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# Studies in American Indian Literatures

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## FROM THE EDITORS

This issue of *SAIL* contains articles on several of the field's most celebrated authors and a review of the work of one of their more neglected contemporaries. Alex Hollenberg offers a Canadian's understanding of the intellectual challenges of "separatism" in Craig Womack's work, one informed by the ever-present rhetoric of Quebec separatism in Canada. J. James Iovannone examines transgendered performances in Louise Erdrich's *The Master Butchers Singing Club*, *Four Souls*, and *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*. Iovannone's article is a provocative contribution to and intervention in the critical conversation about how Erdrich theorizes gender in her novels. Stephanie Li investigates the politics of gardening, along with mothering and storytelling, as domestic resistance to colonialism in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes*, while Arnold Krupat's introduction to Ralph Salisbury's new book, *Light from a Bullet Hole: New and Selected Poems, 1950–2008*, honors the healing poems of a "Cherokee humanist and Indigenous cosmopolitan." This review reminds us, too, of our responsibility to listen with vigilance to all the Indigenous voices that have spoken and are now speaking.

We hope that between the moment we write these words and the moment you read them that we have visited with each other at the Native American Literature Symposium in Albuquerque or, perhaps, at another conference, symposium, or kitchen table.

James H. Cox and Daniel Heath Justice

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# Speaking with the Separatists

Craig Womack and the Relevance of Literary History

ALEXANDER HOLLENBERG

Mention the word “separatism” across Canada, and nine times out of ten the word “Quebec” will come up in the very next sentence. For both the staunch federalist and the tacit devotee to the Canadian mosaic, the basic notion of separatism is just plain frightening; the word will inevitably evoke trace memories of befuddling referendum questions, red versus blue, and English versus French. To speak about separatism as a Canadian is to use a loaded term, one that invokes a significant yet historically specific sociocultural moment. Winners and losers emerged, and in the process, the word “separatism” received a bad rap.

Consequently, as a white Canadian who, when all the cards are down, still believes in at least the optimism of the multiculturalist project, I am forced by Craig Womack’s *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* to face head-on my intuitions about separatism that have been more than a little colored by my Jewish-English-Quebecker roots. That the issues of all Native people are elided by the mainstream Canadian notion of separatism is critical. To speak of “literary separatism” is to first admit the failures of our media-dominated discourses on nationality and unity, and secondly to attempt to understand what sovereignty might *really* imply when it is transposed into the realm of the imagination. This is not to say that Womack’s literary history is not political—it is certainly one of the most world-making and affirming criticisms that exists today; rather, he is able to build a Creek community that defines and evaluates itself internally by reimagining its own

borders. This idea, I hope, will become clearer as my discussion unfolds. Importantly, however, I am not trying to *defend* Womack's version of literary history—he does not need me to speak for him, nor, as I will argue, is he primarily speaking to me. Instead, I write this as a dialogue and as a further invitation to dialogue, for Womack's version of sovereignty reworks the lines of communication in positive and liberating ways.

Central to Womack's communicative model is the issue of literary relevance. Or, put another way, he implicitly asks what it really means for a literary history to be relevant. Is it merely a question of opening up a discourse to a wider group of citizens? In fact, Womack explicitly states that “the primary purpose of this study is not to argue for canonical inclusion or opening up Native literature to a broader audience” (6). Does this make his study irrelevant to the general populace? Hardly. Relevancy, in this case, is not merely synonymous with “significance,” which would imply the inevitable primacy of content over context. Instead, part of the work of *Red on Red* is that it dissolves the simplistic notion of the general, mass audience waiting to connect and instead argues from the premise that, to be truly relevant, a literary history must construct a community that speaks *for* and, even more importantly, *to* itself. This is a difficult position for pluralists and multiculturalists to align themselves with. In her seminal article “The Integrity of Memory: Creating a New Literary History of the United States,” Annette Kolodny argues for an American literary history that is founded not in a fictive harmony but in “diversity, division, and discord” (307). Central to her argument is that the traditional canon must be problematized through a “rereading that must begin with the unfamiliar. . . . [T]he avoidance of familiar texts and authors will help in the breaking-away from old habits of classification and interpretation” (302). In privileging the unfamiliar, Kolodny supposes that the marginal, noncanonical literatures are new lenses with which to view the center. Certainly, to defamiliarize is to rework and revise the dominant hegemonic dynamic, but ultimately, it also reinscribes the dominant symbolic order by defining the center in terms of a multiplicity of others. Womack,

