of her Native language.

Iktomi, masked as a nineteenth-century Quaker missionary, would have Indians believe they must set aside their pagan beliefs for the "more civilized" Judeo-Christian belief system,[7] but Zitkala-Sa outsmarts the Trickster again. Like thousands of other Indian children, Gertrude Simmons Bonnin learned her English in a boarding school where Christianity and Euro-American civilization and culture were taught simultaneously. Consequently, the influence of Puritan rhetoric and its symbols pervades her writing, just as it does the writing of her nineteenth-century contemporaries. Taking the Puritan rhetoric, the writer tricks the reader into believing she has moved from her "pagan" belief system to Christianity, and then she uses that rhetoric to raise the value of her Dakota experience in the eyes of her Eastern audience. To master the "art" of beadwork, the child practices the Dakota value of fortitude by suffering "many trials." So important is proper Dakota behavior that the child judges and "punishes" herself when she misbehaves. Zitkala-Sa's Dakota family and community are raised to the sacred level of Christ when the guest is served "unleavened bread" and when her mother "worships" the uncle's memory. Here the writer reveals a traditional Lakota value: a woman's most valued relative is her brother.

On the surface, it may appear that the writer has abandoned *Wakan Tanka*, and other symbols representing Lakota power, for the Judeo-Christian God, translated as "Great Spirit" for Indian peoples. The child fears the judgment of the "Great Spirit," and the mother accuses the "Great Spirit" of forgetting their family when a child dies. William K. Powers provides a possible suggestion for reading Zitkala-Sa's use of this term. He refers to Riggs who in 1869 defined the Lakota understanding of "Great Spirit":

> Great Spirit is a god named last and least among their divinities. In no sense is he held in high reverence, no worship is offered to him. He is the white man's god, and they find no better way to name him. (175)

Powers suggests the cosmological understanding moves from Judeo-Christian to Lakota and then back again. In the process, the Lakota and even the Christian belief system is reinvented or changed to a certain extent. Although the Great Spirit isn't designated as masculine within these essays, Zitkala-Sa's mother appears to regard this Spirit as an authoritarian and patriarchal power in the Judeo-Christian sense. However, there is another interpretation that would follow Riggs' definition.

For the most part, the mother only speaks about the "Great Spirit" with reference to whites and to missionaries. In Zitkala-Sa's third essay, "An Indian Teacher Among Indians," the young woman returns home to the Reservation. There she sees her mother, now carrying the Bible translated in Dakota and praying for the "Great Spirit to avenge" the wrongs of the "palefaces." This mother knows this Spirit is the white man's god, and yet she believes he is Power. On the other hand, her daughter has learned not to trust this god because she has seen the suffering "His people" have caused in His name. But when the girl cries, "The Great Spirit does not care if we live or die! Let us not look for good or justice," the mother strokes her daughter's head, "as she used to do," and says: "There is *Taku Iyotan Wasaka* to which I pray." Like her mother, who—in her word and spirit—has outwitted the Trickster, Zitkala-Sa, with her own literary trickery, proves the continuance of the Dakota spiritual system and dispels the power of the established Judeo-Christian belief system.

Furthermore, "against the memory" of Dakota culture, a Lakota power provides the child with the promise of a Dakota identity. By 1900, Indian people had lost land, relatives, and lost an element of their tribal identity as a consequence of marriages between whites and Indians. Although the essays never make reference to a non-Indian father, I believe the identity issue is treated symbolically in the episode about "shadows in the landscape." The child leaves behind the great

shadows of clouds and begins to chase her own shadow. But it "slips away . . . beyond" and moves whenever she moves. She finally "dares it to the utmost" and sits on a hillside rock where her shadow follows to sit beside her. Her friends don't understand the experience, just as Zitkala-Sa's brother and sister-in-law didn't understand her desire to keep her Dakota identity even as she pursued a Euro-American education.

Biographers have suggested that Zitkala-Sa was never able to "catch" her heritage and claim it for her own since it was neither Indian nor Euro-American. Deborah Welch believes Zitkala-Sa was "at home in neither Anglo or Indian society (68). But the "rock imbedded in the hillside" may provide the clue to another interpretation. The rock is Power, *Inyan*, one of the four animate forces in the universe controlled by *wakan*, the "incomprehensible" of the Lakota people. Even in the midst of conflict, she "chases [her] shadow" and finally rests on the powerful and secure "rock" while her shadow comes to "sit beside" her.

Further evidence of a certain Dakota identity appeared in Gertrude Simmons Bonnin's obituaries in three major newspapers: *The New York Times*, *The Washington Daily News*, and *The Washington Star*. All three indicated she claimed to be the granddaughter of Sitting Bull. Dexter Fisher regards this as evidence of her personality, which had become an "admixture of myth and fact," resulting in such an "erroneous" belief ("Evolution" 236-38). Perhaps Zitkala-Sa was still practicing her trickery to outsmart the cultural imperialists who would define her for themselves. No doubt she knew traditional Lakota people use behavior rather than biological connections to define relationships. In her essay, "Impressions," Zitkala-Sa invites "a" grandfather, not "my" grandfather, indicating he was one of several grandfathers or older men whom she respected and valued. Likewise, Sitting Bull could have been her grandfather because she revered him as a leader who until his death continued to fight for the territorial and cultural integrity of his people.

On Zitkala-Sa's home reservation, Yankton Reservation Agent J. F. Kinney summarized the US Government's manipulative scheme to eliminate the tribal and cultural identities of Indian peoples:

> Education cuts the cord which binds them to a pagan life, places the Bible in their hands, and substitutes the true God for the false one, Christianity in place of idolatry, civilization in place of superstition, morality in place of vice, cleanliness in place of filth, industry in place of idleness, self-respect in place of servility, and, in a word, humanity in place of abject degradation. (1887 *Annual Report* 143)

But with powerful trickery, Zitkala-Sa turns this pervasive fraud inside out as she articulates the story of her own victimization.

With the vision of an adult looking back on her childhood, Zitkala-Sa could no doubt see the role Iktomi had played in her life's story. Moreover, we may read the motif of a personal and tribal trickster running throughout all three autobiographical essays. In the essay, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," the Trickster has disguised himself as the "paleface . . . the heartless sham . . . who has defrauded" them of their land and "forced" them away. From the very beginning episode, the mother warns her daughter about the "white man's lies." But as Coleman suggests, "with emotions and motivations ranging from obedience to fear to curiosity to desires for white goods and an easier life," the child fails to recognize him when he arrives in missionary disguise.

Throughout the essays, missionaries are associated with deceit, and just like Iktomi, they disturb the traditional Lakota world order, which is based on interdependence and trust. Once missionaries gave the child "a little bag of marbles . . . all sizes and colors. Among them were some of colored glass" (37). Intrigued with the "same colors of the rainbow" in the river's "crystal ice," she tried to pick out the colors with her fingers. But the "stinging cold" hurt, and she had to bite her fingers "to keep from crying." The adult narrator remembers that story and closes with serious irony: "From that day on, for many a moon, I believed that glass marbles had river ice inside of them" (38). The beauty in marbles deceives, just as the overt generosity of the missionaries masks their intention to remove and change Indian children forever.

In the episode "The Big Red Apples," missionaries from the East arrive wearing big hats and carrying "large hearts, they said." Again the child's mother warns: "they have come to take away Indian boys and girls to the East." Although the inclusion of a sarcastic "they said" may indicate the adult narrator's disbelief in their "large hearts," the child foolishly trusts the missionaries and fails to heed her mother's warning. Consequently, she follows the temptation of "the big red apples." Here we can see how the Lakota story tradition, translated into English, has been woven into the Judeo-Christian tradition and rhetoric. With striking irony, the storyteller outwits the Trickster and condemns him for his fraudulent actions.

In the Lakota oral tradition, storytellers would include "they said" in the telling to indicate the story represented the vision of a whole people and their traditions, not the singular "I." In this text—this story—we can interpret the inclusion of this phrase as an accusation of all missionaries. Not only does the adult narrator disbelieve these particular missionaries, but their deceitful voices represent the

collective voice of the whole community of "palefaces."

Within this episode, Iktomi dons another disguise. Like the serpent in the Genesis account of the Fall, missionaries manipulate their victims into leaving parents and friends for boarding school in the East:

> But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. (Genesis 3:3-5)

Her friend Judewin becomes the tempters' accomplice when she tells about the "great tree where grew red, red apples . . . all the red apples we could eat"; and through the interpreter, missionaries promise "a ride on the iron horse." Like Eve, the child's "hope of going to a Wonderland" prevents her from recognizing the deceit:

> And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. (Genesis 3:6-7)

Adam and Eve knew their sin and tried to hide themselves "from the presence of the Lord God," and the child, with "vague misgiving," feels the "sense of regret" and weakness. Adam and Eve—and also this child—experience the consequences of their choice in the flesh as well as in their minds and hearts. Adam and Eve stand exiled, driven out, separated forever from the sacred ground of Eden, and the child, "the captured young of a wild creature," is turned over to "the hands of strangers" her mother didn't trust.

In this episode, Zitkala-Sa has translated her Native belief system into English, has displaced the mythology of her Dakota heritage to shape her own voice and to subvert what she had no doubt experienced as the oppressive Judeo-Christian belief system. Iktomi is "not your relative" in the traditional sense of the word, according to Deloria. He is "without heart," selfish, manipulative, and deceitful, as he goes about his business of making fools of his victims. This is also true of the missionaries. But here we see not the Trickster, Iktomi, who acts on mere impulse and cannot be regarded as inherently evil.[8] Instead, Iktomi is disguised as the premeditative serpent—the personification of Evil—in Genesis. There is no humor, no entertainment here; the consequences of this "trick" are too serious. Neither do we see this Iktomi experiencing ridicule or shame at the end.

Nevertheless, the writer reverses Agent Kinney's scheme to

"elevate" the Indian, and she outsmarts the "paleface" as he stands accused. When this Dakota mother teaches her child—"free as the wind"—never to intrude herself upon others, multiple visions of American Indians' territorial and cultural losses—the consequence of "paleface" encroachment—surround and indict him. With bayonets and cannons, "palefaces" purge the American landscape of native animals and peoples to bring wagons and cattle, fences, plows, Bibles, crucifixes, and books that teach the Natives what to value. He is indicted when he fails to live up to his own Jeffersonian belief that individuals' expressions of freedom should never infringe on others' equal right to express and to act out their freedom. And he is indicted when he fails to abide by the Christian tenet: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Ideally, this is what it means to be "civilized" in the Lakota world as well as in the Judeo-Christian world. But the Indian child's practice of respect for the rights of others stands in bold opposition to visions of many selfish colonialists as they practiced relentless expansionism and cultural domination. In one scene, the mother directs her child to "go elsewhere" rather than to interfere with or hinder the elders' other plans. By contrast, many Indian people, and particularly Zitkala-Sa, witnessed settlers, government agents, and Christian enthusiasts both interfering with and hindering the Indians' plans for themselves. At the end of the "Impressions" essay, the "paleface" is indicted for kidnapping children when the child, in "trembling" fear, clutches a wall in place of her mother. And with the last words we hear from her mother in "Impressions," he is indicted for all those who have defrauded and victimized Indian people:

> This tearing her away, so young, from her mother is necessary, if I would have her an educated woman. The palefaces, who owe us a large debt for stolen lands, have begun to pay a tardy justice in offering some education to our children. But I know my daughter must suffer keenly in this experiment. For her sake, I dread to tell you my reply to the missionaries. Go, tell them that they may take my little daughter, and that the Great Spirit shall not fail to reward them according to their hearts. (44)

This mother knows these "palefaces." She has grown up on Iktomi stories, and she has learned to watch for him. The gracious facade of the missionaries covering their heart(less)ness and the means to cause suffering don't fool her. Therefore, her last line is not a plea, not a prayer, but a curse upon those who have "stolen the land" and the children.

With one more trick, Zitkala-Sa's storyteller's voice can be heard

from a traditional Dakota setting. In "Impressions," the "legends" are told by grandfathers and grandmothers around the nighttime fires " when the sun [hangs] low in the west." While telling the stories, the grandfather gestures, and the old women participate by making "funny remarks" and laughing, and the children practice responses such as "Han Han," (yes, yes) when the speaker pauses to breathe. The stories represent the experience and will of the entire group, the collective experience of the community, rather than the experience of one individual. "Our parents were led to say only those things that were in common favor" (22). In these essays, not only can we read the "paleface" as a collective Iktomi in disguise, but we can also read the voice within as a collective Native voice, telling the "common" story of a people and their experience to an eastern literary audience.

Evidence from Zitkala-Sa's contemporaries indicates her trickery—or accusations—had succeeded in causing "personal" injury. Those at Carlisle were embarrassed by her purposeful identification as an Indian, especially since Pratt had advocated "killing the Indian within." *The Red Man and Helper*, Carlisle's newspaper, called her writing injurious and harmful, devoid of gratitude for the "kindness on the part of her friends" (Fisher "Evolution" 230). Further evidence suggests Gertrude Simmons left teaching at Carlisle because her employer, Richard Henry Pratt, "was unwilling to continue to employ a teacher who disagreed publicly with his acculturation practices" (Welch 25). In a response to Pratt's attack after her publications in *The Atlantic Monthly*, she said: "I won't be another's mouthpiece—I will say just what I think. I fear no man" (Welch 27).

In 1902 Elizabeth Luther Cary reviewed Zitkala-Sa's three essays. In this review, she credits three American Indian Writers—Charles Eastman, Francis La Flesche, and "the Indian girl" Zitkala-Sa—for their contributions to "our" literature. Cary claims to have found literary value in Zitkala-Sa's writing because of its

> truly compelling eloquence. Strange, pathetic, and caustic, her phrases burn themselves into the reader's consciousness . . . whole descriptions are instinct with passion and significance and curbed by a fine restraint. Her emotions, concentrated and violent, strike us with an electric shock; the form in which she wraps them is luminous and highly synthetic. (25)

With her colonial view that Indians can raise their level of civilization or status through education and the imitation of rational white ways, Elizabeth Cary denies the voice of Zitkala-Sa that attacks those same ideological foundations of Euro-American racial and cultural superiority. Squirming when Zitkala-Sa's "emotions" strike with an "electric

shock," Cary denounces the voice's rationality and regards the "sympathy" created as "forced." Cary calls the mashing turnips episode from "Indian School Days" "absurd . . . childish revenge," and she criticizes its inclusion in the text since it destroys the "element of tragedy" when it deviates "from the standard of brevity, emphasis, and incisiveness set for the adequate rendering of a dramatic situation."

Cary quotes Zitkala-Sa in one of her explicit statements of pain: "it was inbred in me to suffer in silence rather than to appeal to the ears of one whose open eyes could not see my pain." Yet with Cary's "open eyes," she is still unable to see the "rationality" of Zitkala-Sa's pain and chooses instead to blame her "rebellion and bitter opposition" and to blame Zitkala-Sa's "revolt against civilization" on an "over sensitive nature" or to a "melancholy" that her classmates said was basic to her nature. Again, Cary insists that Zitkala-Sa's failure to find happiness or peace was basically her problem and not the problem of the system. It is ironic that Cary patronizes Zitkala-Sa and hopes she may find a "way of solving her problem" that might bring "peace in place of [her present] temper of mind." I suggest Cary's criticism of Zitkala-Sa's "forced sympathy" simply demonstrates the effectiveness and power of Zitkala-Sa's writing (Cary 23-25).

On one level, we may interpret "Impressions of an Indian Childhood" and the following essays as nostalgic respect for a "vanished" way of life, as well as an approach to reconciliation with her mother and with her people. However, Zitkala-Sa's writing powerfully surpasses nostalgia when it is read against Said's suggested "memory of another landscape." With this reading, using the writer's surrounding cultural, sociological, and historical contexts, Zitkala-Sa's writing works to contradict the myths of powerless victimization, language inadequacy, and feminine impotence. Through these essays, with particular attention to "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," the writer demonstrates her refusal to accept defeat at the hands of the cultural imperialists who would deny her Native heritage and humanity. From exile, she establishes a strong and humane Dakota identity that no doubt gave her the strength to operate in both systems. But probably most important, with this reading Zitkala-Sa succeeds in fulfilling Beatrice Medicine's definition of a strong Lakota woman by maintaining her role as a "carrier of culture" to future generations.

In contradiction of the second myth of bilingualism as a handicap, Zitkala-Sa appears to have adopted the rhetoric and ideology of the colonizers and thereby proves her ability to successfully communicate in English—even as she incorporates the resonant sounds and images of her Native language into the context of this colonial rhetoric. And finally, Zitkala-Sa contradicts the myth of feminine literary impotence. With the language and story of her Dakota heritage, Zitkala-Sa disrupts

the repressive forces of the Judeo-Christian discourse and ideology. With multiple images emerging from her Dakota landscape, she creates a literary world that pulses under the power of her feminine Dakota ancestors while it operates to break the Euro-American powers of (de)culturation and acculturation.

It can't be denied that Lakota tradition—traditional Lakota values, her mother (*Tate I Yohin Win*), and the traditional strength of women as teachers in the Lakota culture—was the major source of Zitkala-Sa's power and voice. But she also effectively used the dominant culture to communicate with both cultures. I believe she proved to be a very strong voice both to the Indian world and to America's literary society, always insisting that "Anglo America must recognize what was good and deserving of preservation in Indian culture" (Welch 33), not so much that "Anglo America" might benefit but so they would cease depriving Indian peoples of their rightful cultural heritage.

NOTES

[1]From a letter Gertrude Simmons wrote to Carlos Montezuma, as quoted by Dexter Fisher in her Foreword to *American Indian Stories*, x.

[2]Before contact, the greater Sioux nation was divided into seven major bands. Three dialects, representing three major alliances, existed within this nation—Dakota, and Nakota, and Lakota, which also represented the larger nation as a whole. Whenever I have referred to aspects of the larger culture, I have used "Lakota" rather than "Sioux," which several scholars believe is a French aberration of a Chippewa word for the Lakota people. Although some anthropologists would designate the Yanktons as Nakota speakers, I have used Yankton/Dakota throughout this essay for three reasons: Gertrude Simmons was born on the Yankton [Sioux] Reservation and throughout her life claimed to be a Dakota woman; Raymond DeMallie, in his "Introduction" to *Sioux Indian Religion Tradition and Innovation*, suggests the Yanktons called themselves "Dakotah" throughout recorded history (7); and the Yanktons are regarded as "Dakotas" in the Yankton Reservation Agency reports.

[3]This was the philosophy of Richard Henry Pratt, founder of the Carlisle School where Gertrude Simmons taught for a year. Merrill Edwards Gates, LL.D., President of Rutgers College included Pratt's philosophy in his article, "Land and Laws as Agents in Educating the Indian." He prefaced the quotation with, "the noblest rejoinder I have heard come recently from the staunch hero who is the head of the Carlisle School for the Indians, Captain Pratt." Gates' article was published in the 1885 *Annual Report of the Department of the Interior* 1, 775.

[4]This citation is from the Introduction to *Dakota Texts*, but the previous information may be found in Ella Deloria's footnotes throughout the text.

[5]For cosmological information, I have relied primarily on two sources by James R. Walker: *Lakota Myth*, edited by Elaine Jahner (30-33), and *Lakota Society*, edited by Raymond DeMallie (5). Walker takes an Oglala perspective, although, according to DeMallie, Walker used the word "Lakota in its broadest sense . . . to include the Dakota speakers (the Santees and the Yanktons/Yanktonais) as well as the Lakota speakers (Tetons) . . . with common language (divided into three or more dialects), by common culture, and by common blood."

[6]Bernard W. Sheehan discusses the Jeffersonian philosophy: All humans are of equal origin, but all humans are also in a state of becoming. If the natives were equal physically, then they could become morally and culturally equal also. The Euro-Americans could help the natives achieve the superior development of whites as they "made over the Indian in the image of the white man." Once they accomplished this task, they believed the Indian would become incorporated into the Euro-American society (142).

[7]Sheehan cites an excerpt from a letter written by Cyrus Kingsbury in 1826: "the plain and simple, yet powerful truths of the gospel addressed to the hearts and consciences of the heathen is the most direct way to civilize, as well as christianize them" (127).