on the other hand, takes up arms, claiming, “We *are* the Canon” (7). He breaks up the binary of center and margin by asserting the separateness and centrality of Native literature. This is to say that while, intuitively, Kolodny’s argument makes sense, and the pressure of diversity on the monolithic canon can indeed open it up to new voices, Womack’s claim lays bare the fact that to speak of a literature as marginal is to speak of it as an *instrument* of subversion rather than as a self-sufficient and equal history. Womack thus turns the question of relevance on its head. Is it not more relevant for communities to speak from central positions that they construct for themselves? In other words, what is more relevant to the minoritarian: A canon that is diverse yet still posits him/her as the perpetual “other”? Or a canon that is defined in terms of his/her own sovereign community and that eschews the reinscribed fixity of identity that is complicit in a multiculturalist discourse?

If these are loaded questions, that is precisely the point. It is difficult to reconcile the notion of separatism with that of communicability. Indeed, the former word often connotes exclusion, isolation, and prohibition; but these are certainly *not* the premises of Womack’s separatist model. In a public lecture at the University of Toronto, Womack brooded upon the importance of Native people’s “imaginative sovereignty.” Such a concept is very powerful in that it alludes to the primacy of a Native-centered criticism and storytelling that, in its very separation from the conventional non-Native canon, has the capacity to forge a progressive social space, in this case a Creek community that is constructed through a reworking and reimagining of Creek narratives. In *Red on Red*, this idea becomes more lucid as Womack asserts that a priority of sovereignty is

Indian people exercising the right to present images of themselves and to discuss those images. . . . A key component of nationhood is a people’s ideas of themselves, their imaginings of who they are. The ongoing expression of a tribal voice, through imagination, language, and literature, contributes to keeping sovereignty defined within the tribe rather than by external sources. (14)

By beckoning to the unconscious—as opposed to the strictly political—Womack envisions a community that is not merely predicated upon a rejection of a dominant discourse that has traditionally pigeonholed Creek identity into claustrophobic narratives of the “other”; rather, to invoke the community’s own capacity to imagine itself and, thus, to self-identify, he proffers a constructive and affirmative social space that resists the primacy of external definition. Imaginative sovereignty is therefore not a wholly rejectionist stance as it is a dynamic and self-communicative one.

Still, in that Womack argues for a “Native perspective” (4), many might condemn him for asserting an essentialized Indian identity that surely does not exist. But to misread him in this way faults him with a “fundamental naïveté, claiming we argue that Native perspectives are pure, authoritative, [and] uncontaminated by European influences” (5). On the contrary, a Native perspective is entirely different from *the* quintessential Native. On the most basic level, the former connotes an openness and willingness to appreciate the polyphony of Native communities, and the latter indicates closure and emphasis on the sameness of Native experience. It is precisely such a misreading that blinds critics from recognizing the implicit communicability of Womack’s separatist model. Drawing upon the work of Creek author Bill Grantham, Michelle Henry perceptively argues that

The idea that the Creeks were not a “culturally homogenous” group does not mean that they were or are not “authentically” Creek *but rather the opposite*. An essential part of the Creek cosmogony is the fluidity of culture and identity that allows Creeks to, in Womack’s terms, “swallow” up elements of new cultures without damaging their own cultural consistency. (33; emphasis added)