[8]Dexter Fisher suggests Zitkala-Sa broke from the oral tradition in her telling of the story "Iktomi and the Ducks." "By rearranging the same events [Zitkala-Sa] presents Iktomi as one who, indeed, does will things consciously. He premeditates his action by devising a trick and then seeks the opportunity to enact it" (Diss. 61).

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Acceptance and Rejection of Assimilation in the Works of Luther Standing Bear

Frederick Hale

Research on various fronts since the 1970s has illuminated many aspects of American Indian Literatures but has as yet shed very little light on the works of Luther Standing Bear. This Lakota chief, who was apparently born during the 1860s in what became South Dakota, originally bore the name *Ota K'te*, meaning "Plenty Kill," followed a highly unusual course through life, a path to whose uniqueness his written works testify. When approximately twelve years old he became one of the first pupils at the new Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania. After some three years of study there and a brief period of employment at a department store in Philadelphia, he returned to his native area, where the defeated Lakotas were being subjected to reservation life at Rosebud and Pine Ridge. Standing Bear spent three decades on those two reservations, finding employment as a teacher, lay minister, shopkeeper, and rancher. During this crucial period in the history of the Lakotas, the Ghost Dance religion unfolded and the massacre at Wounded Knee of 29 December 1890 occurred. Early in the Twentieth Century Standing Bear accompanied Buffalo Bill Cody's notorious Wild West show to England. In 1905 he was chosen chief of the Oglala Sioux. Seven years later, after numerous clashes with government Indian agents, he left South Dakota permanently to pursue a career as a film actor in Hollywood. His literary career began in the mid-1920s when he started to write a largely autobiographical book titled *My People the Sioux*. Standing Bear's other significant work, *Land of the Spotted Eagle*, followed in the early 1930s. This latter volume is an ethnographic study in which he describes Lakota traditions and stridently defends them from what he perceived as a deeply entrenched pattern of unjust and condescending white distortions of Native American life.

In the present article I endeavor to take initial steps towards redressing scholarly neglect of this author. Beyond presenting a

general introduction to Standing Bear, I shall examine in detail aspects of a conspicuous underlying theme in his works, namely the radicalization that is apparent in his attitudes towards European-American culture and control over his own ethnic group. When one compares *My People the Sioux* and *Land of the Spotted Eagle,* one finds two fundamentally different, though not diametrically opposed, perspectives on the general question of assimilation into white society. More specifically, Standing Bear modified somewhat his attitudes towards the Lakotas themselves, though this metamorphosis should not be exaggerated, and white benevolence *vis-a-vis* Native Americans. Given his unique history of involvement in white society and his position of leadership in his own ethnic group, as well as the nature of his literary production, future study of his works will have to take into account these fundamental shifts.

My People the Sioux

Standing Bear began to write *My People the Sioux* in 1925, more than a decade after he had left Pine Ridge to pursue a career in Hollywood, and completed it in 1927. Houghton Mifflin published this groundbreaking corrective the following year. The volume is self-consciously tendentious and defensive. The purpose of his first major venture with the pen, Standing Bear states in his Preface, was to counter misrepresentations that authors of "white blood" and "mixed blood" had inflicted on the reading public. "White men who have tried to write stories about the Indian have either foisted on the public some bloodcurdling, impossible 'thriller'; or, if they have been in sympathy with the Indian, have written from knowledge which was not accurate and reliable," he laments. Nearly 300 pages long, My *People the Sioux is* divided into twenty-six chapters of greatly varying length. The overall structure of the book is autobiographical with a well-integrated admixture of amateur ethnography. Standing Bear chronicled his life from the plains of what became South Dakota and Nebraska through his approximately three years of formal education and other means of assimilation at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School between 1879 and 1882, his return to Dakota Territory, and his career in southern California. The neophyte author dealt with some phases of his life in rich detail while giving others short shrift.

The extent to which the book is Standing Bear's own work is probably impossible to ascertain. It was edited by E. A. Brininstool, a white writer of western lore and fiction. Much of the prose rings true, however, and bears the stamp of naive plausibility. It is moderately polished writing, although the book is rather loosely organized. There are also numerous minor solecisms and, considered

in the context of Standing Bear's total authorship, narrative inconsistencies. The latter cast faint shadows on Standing Bear's credibility but in at least one case also help to illuminate his shift in attitude towards European-American culture. He declared emphatically in *My People the Sioux* that he was born in December 1868 (3). In an article written in 1931, however, after he had become decidedly more critical of white cultural hegemony over the Lakotas, Standing Bear insisted that he was "born during the troublous days of the 60s, the exact year is not known, when the Sioux were succumbing to the trickery of the whites and the undermining of their own tribal morale" ("Tragedy of the Sioux" 273). The ambiguity regarding the year of his birth also found its way into secondary accounts. In *Who's Who Among the Sioux,* the time of his birth is given obliquely as "the mid-1800s" (228). According to his obituary in *The New York Times,* Standing Bear was seventy-four years old at the time of his death in February 1939, which would place his birth in 1864 or 1865 ("Chief Standing Bear" 23). Underscoring the unreliability of that source, however, is the fact that his birthplace is given as the Pine Ridge Reservation, which did not exist at that time. Other inconsistencies also mar the text. Standing Bear stated that he was the first Indian boy to enter the school at Carlisle (133) but subsequently admitted that counterparts from tribes in the South preceded his enrollment there (177).

Standing Bear did not paint an entirely one-sided portrait of his ethnic fellows in *My People the Sioux,* although his reminiscences of his early life are unabashedly romantic. Writing when approximately sixty years old, he evidently nurtured fond memories of his boyhood on the plains. "We had everything provided for us by the Great Spirit above," he recalled. "Is it any wonder that we grew fat with contentment and happiness?" (27). If his memories are even remotely correct, one can well understand the gratitude inherent in his generalization. Life on the open prairie seemed almost edenic. Standing Bear repeatedly lauded his parents and grandparents for their nurturing skills, which seemed to manifest their kindness in the younger generation. "There was no roughness shown among the children, nor was any advantage taken of any one. We always 'played fair,' as we were taught to be fair in all things," he remembered (48). Recreational activities produced a race who were "all fast runners, very strong and fine-looking" (45). Moreover, "there were no idlers in our camp, no lazy ones," and the Lakota women, productively engaged making moccasins and other attire when not playing games, conducted themselves equally well. "There was no gossiping," according to Standing Bear (67).

A less idyllic portrayal of Native American life emerges in only a few pages of *My People the Sioux.* Standing Bear emphasizes the

centrality of preparation for warfare in his informal education and repeatedly stresses his father's admonition that he die in battle in accordance with the warrior tradition of the Lakotas. Furthermore, hunting parties had to take special measures to prevent some bowmen from violating the tribal ideal, necessary for survival, of sharing the bounty. "To make sure that none of these hunters tried to be tricky and get ahead of some other hunter, three men rode with them with war-clubs in their hands, which they were to use on any hunter who tried to 'get funny,' as the white man calls it" (52). Finally, however peaceful and otherwise ideal Lakota society seemed in Standing Bear's eyes, it did not reflect American Indian reality in general. He notes that fear accompanied buffalo hunters in areas contested by other tribes, especially the Pawnees to the south. Standing Bear relates how his father returned from such an excursion and notes nonchalantly that he had killed seven Pawnees in a skirmish. Warriors who performed such feats gained their "just merits" at Lakota feasts (57).

Nowhere does Standing Bear reveal his generally though by no means categorically positive attitude towards assimilation in European-American society more clearly than in his recollection of his experience at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. That institution, which Richard Pratt (1840-1924) established in 1879, became his home in the autumn of that year.[1] Standing Bear recalls that initially he and his fellow pupils had to sleep on a hard floor and eat meager rations, and that he and the other boys deeply resented being shorn of their long hair. Moreover, the stress of white academic life apparently took its toll in Indian lives as several of the children succumbed to unknown causes at Carlisle. Nevertheless, his overall assessment of the opportunity it provided him was clearly positive. Standing Bear gives no indication that he resisted compulsory religious education; indeed, he mentions approvingly that all pupils enjoyed some measure of religious freedom (144-45). As part of his unwitting assimilation, he chose "Luther" from a list of names a teacher had written on the blackboard. Furthermore, the Lakota youth soon learned that "it paid to do whatever was asked of me, and to do it without grumbling; also that it pays to obey your parents in all things" (153). Standing Bear remembered that by 1881 he was doing "splendidly" at the school, that he impressed many whites with the speed with which he and his fellow pupils "were acquiring the white man's ways," and that he had a strong desire to speak English fluently (155). Indeed, so impressed was Standing Bear with Carlisle Indian Industrial School that in 1882 he gladly accepted Pratt's offer to send him back to his home area to assist in recruiting more Lakota pupils. He succeeded in convincing approximately fifty to accompany him back to Carlisle, an accomplishment he relates in detail (160-66). Standing Bear had mixed feelings

about leaving the school in 1882 and declared retrospectively that it "was the best place for the Indian boy" (179).

After returning to his homeland and settling on the Rosebud and, later, Pine Ridge Reservations, Standing Bear found himself inevitably straddling two cultures. Some of the Lakotas at Rosebud thought his complexion, lightened because of limited exposure to the sun, made him different from other members of the tribe. "It made me feel very proud to have them compare me to a white boy," he wrote. Standing Bear added that his attire made him resemble "one of these Jew comedians on the stage" (191-92). In a similar attitudinal vein, he remembered that his first child, a girl born to his mixed blood wife, was "very pretty, and took after the white side of the family." Their second child, a son, by contrast, "took after my side of the family, being of dark complexion, but was a very fine baby, nevertheless (203). Like his father, Standing Bear became a shopkeeper, applying for his own economic advancement skills acquired while briefly employed at a department store in Philadelphia. Other signs of his assimilation also came to the fore. In 1898 he and his father had their horses branded in accordance with white ranching practice (244). While teaching at Pine Ridge, he participated in a dramatic production titled *The Landing of Columbus*, an act that a later generation of Native Americans would have dismissed as cultural treason (235). Standing Bear expressed no regret for this activity.

No less revealing is his attitude towards the Ghost Dance in the early 1890s. Standing Bear explained that his fellow Lakotas were "very superstitious" at that time and thus "their feelings were easily aroused and played upon" (218). He consequently thought it was natural but nevertheless regrettable that "they felt that this new religion was going to rid them of the hated pale-faces who had antagonized them so long" (219). It should be borne in mind that at this time Standing Bear was serving as a lay minister in the Episcopal Church, the denomination in which he had been baptized while attending the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. When asked for his opinion about whether people should join the Ghost Dance, Standing Bear had taken a pragmatic position and told fellow Lakotas that "it would not be right for them to join the ghost dancers, as the Government was going to stop it, and it would not be best for them to be found there" (220). He praised his father's role in serving as an agent of reconciliation after the carnage at Wounded Knee and rebuffed those "wild Indians" who refused to smoke the peace pipe (228-29). Standing Bear left no doubt that he regarded the violent suppression of the Ghost Dance as inexcusable but nevertheless insisted that on their reservations in the late Nineteenth Century "the Indians, as a whole, were quite happy, as they appeared to be getting about everything they wanted" (241).

Near the end of My *People the Sioux* Standing Bear recounts both his participation and that of many other Lakotas in Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, focusing on its tour of England shortly after the turn of the century. His account sheds additional light on his sometimes condescending attitude towards his settled tribesmen in the era of the reservation. One of the abstemious Standing Bear's greatest tribulations while serving as a disciplinarian was keeping the Lakota members of the troupe sober. Despite implementing various means of controlling them, including a pass system, he recalled that "the Indians managed to get their whiskey." Implying the existence of an innate behavioral factor, Standing Bear related that "the craving for the vile stuff made them go to extremes," which he described in lurid examples (256-58). Further underscoring the impression that his fellow Native Americans in the employ of Buffalo Bill required paternalistic discipline, he told how that American entertainer had praised him for "the good work I had done in keeping the Indians sober and in good order." Standing Bear agreed and wrote that "to this day I am proud of the success I had while abroad with the Buffalo Bill show, in keeping the Indians under good subjection" but admits that because some had "spent their money foolishly" he had autocratically decreed that part of their salaries would be withheld until their return to the United States of America (268-69). However critical his attitude towards his ethnic brethren may have been at that time, Standing Bear was sufficiently enamored of British and European-American culture to name his daughter, who was born in England in 1902, *inter alia* after the wife of Prince Edward, namely Alexandra Birmingham Cody Standing Bear (266). His subsequent writing would be in a much different vein, reflecting an almost total reversal of this general pattern of respect for whites and acceptance of the paternalism with which they treated indigenous Americans.

Possibly owing to a need to complete forthwith *My People the Sioux*, which had been in progress for approximately two years, Standing Bear treated the most recent two decades of his life inconsistently and glossed over many events after the completion of his stint with Buffalo Bill. On the one hand, he described in detail how he was chosen chief of the Oglala Sioux in 1905 and, after bureaucratic machinations, finally acquired United States citizenship, an achievement that at the time made him "feel that I had been raised higher than a chieftainship" (282). On the other hand, Standing Bear related both his economic activities in and crucial relations with government Indian agents in South Dakota in a most cryptic fashion, and his wife simply disappears from the narrative following the deaths of two of their children. He provided very few details about his career in the film industry, which began in 1912, although he complained bitterly that Indian actors suffered racial discrimination that hampered their

professional advancement and that every film depicting Native Americans had severely misrepresented them (284-85). *My People the Sioux* ends rather abruptly after Standing Bear had made these points and appealed to readers to give Indians further economic opportunities.

The Tragedy of the Sioux

Standing Bear's brief return to Rosebud and Pine Ridge in 1931 proved a watershed event in his authorship, one that appears to have made an indelible mark on his perceptions of Lakota life and United States government policy *vis-a-vis* Native Americans. It also shaped the content and tone of *Land of the Spotted Eagle*, as we shall see shortly, and signalled a radicalization of his social and political views. Standing Bear described this disenchanting experience in an article titled "The Tragedy of the Sioux," which *The American Mercury*, then edited by the caustic social critic Henry Mencken, carried later that year.

After an absence of approximately sixteen years, lived under economically privileged conditions, Standing Bear appears not to have been fully prepared for the debilitating conditions that approximately half a century of subjugation on the reservations of South Dakota had wrought. His article testifies boldly to the anger that resulted from his perceptions at Rosebud and Pine Ridge and, one suspects, his sense of virtual helplessness to ameliorate the indigence and spiritual torpor of their residents.

The brief reminiscences in the first few paragraphs of Standing Bear's article underscore his new posture. Regarding his decades at the two reservations after his return from Carlisle, he generalized that he had "developed into a chronic disturber" and "a bad Indian" who "remained a hostile, even a savage, if you please." As Standing Bear insisted without apology, "I still am. I am incurable" (273). He painted a decidedly more critical portrait than previously of his exposure to assimilationist education, declaring that "in 1879 I was sent, with some eighty other boys and girls, to Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, to be made over into the likeness of the conqueror" (273). Entirely absent from his not entirely ingenuous depiction of this episode of his life was any indication that he had wanted to go to Carlisle in the first place and voluntarily stayed there longer than anticipated. Standing Bear's attitude towards Christianity also appears to have undergone a metamorphosis during the 1920s or early 1930s. The church, he judged, had played a role in "routing the old life" of the Lakotas and was "very foreign, very upsetting, to minds and bodies that had, out of centuries of struggle, achieved a harmony with their surroundings" (274). Again, Standing Bear chose not to

mention his elective participation in the Episcopal Church or involvement in its work as a lay minister, which he had described in *My People the Sioux.*

The physical conditions that the Lakotas were then experiencing in South Dakota made the first impact on Standing Bear. During the previous winter, he observed, they had been "in desperate straits" because of a food shortage. Some had been compelled to violate a deeply seated taboo by eating horse meat, which the alarmed Standing Bear found ubiquitously drying in the sun. He attributed to a scarcity of meat, the mainstay of the tribe's traditional diet, the physical degeneracy he perceived. Older Lakotas, Standing Bear believed, still evinced the physical vigor he had known decades earlier. "But the young—they showed weakness coming on. Their cheeks were hollowed and their lower jaws drooped down—the inevitable sign of hunger." He thus feared that the coming winter would bring a catastrophe to the reservations (275). The encroachment of white cattlemen on reservation land for grazing purposes seemed to Standing Bear to be the primary cause for the decline of the food supply. Whereas the Lakotas at Rosebud and Pine Ridge had possessed noteworthy herds earlier in the century, the intermingling of their animals with those of the white ranchers had somehow decimated the former. "The Indian's herds have not ceased to exist," Standing Bear declared obliquely without explaining how this had come about. The solution seemed obvious to him: "Remove the white man entirely. Fence the reservation if necessary. Stock the land with cattle and let the Sioux do the rest" (276). Related to the economic changes they had experienced, the Lakotas had begun to suffer various medical difficulties of a magnitude previously unknown. Standing Bear found most of his ethnic fellows wearing canvas instead of leather moccasins and thought the "most noticeable thing about the Sioux people in general is their dire need of dentistry" (276).

Physical deprivation had enervated the Lakotas spiritually, morally, and mentally. Standing Bear recorded testimonies that the medicine men no longer could heal or work wonders and that in a broader sense the combination of autocratic rule by government agents and the presence of sizeable numbers of other whites had cost the Lakotas their faith. He longed for the days of his youth "when everyone ate or no one ate; when a man's word was never broken; when there was plenty, for no man killed except for food" (277). In none of these respects did the reality of 1931 live up to the ideal conditions of his memory.

Standing Bear was especially concerned about the younger generation and clearly feared that if it did not somehow reverse the course that the Lakotas were then following, the tribe would soon be entirely decrepit if not extinct. They struck him as bereft of the

manners of their elders, lacking educational and cultural direction generally, and in want of a vision of the future that in any meaningful way related to their ethnic past. Standing Bear found many young Lakotas of both sexes addicted to alcohol and nicotine and using profane language. "Self-mastery—which the old Indian knew so well—is weakened and the young have not the strength to deny themselves." He therefore thought it particularly imperative that young Lakota "be trained in the history and arts of their people," for only by receiving such education could they "perpetuate the native dances, songs, music, poetry, languages and legends, as well as the native arts and crafts" that supplied the spiritual lifeblood of their tribe (278). Instead of providing adequate educational conditions, however, the segregated government schools were "a curse and a blight." Standing Bear acknowledged that the mission schools on the reservations were superior to those which the government administered but lamented that the former lacked the capacity to admit large numbers of applicants.

Broaching a theme to which he would return in a subsequent book, Standing Bear delivered a parting shot at white America. He resented oft-repeated, condescending assertions of the necessity of elevating Indians to the standards of European-Americans. "It is not a question (as so many white writers like to state it) of the white man 'bringing the Indian up to his plane of thought and action.' It is rather a case where the white man had better grasp some of the Indian's spiritual strength." Reversing this rhetorical tradition, Standing Bear insisted that "the white race today is but half civilized and unable to order his [*sic*] life into ways of peace and righteousness (277). How whites could tap what he acknowledged was rapidly disappearing Native American civilization, however, he did not explain.

Land of the Spotted Eagle

Shortly after returning to southern California, Standing Bear began to write his second major book, *Land of the Spotted Eagle*. Houghton Mifflin did not publish this work until 1933, but internal evidence indicates that it was completed before the end of 1931, i.e., within a few months of Standing Bear's dispiriting visit to South Dakota. Much in this volume reflects a sentiment that harmonized with that of "The Tragedy of the Sioux." *Land of the Spotted Eagle* must be read with this in mind. It also reflects its author's disillusionment with white life in the Los Angeles vicinity during the 1920s, when he experienced unbridled greed, detachment from nature, and other manifestations of cultural decadence of the "Jazz Age" at their worst.

In the meantime, public attitudes towards American Indians had undergone a partial metamorphosis that made such ethnic identity less

shameful for many who claimed it. The extent of this shift should not be exaggerated, but in any case the decade of the 1920s brought certain developments that stand out in this respect. The protracted controversy over the Bursum Bill, which was introduced in Congress in 1922 and would have dispossessed the Pueblos of much of their traditional land, aroused the sympathy of sectors of the American public. It consequently never became law. Two years later President Calvin Coolidge signed an act granting citizenship to all Indians who had been born in the United States but who did not yet have it. In the meantime, organizations like the American Indian Defense Fund had arisen to advocate the rights of indigenous peoples. They took their place alongside the older Indian Rights Association in this broad campaign.