The conception of self that Womack posits is not a pure or essentialized body by any stretch of the imagination; instead, he rearticulates the Native body as an always-mixed, hybrid identification. Significantly, however, this fluidity need not include only the white body. Henry, for example, points out that in Womack’s

characterization of Jimmy in *Drowning in Fire*, the character recognizes himself as phenotypically black but identifies primarily as an Indian (Henry 34). Thus, we might observe here an important distinction between phenotype and nationhood in which nationhood is privileged. Whereas this nationalist focus may, intuitively, appear to preclude communication between literary communities, the emphasis on the Native body as both hybrid *and* bordered suggests the very permeability of those borders. Womack, surely, cannot be accused of ethnic exclusivism. His separatist project is fully dependent on the fluidity of selves that comprise Native communities. In fact, it is only by means of such mutable identifications that there exists the possibility for open communication and connection both within the community and without. The hybridity of Creekness (and this is most certainly not a contradiction) allows for the borders of the community to remain porous but intact as well, because Womack never seeks to deny the fact that an individual can (and often must) be a part of more than one community at the same time. As a result, Womack writes a sovereign community that is separate yet integrative. The nation is thus construed as a heterogeneous space in which the Native body cannot be typified, where borders are reimagined as places of creativity and flux.

Arnold Krupat, a multiculturalist scholar whose often-valuable criticism of Native studies runs counter to the separatist model, denies legitimacy to Womack's sovereigntist history due to the very misreading that Womack admonishes against. In arguing that the separatist model is an unproductive vision that "distinguish[es] Native American from European influences" ("Native" 163), Krupat implicates Native literature as an instrument of canonical subversion—as if it exists purely to disrupt and defamiliarize the established discourse. Further, he delineates a substantial difference between the "nationalist critic" who is interested in "resistance literature" that is unprogressive in its opposition to canonical inclusion and his favored "cosmopolitan" critic who seeks to "work with indigenous methodologies to produce . . . an ethnocriticism in the belief that the master's tools, as it were, in conjunction with Native tools constitutes the most powerful *hybrid* or mixedblood strategy

available against cultural colonialism” (“Nationalism” 619, 624). While such a concept is a noble attempt at inclusion and integration, it nonetheless constructs itself as an erasure of the Native perspective in two important ways: first of all, Krupat does not recognize, as Womack does, the fluidity of the Native identity. He produces his hybrid criticism as a mixture of white and Indian, thus denying the reality of other hybrid identifications. This is to say that the Native perspective need not *always* be concerned with the white. Secondly, as a consequence, Krupat assumes that the primary role of Native literature is to dissect and complicate white, dominant discourses of the self and thus inevitably appease the phoenix of liberal guilt that has risen out of the ashes of the defamiliarized canon. Similarly, Elvira Pulitano alleges that Womack “overlook[s] the complex level of hybridization and cultural translation that is already operating in any form of Native discourse (including [his] own)—the product of more than five hundred years of cultural contact and interaction” (61). Such a problematic conception of hybridity places the non-Native subject at the center of Native literature and criticism, ultimately perpetuating the colonialist erasure of Native voices and perspectives. Indeed, Krupat derives much of his cosmopolitan theory from the work of Paul Rabinow, who postulates cosmopolitanism as a project that is “suspicious of sovereign powers, universal truths, overly relativized preciousness, local authority, moralisms high and low” (Rabinow 258). To interpret Womack’s literary separatism along parameters such as these is to elide his whole critical project. *Red on Red* is an act of self-determination, a means of asserting a self-worth that is independent of a dominant symbolic order but not antithetical to it. It posits a cooperative spirit that will be better able to communicate its multiple loci of selves within a polyvocal society.

So too does Womack deny “the supremacist notion that assimilation can only go in one direction, that white culture always overpowers Indian culture, that white is inherently more powerful than red” (12). Thinking of assimilation like this—not as osmosis, but as diffusion—clearly illustrates that Womack does not seek to renounce cross-cultural communication. Rather, he intends to

emphasize the possibility of asserting a worldview in which the Native body is not the perennial “other.” Thus, his literary separatism implies a Native literature that speaks from a footing equal to the white canon, though from a different mountain entirely.