Among influential Lakotas, after a generation on their reservations, there had developed by the 1920s a general acceptance of white hegemony and indeed a high degree of dependence on the federal government. Symbolically, this was typified in 1927 when Chief Henry Standing Bear, younger brother of the author and actor, welcomed Coolidge to South Dakota, adopted him into his tribe, and bestowed on him the name *Wamblee-Tokaha*, or "Leading Eagle." Dressed in full regalia, Henry Standing Bear read an oath of fealty to Coolidge as the "White Chief and Protector of the Indians." In a brief speech, the Lakota chief acknowledged that men like Sitting Bull, Spotted Tail, and Red Cloud "may have made mistakes" but expressed his confidence that as their successor Coolidge would "fulfill the same duty call from which they never did shrink, a duty to protect and help the weak" ("Coolidge Becomes Chief" 1). This obsequiousness dovetailed perfectly with the assimilationist position of Henry Standing Bear and relatively well with the ambivalent attitude towards European-American civilization expressed in his brother's *My People the Sioux*.

In literary circles, there was a resurgence of interest in Native Americans during the 1920s. Perhaps no work gained more prominence in this regard that Oliver La Farge's novel of 1929, *Laughing Boy*, for which its author was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for literature. La Farge juxtaposed pristine Navajo society and the degenerate white civilization that was continuing to intrude and leave its debilitating stamp on it. Whereas white public sentiment hitherto had overwhelmingly favored the assimilation of Native Americans, many culturally prominent people began to revive the ideal of the undisturbed primitive indigenous society, examples of which they perceived in the Southwest. The Dakotas and Lakotas, by contrast, had obviously changed too greatly since the 1870s to fuel the imaginations of even the most romantic whites in this way. Brian W. Dippie has summarized the proliferating attitude and how it was replacing a previous one: "The noble savage, wild, free-spirited the antithesis of societal restraint, had

now become the model member of an organic community, the perfect tribalized being. Those who did not fit this mold, like the settlement Indians of the past, were somehow less Indian" (295). Standing Bear, who had spent the decade of the 1920s in southern California acting in films and engaging in various other economic activities in a culture dominated by avaricious whites with little apparent interest in the welfare of Native Americans, appears to have come under the influence of this new spirit. He composed his subsequent literary works in a correspondingly different key.

In obvious respects *Land of the Spotted Eagle* reflects both Standing Bear's anger at the decadence of the Lakotas and his eagerness to identify with his tribal legacy. Whereas *My People the Sioux* was largely autobiographical, this volume was a foray into the world of ethnography, though of a subjective sort that afforded its author abundant opportunity to employ his experiences as illustrations of Lakota folkways and evidence of the devastation that European-American cultural and economic hegemony had wrought. *Land of the Spotted Eagle* encompasses 259 pages divided into nine chapters. Like Standing Bear's first book, it is stylistically simple and straightforward. Furthermore, it imparts a wealth of information about most aspects of traditional Lakota life; indeed, in some respects the detail may have overwhelmed the nonspecialist readers for whom it was intended. Standing Bear's zeal to depict his ethnic tradition in a favorable light led him to make generalizations that are neither substantiated nor plausible. He thus created a tendentious work that arguably sheds just as much light on its author's anger and resulting pride as it does about the subject he intended to portray.

Standing Bear's overarching and intertwined themes were that the Lakotas were a vigorous, harmonious, artistically talented, spiritually vibrant, morally upright, and cultivated people well-adjusted to their natural environment on the plains before the advent of European civilization; that they were not inferior to white Americans; that European-American civilization was decadent and tended to corrupt that of Native Americans; and that to the extent that the Lakotas no longer displayed the admirable traits of their ancestors to any appreciable degree this shortcoming could be attributed to the impact of whites and United States government policies towards American Indians. Indicative of his tendentiousness, Standing Bear conceded that "the Indian, like every other man, was possessed of both faults and virtues" (66), but he ignored the former almost entirely while underscoring the latter throughout his book.

In fact, to an even greater extent than in *My People the Sioux* Standing Bear depicted the Lakotas and their traditional ways in glowing terms. Before being conquered, he averred, members of his

tribe were "large and strong with well-defined features" (45). Standing Bear had never seen "crippled or deformed babies" (3). Many had possessed "perfect teeth" into old age (63), and on the whole remained "lean and thin due to their outdoor and vigorous lives" (64). They were "blessed with good health" and had little need for medicines. Standing Bear did not believe that contagious diseases existed among the Lakotas before they were enclosed on reservations (60). So keen were the senses of the Lakotas that they "almost matched those of that animals that he caught for food" (69). Some, for that matter, were prescient (72). Socially, members of the tribe were "industrious" and, while living in their natural, unrestricted environment on the plains, they had remained active, in contrast to the relatively sedentary life that had begun to form part of the stereotype of existence on the reservations (66-67). Tidiness, moreover, had characterized their households. Family life was exemplary. Echoing themes he had developed in *My People the Sioux,* Standing Bear declared in *Land of the Spotted Eagle* that Lakota parents never abused or neglected their children and that they taught them effectively by natural example (7, 16, 84). In this Eden of the American West, moreover, "there was little or no crime among the people of the plains until their tribal life was disrupted" (175).

The question of education occupies a prominent place in this book. Standing Bear found a stark contrast between Lakota and European-American pedagogy. In his early childhood, he noted, education had been natural rather than unnecessarily systematic and contrived. "When children are growing up to be individuals there is no need to keep them in a class or in line with one another," the aging chief insisted (15). His recollections of life at Carlisle had taken a sharp turn for the worse. He recalled bitterly that there the dignity of the pupils fell victim to "foolish examinations" that did little more than make children conscious of their shortcomings. "I never knew embarrassment or humiliation of this character until I went to Carlisle School and was there put under the system of competition," Standing Bear remembered. He related how one ostensibly insensitive teacher had ordered him to read a passage aloud no fewer than eleven times without giving him any positive feedback. "I sat down thoroughly cowed and humiliated *for the first time in my life* and in front of the whole class!" he recalled (17). Entirely absent from Standing Bear's account of his years at Carlisle in *Land of the Spotted Eagle,* conspicuously so to one who has recently read the corresponding chapters in *My People the Sioux,* are his praise of the opportunities it gave him or any mention of his efforts to recruit dozens of other Lakota boys and girls to accompany him back to Pratt's school in the early 1880s.

The depiction of traditional Lakota religious life and practices is

similarly roseate. Standing Bear praised them as a natural expression of Native American spirituality that harmonized perfectly with the forces of nature. Yet he sought to dispel accusations of animism by explaining that the Lakotas did not worship the sun or any other physical object, but concentrated their veneration on Wakan Tanka, the Great Spirit or Great Mystery (46-47). Standing Bear remained silent about his participation in the ministry of the Episcopal Church and did not explain how and why he had ended that phase of his career or reveal what had prompted him to revert to traditional tribal spirituality. Treatment of this topic could have added a valuable dimension to sections of *Land of the Spotted Eagle* whose ramifications would have extended well beyond an understanding of its author as an isolated individual.

Standing Bear defended the Lakotas against the stereotype of violence with which he believed white America had unjustly burdened them. His rhetoric involved an apparent contradiction. On the one hand, he praised the tribal warrior tradition, pointing out that it provided an ideal of bravery which Lakota society lauded in song and dance and which boys wanted to emulate (24-25). Chivalry reached its zenith on the plains: "The great brave was a man of strict honor, undoubted truthfulness, and unbounded generosity. He was strong enough to part with his last horse or weapon and his last bit of food. In conduct he never forgot pride and dignity, accepting praise and honor and wearing fine regalia without arrogance" (39). On the other hand, Standing Bear insisted that his people had been peaceful and blamed their undeniable history of warfare on incursions by their ostensibly less irenic Pawnee and Crow neighbors (40-41).

To a much greater extent than in *My People the Sioux*, white Americans are the imperialist villains of *Land of the Spotted Eagle.* Whereas in the former volume Standing Bear had alternatively praised and vilified them, in the latter book they serve as objects of his almost unqualified contempt. Apparently his rhetorical strategy entailed reversing the threadbare and condescending stereotype of American Indians as people less civilized than their European-American subjugators. Aesthetically, the latter had seemed downright repulsive when they settled on the plains. Standing Bear recalled that "we had, in the beginning, found the smell of the white man obnoxious" and that cattle, or "spotted buffalo," as the Lakotas referred to the exotic bovines that the pioneers herded, had made him and his fellows hold their noses (57). Later in *Land of the Spotted Eagle* he returned to this theme, noting that "some [white settlers] were rough, loud-talking and swearing, and not too clean; their habit of wearing whiskers and beards added to their strange and foreign appearance" (172). In his description of these unwelcome people, Standing Bear played on the wide-

spread white perception of American Indian women as a dominated ethnic gender: "These people endured great hardships, and all the while they were thinking that our women were slaves we felt that theirs were. It may not flatter the white man, but the Lakota did not think him considerate toward his women" (172). However plausible this memory may have been, he stretched credibility in another implied comparison of these clashing cultures: "Moths, bedbugs, fleas, cockroaches, and weevils came simultaneously with the white man, so they must have been co-travelers" (65). Standing Bear, moreover, described traditions of Lakota dancing in graphic detail and defended the violent but no longer performed Sun Dance but revealed that he held no brief for at least one fad of the 1930s which he believed deserved even harsher criticism: "It is quite likely that the present hysteria for dance 'marathons' warrants more condemnation for senseless cruelty than ever did the Sun Dance" (62).

That the Lakotas had declined precipitously during the Twentieth Century Standing Bear did not deny. His observations at Pine Ridge and Rosebud in 1931, after all, had been distressing in the extreme. In *Land of the Spotted Eagle* he conceded, for example, that tribal medicine men had lost their ability to cure because "there is no solidarity of faith to work its magic wonders" (74). The artistic talents of Lakota women had largely fallen victim to cultural change and, indicative of the hegemony this had wrought, because centuries-old skills of creating decorative elements from natural resources "the only means whereby native designs might be kept alive is through the use of the white man's beads" (91). Extending his gaze to Native Americans in general, his summary of contemporary conditions was bleak:

> Today my people, and all native people of this continent, are changed—degraded by oppression and poverty into but a semblance of their former being; health is undermined by disease, and the moral and spiritual life of the people deadened by the loss of the great sustaining forces of their devotional ceremonies. . . . There is not a tribe but has been poisoned by oppression and the thwarting of the natural course of life. (226)

Standing Bear left no doubt about who deserved the blame for this cultural degeneracy. He fired his most explosive salvoes in the final chapters of *Land of the Spotted Eagle*. A sample of these fulminations will illustrate the intensity of his anger. The "white strangers, who came unbidden, yet remained to become usurpers," had assumed an attitude of superiority and consequently maintained distorted images of American Indians as part of their strategy of hegemony. Furthermore, their axiology was inferior; they "did not observe the same high

principles which we observed" but rather "violated all of our rights as natives in our own land and as humans. . . ." Standing Bear wondered whether whites were even capable of doing otherwise, for "being narrow in both mind and spirit, they could see no possible good in us" (227). Making generalizations but offering no evidence to substantiate them, he declared that "all groups of public opinion and action, the schools, universities, men's and women's clubs, churches, and other organizations are apathetic toward the Indian and his situation" (229). In a less categorical assertion, the piqued chief and erstwhile lay minister stated that "the missionary oftentimes was an ally to the agent in trying to stop everything the Indian naturally did either in the pursuit of living or pleasure" (237). The entire issue of land tenure particularly fueled Standing Bear's wrath. Undoubtedly recalling his visit of 1931 to South Dakota, he in effect accused the United States government of practicing genocide by alleging that "the reservation became a place where people were herded under every possible disadvantage and obstruction to progress until the race should pass out from sheer physical depletion" (245). Standing Bear dismissed the law of 1924 that granted citizenship to Native Americans as "the greatest hoax" ever perpetrated on them (229, 245). Indeed, it seemed simply absurd for whites to believe that they should determine policies affecting the general course of American Indian history, for their "tyranny, stupidity, and lack of vision have brought about the situation now alluded to as the 'Indian Problem'" (248). No less ridiculous, Standing Bear thought, was the notion that Native Americans should continue to emulate their neighbors of European ancestry. The fruits of the latters' civilization, "though highly colored and inviting, are sickening and deadening" (249). On the contrary, the United States of that decadent era should reverse course as a matter of self-interest: "But America can be revived, rejuvenated, by recognizing a native school of thought. The Indian can save America" (254). Looking back at his own life, Standing Bear in effect disavowed any meaningful indebtedness to European-American influence. "Regarding the 'civilization' that has been thrust upon me since the days of reservation, it has not added one whit to my sense of justice," he wrote in his conclusion; "to my reverence for the rights of life; to my love for truth, honesty, and generosity; nor to my faith in Wakan Tanka—God of the Lakotas" (258).

Conclusion

With regard to the vital and enduring question of attitudes towards assimilation, the works of Luther Standing Bear collectively form a microcosm of widespread Native American views on the subject,

despite the atypicality of his life. These uncomplicated volumes encompass an initial unquestioning acceptance of the Lakota heritage as it existed before the white conquest of the plains, followed by a general if not categorical embracing of the dominant European-American culture in the efforts of Pratt and other assimilators to transform indigenous peoples in their own image. That Standing Bear cooperated enthusiastically with this general endeavor as a young man is beyond dispute; indeed, he virtually claimed as much himself. Yet after returning to what became South Dakota, he found himself divided between two worlds, neither of which was particularly strong or appealing. His own traditional culture was rapidly fading, while his people were increasingly becoming the dependent victims of white society and hegemony of an exploitative and tawdry sort that hardly reflected the ideals of what is too loosely termed "western civilization." Small wonder that Standing Bear eventually found it necessary to withdraw from this repugnant scene, which bore scant resemblance to his childhood memories of Lakota life and, despite close familial ties to South Dakota, not return there for a period of sixteen years. Precisely why he went back in 1931 is not known; perhaps it was to gather information for a second book, *My Indian Boyhood*, in which he summarized Lakota traditions in sympathetic terms for young white Americans. In any case, his observations of the plight of the cultural and economic decline of the Lakotas prompted him to write his angry article in *The American Mercury* and bitterly announce his general rejection of European-American civilization in *Land of the Spotted Eagle*. That Standing Bear did so in English and through the medium of the printed word while working as a movie actor and residing in Los Angeles County underscores the virtual impossibility of turning back the clock in the 1930s.

NOTES

[1]The standard and highly sympathetic biography of this educator is Elaine Goodale Eastman, *Pratt: The Red Man's Moses* (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1935).

[2]In the meantime he had written *My Indian Boyhood*, which Houghton Mifflin published in 1931. This popular book was intended to introduce the Lakota to white children.

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The Great Spirit Goddess

Raven Hail

The Great Goddess Agehyagugun

Spirit of the sky above
Spirit of the underworld
Spirit of the land between
Spirit of the living waters

was once the Vital Essence of the People

of the sun and moon and stars
and winds that blow
in all the seven ways:
from the four corners of the earth
from the sky vault up above
from the caves of nether regions
from the very Center-of-Being.

The People understood The Goddess

all Her mysteries:
the cycle of the seasons,
how the entities of earth
are but a shadow
of the stars that shine above;
the infinity of youth and growth, maturity,
old age, the mage of wisdom;
the dance of birth and death and re-creation
to the music of the spheres;
women were free
and men were free
in balance with the rhythm of The Earth.

And then the Demon of Oppression came

he devoured the hearts of men
he taught them greed and avarice
he sold their women into bondage
he led them into bloody games of war.

The People were enslaved

their lands were confiscated
their sacred springs befouled
their ancestral burying grounds plundered
their language banned
their names besmirched and stolen
their ancient myths re-written
their heritage distorted.

The women resisted

were raped and fettered
then stoned for easy virtue
burned as witches
ridiculed to aged crones.

The Goddess was raped and fettered

stoned, burned and ridiculed
and though She suffered
the tortures of the damned
She was not damned eternally.

The People kept the faith

preserved the ancient mysteries
practiced the old ways
in secret sacred rituals
hidden away from prying eyes,
used the spoken word
in old wives' tales
magic formulas
scribbled in forbidden language
bits and pieces, scraps of paper;
danced the dances
sang the songs
to a breathing, warm, pulsating Earth

and survived

hoarded the seeds of re-awakening
passed along the arcane knowledge

from generation to generation,
mother to son
father to daughter;
healer, shaman
midwife, medicine woman
weaver of dreams
guardian of inner light
keeper of the eternal flame;
caring, waiting, hoping
believing

but The People greatly suffered

sick in body
sick at heart
sick of ravening destruction;
even The Oppressor suffered
sick in body
sick at heart
sick of ravening oppression.

In this time of cataclysm

when The Earth is slowly dying
when the land is in upheaval
when the waters are polluted
when the seeds no longer quicken

The People are remembering

the inner light
the inner warmth
the inner fire
the inner beauty.
The Goddess of each heart
awakens at the calling Drum;
the time is come—

The Time is Now!

William Apess and Writing White

Randall Moon

It is remarkable, given the energy that has been expended during the last few years in developing theories of minority discourse and the concomitant renewal of interest in previously neglected texts of American literature, that the work of William Apess, the radical Native American Methodist preacher from Massachusetts, is not better known. It is no more remarkable perhaps than the obscurity of Apess himself who disappears from the public record after a debt action is brought against him in 1838. We never hear of him or from him again (O'Connell xxxviii). Through his largely autobiographical writings, Apess illuminates the meaning of the colonial and post-colonial relationship between Native Americans and the white dominant culture as well as an understanding of the violence that permeates that relationship, a violence that is still very much a reality for many Native Americans today.

In order to begin discussing Apess, I want to first look at one very brief representation of Native American life in the early Nineteenth Century provided by a contemporary, Henry David Thoreau, a writer who was certainly atypical of the racist attitudes that informed political responses to American Indians. In "Economy," the chapter that opens *Walden*, Thoreau relates the following anecdote as a parable of commerce:

> Not long since, a strolling Indian went to sell baskets at the house of a well-known lawyer in my neighborhood. "Do you wish to buy any baskets?" he asked. "No, we do not want any," was the reply. "What!" exclaimed the Indian as he went out the gate, "do you mean to starve us?" Having seen his industrious white neighbors so well off,—that the lawyer had only to weave arguments, and by some magic wealth and standing followed, he had said to himself, I will go into business; I will weave baskets; it is a thing which I can do. Thinking that when he had

> made the baskets he would have done his part, and then it would be the white man's to buy them. He had not discovered that it was necessary for him to make it worth the other's while to buy them, or at least make him think that it was so, or to make something else which it would be worth his while to buy. (12)

The obvious lesson to be learned here is that the would-be capitalist should assess the market demand for a commodity before beginning production. Thoreau then challenges the logic of the marketplace in order to lend a higher purpose to the meaning of labor and in order to justify both the dismal sales record of *A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers* and his hermitage at Walden Pond. He continues:

> I too had woven a kind of basket of a delicate texture, but I had not made it worth any one's while to buy them. Yet not the less, in my case, did I think it worth my while to weave them, and instead of studying how to make it worth men's while to buy my baskets, I studied rather how to avoid the necessity of selling them. The life which men praise and regard as successful is but one kind. Why should we exaggerate any one kind at the expense of the others?

Thoreau's subject position as a white middle-class male and Harvard graduate whose homelife with mother and father is relatively stable and secure allows Thoreau the privilege and freedom to take the higher ground of aesthetic pursuit. The Indian in the anecdote, however apocryphal it may be, is most likely unable to bear the burden of following such a vision of self-reliance. There is a context here to which Thoreau's parable belongs that concerns Native Americans and basketmaking in the New England of Thoreau's day; the text of *Walden* ignores this context, flattens it and elides it in order to address the more properly philosophical issues to which Thoreau hopes an educated white audience of the mid-Nineteenth Century would be drawn. But Thoreau's text still offers a window, however narrow, through which we see a moment in the post-colonial situation in which many American Indians found themselves.

Twenty years before the publication of *Walden* in 1854, William Apess had published his third book, *The Experiences of Five Christian Indians* (1833). The first chapter, "The Experience of the Missionary," is Apess' brief account of his own life and conversion to Christianity and it gives us, as *Walden* would later, a window through which we are allowed to see the postcolonial status of a Native American who makes and sells baskets:

> Little children, how thankful you ought to be that you are

> not in the same condition that we were, that you have not a nation to hiss at you, merely because your skins are white. . . . At a certain time, when my grandmother had been out among the whites, with her baskets and brooms and had fomented herself with the fiery waters of the earth, so that she had lost her reason and judgment and, in this fit of intoxication, raged most bitterly and in the meantime fell to beating me most cruelly; calling for whips, at the same time, of unnatural size, to beat me with; and asking me, at the same time, question after question, if I hated her. And I would say yes at every question; and the reason why was because I knew no other form of words. Thus I was beaten, until my poor little body was mangled and my little arm broken into three pieces, and in this horrible situation left for a while. And had it not been for an uncle of mine, who lived in the other part of the old hut, I think that she would have finished my days; but through the goodness of God, I was snatched from an untimely grave. (121)

To describe Native Americans as a nation hissed at resonates with the vivid imagery of Jeremiah in the Old Testament (with which no doubt Apess, as a Christian missionary, would be familiar) when he prophecies of the downfall and debasement of the Hebrews in Jerusalem:

> And I will make this city desolate, and an hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss because of all the plagues thereof.
>
> And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend in the siege and straitness, wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them.[1] (Jer. 19:8-9)

But Apess ruptures the connection between Biblical allusion to the punishment of the wicked and the hissing of utter scorn he undoubtedly felt from the white community around him by foregrounding the dimension of race. He understands the privilege that accompanies white skin in America and he uses the depiction of his grandmother to illustrate the psychic and physical scarring that typifies the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized.

What was once an integral dimension of Native life in New England before contact with the European, a way to transmit through the generations important skills and spiritual values,[2] basketmaking came to be by the turn of the Nineteenth Century a desperate means of survival for Native Americans who found themselves clinging onto the outermost fringes of a capitalistic culture based on the exchange value

of commodities. The "strolling" Indian of Thoreau's innocuous anecdote who lackadaisically turns salesman only to be rebuffed is in Apess' story a wretched picture of violence and alcoholism.

The passage describing Apess' grandmother achieves its power through a pacing so frenetic that the grammatical structure cannot contain it and that only serves to complement the action being described. By compressing events so densely into one sentence—Apess' grandmother goes from selling to drinking to raging and beating—Apess exhibits a household drowning in a vortex of hysteria and self-loathing. As the victim of a "hissing" nation, the object of an unremitting scornful white gaze that reflects back to her both the paltriness of her handiwork and the insignificance of her position in American society, the basket-maker launches into a sado-masochistic interrogation of her defenseless grandson. She asks him if he hates her; it is obvious that she hates herself, epitomizing the kind of pathological inferiority complex that Frantz Fanon attributes to the racism of white colonization.[3] The little grandson's inexperience with the language commits him to replying in the affirmative, which only angers her more and she beats him, asking repeatedly if he hates her and he continues to answer yes and she continues to beat him so savagely that she nearly kills him. Apess spends most of the rest of his childhood as an orphaned indentured servant to a number of white families with whom he learns to read and write in English.

How William Apess escaped the vicious self-degradation that accompanies colonization is the story in both the first chapter of *The Experiences of Five Christian Indians* and in Apess' earlier full-length autobiography, *A Son of the Forest* (1831). When these are added to Apess' last two published works, *Indian Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts Relative to the Marshpee Tribe: or, The Pretended Riot Explained* (1835) and *Eulogy on King Philip* (1836), we have an impressive oeuvre of philippical minority literature. The target of Apess' harshest criticisms is always the white dominant culture and its abysmal failure to live up to the Christian precepts it sought to inculcate in Native Americans. And he manifests little anxiety over addressing that group directly:

> Now let me ask you, white man, if it is a disgrace for to eat, drink, and sleep with the image of God, or sit, or walk and talk with them. Or have you the folly to think that the white man, being one in fifteen or sixteen, are the only beloved images of God? Assemble all nations together in your imagination, and then let the whites be seated among them, and then let us look for the whites, and I doubt not it would be hard finding them; for to the rest of the nations, they are still a handful. Now suppose

> these skins were put together, and each skin had its national crimes written upon it—which skin do you think would have the greatest? I will ask one question more. Can you charge the Indians with robbing a nation almost of their whole continent, and murdering their women and children, and then depriving the remainder of their lawful rights, that nature and God require them to have? And to cap the climax, rob another nation to till their grounds and welter out their days under the lash with hunger and fatigue under the scorching rays of a burning sun? I should look at all the skins, and I know that when I cast my eye upon that white skin, and if I saw those crimes written upon it, I should enter my protest against it immediately and cleave to that which is more honorable. And I can tell you that I am satisfied with the manner of my creation, fully—whether others are or not. ("An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man, *Experiences* 157)[4]

Apess ends this passage with a note of defiance and self-affirmation, characteristic elements of the minority discourse found in slave narratives of the Nineteenth Century. A notable example is in the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* when Douglass experiences a rebirth of selfhood after rising up against his master, Mr. Covey: "I felt as I never felt before. It was a glorious resurrection, from the tomb of slavery, to the heaven of freedom. My long-crushed spirit rose, cowardice departed, bold defiance took its place" (ch. 10). And like Apess, Douglass takes pains to distinguish between the Christianity as taught by Christ and that practiced by white men (Appendix).

At least one critic has noted that a salient characteristic that Apess' autobiography, *A Son of the Forest*, shares with slave narratives is in its vehement attack against white injustice (Ruoff 254). This is more forcefully rendered in "An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man," as the above passage demonstrates, and also marks an important development in Apess' understanding of his shared oppression with Black slaves. Barry O'Connell has detected a progression in which Apess moves away from anxiety over the racial difference between African Americans and Native Americans towards a realization that both groups are bonded together as people of color and as victims of white racism (lxx).

What is most significant about Apess' compulsive diatribe, however, is how it is informed by a negation against the dominant culture's attempts to form his subjectivity along the lines of a racial hierarchy. This negation is what Abdul JanMohamed finds at the center of all minority literature which, following Gilles Deleuze and

Félix Guattari, he recognizes by three attributes: "1) the deterritorialization of the dominant or major language by the minor literature that uses that language as a vehicle, 2) the fundamentally political nature of all minor literature, and 3) its tendency to represent collective values" (246).

We have just looked at an example of the significance that the collective holds for Apess. This comes only after the struggle, however, of resisting and overcoming his own internalization of the dominant culture's phobic stereotypes of Native Americans in order to construct a more stable and coherent self, one that could then identify with and embrace a group that he had earlier feared and despised. In *A Son of the Forest*, Apess describes the revulsion he felt for the word *Indian* and his alienation from others of his own race. This was during the six years he had spent "bound out" to the Furman family after the local authorities had taken him away from his grandmother when she broke his arm in three places:

> I thought it disgraceful to be called an Indian; it was considered as a slur upon an oppressed and scattered nation, and I have often been led to inquire where the whites received this word, which they so often threw as an opprobrious epithet at the sons of the forest. I could not find it in the Bible and therefore concluded that it was a word imported for the special purpose of degrading us. (10)

Apess here seems to be investing the term *Indian* with the same kinds of cathectic power carried in connotations of the word *nigger*. Apess is very much aware, however, in looking back over his childhood, of the ideological pressures that shaped his orientation. He continues:

> So completely was I weaned from the interests and affections of my brethren that a mere threat of being sent away among the Indians into the dreary woods had a much better effect in making me obedient to the commands of my superiors than any corporal punishment that they ever inflicted.

The situation that Apess describes conforms to the colonialist need to conquer the mind of the Native without which he knows obedience can only be got by brute force (JanMohamed 247). Apess continues by recalling an incident that shows just how thoroughly his subjectivity had been molded by white paranoia of the Native Other:

> One day several of the family went into the woods to gather berries, taking me with them. We had not been out long before we fell in with a company of white

> females, on the same errand—their complexion was, to say the least, as *dark* as that of the natives. This circumstance filled my mind with terror, and I broke from the party with my utmost speed, and I could not muster courage enough to look behind until I had reached home. (10-11)

So alienated is Apess from his own people that he is unable to make any connection at all between them and himself. The white women are as dark as, not Apess, but "the natives," a group with whom he obviously does not identify. From the position of his later years, however, in looking back at this incident, Apess now understands how he was the subject of an indoctrination process and concludes that "If the whites had told me how cruel they had been to the 'poor Indian,' I should have apprehended as much harm from them."

What follows in *A Son of the Forest* as well as most of Apess' other writings is a fulfillment of the other two characteristics that Deleuze and Guattari attribute to minority discourse, i.e., the deterritorialization of the dominant language and its fundamentally political nature. At age fourteen Apess experiences a conversion to Christianity described in terms common with the conversion narratives of the time. And after backsliding for a time when he had reached adulthood and suffered from alcoholism, he renews his commitment to the gospel and begins a career as a preacher. It seems obvious, the way Apess tells it, that his conversion empowered him with a new sense of identity and that Christianity, ironically perhaps as the white man's religion, was, as O'Connell argues, the "means for him to develop a powerful identification with his fellow Pequots and, eventually, with all people of color" (lv).

Similar to the ways Frederick Douglass and other former slaves who wrote their narratives would use and subvert the religious language of the slavemaster in order to expose the evils of slavery, so Apess uses Christianity to inform his scathing criticisms of the dominant culture. In addition, Apess takes the rhetoric of the founding fathers and hurls it back into the faces of those in power demanding for himself and all Native Americans just and equal treatment under the law as guaranteed by the constitution. His most "political" work, *Indian Nullification*, is a collection of Apess' narrative, newspaper editorials in support of his efforts, and court documents that detail Apess' work on behalf of the Wampanoag tribe at Mashpee on Cape Cod to protect their property rights from white encroachment. As part of that effort, Apess writes a "Declaration of Independence" calling for complete autonomy from the United States. The state government will not allow the Wampanoags to cede from the union, of course, but it does allow the tribe to incorporate its territories and manage its own

affairs, although with the added proviso that the legislature has the right to repeal the act at any time (McQuaid 621-22).

Partly because of his total assimilation into the dominant culture, Apess is able effectively to enlist his understanding of the political process and the nature of power in that dominant culture on behalf of the Wampanoag tribe in Massachusetts. This same assimilation, unfortunately, has allowed most critics, until very recently, to totally ignore Apess as a writer. Arnold Krupat, for example, probably the most prominent scholar who has dealt with Apess, easily dismisses Apess as a writer of "salvationism" (144) caught up in a monologic mode of discourse in which the writer's "dominant voice" "desires no supplementation by other voices" (148). Because Krupat has decided to employ Bakhtin's theory of the dialogic in response to Apess, it prevents him from seeing the significance of Apess as a writer of a minority discourse. Krupat goes as far as concluding that "In Apes's [sic] case, indeed, there is the implication that when the Native lost his land, he lost his voice as well" (147). On the contrary, it is largely because of this voice that Apess managed to secure for the Wampanoags the rights to their land, as recounted in *Indian Nullification*.

I sense a political unease over Apess because he writes too much like a white person, with no trace of a Native "voice," and too Christianized to be recognized as an "authentic" representative of Native America. This would help explain why he is hardly mentioned, if mentioned at all, in important works on Native American Literatures.[5] This has not been a problem for studies in slave narratives, in which the writer is expected to write within the bounds of a dominant discourse; critics typically look for ways that such a writer resists the hegemony of such a discourse while still writing within it. So it is interesting that critics would be blind to the same kind of strategies of resistance by Native American writers in the Nineteenth Century. Instead, narratives by more "traditional" Native Americans seem to attract the more serious attention of scholars, works like *Life of Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak or Black Hawk* or *Black Elk Speaks*. In these works, a traditional Native lifestyle comes into conflict with that of the burgeoning white population to the detriment of the natives who act out a tragedy of displacement and disappearance.

It would appear however, that Apess is beginning to receive the attention that is long overdue. David Murray has a chapter in his book, *Forked Tongues*, that compares Apess with Samson Occom, another Christian Indian who struggles within and against hegemonic discourse. Krupat has lately reconsidered the importance of Apess' works in an essay that describes Apess as the "prophet of color-blind Christianity" (184) and as a critic of the white establishment. And the publication last year of *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings*

of William Apess, A Pequot makes accessible texts that were previously difficult to find. Barry O'Connell, the editor of the collection, has written a lengthy and incisive introduction, making it the most thorough response that has yet been written on Apess while contributing significantly to our understanding of Native American Studies.

NOTES

[1]There is no way of knowing if Apess was familiar with Joseph Smith's *The Book of Mormon*, published in 1830 just three years before Apess's *Experiences*, but Smith's own use of Old Testament imagery is relevant here since his book explicitly connects Native Americans with the Hebrews in Jerusalem. Apess' "hissing" resonates even more strongly with this passage from *The Book of Mormon*: "And because they turn their hearts aside . . . and have despised the Holy One of Israel, they shall wander in the flesh, and perish, and become a hiss and a by-word, and be hated among all nations" (1 Nephi 19:14).

[2]For the significance of basket-making among Native American tribes in New England see Trudie Lamb Richmond, "Spirituality and Survival in Schaghticoke Basket-Making," in Ann McMullen and Russell G. Handsman, eds., *A Key into the Language of Woodsplint Baskets* (Washington CT: American Indian Archaeological Institute, 1987).

[3]"I begin to suffer from not being a white man to the degree that the white man imposes discrimination on me, makes me a colonized native, robs me of all worth, all individuality, tells me that I am a parasite on the world, that I must bring myself as quickly as possible into step with the white world," Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 98. But see chapter five, "The Fact of Blackness," for a fuller discussion.

[4]This lengthy quotation is from the essay "An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man" which Apess appended to the five conversion narratives of *The Experiences* in the 1833 edition but which was inexplicably excised in the 1837 edition.

[5]See Paula Gunn Allen, *Studies in American Indian Literature: Critical Essays and Course Designs*, New York: MLA, 1983, who has two passing references to Apess; H. David Brumble III, *American Indian Autobiography*, Berkeley: U of California P, 1988, has no references; Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat, eds., *Recovering the Word: Essays on Native American Literature*, Berkeley: U of California P, 1987, mentions Apess in one line on page 539; and Arnold Krupat, *For Those Who Come After: A Study in Native American Autobiography*, Berkeley: U of California P, 1985, excludes Apess.

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Trickster: Shaman of the Liminal

Larry Ellis

The Native American Trickster is a figure who defies category. He is at once the scorned outsider and the culture-hero, the mythic transformer and the buffoon, a creature of low purpose and questionable habits who establishes precedent, dabbles in the creation of the world that will be, and provides tools, food, and clothing to the people who will inhabit that world. He may assume an array of contradictory personae in the course of a single narrative, moving from one to the other with the skill of a practiced shape-shifter while tripping on his tail at every turn. Trickster creates through destruction and succeeds through failure; his mythic and cultural achievements are seldom intentional. "Defining such a various creature," writes Jarold Ramsey, "is a little like trying to juggle hummingbirds" (26).

Ramsey attempts to reconcile Trickster's inconsistencies by pointing out the tendency of Native American myth-narrative to carry out "a plurality of significant and interrelated functions simultaneously" (24), and goes on to outline an inductive/deductive approach to Trickster study that is "attentive to character features *and* role" (27). However, any effort to arrive at a more complete definition of this most illusive of characters must eventually leave the search for definition behind. Even Ramsey's emphasis on cultural perspective and role/character correspondence cannot pierce Trickster's mythic core, for it is a place that is more closely associated with the landscape in which he travels and performs than with who or what he appears to be. If we are to begin to understand Trickster, and to perceive the strange unity that arises from the contradictory and irrational in his nature, we should examine him as a function of this landscape, and further as its haphazard and unwilling manipulator.

Barbara Babcock-Abrahams suggests that Trickster thrives in a

region of in-betweens where ambiguity, paradox, and "a confusion of all customary categories" (160) are the natural order. It is a place where opposites meet and commingle and is "usually situated between the social cosmos and the other world or chaos" (159); the clashing and overlapping of disparate realities provides this "marginal" region with its peculiar identity.

Trickster personifies marginality. He stands in the "Betwixt and Between" (93), the transitional state that Victor Turner calls "liminality." Straddling the juncture of two worlds, he belongs to neither and yet to both, and if his behavior confounds us, it is because we see in him the apparent confusion that characterizes the marginal/liminal landscape.[1] Turner views liminal reality as an unlikely but potent source of creation:

> Liminality may perhaps be regarded as the Nay to all positive structural assertions, but as in some sense the source of them all, and, more than that, as a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise. (97)

Trickster is the hesitant avatar of this region of thresholds and boundaries, this "realm of pure possibility." He embodies the fantastical, bewildering mixture of order and disorder that is its trademark. He is its creature—and its shaman.

The power of the Native American medicine man, or shaman, is grounded in a unique bond with the otherworld that is often established in a ritual of isolation, fasting, and meditation that in many ways resembles the "rites of passage" upon which Victor Turner bases his definition of liminality (93-94). Indeed, the shaman is a liminal figure, a mediator who stands between the supernatural and the world of the People. The measure of his skill and success is the degree to which he is able to establish harmony between these two worlds. His tribe may consider him a "loose cannon," for the rituals and spirit guides that aid him in channelling the power of the otherworld to benefit the community usually respond to him and him alone. He is a valued and essential member of the tribe, but to some degree will always remain the outsider—powerful, unpredictable, and incomprehensible. Trickster's shamanism works on as many levels as he has roles, and with characteristic absurdity. He draws his power from the realm of the liminal, wielding it in a manner that parodies the significance of what he accomplishes.[2]

Perhaps the most incongruous of Trickster's personae is that of the mythic transformer. The world of myth is a place of creation in which things and events, from the seemingly insignificant to the momentous, are altered in preparation for the world to come. Trickster is a figure

of myth, and in singular fashion sets out to change the mythic landscape in every area imaginable. However, his creative accomplishments are almost always the result of accident, usually in the pursuit of selfish or irrational goals. Thus, the Nez Perce coyote trickster establishes the permanence of death through failure to follow the instructions of his spirit guide as he attempts to retrieve his wife from the world of the dead (Phinney 282-85), and Wadjunkaga of the Winnebago inadvertently provides a food source for the People when his penis, which has been gnawed to pieces by a chipmunk, is transformed into edible roots and berries (Radin 38-39).

There can be little doubt that Trickster is capable of creation. The evidence is widespread. What is remarkable is the manner in which he creates, for the act of bringing into existence is somehow less worthy of acceptance if done by accident or as the result of foolish behavior. It would seem that we judge our creators as much for attitude as for product, and Trickster's attitude is far from exemplary.[3]

Yet Trickster's approach, or non-approach, to the process of mythic transformation may not be as random as it seems. It is certainly haphazard and self-seeking, but that is Trickster's nature, and his nature is, in fact, the source of his power. By acting true to character, Trickster in effect performs a shamanistic ritual that connects the otherworld to the world of the People through acts of creation and transformation that occur in the world of myth. His power is rooted in liminality and he calls it forth merely by expressing his liminal nature in the outlandish behavior for which he is so well known. The Nez Perce Coyote achieves mythic success through lust and impatience, and Wadjunkaga's fortunate accident occurs for similar reasons. In neither case is Trickster's goal realized—Coyote fails to rescue his wife and Wadjunkaga's exploration of the hollow of a tree is, so to speak, cut short. However, on the mythic level he performs a shamanism of the highest order. He is both conjurer and conduit of the creative and cultural forces that he puts into motion.