What criticisms such as Krupat’s indicate is that contact itself has been the traditionally privileged trait of Native literature. But what any Native scholar will surely make evident is that Native literary history predates Euroamerican contact. Indigenous nations were telling stories to each other long before the burden of settlers and their concomitant literary conventions seized the land. In emphasizing the primacy of Native contact literature—or at least by viewing Native literature through the always-foggy lens of white contact—critics unwittingly posit the Native self as always victim. To understand Native identity so opaquely, in which the Native is always a borrower of language and white tradition, is at best problematic and at worst maliciously stereotypical and assaultive. Thus, when Womack strongly affirms that “we should not play along and confess to being a second-rate literature. Let Americanists struggle for *their* place in the canon” (7), he constructs a literary sovereignty that lays claim to an English that is just as much Native as it is white. No longer the borrower but the owner of a language that has for centuries been used to exclude the Native person, Womack reframes his literary history. Many Native critics and storytellers have made similar claims. Emma LaRocque, for example, states, “I have ‘appropriated’ this language without abandoning my Cree. I have sought to master this language so that it would no longer master me. . . . English is serving to decolonize and unite Aboriginal peoples. Personally I see much poetic justice in this process” (xxvi). Performative statements such as this reimagine the discourse and rewrite Native literary communities as active cultural participants as opposed to recipient-victims. Thus, for cosmopolitans like Pulitano to claim that Womack “dismisses the fact that he is utilizing language and tools borrowed from the colonizer” inevitably presumes that the Indigenous is *always* in a marginal position (Pulitano 86). Why, we must ask, is the Native subject always first construed as a borrower in cosmopolitan criticism? Again, to

recognize that assimilation is diffusive as opposed to osmotic is to deemphasize conventional narratives of contact and promote a sovereignty that celebrates Native voices from within.

Similarly, there is a pernicious educative function that latches on to the victim narrative. In LaRocque's words, it is "the weary task of having to educate our audiences before we could even begin dialoguing with them!" (xxii). Comments such as these indicate how the valence of Native literatures, subsumed by the dominant discourse, has generally been deflected and redirected as an instrument of (usually white) education. It is as if the purpose of Native literature is *only* to ask the question of how *we* can teach *you* about our history of contact. How might *we* translate our stories of devastation, diaspora, and defamiliarized selves so that *you* can understand them better? Again, such a function effaces the Native audience and assumes that the non-Native is always already the primary addressee.

This issue has everything to do with the question of literary relevance. Womack writes a sovereignty that forcibly changes the current of Native studies. *Red on Red* champions the fact that a dialogue has been opened up, primarily within the Creek community, and only secondarily with non-Native discourse. In that Womack's literary history is a celebration of the Creek community—one that simultaneously promotes the fluidity of Creek identification and resists narratives of victimization—he challenges readers to educate themselves. Bruce Bawer notes that for minorities to assert only a self-victimizing stance "appease[s] liberals who don't share their group identity but who feel virtuous about applauding their anger" (24). The point of reading a Native literary history is not to feel like a better multiculturalist (comfortable in one's recognition of difference) but to locate for one's self the capacity to dialogue and, also, to accept the possibility of not possessing the central and controlling perspective. Simply, the sovereigntist literary history is precisely the means with which to make literature more relevant to a community upon which a rhetoric of marginality and victimization has been imposed. Womack's Creek history enables a Native-centered criticism to arise from within the community itself.