Trickster will often assume the role of minor shaman to pursue his less-than-admirable ends. The Wishram coyote, for example, attempts to conceal his masturbation from the People by fortifying his sweat-lodge:

> Now then at dark he camped again,
> now then he slept in a sweathouse,
> now then in the sweathouse he made it rock.
>
> Now then he was licking his penis,
> now then he came out:
> "This sweathouse will be a rock." (Kalapuya 44)

In another version of the story he constructs a barrier of rimrock:

> He thought: "They'll make news."
>
> Then he done his hands like this [extended arm, elbow bent, palm erect and facing outward, moving left and right in a wide sweep]: [Then] it became rimrock clear to the river from the top of the hill on both sides of the river. (Smith 98)

Coyote's shamanism is flawed, however, for his spells are incomplete:

> Now then he examined his sweathouse;
> now then he saw
> where the rock had been cracked apart.
>
> "Ohhhhh! I suppose this is where the news came out from it." (Kalapuya 45)

And:

> He got afraid: It might make news
> [But] already the wind blew down
> over the rimrock; already the news
> got ahead of him. (Smith 98)

The "news" escapes, and wherever Coyote goes he finds that it has preceded him. His failure, however, is transformed into success, for on the mythic level he performs the more significant feat of destroying the inviolability of all that is secret or hidden:

> "That is how it is going to be,
> "That is the way it will always be,
> "Nothing will ever be hidden,
> "That is the way it will always be." (Kalapuya 45)

Jarold Ramsey describes Trickster as a "false shaman," a source of satire on the "excesses and abuses of shamanism" (33), but also as Levi-Strauss's *bricoleur*, "a sort of mythic handy-man who 'cobbles' reality in the form of a *bricolage* out of the available material" (41). The Wishram coyote is clearly an object of satire and ridicule. He is portrayed as an incompetent charlatan who conjures barriers that are impressively wrought but ultimately Without substance, and the careless, self-serving manner in which he wields those powers he is able to summon stands the traditional tribe-nurturing role of the shaman on its head. The false shaman persona makes effective use of negative example to define and focus this role; however, its purpose does not end here. It is also the first stage of a mythic creative process, providing the botched magic with which Trickster unwittingly constructs the *bricolage* that will determine the realities of the world to come. Coyote's blundering attempts to effect secrecy not only fail, they set mythic precedent ("Nothing will ever be hidden . . ."), and if

what is achieved is not what is intended, it nevertheless represents a successful shamanistic endeavor. The false shaman, in fact, becomes the mythic shaman. Impotence is transformed into power, absurdity into meaning, and the trivial into the consequential as Trickster is unceremoniously shuffled from one role to the next amid a confusion of ironies that is characteristically liminal.

In Native American trickster literature, liminality finds specific expression in the metaphor and imagery of the threshold and the boundary. The marginal/liminal landscape discussed by Barbara Babcock-Abrahams and Victor Turner is a gray, uncertain area, a point of connection and transition between specifics of culture and myth. It begins as a boundary, a line or region that simultaneously marks intersection and separation. When the boundary is crossed, or opportunities are offered for its crossing—as in the discovery and negotiation of a pass over a range of mountains—it becomes a threshold. Further examination reveals that every threshold is bound to a matrix of subordinate thresholds, all of which not only exist as closed systems but interreact in infinite combination, from the broad, mythic limen that joins the cosmos and the world of the People to the most subtle transition in culture or individual thought. A society that moves from a hunting and gathering to an agricultural way of life, for example, experiences a complex interaction of thresholds that range from the larger transitions in technology, ritual, mythology, and art to the reaction of a single member of that society to the introduction of a new tool or mythological motif.

The strangeness and incomprehensibility of the liminal is because, at least in part then, of its complexity, for the quanta at play are vast, even in the smallest systems. If there is indeed a logic to liminal reality, it is so involved and open-ended that it is perhaps best discerned through symbol, metaphor, and image—all of which are provided in Trickster's interaction with the wide array of boundaries and thresholds that lie scattered throughout the tales in which he takes part.

Mythic literature has recognized the power and importance of liminality in its imagistic approach to physical and temporal boundaries. Rivers, roads, seashores, mountain ranges, twilight—in short, anything that separates one time or space in the physical world from another—have represented to cultures world-wide the point at which the realms of the natural and supernatural collide. Liminal reality holds sway here, and thresholds, or points of crossing—bridges, crossroads, and fords—are of special consequence, for they provide a point of interaction between mortal or mythic beings and the forces of the liminal. Barbara Babcock-Abrahams writes that Trickster "tend[s] to inhabit crossroads, open public places [especially the marketplace],

doorways, and thresholds" (159). This would seem to indicate that his association with the broader definition of liminality extends into the specific liminal imagery of his literature. Further extrapolation suggests the probability that Trickster's creative shamanism, which is inextricably bound to the liminal, should find its mythic/literary expression in the imagery of the boundary and threshold.

In the oral literature of the Nez Perce of the northwestern United States, Trickster is the coyote. He is antisocial, cowardly, unsavory, and infinitely entertaining. His foibles are well-known to the People, and wherever he goes "everyone knows who he is." Coyote is also a powerful shaman/transformer (although he would never know it), and in the story "Coyote and the Shadow People" he stumbles through one of the most significant creative acts in Trickster literature—the establishment of death as a permanent and irrevocable state of being. Here we see Coyote at his most foolish and helpless—a state that is usually evocative of laughter in Trickster tales. However, in "Coyote and the Shadow People" the humor is dark, for it involves a tragic loss, not only for Coyote but for the People who will follow. "Coyote and the Shadow People" is clearly an "Orpheus myth," the story of a journey to the land of the dead in which a hero's attempt to retrieve a deceased loved one fails because at the last minute he violates the ritual of passage. It is the perfect vehicle for Trickster; he is a habitual breaker of rules and taboos, and his inability to follow even the simplest of rituals to successful completion is notorious.

Ake Hultkrantz has proven that the Orpheus myth is a widespread genre in North American Native Literatures, particularly in those of the hunting tribes of the northwestern United States and Canada. Like the trickster stories, it is centered on the shaman. Hultkrantz suggests that in Native American tradition, journeys to the otherworld can, in certain cases, be made by living persons:

> We do not need to be in any doubt, however, as to the category of persons here in question: they are, of course, the medicine men, the shamans, who, accompanied by their assistant spirits, have tried to fetch the souls of sick persons from the realm of the dead. (85)

The trance-journey of the shaman to the otherworld is a dangerous and culturally significant undertaking, and to Hultkrantz figures strongly in Native American Orpheus myths. For Coyote it is the means to achieve a shamanistic feat of even greater note, and to do this, as always, he must fail. The process and consequences of this failure are well-illustrated in "Coyote and the Shadow People," a summary of which follows (I am paraphrasing Archie Finney's translation [282-285]):

> Coyote's wife dies of an illness and he weeps for her. He is visited by the death spirit who offers to take him to the land of the dead if Coyote will follow his instructions. Coyote agrees. On their journey the spirit points out a herd of horses. Coyote cannot see the horses but he pretends that they are there. Neither can Coyote see the death spirit. He appears to be a shadow. When Coyote and the death spirit arrive at the land of the dead the spirit invites Coyote to eat some berries. Coyote cannot see them but pretends to eat them nevertheless. The spirit leads Coyote to a lodge and tells him to enter through the doorway and sit down beside his wife and eat the food that she has prepared for him. Coyote cannot see the lodge, the food, or his wife, but he obeys the spirit. When night falls Coyote sees the lodge that he could not see during the day, and in it are fires, and people he knew when they were living and, of course, his wife. With the dawn, everything and everyone disappears, only to return on the following evening. It is like this for several days and nights. Eventually the death spirit tells Coyote that he must leave. The spirit allows Coyote to take his wife with him but warns that he must not touch her until they have crossed the fifth mountain of the five mountains that lie between the lands of the living and the dead. Coyote agrees. Coyote and his wife begin their journey. At night they sit with a fire between them and Coyote notices that with every night his wife's form becomes clearer. On the last night of the journey Coyote can wait no longer and reaches across the fire to embrace his wife. She disappears the moment he touches her. The death spirit returns and tells Coyote that because of his foolishness the practice of returning from the dead will never be and that the dead must remain forever separate from the living. The spirit leaves. Coyote tries to return to the land of the dead, repeating everything he was instructed to do on the first journey: he pretends to see a herd of horses, to eat berries, to enter a lodge, to acknowledge his wife, and to eat the food she has prepared for him. When evening comes the lodge, the fires, the people, and Coyote's wife do not appear, and they and the death spirit never appear to Coyote again.

The dominant feature in the action of "Coyote and the Shadow People" would seem to be the crossing of boundaries or, more specifically, the transformation of boundaries into thresholds. Coyote is given the opportunity to create a threshold out of the boundary that

separates the living from the dead. He is assisted by the death spirit, who is the analog of the spirit guide described by Ake Hultkrantz as accompanying the shaman on his trance-journey into the land of the dead. Strict attention to the direction of the death spirit is necessary if the transformation is to succeed, and at first Coyote exhibits uncharacteristic wisdom and responsibility in doing what is required. He confronts a series of lesser boundaries, many of which must be transformed and crossed before the boundary to the land of the dead can be bridged. These secondary boundaries—sub-liminalities, as it were—constitute an imagery that is the literary reflection of the greater mythic boundary between death and life. The doorway to the lodge, the walkway that runs down the center of the lodge and the fires that stand on its edges, the fire that separates Coyote from his wife on their homeward journey, the mountains that separate the lands of the living and the dead, and the dawn and dusk that bound Coyote's perception of the land of the dead are all specific images that partake in a complex mythic and literary interplay that substantiates and defines this boundary.

The culture number of the Nez Perce is five. It signifies completion and is applied to groups of actions, objects, or beings that are working toward or have attained wholeness. Coyote must work his shamanism on five secondary boundaries before he is allowed to make contact with the dead. They are boundaries of perception, and to effect their transformation Coyote must assume the distinctly liminal rationale of perceiving the imperceptible. The herd of horses, the berries offered to him by the death spirit, the doorway to the lodge, the presence of his wife, and the food that she has prepared for him are successive points of crossing that must be negotiated in accordance with the ritual prescriptions of the death spirit, and Coyote performs admirably. Each in its turn is transformed into a threshold when he acknowledges its existence by executing the required pantomimic response. On completion of the fifth transformation, the boundary to the land of the dead is itself transformed and Coyote is allowed to enter, but only at sunset—the threshold that links day to night—and he must leave every morning by way of the threshold of the dawn.

Coyote's manipulation of liminal phenomena to establish a point of entry into the land of the dead is textbook shamanism. A major boundary is bridged by ritually transforming its component boundaries into thresholds, and it is the traditional shamanistic technique of subordinating the will to the direction of a spirit guide that makes this possible. A different kind of shamanism comes into play, however, when Coyote attempts to restore his wife to the land of the living. The boundaries encountered on the return journey are physical rather than perceptual, and if they are to be transformed Coyote must refrain from

touching his wife until they are successfully negotiated. Again, the Nez Perce number of completion is involved: five mountains must be crossed to realize fully the threshold that will allow the dead to return to life. However, Coyote at last behaves true to character and violates the ritual of passage by reaching for his wife on the night before the final mountain is crossed. She disappears and cannot complete the crossing. The fifth boundary is not transformed, and the threshold that will bridge the living to the dead cannot be created. Coyote's wife must remain forever in the land of the dead and he must go home alone. It is at this point that the caprices of the liminal are unleashed and the coyote trickster, in the process of his failure, is himself transformed, from the failed shaman into the mythic shaman, and an awesome precedent is established:

> When the death-spirit learned of Coyote's folly he became deeply angry. "You inveterate doer of this kind of thing! I told you not to do anything foolish. You, Coyote were about to establish the practice of returning from death. Only a short time away the human race is coming, but you have spoiled every thing and established for them death as it is." (Phinney 285)

The Nez Perce coyote remains ignorant of the mythic potential of what he attempts, and his motives, however poignant their origin, are as selfish as those of the coyote of the Wishram.[4] Uncontrollable lust and a self-destructive inattention to procedure are at Trickster's very core, and it is only a matter of time before Coyote invokes the terrible, unpredictable power of the liminal by reverting to his own liminal nature. Curiously, it is fire—certainly the most potent image in "Coyote and the Shadow People"—that elicits this reversion. In true liminal fashion, fire behaves simultaneously as boundary *and* threshold. Implicitly, it casts the shadows that allow Coyote to perceive the forms of the dead:

> He saw that he was in a very, very large lodge and there were many fires burning. He saw the various people. They seemed to have shadow-like forms. . . . (Phinney 284)

Fire also outlines the boundaries that separate Coyote from those in the lodge who have died:

> He would march down the aisles between the fires, going here and there, and talk with the people. (284)

Fire is the barrier that stands between Coyote and his wife on their journey to the land of the living. Ironically, it is by the light of the fire that Coyote is able to see his wife slowly materialize. His lust and

impatience are aroused and he breaks the boundary of the fire before the ritual of crossing is completed. A new, more powerful boundary comes between the living and the dead—and it can never be crossed.

Fire is the final and most powerful of the boundaries, and all minor transformations must be completed before it can be crossed. As Coyote's wife materializes, fire defines and illuminates her transformation, but with strange purpose, for its light excites the coyote trickster's renowned lust, urging him on to a tragic and unwitting act of mythic creation. Throughout most of the story, boundaries, spirit guide, and shaman interact in unexpected harmony, but when the final transformation is at hand Coyote is confronted by a boundary that his trickster nature forces him to violate. The duality of this boundary—for fire not only separates the living from the dead, it joins them through the perceptual medium of shadow—suggests a complexity that places it in a category beyond the imagery thus far encountered. In effect, fire is a symbolic construction of the full range of boundary/thresholds that participate in the tale of "Coyote and the Shadow People," and as such is a metaphor of the great limen that marks the juncture of life and death. Fire's nature is at once destructive and nurturing, fluid and impassable. Similarly, the transition from life to death is sorrowful but necessary, for it prevents overcrowding in the world of the People, and the passage leads only one way. This is "death as it is." Fire is its architect, strengthening the impassability of the limen that it represents by deliberately manipulating the shamanism of the coyote trickster. Behind everything lies the motive force and indiscernible purpose of liminality, bewildering in its complexity, consistent in its inconsistency.

Liminality itself is given a metaphor in another Nez Perce tale, the "Two Coyotes," which follows in full text:

> Two Coyotes were going upriver and came to a big bench. From there they saw people living below, near the river. Then the two friends said to each other, "you go ahead." Then one says "No. You go," and the other said "No." And they argued and protested for a long time. Then one said, "You go first they will see you any moment and say 'there is a coyote.'" They were going on the trail. [The other said] "I am not a coyote." [The first said,] "But you are just the way I am. We are the same in every way. We are both coyotes." [The other said,] "No, I am just 'another one.'" In this way they argued.
>
> Then the second one said to the first, "You go first." There was a ridge on which people could see everything from below. When he [the first] started walking, went on, and went over a small ridge, the people below said,

> "There is a coyote going upstream." Then they [people] came out and watched the coyote going. "See?" he said. "See what they said? You are a coyote." "Come! You too." he said. "They will say the same of you. You are a coyote." "All right. I will go" [said the other], and he also slowly started walking on the trail from there. Then [people said], "Ah, another one again. There is another one." Then he came to the first, saying, "See? I am not a coyote. I am 'another one.' See, the people said that I am 'another one.'" That's all. (Aoki 17-19)

This short, deceptively simple story is dominated by motion, its trickster protagonists traveling from and to nowhere in particular along the edge of a river. Dell Hymes suggests that "Traveling on is indeed a fundamental premise of the Coyote cycle" (100), and examines the Hiram Smith coyote tale for evidence that Coyote may have been travelling "east in the direction along the Columbia River Gorge" (113). Trickster is a creature on the move, and his movement is often associated with rivers and roadways, which mythically can be defined as boundaries. A river divides the land, sometimes offering thresholds in the form of fords but often, if violent and fast-flowing, offering no point of crossing. However, Trickster does not relate to the river either as a boundary or a threshold. He symbolically travels within its flow, following its banks—and he travels upstream in both the Smith tale and "Two Coyotes." Barriers and points of crossing are irrelevant, for he is part of the river, just as he is a creature of the liminal, and he has no more control over the river's flow than he does over the power and purpose of liminality.[5]

The river in "Two Coyotes" works as a metaphor for liminality. The symbolic connection between water and the peculiarly liminal workings of the subconscious mind is well-established. The behavior of eddies and undercurrents in a river is strikingly similar to the complex interplay of boundaries and thresholds in a liminal situation, and the sculpting of a physical landscape by the power and flow of water in motion is a strong analog to the transformation of a mythic landscape by the phenomena of liminality. Trickster's shamanism is one of these phenomena, and it is ultimately out of his control, for although he may appear to travel the river's banks under his own power, it carries him where it will—even when he appears to be opposing its current.

Franchot Ballinger stresses the significance of the "socially didactic and corrective roles" of the Native American trickster, and warns against the imposition of metaphors that add "unnecessary layers of paradox to an already paradoxical figure" (15-17). The postmodernist approach of Gerald Vizenor suggests a greater attention to the lively

chaos of "narrative discourse" in trickster tales than to structure and the "limited language game" of the social sciences (277-87). Any analysis of Native American oral literatures that relies on Euro-American metaphorical systems can only be viewed as incomplete and, occasionally, inappropriate. Yet Trickster is a character of many facets who invites multiple, often disparate, interpretations, if only to throw them—chewed, mangled, and exposed—back in our faces. The metaphor of the river in "Two Coyotes" may tempt such "trickster discourse," but it does serve to articulate the landscape symbolically in which and through which Trickster conjures, postures, and entertains. It sings his boundaries, and in this way, perhaps, defines him.

C. G. Jung writes that "The unity of the psyche's nature lies in the middle, just as the living unity of the waterfall appears in the dynamic connection of the above and below" (209). The Winnebago trickster Wadjunkaga ultimately rules on a level of the otherworld that stands between the Earthmaker and the world of the People (Radin 53), and Coyote will ever travel within the confines and flow of the river. The Native American Trickster is a figure of threshold and unity. He practices a strange shamanism which, for all its twists and turns, effectively draws the above to the below. Simultaneously and unintentionally, he creates a harmony between worlds and provides entertaining instruction on how to maintain that harmony.

And on a ridge that runs along the river stand the People, watching and commenting.

NOTES

[1]Franchot Ballinger finds discrepancies in Babcock-Abrahams' comparison of marginal and liminal (interstitial) states: "Sometimes the metaphors are used together with little regard for their contradictory implications. . . . Marginality means literally at the limit or edge, not outside of boundaries. And that which is interstitial is neither marginal or outside" (16-17). Ballinger's strict delineations may not be applicable here. What is in between is, to a large degree, both outside and on the edge. In any case, overlapping definition and skewed geometry would seem to be very much at home in a region characterized by "a confusion of all customary categories." This paper will use the terms interchangeably.

[2]Joseph Campbell describes Trickster as a "super-shaman. . . . The chief mythological character of the paleolithic world of story . . . an epitome of the principle of disorder, he is nevertheless the culture bringer also" (273-75).

[3]Trickster's unique approach to creation is sometimes tempered by what Jarold Ramsey calls "a sense of 'mythic fitness,'" recognizing " what 'the

people who are to come soon' (the real Indians) will need in the finished world." However, "their actions and careers are still inextricably bound up in their careers as tricksters." He cites the example of the North Coast Raven, who "brings sunlight to the world because he thought it would be hard for him to obtain his food if it were always dark" (40-41).

[4]In contrast, the coyote trickster Ma'ii (First Angry) displays Ramsey's mythic fitness in establishing the reality of death for the Navajo. Tossing a stone into water, he declares "if it floats, we will all live forever. But if it sinks, everybody will die sooner or later." The stone sinks, and Ma'ii reasons that if human beings were to live forever, the world would become too overcrowded to accommodate succeeding generations of the People. "When the people heard what Ma'ii the Coyote had to say, they recognized the wisdom of his words" (Zolbrod 82-83).

[5]The spoof transformation performed by the second of the two coyotes exemplifies the satirical function of Trickster's false shaman persona. The coyote's perversion of the shape shifter's prerogative, while providing a good story with a great punch line, suggests a shaman who does not take his role and privileges seriously.

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Communion in James Welch's Winter in the Blood

Betty Tardieu

Traditional American history portrays Native Americans as savages, as simple-minded, barbaric people who needed to be transferred to remote areas for the United States' progress.[1] These peoples' displacement affected them spiritually as well as physically because they considered the land they had to leave sacred, as the center of the universe and the origin of their being. James Welch's *Winter in the Blood* explores the estrangement that still haunts Native Americans today.

American authors writing about a male protagonist's alienation abound in American literature, from Saul Bellow to John Updike to Walker Percy. However, estrangement in ethnic literature has an added twist: instead of just feeling a psychological distance from society, these people find their isolation a literal fact, drifting between dominant United States' mores and the differing customs of their cultural heritages.[2] And Native Americans experience still another twist in this complex puzzle: they did not choose to come to the United States; they were here all along. They did not choose to become a part of the dominant white society (and increasingly resist it), but those in power tried to force it on them. In addition, Native American ideologies often differ radically from Western, Christian thought: many Native Americans believe that the spirit pervades all of life, the physical realm being merely one manifestation of the spirit (Allen, *Hoop* 60), while Christians separate the material from the spiritual. This basic difference means that Native Americans not only diverge from mainstream whites in ostensible ways such as dress and language, but also in their deepest understandings of life. Native American authors of well-known works write about this extreme estrangement, such as Leslie Silko in *Ceremony* and N. Scott Momaday in *House*

Made of Dawn; Welch continues the tradition.

His novel is the story of a young Native American man whose sense of displacement is complex; he feels shut off from his past, his family, his environment, himself. As he begins his story, the narrator admits that going home is "torture" for him, that he encounters there "a mother and an old lady that was my grandmother. And the girl who was thought to be my wife" (2). He does not say "*my* mother," but an objective "*a* mother," and his grandmother is "*an* old lady." He describes his wife in a passive verb tense as if he is reporting a condition in his life with which he has no real involvement.

He does not know why he feels so alienated and goes on to hypothesize, "It could have been the country, the burnt prairie beneath a blazing sun, the pale green of the Milk River valley, the milky waters of the river, the sagebrush and cottonwoods, the dry cracked gumbo flats" (2). His Native American heritage of sensitivity to and connection with the natural world peeps through in his language here: he knows the names of all the plants and trees around him, the water's color, the tender hue of the valley. But he is unaware of his connection; instead, what he views seems a wasteland, as the adjectives he uses to qualify his experience of the landscape show: "burnt," "blazing," "pale," "dry, cracked."

He goes on to summarize, "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" (2). He cannot pinpoint his "distance," knowing only that he feels estranged. Welch chooses to write his novel in the first person, which emphasizes the narrator's focus on his inner-self. In fact, the entire story centers on the protagonist's movement from isolation to integration.

From the start, the book focuses on the psychological or spiritual impact of physical sensations. This emphasis is contiguous with Native American views of life, which see no separation between body and spirit. The state of existence is whole; God is not "out there" in heaven, but infusing every atom of the world (Allen, *Studies* 8).

As stated previously, in contrast, the dominant, Christian American culture separates body and spirit and, in so doing, makes the body a dirty, abhorrent thing, and the world of the spirit and mind the desirable, but always slightly unobtainable goal, unobtainable because the body always threatens to taint the intellect. Many of our "founding fathers" laid the cornerstones for this orientation. Thomas Paine is a good example. He warned in *Common Sense* that because people in the new republic would no longer have a king to control their passions and desires for luxuries for the body, which are damning things, they must learn to restrain themselves, not to give in to their bodies, but to use their virtue to focus on their minds (Takaki 8). These influential

people felt that one of the main reasons Native Americans were so savage was that they did "give in to their bodies." Benjamin Rush, an eighteenth-century theoretician, wrote a treatise saying that Native Americans had "weak venereal desires," being promiscuous, and that they were "unclean," that "'nastiness' was yet another vice among them, exemplified in their 'food'—drinks—persons—above all, in their total disregard for decency in the *time—place—*and *manner* of their natural evacuations" (Takaki 28). In other words, they did not think their bodies were bad.

Such attitudes illustrate the superior stance those in power have traditionally taken, a stance so, in fact, superior that it precludes any empathy with differing views. Those who explore Native Americans with less prejudiced eyes (especially Native American themselves) point to their many positive traditions, some of which parallel the Christian. For instance, Allan Wolf Leg, a deputy for the Northern Blackfeet (the narrator's heritage in *Winter in the Blood*), made the following statement in 1979:

> In the Indian religion there is God, the Indian people, and Nature in between. We do not have Jesus Christ, yet on the other hand he existed among those people who made up Christianity. The same God, the same human beings, though of a different race, but this has Christ, that has Nature. (Hultkrantz 126)

Welch seems acutely aware of the dominant culture's ignorance of the true spirit of Native American ways, and he plays with his white readers by layering his references to body functions with irony. One of the most salient instances occurs when First Raise, the narrator's father, takes his son to visit Yellow Calf. The narrator's main memory of their visit is his father "peeing what he said was my name in the snow" (161). A member of the dominant American Christian culture can easily view this scene as blasphemous and somehow dirty. But that is where the irony comes in. The incident is only obscene when read from the Christian perspective. From the Native American stance, it is as close as the reader comes to knowing the narrator's name. The protagonist's namelessness is one way Welch shows his displacement because names carry much significance in Native American cultures. N. Scott Momaday in his autobiography aptly titled *The Names* says, "A man's life proceeds from his name, in the way a river proceeds from its source," going on to explain that his name gives him an identity as only one point in the names of all the generations before him (Brown 89). The fact that the young character's memory of his first visit with Yellow Calf, the grandfather who eventually unites him with his past and thus grants him an identity, consists of his father urinating

his name in the snow reveals that, even then, the narrator had a dormant awareness of the importance of his ancestry. In addition, in some Native American traditions personal names are sacred for the individual (Brown 53), as all of nature is (including urination), giving the narrator's memory a divine rather than a blasphemous significance.

Thus, the narrator of *Winter in the Blood* finds himself caught; he has a Native American legacy that exalts the physical as a manifestation of the spirit, while he finds himself immersed in the dominant white culture that demands that he accept its tenet that the body is bad before he can be "virtuous" and a successful member of society. He is trapped, lost, distanced.

At first, he hears his centenarian grandmother speak of her nomadic life with a tribe before the whites came, while his mother, Teresa, and her husband, Lame Bull, run a farm as whites do, trying to get enough money to follow the American dream. On a level deep within him, the narrator realizes both the frustration inherent in a Native American's pursuit of the completely materialistic American dream, making him reluctant to follow his parents' path, and also his estrangement from his Native American heritage, one that the dominant white Christian ideology overshadows. His trap seems shut tight. A Native American has no true place in white American society. But the two cultures do touch in the value they place on the ritual of communion, and it is this commonality that Welch uses to bring his narrator to self-integration.

Communion is a Christian ritual of paramount importance. Participants drink wine, which symbolizes Christ's blood, and eat bread, which symbolizes His body, in a ceremony that unites them not only with Him, but with God and the Holy Spirit. Ironically, this exalted ritual *does* unite the body and the spirit (even though Christians disdain such a union in everyday life). Also, people usually consider Christianity a linear faith, one in which a person is born, lives, dies, and goes to heaven or hell (in comparison to more cyclical faiths, such as those of some Native Americans, which hold that death follows life, and from death comes new life in a never-ending cycle). However, Christian communion breaks the linear mold. Believers transcend time as they re-enact a ceremony first performed centuries before and unite with the Trinity, which is everlasting. In fact, some scholars, such as Jessie Weston, believe that Christ's sacrifice, which communion represents, stems from ancient fertility cults that centered on the cyclical nature of the seasons, cults not too far-removed from Native American beliefs.

It is fitting, since Native Americans experience the Spirit in all of life, that they do not have one isolated ritual, but that communion is a part of their day-to-day activities. Some rituals for communion do

attain a certain status, such as the passing of the pipe,[3] but many center around daily tasks, such as grinding corn in a certain way so that the spirit of the corn is not damaged or offended.

Probably because white Christian culture looms large over Native American, Welch uses images from the Christian communion ceremony to underscore the narrator's internal development. However, because this ritual does share traits with Native American spirituality, Christian communion highlights rather than obscures Native tenets. Communion references progress in meaning from an ironic inversion in the beginning to true unity and integration in the end, reflecting the inner state of the protagonist.

As previously noted, the narrator senses that he should feel united with his family, nature, and himself, but he does not. A Native American spirit that infuses and connects all of life evades him. Similarly, the drinking and eating that take place contain rudimentary traces of the spirit in communion, but debauchery, especially with drinking, overshadows any inherent profundity. The Native American characters push white perceptions of them to the limit by focusing on their bodies so much that they obscure their spirits. For instance, Ferdinand Horn and his wife visit Teresa and Lame Bull. It is a time for sharing, and, appropriately, they drink wine around a table, just as Christ and His disciples did at the Last Supper. However, rather than being an expression of unity, their experience with the wine highlights their alienation from each other and themselves. Conversation is disjointed. The group follows two trains of thought, one about the narrator's missing wife, whom Ferdinand Horn's wife has seen in a nearby town with another man, and one about Long Knife, a hired hand who quit working in the middle of a job. The following conversation shows their lack of cohesion:

> "Maybe I ought to go get her." I glanced at Teresa.
> "Oh, she can take care of herself. At least that white man thinks so. . . ." She [Horn's wife] also glanced at Teresa.
> "Hell, Long Knife ain't such a bad guy," continued Lame Bull.
> "The one she was riding with. They had her brother in the backseat but that didn't seem to bother them any." She took a sip of wine. (31)

Rather than addressing each other, the narrator and Horn's wife are really talking to Teresa, as their glances show, who remains silent. Lame Bull is oblivious to their comments, continuing his own thoughts about Long Knife. That Horn's wife takes a sip of wine at the end of this exchange underscores the irony in this mock communion.

And instead of being united with nature in any Native American tradition, the narrator notes that the natural world merely mirrors their communion gone askew, as the passage concluding the Horns' visit shows:

> The fly had reached the other side of the puddle of wine. First he cleaned his head with his front legs, then his wings with his back legs. He rubbed his legs together and fell over. A steady buzzing filled the room as the fly vibrated on his back. . . . Lame Bull poured Ferdinand Horn's wife another drink. She shrieked as the wine overflowed the glass and stained the butterflies on her wrinkled print dress. . . . Lame Bull let out a great laugh and fell over backwards in his chair. (32)

The fly falling on its back parallels Lame Bull's tumble, and the wine, instead of enhancing, stains butterflies that are not even real, but part of a wrinkled dress. This communion perverts rather than enhances the natural world.

The narrator continues his disillusioned search for meaning and finds some hope as he visits Yellow Calf, a blind Native American man almost one hundred years old who lives in a shack in the countryside. During one visit, the narrator brings a bottle of wine, and he has a true communion with Yellow Calf: he shares conversation with him, he feels nature, and he connects with his past. The cohesion of the following conversation, in which Yellow Calf tells the narrator about his grandmother's youth, contrasts with the previously quoted one:

> "She was the youngest wife of Standing Bear." I was reaching for the bottle of wine. My hand stopped.
> "He was a chief, a wise man—not like these conniving devils who run the agency today."
> "How could you know Standing Bear? He was Blackfeet."
> "We came from the mountains," he said. (152)

Rather than being the focus, the bottle of wine accentuates the sharing between the two. The conversation so engrosses the narrator that he quits reaching for a drink to continue talking.

Later, Yellow Calf talks about the cycles of time, and the narrator thinks how the man has lived two lifetimes, one when he could see, when he followed "the calendar, the years, time" (158) and one when he has been blind, possessing a distance about him, not as the narrator at the beginning, but as one who is in touch with the unseen spirit pervading all. At this transcendent moment, the narrator has an epiphany as "Bird [his horse] farts" (158). He realizes that instead of the halfbreed he had thought was his grandfather, Yellow Calf is.

It is significant that he becomes aware that he has no white blood because now he can immerse himself totally in his Native American heritage that white society's influence has previously overshadowed. Because his insight comes on the "one moment of gusting wind" (158) of Bird's gas, the vision unites the body with the spirit in a way that would make the white world deem it blasphemous, but that heralds a Native American's belief that body and soul are both part of the spirit. Also, just as the Christian communion transcends time, Yellow Calf and the narrator unite with each other both in the present and the past:

> And so we shared this secret in the presence of ghosts, in wind that called forth the muttering tepees, the blowing snow, the white air of the horses' nostrils. The cottonwoods behind us, their dead white branches angling to the threatening clouds, sheltered these ghosts as they had sheltered the camp that winter. (159)

Not only do the two join with the past, but with nature. Now, instead of describing nature with harsh, cacophonous words, the narrator uses a graceful, poetic language that describes how it shelters humans. Humans, nature, past, present—all are one, in the true Native American tradition of spiritual unity (Brown 120). It is appropriate, too, that it is winter and the cottonwoods have "dead white branches," because the existence of death when the narrator has an epiphany about life emphasizes the cyclical nature of his experience.

After his epiphany with Yellow Calf, the protagonist goes home to find a cow stuck in the mud. His rescue of the animal shows not only the protagonist's ability to live from his new awareness of connection with his heritage, but also the author's skill in interbraiding Native American and Christian traditions. It is a scene that deserves careful scrutiny, one mixing baptism, communion, sacrifice, birth, and death and one that ends up being more Native American than Christian.

First, the Christian hierarchal stance shines through in the very fact that Native Americans are raising cows, corralling animals and dictating their lives. In fact, one of the main ways whites tried to make Blackfeet mirror their culture was by teaching them to raise cattle (Thernstrom 94). Also, the family has trained the horse, Old Bird, to do what they want him to do (herd cattle) instead of allowing him to remain true to his inherent nature. The epitome of Native Americans trying to operate totally as whites would occurs in the previous scene, a flashback to the time when the narrator and his brother, Mose, drive the cattle too hard, escalating their schedule and completely losing track of the innate rhythm of the natural world. They fall into the white dominant society's belief that it is good to drive hard and do things fast. The result of this life-out-of-balance is the death of Mose (whose

name, a Biblical reference of incomplete spelling, echoes that religion is somehow askew). In the present scene, the narrator unites with the world around him, both physically and spiritually, when he saves the cow's life in a reversal of the incident with his brother.

Because of his identification with the cow, the narrator is also symbolically saving himself. Welch makes clear the protagonist's identification with the animal. At first he falls back on the white perception of animals, saying that he wants to let the cow "drown in her own stupidity" (166), just as he takes the white stance toward Native Americans when he struggles to pull her out of the mud, exclaiming, "Can't trust any of these damn idiots, damn Indians" (169). The narrator's following account reveals the extent of his identification: "As she stared at me, I saw beyond the immediate panic that hatred, that crazy hatred that made me aware of a quick hatred in my own heart" (166).

But when viewed from a Native American perspective, again, his negative, blasphemous association with the animal changes into a connection with the divine. The narrator confronts all of the negative images whites assign to Native Americans and moves beyond them, even as they reverberate in his head, to act out of the affinity he feels with the cow. In nomadic tribes such as the traditional Blackfeet, people stress the essence, which is the same, between humans and animals. Often, people and animals are interchangeable (Brown 125). The cow is stuck, just as the narrator has been stuck throughout most of the novel, and the protagonist struggles to free her just as he has battled to free himself.

In fact, his liberation of the cow is a baptism or rebirth of sorts. The Judeo-Christian creation myth reverberates as the cow and the narrator are freed from the mud. Just as "a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground—then Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Genesis 2:6-7), so the cow and the narrator emerge from the mud to life. The rain and the wet mud echo a baptism motif, as water covers both of them. However, unlike the Genesis account, in which God creates man, then woman, then animals in a hierarchal manner, here the cow and the man are reborn together from Nature herself, their oneness again emphasized in the Native American tradition.

In many ways, the narrator's experience with the "wildeyed" cow parallels Native American rituals that are symbolic representations of death and rebirth, also. Paula Gunn Allen (*Hoop* 91) and Kenneth Lincoln (153) suggest that Welch's narrator goes on a traditional vision--quest, a practice of the Plains Indians (of which the Blackfeet and Gros Ventres are a part) in which a young man ventures out and wanders,

and through prayer, fasting, and mutilation finds himself. Their observations are valid.

Particularly in connection with this scene, the narrator's experience also shows parallels with the Blackfeet Sun Dance. This ritual is an elaborate ceremony that re-enacts the creation of the earth and thus echoes the previous reference to Genesis. It is held at the New Year, symbolizing new birth. Near the end of the ceremony, young men customarily undergo self-mutilation in a sacrifice to the sun (or life), during which time they call on the spiritual powers for pity as they approach death, sacrificing some of their flesh and blood, in order to be transformed into a new being (Hultkrantz 238-39). When the narrator gets stuck in the mud, he sacrifices his knee in the process and notices that "my whole leg was dead" (168). From this sacrificial "death" of part of his body, his new life emerges, and as he frees himself from the mud, he notices, "My arms began to tingle as they tried to wake up. I moved my fingers. They moved. My neck ached but the strength was returning. I crouched and spent the next few minutes planning my *new life*" (169, my italics).

Another sacrifice is Old Bird's death. In this passage, not one death and birth occurs, as in the linear, Christian way, but a series of births and deaths interwoven in a cyclical configuration. Bird dies so that life can continue. When viewed in a Native American matrix, his death can also underscore the "death" of the narrator. The Blackfeet consider the horse to have supernatural power (Hultkrantz 124), giving Bird's sacrifice divine dimensions. In addition, it was customary Blackfeet practice to kill a man's favorite horse when the man died (Ewers 107), thus making Bird even more of an emphasis for the narrator's symbolic death. In this scene Welch weaves Christian and Native American elements in such a way that he adds to the skeleton of Judeo-Christian concepts by the flesh and full life of Native American beliefs.

As the story ends, the narrator goes to his grandmother's funeral, a final embodiment of the new awareness of communion emerging within him. There, he notices Teresa and Lame Bull and thinks about his missing wife; he is back in the present. However, there are hints that he now feels the distance, not of complete isolation, but of Yellow Calf, of the spirit that pervades all. He looks "off toward the slough, fingering the tobacco pouch" (175) that he will throw into his grandmother's grave, tobacco a symbol of communion with his grandmother (who smoked tobacco mixed with chokeberries) and with his ancestors.

The burial itself resembles a Christian ceremony. However, just as the initial drinking scenes resemble mock communion, here, the burial seems a false one. But there is a difference: the narrator has completed a cycle. In the beginning, everything seems stagnant, devoid

of meaning. Then, Christian and Native American elements of communion intertwine. Finally, traces of Christian ceremony exist, but they are outweighed by Native American profundities. The Christian traces in the burial scene are humorous. The priest from Harlem cannot make the funeral, so the ceremony is left up to the family, Lame Bull taking primary responsibility. The hole in the ground is not quite big enough for the coffin, so Lame Bull hops in the grave (in a mock-Hamlet gesture itself) and jumps on the coffin so that the high end becomes low enough "to look respectable" (174). Then, he begins a stumbling, meaningless eulogy. His attempts at the Christian ceremony are truly lame. However, Native American underpinnings, especially in reference to tobacco and the grandmother, elevate the experience to one with meaning (at least for the narrator). It could be that Welch is deliberately showing the outward machinations of white, dominant United States' culture Native Americans engage in—which are meaningless for them and which gain significance only through Native American undercurrents.

Grandmothers in almost all Native American cultures carry a special significance. They are the ones who pass on the stories from past generations to the young, and, indeed, are the central characters in both the spiritual and daily lives of the community (Green 310). The narrator himself admits near the beginning of the book, "This woman who was Teresa's mother had told me many things, many stories from her early life" (34). However, by the time the narrator tells his story, she can no longer recite tales. Finishing the tales becomes the responsibility of the grandfather, Yellow Calf.

It is appropriate that these two complete the tales from the past and thus take the narrator back to his beginning because Blackfeet consider the Old Man and the Old Woman creators of their universe (Lincoln 150-51). In the beginning of the book, the protagonist refers to his grandmother as "old lady" (2) and "old woman" (11) and to Yellow Calf later on as "old man" (151). The terms turn out to be not as derogatory, when read from the Native American perspective, as a white reader might think. Not surprisingly, Old Man and Old Woman are counterfools, contradicting and eventually balancing each other in marriage, much as the Christian and Native American elements of the novel combine.

That the narrator throws his grandmother's tobacco pouch into the grave is significant since Native Americans view tobacco, its growing and its use, as extremely sacred (Ewers 169-70). The protagonist "plants" the pouch in the ground in a gesture that hints at the cyclical nature of life. Also, the smoking of the sacred pipe shares perhaps the most similarity with Christian communion of any Native American practice. The Plains Indians considered that the pipe represented the

human being in totality, including links with the entire universe. Often, when they were concluding the ritual of smoking, participants repeated, "We are all related" (Brown 17). Of all his grandmother's possessions, the narrator chooses to bring her tobacco pouch, realizing its significance and his connection with what it represents. He has not yet smoked the pipe and participated in total unity, but he does now have the knowledge of its ultimate importance because he has tapped his Native American roots.