In his well-meaning attempt to imbue relevance into the discipline in “Criticism and the Canon: Cross Relations,” Krupat argues for the application of a historicist model to Native studies. “Given the relationship between critical perspectives and the canon,” he avers, “the chances for Native literatures to position themselves within, or at least at the margins of the canon of American literature are poor should a formalist paradigm persist” (16–17). But, in correctly viewing conventional formalism as exclusionary, Krupat overlooks the pitfalls of his historicist prototype. He reinscribes the center/margin binary, and in doing so, he asserts a literary relevance that only placates liberal pluralists who fathom multiculturalism as an endpoint in itself. This is to say that there is a latent smugness in the critic who, in a desire for harmony amidst discord, reaffirms the integration of Native literature in the canon but simultaneously champions its place as one of the (disempowered) “other.” When Krupat hopes that more Native literatures will be “available for celebration—for the sheer pleasure anyone might take in them” (“Criticism” 19), he in fact posits a notion of celebration of difference that takes as its basis a patronizing victim identity. Womack, on the other hand, champions a celebration of a dialogic community (founded in a Creek worldview) whose very sovereignty eschews the narrative of victimization.

The question of relevance is more complex than critics like Krupat assume. The deluded belief that postmodernist inclusiveness is all that is needed to make the discipline more relevant conceals the fact that such inclusion merely substantiates the familiar in different terms. Ross Posnock elucidates:

One legacy of cultural relativism might be described as the routinizing of demystification, which has resulted in a new version of political innocence: one that believes innocence has been abolished, the quaint affliction of earlier generations. This attitude is secure in the knowledge that we are postinnocence just as surely as we are postmodern. And this new postmodern innocence takes as its guiding assumption a deluded belief that self-awareness is emancipatory. (155)

Importantly, the self-awareness that Womack advocates is decidedly not ensconced in postmodern language. What Posnock's passage circles around is the inability of postmodernism to consider a narrative that does not first latch onto the thread of victimization—as if in order to be emancipatory, the self must first be victimized. Consequently, what he calls postmodern postinnocence lacks the capacity to legitimize a literary history that separates itself from that narrative, a literary history that does not seek self-awareness through its “otherly” victimization but through a celebration of its sovereign self using its own critical apparatus. In other words, Womack's literary history illuminates this particular postmodernist discourse as a set of tools that unavoidably perceives the Creek people *as tools*. “The same damn Bakhtin quotes we've all heard a million times” might reinvigorate self-awareness within the white, multiculturalist discourse (Womack 8), but they cannot always be reconciled with the Creek narrative. David Perkins, though speaking specifically about encyclopedic forms of postmodern literary history, still offers an important perspective when he argues that their “explanations of past happenings are piecemeal, may be inconsistent with each other, and are admitted to be inadequate. *It precludes a vision of its subject*. Because it aspires to reflect the past in its multiplicity and heterogeneity, it does not organize the past, and in this sense, it is not history” (60; emphasis added). When a postmodern discourse loses sight of its subject, the subject is inevitably cast into the periphery. If the Native subject is typified as merely one in a string of marginal, inadequately represented players, multiplicity, diversity, and inclusion become specious terms. Henry's paraphrase of Womack's project is thus valuable: “those of us outside of Creek worldviews . . . carry a responsibility to set aside ‘dramatics’—theoretical jargon that ignores the lives of people who are implicated in that theory—and consider the worlds outside of mainstream Euroamerica on their own terms” (49). Indeed, the imposition of this postmodernism places the burden of the victim squarely on the shoulders of the Native, and as a result the only celebration available is feel-good relativism meant to assuage guilt and nothing more.

Writing fifteen years before Henry, bell hooks levels a similar

criticism of postmodern theory that is worth noting here because it deals with parallel issues of relevance for the minoritarian subject.