Near the end of the novel, the narrator no longer describes the landscape as "burnt, blazing, pale, dry, cracked" (2) but uses adjectives reflecting his new positive attitude and his affinity with the land. In the rain, lightning flashes in the corner of his eye, as though it were "mirrored countless" times in the "countless" raindrops on his face. The lightning is a part of him and the raindrops, and the adjective "countless" connotes all are united with infinity. The magpie's call is "almost conversational," and the calf's sound is "soft." He feels "pleasant" and "distant in a clean rain" (172). The word "distant" again echoes the spiritual awareness of Yellow Calf, while "clean" is the state of a person after communion. In *Winter in the Blood* Welch offers no neat, exact explanation of the interplay of Christian and Native American expressions of communion, but he intertwines the two in a pattern that parallels the state of the narrator's psyche, a pattern that allows the protagonist, in the end, to experience an affinity with Native American beliefs that jars him out of his stuck, stagnant existence into an awareness tinged with meaning and hope.

NOTES

[1]An example of this traditional approach to history is George Bancroft's *History of the United States of America* (New York: Appleton, 1882), in which the notion of manifest destiny resounds. For a stance that acknowledges the atrocities committed by the United States' government against Native Americans, see Ronald Takaki's *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in l9th Century America* (New York: Oxford U P, 1979).

[2]See Abraham Cahan's *Yekl* (New York: Dover, 1970) and Jerre Mangione's *Mount Allegro* (New York: Harper, 1942) as examples of white ethnic estrangement.

[3]For connections between communion and Native American rituals, see Joseph Epes Brown's *The Sacred Pipe* (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1953). Brown does not compare the two religious traditions, but his portrayal of the pipe ritual contains many of the same elements (uniting all as one, uniting body and spirit) as communion.

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FORUM

ASAIL President's Report on the 1993 MLA Conference in Toronto

Hertha D. Wong

1993 was a good year for the Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures (ASAIL). Particularly significant is the closer collaboration between ASAIL and the new American Indian Literatures Division (chaired this year by Susan Scarberry-García). Our first joint business meeting was a success; and those present agreed to continue the practice. Not only does it make coordinating plans for MLA sessions easier, it saves time for the dutiful persons who would have attended two business meetings as well as freeing hotel space and time slots for other MLA participants. Thanks to all of you who not only sat through but also participated in that long and productive meeting.

Between those sponsored by ASAIL and the Division, five MLA sessions were devoted exclusively to Native American Literatures. Every session (and I was able to attend all but the last one) was filled to capacity, with at least 300 people attending in total. ASAIL sponsored two sessions: "Intellectual Property Rights in Native North America: Whose Story is This Anyway?" chaired by David L. Moore and "Film and Theater in Native North America" chaired by James Ruppert. The Division sponsored three sessions: "Linda Hogan: Calling Herself Home" chaired by Betty Louise Bell; "Crossing the Medicine Lines: Native North American Migration Stories and Songs of Place" chaired by Susan Scarberry-García; and "Crossing the Genres: Tricksters, Tropes, and Transformations in Native North America" chaired by me. Several other exciting sessions and papers, sponsored by other MLA divisions and groups, focused on Native American Literatures as well.

Two special events were highlights of the 1993 MLA Conference. The fiction reading by Linda Hogan was a special event that was petitioned by the Division, underwritten by ASAIL, and worked on by members of both. Linda Hogan not only gave a spellbinding reading to an overflowing lecture hall, but attended (and participated in) sessions and social events throughout the conference. The late Wednesday evening screening of the film version of Tom King's novel, *Medicine River*, was a great success also. It was refreshing to have an enormous room full of conference participants laughing out loud with delight. Like Linda, Tom King participated in MLA sessions. Both Linda and Tom enlivened the conference immensely with their presences. I offer heartfelt thanks to both of them. Thanks also to Susan Scarberry-García and Betty Louise Bell for helping to arrange these events.

Our ASAIL reception (a euphemism for an MLA Cash Bar) this year was held in honor of A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff who, as everyone knows, has contributed many years of outstanding scholarship, inspired teaching and generous consultation to our field. It was heartwarming to see such an outpouring of gratitude and love. In a crowd of LaVonne's students and former students, colleagues and aspiring colleagues, old friends and new, many spoke of the ways LaVonne has touched their lives and work. On behalf of ASAIL and Professor Ruoff's many friends, Ken Roemer presented LaVonne with a star quilt made especially for her. Be forewarned, though, this was not a retirement party. Professor Ruoff was a respondent to the session on Tricksters, Tropes, and Transformations and has every intention of continuing her work.

The 1993 ASAIL/Division joint business meeting was well attended and productive. Here is a brief summary. Since Rodney Simard (*SAIL* Editor) was unable to attend MLA, Bob Nelson (Treasurer and Production Editor) and I presented the report on *SAIL*. Rodney and his enthusiastic staff continue to keep the journal running smoothly. Volume 5, numbers 1 through 3 of *SAIL* were published in 1993. ASAIL Members voted in favor of a proposal to develop an Editorial Board for *SAIL*, one way to help with the manuscript review process and to align the journal with the standard practices of other scholarly journals.

A Treasurer's report was submitted by Robert Nelson. Paid ASAIL members (subscriptions) have dropped from over 300 to 238, including institutional and overseas subscriptions. This, combined with substantially increased journal production costs, has resulted in financial strain, although we are "still solvent." Last year members at the business meeting voted that the Association dedicate $16 of every $25 membership dues toward journal production and distribution. At the

current rate, the cost of *SAIL* 1994 production is projected to take 100% of the dues. This year, however, members reaffirmed their commitment to spend only 64% of ASAIL annual income ($16 out of $25) for journal production. Just how that will be accomplished without sacrificing the quality and size of the journal is still to be determined.

Franchot Ballinger has completed his directory of Native American Studies Programs. It been published as a removable pamphlet in this issue of *SAIL*. Thanks to Franchot for his hard work on this project.

Jim Ruppert reported on the continuing epic adventures of ASAIL incorporation. Since incorporation requires a permanent address and since each state has different, non-transferable incorporation laws, it is not feasible for the ASAIL President (who changes every two years) to be the "statutory agent." As a result of our meeting, I have agreed to be the "statutory agent" and to apply for incorporation in the state of California (unless there are unforeseen financial costs). Incorporating in California seems like a good idea since there are many scholars of Native American Literatures in the state so if I needed to be relieved of duties, someone could take over easily (without having to reapply for incorporation in another state). Thanks to Jim for his many hours of research into this matter.

The ASAIL by-laws call for the President and the Treasurer to be elected to two-year terms in odd-numbered years and for the Vice-President and Secretary to be elected to two-year terms in even-numbered years. I am pleased to report the results of our 1993 ASAIL elections. Our new ASAIL President is Kathryn Shanley (Cornell University). She brings much experience and wisdom and grace to the job. Robert Nelson (University of Richmond) was re-elected to the position of Treasurer for a two-year term (you may remember, last year he was elected as an interim Treasurer for one year), a position in which he has done an outstanding job.

ASAIL has plans for another set of exciting sessions at the 1994 MLA in San Diego (finally, a warm location). Again, ASAIL is sponsoring two sessions: "Return to Native Languages" to be chaired by Fred H. White and "Teaching Native American Literatures" chaired by Kathryn Shanley. The American Indian Literatures Division is organizing three sessions: "Past, Present, Future(s): Literary Criticism and Native American Literature" to be chaired by Arnold Krupat; "Voices of Native California" chaired by Greg Sarris; and "Performance of Diane Glancy's *Halfact*," a session organized by Susan Scarberry-García. We encourage your participation. In addition, plans for special events are underway.

Although the MLA Conference is the central event of ASAIL business, it is not the only one. In 1993 ASAIL was represented at the

Women Writers Conference in San Antonio, Texas by Inés Hernandez Avila (ASAIL Secretary) who organized a session on Native American women writers and at the American Literature Association Conference held in Baltimore last June for which John Purdy (Editor of *ASAIL Notes*) organized numerous sessions.

Consider attending this year's annual conference of the American Literature Association (ALA) that will be held at the Bahia Resort Hotel in San Diego, June 2-5 (Thursday through Saturday), 1994. Jennifer Sergi (University of Rhode Island) is organizing several ASAIL sessions. All topics are being considered, but sessions of special interest include those on the American Indian and popular culture, Louise Owens, Gerald Vizenor, and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*. For submissions or more information, write or call Jennifer Sergi at 33 Nisbet St., Providence RI 02906, (401) 831-4315 as soon as possible.

ASAIL has accomplished a great deal in two years: we hired a new editor for *SAIL* and made a smooth transition to the new operation; we renewed ASAIL's MLA allied organization status (until 1999); we organized exciting MLA sessions and special events (implementing the now ongoing session on literatures in Native languages); we established collaboratively a close working relationship with the Division; and we elected more Native officers than ever before. This report is my final act as President of ASAIL. It has been my honor to serve. There is still much to do and I look forward to being a part of the exciting work ahead. Warm wishes for the New Year.

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REVIEWS

Native American Literatures. *Ed. Laura Coltelli. Native American Literatures, vol. 2. Pisa: Vicolo della Croce Rossa 5, 1992.*

Laura Coltelli's second volume of Native American essays and interviews furthers her goal of EuroAmerican "exchanges." Two tribal writers, three Europeans, and two American scholars make up the expertly edited collection, clean and concise, informed and insightful. The diversity of American Indian cultures and their contemporary resurgences, their complexities and transformations across millennia, are here matched by collaborative dialogues across the Western world, intercultural, trans-historical richness and depth. It's an appropriate dialogical document for Quincentennial 1992.

Paula Gunn Allen opens with a tender elegy for her Laguna mother's death. The reader senses the passing of an age of transitions, traditional to postmodernist, in the blues riffs and colloquialisms mixed with Victorian decorum that layer the poem: "(You're dying, mama oh my dear)" to the final line, "Who will I sing for now you're gone?" Coltelli's volume is anchored here among women (five of the seven contributors), feminist-sensitive, and still male-honoring. Gender is not a shard of contention, so much as cross-sexual reciprocity.

Helen Jaskoski begins the academic discussions multiply reading a traditional Hopi tale of witchery and heroic quest, "*Powaq-wuuti*," adapted as, "The Witch Lady Story," variously told in Hopi oral tradition, commented on by Emory Sekaquaptewa, and originally published in Mando Sevillano's *The Hopi Way: Tales from a Vanishing Culture* (1986). Jaskoski approaches the story as an open text inviting

responses, rather than a closed regulation—stretching parallels toward Greek tragedy and Hawthorne's fiction, particularly "Young Goodman Brown." She concludes, as Allen does in parts of *The Sacred Hoop*, with assertions that the Hopi story "supports simultaneous, mutually exclusive, yet fully substantiated readings." Who's to argue?

Louis Owens strikes a somewhat different tack in reading John Joseph Mathews's *Sundown* (1934) as a breed version of Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*. Owens sees this novel as the prose fictional prototype of hybrid Indian men between cultures, biculturally dislocated and confused, resorting desperately to drugged escapism, lost between white decimation and Indian displacement. Perhaps so. The essay seems thoughtful, articulate, challenging, and contextual for such later works as *House Made of Dawn*, *Ceremony*, *The Death of Jim Loney*, and the most recent novels by Linda Hogan, *Mean Spirit*, and Ray Young Bear, *Black Eagle Child*, and Owens himself, *Wolfsong* and *The Sharpest Sight*. Yes, definitely, a century-old tradition of the mixed-blood struggling to acculturate both sides of his heritage traces back as far as Mourning Dove's *Co-Ge-We-a*, *The Half-Blood: A Depiction of the Great Montana Cattle Range* (1927) and on back to nineteenth-century snarls that mixed-bloods were not whites and no improvement on redskins. A century of dishonor, indeed, a racial mix still sorting itself out: it seems one of the most deeply American issues of this country's immigrant and native history.

In yet another approach, this one expressly literary and perceptively postmodernist, Bernadette Rigal-Cellard from the University Michel de Montaigne, Bordeaux reads the Prologue of *House Made of Dawn* syllable-by-syllable as a "hermeneutic code" that encapsulates the entire novel. Navajo-Pueblo-Kiowa complexes stack up against Camus, Hemingway, and (one might add) Faulkner in this one-page prose poem of "iambic" *and*s (thirty-one of these conjunctives in thirty-two lines), visual icons, parabolic horizon lines and slant rain, mottled colors, broad parallelisms, and finally the character epically victimized and named Abel, running, alone and still, at dawn. "Momaday is fascinated by motion," Rigal-Cellard deduces, "a word often recurring, and also by its very antithesis, stillness, and more precisely the sudden stillness of a motion, as if Momaday the painter-to-be loved those frozen moments of energy that the human eye can finally behold better than in speed." It's an observation worth quoting. Elsewhere this Gallic critic is consistently lucid, as on the line "*His skin mottled*"—"Nothing can be permanently monochromic because everything is changing and double: the albino, though an Indian, is white and pink and has black nails; the bear is black but dappled with light; Abel is a mixed-blood, tanned and gray. Dualism in all things prevails over a simplistic black only/white only manicheism." This is worth noting

and referencing in trans-cultural nativist thinking, from Alfonso Ortiz's *The Tewa World*, to Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*, to Harry Fonseca's hightop-hoofed Coyote as Uncle Sam in tophat and tails shuffling off to Buffalo.

House Made of Dawn is surely, as evidenced in the first page, endlessly circular and "forever ambiguous," its final "trick" to end on February 28: "It is the only date of the western calendar that hinges onto the unknown, either the 29 or the 1st of March," the critic remarks, "just as the day hinges either on the genuine recovery of Abel or his disintegration into the universe" (by the by, Momaday's birthdate is March 27th). Rigal-Cellard's literary insights are critical complements to the tribal, autobiographical, and ethnopoetic, if not downright anthropological, contextual studies of others (Scarberry-García, Schubnell, Woodard, et al.). Still *House Made of Dawn* is, after all, a novel—an aesthetic house made of words, characters, actions, metaphors, and songs. To ignore its literary elegances and antecedents (Dickinson and Faulkner to Navajo night-chants and Pueblo ceremonies) is to miss the point of the novel receiving the Pulitzer Prize in 1969. Social science is not by definition literature, nor do neo-historical studies begin to account for the magic and mystery of linguistic art, phoneme to phrase, cadence to caesura. As Momaday tells Gaetano Prampolini about his writing later in the volume, "There is more to come. It is more elaborate and more intricate and more complicated and so it reveals itself more and more as you read it again and again . . . you write not always knowing what you write, or what effect it has—these things are discovered after the fact, very often."

Elaine Jahner would combine legal and literary theory in interdisciplinary mixtures to verify tribal continuity for over one hundred and fifty displaced, unacknowledged "tribes" extant today in the United States. Her test case is the Little Shell Chippewas, cousins to the Turtle Mountain Metis of Erdrich's *Love Medicine*. Her burden of proof derives from new legal theory by such as Steven L. Winter (*Michigan Law Review* August 1989), the cognitive linguistics of transformative sequences in Teun van Dijk (*Text and Context* 1977), on back to Propp, Lévi-Strauss, and Chomsky, all big thinkers. The approach is ambitious, thickly cognitive, sprawling, confrontative—an example of the new flex of Native American literary critics boldly assertive, newly theoretical. Sweeping aside "naive mimetic realism," Jahner sees Marie in *Love Medicine* as the newly acculturative Native woman: "Explicating the *language* of her experience in relation to Ojibway imagery, reveals a stylistic phenomenon rooted in psychological processes of individuation. Style becomes the surface marking of transmuted meaning achieved as individuals negotiate the terms of more than one culture." Well, yes, and let's not forget Louise's surname,

nor her Ivy League education, nor her debts to Dickens, Welty, Faulkner, and Dinesen. There is risk of overstatement here: "Louise Erdrich, though, is the first writer to let readers glimpse the cognitive dynamics at work in her culture, formed by the history of her people." What histories, which peoples, how many cultures, and whose cognitive dynamics, simply stated? And have not Native Americans before Winter and Jahner already begun the literary-legal cross-fertilizations necessary to tribal renaissance and reacknowledgement?—D'Arcy McNickle's (Flathead) socio-historical testimonies, Vine Deloria, Jr.'s (Lakota) heuristic legalistics and populist satire, Alfonso Ortiz's (Tewa Pueblo) politico-cultural studies, Allogan Slagle's (Cherokee) legal demographies, and Rebecca Tsosie's (Yaqui) historical-cultural research on contemporary land claims (there are today some 1500 Native American lawyers in practice, and more coming).

Two interviews conclude the volume. Gaetano Prampolini of the University of Florence travels to Tucson to interview N. Scott Momaday, November 1990, on his most recent novel, *The Ancient Child*. It's a chatty exchange, full of bonhomie and good humor, with a dash of the "light, nonchalant touch" the interviewer finds in the novel itself. The tone is consistently understated, minimally interpretive—the come-hither, hiding, and dis-covering of the primary act of reading fiction. There are scattered gems. Momaday divulges that Grey's fictive Kiowa name, *Koi-ehm-toya*, is one of his own daughter's names, "Among the Kiowa." More wordplay, imaginative gaming, literary-biographical humor here, as one suspects early on with Momaday (cf. Tosamah as his "Big Bluff" alterego in *House Made of Dawn*). His work-in-progress includes a collection of some eighty poems, *Earth, Pray My Days*, and a gathering of sixteen prose poems, *The Book of Shields*, in the style of *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. One supposes visual art will complement this collection, as in fine-press editions already published this year and earlier.

The dialogue between Momaday and his Italian guest is literate, fore-armed, insightful, and playful in the best EuroAmerican hospitable dynamics. If "Set painted in order to astonish God," and the author writes to resist boredom, the work (and the interview) weaves between a yawn and an epiphany, a commonplace and a genuine revelation. It keeps one guessing, and thinking:

> GP But at a certain point we read that in the story the position of Catlin Setman is a strategic position.
> NSM What do you mean?
> GP What do *you* mean?
> NSM I don't know . . . ! (*laughs*) Strategic. It's an interesting word, but I'm not sure I know what you mean by that.

Add this interview to the scores of others with the wily Momaday. Write little, publish less, Yvor Winters advised him long ago in his apprenticeship at Stanford. And one might add: never tell. Write for the writing, not the gloss.

Laura Coltelli ends her own gathering May 1991 with Gerald Vizenor in Pisa, the land of the leaning tower, to de-celebrate Columbus. Vizenor wants no more "negative credit" given to Christopher and the ensuing invasion, so he calls for a mixed-blood "counterdance" around the subject. In his newest romp, *Heirs of Columbus*, Minnesota Chippewas create Columbus as a kin trickster, along with a Mayan Jesus Christ. It all works the *other* way, Vizenor insists. "What's unusual about the genetic inheritance of Columbus is that it's a healing shamanic genetic signature." Lots of buzz words here in this bromidal "word war" of Indians as colonial linguistic victims: bingo, crossblood, postmodern, trickster, transformative, imagination, the usual Vizenor fare. No small dose of H. L. Gates' *The Signifying Monkey* in all this, or as my Sioux friends say back home, shortgrass *chesli.*

> LC You define autobiographies as "a remembrance past the barriers," "wild past times over the pronouns." Can you elaborate on that?
> GV No. You expected me to say that. I'm not going to kill that wonderful metaphor with a comment. Pronouns are obvious because they are an imposition of translation, and pronouns were different in a different worldview.

The two interviews seem inversely booked between reticent dialogue and rhetorical monologue, a slyly secretive Dedalus and a smokescreening Polyphemus, premodernist and postmodernist mixed-bloods most highly visible in the field of Native American literary studies, for better or worse. "Mixedbloods are postmodern in the blood," the trickster of liberty asserts. As they used to say over the card table back home, "read 'em an' . . . weep."

All in all, this collection stands up well with the plethora of Indian materials burgeoning into a second-renaissance printing. Readers need all the help they can get decoding these multi-cultural materials, both the compost and the bedrock of American literature these days. Like it or not, America is reading Native America now, not always acutely, but with avid, refound, searching, interethnic interest. It's reassuring that scholars and artists can speak with each other across tongues, genders, cultures, histories, and the Bigger Waters.