Disturbed not so much by the “sense” of postmodernism but by the conventional language used when it is written or talked about and by those who speak it, I find myself on the outside of the discourse looking in. As a discursive practice it is dominated primarily by the voices of white male intellectuals and/or academic elites who speak to and about one another with coded familiarity. (2478)

I offer here an analogy, not an equivalence, for fear of eliding historical specificity. The critical terrain is similar, though, as both Womack and hooks speak about the implicit intellectual masturbation that some postmodern theory can potentially provoke. The very insularity of the academic community and the exclusiveness of its language run counter to many a minoritarian project because they construct a binary between intellectual and citizen. Again, both hooks and Womack arrive at similar solutions. Says hooks, “On the terrain of culture, one can participate in critical dialogue with the uneducated poor, the black underclass who are thinking about aesthetics. . . . a space is there for critical exchange” (2484). Likewise, Womack insists,

We have gone too long thinking that storytellers cannot also talk about stories, that fiction writers and poets do one thing and critics and academics quite another. When I am back at home (that is, in Indian communities in Oklahoma), I am always amazed when I encounter individuals who are encyclopedic in their knowledge of their own tribe. . . . I often wonder why *these* people are not doing literary criticism and writing book reviews. (9)

Both writers center their criticism upon the possibility (or, rather, the reality) of the organic intellectual—the storyteller *and* critic, the underclass citizen *and* intellectual. By dissolving the exclusionary binary, they rewrite the critic as an extension of the real world, not as an antithesis to it.

In doing so, these writers (and, of course, they are not the only two to suggest this) provide a model of literary relevance that is quite often ignored: in order for the community to speak with the academy, the community must first speak on an intellectual level with itself. I am assuming, however, that after a long history of exploitation, the community even wants to speak with the academy. This is to say that the organic intellectual of a separate literary heritage bridges the gap and, subsequently, becomes a conduit of communication (and integration) that can only make the academy, in the long run, more relevant to the minoritarian community. The borders between communities are reimaged as porous.

To be sure, one must appreciate the fact that Womack is firmly ensconced within the academy. Like most university professors, he teaches, publishes criticism, delivers conference papers, and goes on speaking tours. This may seem like a banal point to make, but Womack's very presence within the academy precludes certain critics' myopic claims that his separatist model "categorically dismisses any possibility of dialogue with the Western academy" (Pulitano 60). Indeed, Pulitano's argument that *Red on Red* is a "sophisticated work of literary criticism and, as such, inaccessible to those members of a Native audience who cannot approach it from a similarly privileged position" is condescending in its primitivist orientation (92). She assumes that Creek values do not include academic education, nor does she consider that Creek academics can remain a firm part of their home communities. A factor in such misreadings, arguably, is the nature of the language that Womack chooses to employ. Indeed, when he claims that "it is time to really dig in, to entrench ourselves" (15), or, "I am saying this with all the bias I can muster that *our* American canon, the Native literary canon of the Americas, predates *their* American canon" (7), the reader cannot help but notice the forcefulness of his language. There is anger—and justifiably so—in these phrases and others like them. One might reasonably wonder, then, about the discrepancy between Womack's rhetoric and what I have already labeled as a communicative and integrative sovereignty. Granted, the language does act as a mechanism of separation between Womack and white aca-

ademic discourse, and it also conveys an explicit antipathy toward the state of Native studies in the university, but I would also argue that the language acts as a strategic misrecognition of a conventional interpellating gesture. It is something more than isolationist rhetoric. Emma LaRocque shines some light on this discussion when she points out that “Our anger, legitimate as it was and is, was exaggerated as ‘militant’ and used as an excuse not to hear us. There was little comprehension of an articulate anger reflecting an awakening and a call to liberation, not a psychological problem to be diffused in a therapist’s room” (xvii). Typified and categorized by the discourse as “angry Natives,” intellectuals like Womack and LaRocque have been forced to contend with expectations—external to themselves—that have traditionally dictated what it really means to be a scholar who is also Native. Krupat, importantly, is guilty of such stereotyping when he chooses to catalogue nationalists as those “interested in the broad category of ‘resistance literature’” (“Nationalism” 619). It is precisely because of such claustrophobic categorizations coming out of the academy that Womack constructs his model of literary separatism. His form of pedagogy is not “the hermeneutics of spite” (Hassan 2). While he refigures the militant language on the one hand, he also complicates this resistance by means of his presence within the academic community. One cannot, therefore, claim that he is being *merely* resistant; rather, through his very language, he is creating a separate, anti-assimilationist space where the hybrid Native can exist. By rearticulating the hyperbolic media stereotypes of the Native subject so prominent in popular discussions of crises such as Wounded Knee II, Oka, and (quite recently) Caledonia, Womack undermines the apparent fixity of Native identity.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it is an ironic space because he coopts the rhetoric of militancy—and thus the external discursive expectations—and uses it to construct a communicative sovereignty that speaks from and to a Creek worldview; only secondarily does it engage with the dominant symbolic order.