Kenneth Lincoln

Alex Posey: Creek Poet, Journalist, and Humorist. *Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1992. Cloth, ISBN 0-8032-2899-6. 330 pages.*

Biographies are difficult things to write, and sometimes to read. If the biographer simply synthesizes written records and previously published materials, the result can be disastrous: a boring word pile (as Gerald Vizenor would call it) in which the reader's only hope is for the veracity of dates and places. On the other hand, if handled creatively, the same materials can be made to tell a compelling story in all its complexity and poignancy. That is exactly what the storyteller Daniel Littlefield accomplishes in his insightful biography of Alex Posey.

Littlefield's work is more than a linear retelling of Posey's life. Like numerous contemporary Native American novels, it begins where it ends, with Posey's death. It then reconstructs his life by focusing on central events that, like knots in a fishing net, branch off in several directions and connect to other events elsewhere: in the past, in the future, in the other factions of Creek society. In other words, Littlefield seems to realize that one's life is more than a sum total of dates and places, and that any point in it is a complex network of forces and influences—the contexts—a biographer must examine fully. And examine them he does. *Alex Posey* is a wealth of detailed information that takes it far beyond the telling of one life.

As Littlefield tells us on the first page of his text, Posey became "the first American Indian to receive significant notice as a lyric poet and political humorist." This makes his life significant for those who study the written literary history of Native America. To explicate the genesis of this notoriety, Littlefield explores Posey's early education and moderate success as a poet; however, it as a humorist that he will be remembered. His poetry is strongly imitative, but his Fus Fixico letters–written in dialect and directed to then current political issues–are wonderfully original. Littlefield studies the development of the voice, the persona in them and ties them to the issues they address. In this way, despite the subtitle of the biography, the book takes on an

added, crucial, historical dimension.

Posey was born in 1873 in the Creek Nation, of Creek parents, and he died in 1908 near his birthplace in what had become Oklahoma. These facts, alone, reveal the centrality of his life; he lived at a time of great change for the Five Civilized Tribes and other Native cultures around the continent who faced very similar, very threatening socio-political forces. In 1873, the removal from Alabama was recent history and the future questionable, at best. In such times, there is always a great deal of debate about the best course to that future and the best means for survival, and this is the context Littlefield provides for Posey's life. As he develops each phase in Posey's careers as poet, journalist, humorist, political figure, and land speculator, Littlefield draws upon mountainous resources to detail the historical setting, the Creek social issues of the time, Posey's private life, and his writings. Since Posey was at the center of Creek politics, his life reveals the very nature of their debates for survival, and the forces that moved to direct the debate's outcome.

Posey was a "progressive," which means he argued that the Creek people must inevitably accept modern American society's ideals and lifeways. He worked for the Dawes Commission, seeking out "conservative" Creeks who refused to enroll on governmental records and to accept the conditions of land allotment, preferring instead to wait for the US government to live up to the conditions of its treaty with them. In the last year of his life, he also became a land speculator who searched for the riches of oil and other minerals on lands opened up for exploitation by congressional act. Rendering his life this way—reducing it to factual statements removed from the context of the social forces that shaped him—is a good way to illustrate the potentially slanted appraisal that some would make of Posey, but which Littlefield avoids.

Readers in the 1990s may be prone to condemn Posey, to write him off as an assimilated Indian and then move on to more comforting, romantic images of the "conservatives" living a traditional lifeway free from mainstream materialism and such. Littlefield will not allow such a simplistic reaction. Instead, he forces us to consider the complexities involved in the decisions Posey and the "conservatives" made, the harsh realities of poverty and disease that Posey encountered in their homes, the irony of his death and the loss of his lands to the land speculation company for which he worked, and the equally ironic persistence into contemporary times of the lifeways he thought doomed to extinction. In other words, Littlefield offers us a judicious rendering of a complicated set of historical and social and personal circumstances, within the narrow scope of one man's life and works, and he does so in a readable way that makes this a valuable resource for those

interested in Posey as a writer, the times in which he lived, the people with whom he came in contact, or the intricacies of the problems of forced assimilation faced by so many over the last 500 years.

John Purdy

Sending My Heart Back Across the Years: Tradition and Innovation in Native American Autobiography.

Hertha Dawn Wong. New York: Oxford U P, 1992. $29.95 cloth, ISBN 0-19-506912-9. 246 pages.

In its meticulous comparisons of oral, written, and painted expressions of Native American life, Hertha Wong's book is nearly as innovative as its subject. Although *Sending My Heart Back Across the Years* contains a wealth of well-known information about the historic development of Native autobiographies and about the intense scholarly debates concerning the nature of self-narrations, this book distinguishes itself by delicately, yet thoroughly, examining the Native symbolic systems that unite spoken and drawn images of the natural world. To date no other classic study of Native American autobiography—such as those published by Sands and Bataille, Brumble, or Krupat—presses as far into the interpretative, spiritually-engaged creative processes of the artists/storytellers themselves.

Wong's thesis is that "the roots of Indian autobiography . . . are not merely in the Western written tradition, but in the pre-contact Native American traditions of orality, art, and performance" (56). Citing examples of performed Plains coup tales, serial naming practices, and tipi and shield narrative art as evidence of indigenous autobiographical traditions, Wong boldly asserts that the Native autobiographies developed over the last century are extended transformations of age-old impulses to situate and define the self in relation to family, tribe, and the natural world. While this formulation may strike some as obvious, it needs to be emphasized because a popular view has erroneously held that historically Indians submerged their individual identities in communal activities so completely that self-narration was

virtually unpracticed.

Strikingly, Wong's book functions to enlarge interpretations of individual culture members' self concepts–how they and their ancestors have conceived of themselves over the last two centuries. *Sending My Heart Back Across the Years* demonstrates what those deeply familiar with oral tradition, such as Dennis Tedlock, have already known—that narrators are also frequently the commentators on their life stories and that narrators ordinarily do not separate artistic narrations from verbal narrations of their personal experiences. This wholeness of expression is possible because the various filaments of creativity all originate in the interrelated spirit world. For a recent example of how this harmonizing of creative expressions actually works, see the Santa Clara poet-potter Nora Naranjo-Morse's *Mud Woman: Poems from the Clay* (U of Arizona P, 1992). *Sending My Heart Back Across the Years* may also be helpful then in providing an imaginative basis for conceptualizing new interpretations of autobiographical poetry and fiction.

Wong's densely written book initially focuses on the critical context necessary for understanding differing conceptions of the self. Pointing out that Native people have "more inclusive" self-concepts than do most Euro-Americans, and that Native life stories often emphasize events and actions more than introspection, Wong stresses the dynamic changing nature of the broadly related "self-in-process" that is revealed in Native autobiographies. Additionally, Wong suggests a gender reading of this material, a reading which highlights linkages between Native American autobiographies and Euro-American women's autobiographies that also spring from a "web of relationships" (23).

In Chapters 2 and 3 Wong concentrates on "oral and pictographic autobiographical narratives." After examining the patterns of coup tales, Wong turns to a detailed study of the iconography of hide and tipi drawings. She also looks closely at nineteenth-century paintings and drawings done with scarce materials such as paper and watercolors. Wong is perhaps at her best when she analyzes the Kiowa chief Little Bluff's tipi painted near the end of the last century. Because Little Bluff and other Kiowa men painted images representing tomahawks and their successful raids next to battle scenes previously drawn on the skins by tipigiver Sleeping Bear, a Cheyenne, Wong sees this composite painting as possibly an "early collaborative autobiography" (35). This process of adding on and embellishing the story events already painted was a symbolic means for Little Bluff to graft his life and that of his tribe onto the lives of Sleeping Bear's people.

Since Wong is captivated by the work of the Plains artists imprisoned at Fort Marion during the late Nineteenth Century, we learn about Zo-Tom (Kiowa), Howling Wolf (Cheyenne), and Wohaw

(Kiowa) in considerable detail. Stressing the pictographic transformations that these artists underwent, Wong charts some of the changing conventions of their art from the addition of landscape to the inclusion of "writing in syllabary or in English" (78). The subject matter of the art also changed from the emphasis on "personal exploits" to "tribal documentaries" (78). Significantly, these changes heralded an expanded sense of self for most of the artists who had grown increasingly aware of the need to articulate on paper, hide, or canvas the conflicts of their people with the dominant culture.

In Chapter 4, Wong follows John Paul Eakin in asserting that autobiographies are essentially "fictions of the self" (88). Then Wong proceeds to examine the nature of the constructed selves revealed in the well-known collaborative autobiographies of Plenty-Coups (Crow) and Pretty Shield (Crow), who worked with Frank B. Linderman; of Sam Blowsnake/Crashing Thunder (Winnebago), who worked with Paul Radin; and of Mountain Wolf Woman (Winnebago), who worked with Nancy O. Lurie. Reflecting on issues such as the relationship between "informants" and amanuenses, "the circumstances of collection," and the editorial decisions to "emphasize personality" or to "present representative types," Wong considers the myriad ways in which these autobiographies have been shaped to acquire the form that we now recognize in print (104, 115). This introductory material is very helpful especially to the student new to the complex field of Native American autobiography studies.

Chapter 5 focuses on two of the better-known storyteller-autobiographers—Nicholas Black Elk and Charles Alexander Eastman. Wong sorts out some of the thorny problems that have plagued interpretations of Black Elk's life story as-told-to John G. Neihardt. She also finds Black Elk exemplary because he "not only *tells* his vision . . . but *shows* it and *performs* it as well, thus uniting oral, pictographic, and dramatic forms of personal narrative" (132). More visually-oriented than most scholars of the Black Elk materials, Wong brings forward an analysis of the pictographs drawn by Standing Bear to accompany the text of *Black Elk Speaks*. Although Eastman did not write spiritual autobiographies per se, he did, according to Wong, develop a "double vision" about his life. He played the bicultural roles of both "Santee Sioux participant" and ethnographer and included sixteen photographs in *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* to illustrate dramatically the "personal and cultural details" of his life (144, 150).

In the concluding chapter of *Sending My Heart Back Across the Years* Wong examines the innovative autobiographies of contemporary writers N. Scott Momaday and Leslie Marmon Silko. Seeing these writers as benefitting from the legacy of Plains and Pueblo Indian autobiographies, Wong comments that they have melded oral traditions

with elements of written Euro-American traditions in order to create remarkably complex autobiographies noted nearly as much for their artistic as verbal dimensions. Wong defends Momaday's polyvocality and communal sense of self in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* and *The Names: A Memoir* against critics who have heard his voice as monologic. And Wong notes the fine quality of Al Momaday's pen and ink drawings in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. Scott Momaday now follows his father's lead and has recently illustrated *In the Presence of the Sun: Stories and Poems, 1961-1991* (St. Martin's, 1992).

Leslie Marmon Silko, while not a graphic artist, follows in her photographer father Lee Marmon's footsteps and has recently hand-produced *Sacred Waters* that features black and white photographs taken around her home. While this book is too recent for Wong to have commented on, many of Wong's remarks about the historic photographs taken at Laguna Pueblo in Silko's *Storyteller* are appropriate for *Sacred Waters* as well. Wong discusses the connections between image and narrative, between visual and verbal stories. One reason why *Sending My Heart Back Across the Years* is such a significant critical book is because it anticipates these new intertwined directions of Native American art and literature.

Silko writes in the Preface to *Partial Recall: Photographs of Native North Americans* (Lucy Lippard, ed., The New Press, 1992) that she once shot a "photonarrative" around her ranch house. She muses: "Perhaps photographs register ambient bursts of energy in the form of heat or x-rays as well as light. Thus photographs reveal more than a mere image of a subject" (18). So too do pictographs reveal historic energies or stories behind the story of their actual images. Is it not possible that Wohaw's "Indian Between Two Cultures" on the cover of Wong's book also tells the story of the commingled sounds of buffalo and cattle hooves on the plains in the mid-Nineteenth Century?

Sending My Heart Back Across the Years deserves recognition for its groundbreaking work in pulling together research from the fields of literature and art history in order to arrive at a fuller appreciation of the complicated dynamics of Indian storytelling. And Wong has provided us with reproductions of fascinating sketchbook art that would otherwise be hard to locate. As we move in and out of the archives with Wong, we experience her reliable scholarship and careful judgments. If occasionally Wong overwrites, overstates a point (e.g., that the first and last illustrations in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* "tell the entire story of the Kiowa"), or omits the work of Joseph Epes Brown, Arthur Silberman, and Kenneth Roemer that could shed still further light on her subject, nevertheless we may expect that her next project will yield more refined research on the ways that the art is the story (167). In my own work with elder José Rey Toledo on his

forthcoming life history–*Morning Star: The Autobiography of a Pueblo Indian Artist*–Toledo has stated that it is knowledge of the symbol systems behind the art that shapes values and will help young people construct Indian identities to meet "the challenge for survival." *Sending My Heart Back Across the Years* also propels these life-stories forward into the twenty-first century.

Susan Scarberry-García

Choteau Creek: A Sioux Reminiscence. ***Joseph Iron Eye Dudley. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1992. Cloth, ISBN 0-8032-16904.***

Not First in Nobody's Heart: The Life Story of a Contemporary Chippewa. ***Ron Paquin and Robert Doherty. Ames: Iowa State U P, 1992. Cloth, ISBN 0-8138-1837; paper, 0-8138-1836-2/92.***

These two Native American autobiographies could not be more unlike in their themes and structure. *Not First in Nobody's Heart* is an "as-told-to" account of a contemporary Chippewa struggling to make a living and survive as a responsible man in the hunting and fishing world of northern Michigan. *Choteau Creek* is a first-person narrative of a boy growing up on the Yankton Sioux reservation in South Dakota in the 1940s. The first is a record of anger and self-destruction that moves us violently into the contemporary America of political and economic warfare. The second is a history that works from the present backwards into the vanishing Indian world of myth and community, as though seen down the other end of a telescope. Both autobiographies, however, represent twentieth-century Indian life as marginal, the reverse side of American society. One describes what being marginal can do to a person without significant cultural support, the other how an Indian inheritance, however diluted, can produce a "rooted" human being. Both works are "conversion" stories of a kind in which the narrators find different ways of "saving" their souls.

Not First in Nobody's Heart is a nearly-parodistic representation of Foucault's view of the body as a "political field," a force of production, on the one hand, and an object to be subjugated by society, on the other. A paradigm for the repressive forces that shape us politically and economically, Ron Paquin's physical body is always brutally front and center. The product of an economically marginal family so prone to violence and emotional rejection it makes a term like "disjunctive" seem affirmative, the boy grows up angry, violent, into reform school, alcohol, and the precarious poverty of an uneducated drop-out from American society. Importantly, Paquin's sense of himself as Indian is put under erasure at an early age: his abusive father, "mostly Chippewa," curses other Indians and denies his son's racial inheritance. Forced into a typical Catholic boarding school, Paquin early on turns to quickly-triggered rages taken out on his physical world and on himself.

He beats his father after breaking the windows of the family shack; smashes a car's rearview mirror in his buddy's face ("He still carries an awful scar" [39]); and goes on into reform school, an insane asylum, and finally prison, after cutting open a man's face with a can opener, stabbing another in the eye with a billiard cue, breaking another's collarbone—all these acts along a trail of continual drinking and fighting. He begins to hurt himself, cutting his initials into his arm with a knife, burning himself with cigarettes, trying twice to commit suicide with a razor blade. These brutalizing events are recounted in Paquin's direct and graphic English with its sometimes angry deformation of standard usage:

> Don't be blaming the working people for screwing this country up. Don't blame them. Them elites figure, "we can't make mistakes, because, boy, we got doctorate degree of this, a degree of that, and a degree of everything. Oh, are we ever smart! Goddamn, are we clever people! We don't got to listen to dumb laymens. We don't make mistakes—we was educated." (159)

While many episodes in reform school or prison are told with humor and illustrations of his "common sense," his favorite virtue, much of the book's tone is set by Paquin's anger and regret.

Paquin does not take up "being Indian" until rather late in his story, when he begins commercial fishing in the Great Lakes and runs up against discriminatory federal laws and local prejudice: "white people been putting the boots to Indians around here for as long as I can remember. . . . So what are you going to do? I can't get jobs sometimes because I'm an Indian" (159). But he can also be "upfront" about his own contribution to his marginality: "What really done me in

was no education. . . . I can't hardly read this book I'm writing here. . . . I can fool most people into thinking I graduated high school. When you're like I am, you got to con a lot" (159). Living in a world of rural poverty and cultural isolation, Paquin comes across rather more as a speaker from an American working class than as an Indian. The language of this unromanticized self-report expresses his essentially helpless subjection to the goals and failures of a care-less economic system. There is no sense of a supportive "Native" inheritance here. Although Paquin can make a little money in hard times by painting fake totem poles or building a show long house for the local museum, their historical cultural context means little to him, in themselves unconscious signs of his rootlessness, victimized by a marketplace sense of self, however much he may try to fight it.

No world would seem further from Ron Paquin's than that of the little house on the prairie of *Choteau Creek* where Joseph Iron Eye Dudley was raised by maternal Indian-blooded grandparents. Miles from the nearest family, school, and church, those contextualizing and supportive institutions are still importantly present, reinforcing the child's surroundings as whole, purposive, and loving. Here the past is not read as a terrible drag on the narrator. Nor is it historically-degraded where an Indian vision has to be re-invented through fake totem poles for the white man. Instead it is the basis for a nostalgia-generated recovery of the emotional and imaginatively creative world of myth. The present is connected to the past by the love and the memories of grandparents whose own beginnings, recounted in stories, go back to Wounded Knee and being "rooted."

Dudley's success story is patterned on an American romantic tradition in which the young boy from a poor but loving family, a sensitive dreamer, succeeds to a spiritual kingdom. While Paquin's vision is expressed in his language's broken rhythms, the subnarratives of Dudley's flow together in a seamless and teleological reading: looking back, he can see how his history destined him for the ministry. As a writer of autobiography, the author's problem is to achieve a memoir saved from the verbal clichés such lives seem to fulfill.

What gives this history life, in fact, is a richly if conventionally metaphoric language whose narrative syntax reflects Dudley's sense of continuity and historical purpose. Like Paquin the child of a broken home, Dudley was fortunate enough to be taken in by grandparents living on a pension far back in the hills. The days are filled with accounts of shoveling snow, attending church, or listening to the grandmother's stories. Narrative detail is never excessive and always purposively descriptive, from a picture of bowls filled with small gifts set out on family graves on Decoration Day to the types of old cars pulled up around the church on Sunday.

It is Dudley's grandmother who sets these present experiences in an important historical context, the stories of her past achieving mythic significance for the young boy. A child at the time of Wounded Knee, she remembers her parents attending the "Dance of the Ghosts" and seeing a "whirlwind" bringing spirits back to earth. She is available for a number of supernatural experiences, from seeing "people walking in the sky" on Christmas eve (103) to her long-dead son come back as a revenant to Choteau Creek (133). While she can tell about a medicine man finding a drowned body through Indian visionary techniques, these are events common to Christians with a bent toward the mystical. The grandmother's faith in the spiritual then finds its continuity in the boy's waking to discover his dead maternal grandmother in his room. His story-telling grandmother explains that "'they [the ancestors] do that, you know . . . because they are concerned and care about you'"(131). He, too, sees a whirlwind, the ancestors, come for a dying man (94). The narrative climax, however, comes when his grandmother leads him to conduct the family prayers one Sunday (110). Her tales and her living presence provide emotional and spiritual connections with the present human world and the one "beyond." In her prayers, Dudley says, his grandmother "was taking me with her," a "mountain-top" experience never available to Ron Paquin. Phrases like "heartwarming" or "love, faith in God, and giving" are not in his tough vocabulary.

Ron Paquin says he turned his own life around, deciding in prison he must control his temper and find a good woman for raising a family; and he asserts enough self-control to achieve this goal, though his editor tried to press for explanations he never gets (242-43). Paquin's story is appropriately inconclusive. We learn he has come to terms with his past, but Doherty's Afterward tells us his wife, Carol, has died, that he is often without a job or money, and that he appears to Doherty, the social historian, however sympathetic, as an example of the "invisible and largely inarticulate men and women . . . the working poor" of America" (259). That the narrative simply stops rather than concludes, and in the voice of another speaker (and a white man, at that), is nevertheless appropriate. This fragmented and distancing ending could not be in greater contrast to the smooth and inevitable closure of Dudley's story, where the deaths of his grandparents and the end of their era lead to his adulthood and his representation of their lives together in a smoothly developed narrative. Both autobiographies, however, are perhaps less about being Indian than they are about what it means to confront the challenge of being marginal with the tools American history has provided—or failed to provide.

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