Jose Esteban Muñoz’s discussion of “disidentification” regarding queers of color is useful to consider here. Drawing upon the work of French linguist Michel Pêcheux, Muñoz delineates three different modes of identification

where a “Good Subject” chooses the path of identification with discursive and ideological forms. “Bad Subjects” resist and attempt to reject the images and identificatory sites offered by dominant ideology and proceed to rebel, to “counteridentify” and turn against this symbolic system. . . . Disidentification is the third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology. (11)

Womack, then, chooses this third path in that he steps both in and outside of the dominant symbolic order so that he might create a livable space for the minoritarian subject. He manipulates the interpellating call (by using the aggressive language expected of him), and in doing so he reimagines the Native discourse. This brings us back to his concept of imaginative sovereignty: his language is performative, which is to say that he constructs a Native perspective—not a quintessential self—that disidentifies and reworks the conventional narratives of the discourse. The pseudo-militant language, somewhat counterintuitively, reimagines a communicative space that, on the one hand, defies the fixity of a Native typology that is reaffirmed by a multiculturalist model and, on the other hand, celebrates the multivalent selves within his community. This is no more evident than in Womack’s engagement with issues of queer Natives. His own testimonial, as a “Native gay guy” (19), points to the fact that the separate community he constructs is a space that thrives on dialogue. As Henry points out, “Womack’s argument moves beyond the idea of queerness existing simply as a challenge to the heterosexual norm, just as he moves beyond the idea of Native literature existing simply as a subversion of the Euroamerican canon” (46). The combative language that he employs exposes the discrepancy between his words and his queer identification and thus co-opts the typologies administered by the white dominant discourse; consequently, he denaturalizes the Native space. This is to say that Womack makes use of his model of imaginative sovereignty by constructing a liberated space *on his own terms*. Moreover, it is a nonassimilated space, one that does

not exist wholly within the dominant order but parallel to it. As a subject who disidentifies, Womack asserts himself and his community as voices that can more effectively and equally communicate through their own worldview.

It should thus be clear by this point that the separatist model of literary history that Womack constructs is not a grand act of isolationist politics that precludes cross-cultural communication; rather, by imagining a criticism founded in a Creek worldview, Womack reimagines Native studies as a space that is not merely instrumental to the dominant discourse. The purpose of Native literatures is not to reify narratives of victimization in order to subvert the center, nor is it to compete for a certain canonical inclusion rooted in liberal guilt. On the contrary, Womack's project offers a model of literary history that asserts a Native-centered critical apparatus that subsequently allows the minoritarian subject to speak from a position of dominance instead of perpetual otherness. Furthermore, his strategy imbues a renewed sense of relevance into the discipline itself because he rewrites the us/them, citizen/intellectual binary that has for too long been naturalized as a part of literary studies. The forceful language of *Red on Red* has, understandably, caused many skeptical misreadings of Womack's critical project, and yet, I argue, this is perhaps part of his point: for such a long time have Native literatures been assimilated, co-opted, and misread by a dominant discourse—one that filters minoritarian literatures through a critical apparatus that serves only to reinscribe the established structures of power—that the very simplicity connoted by the word "separatism" conceals the complications and nuances beneath Womack's version of imaginative sovereignty. Indeed, this need not be a concept we resist or even fear. It is an invitation to dialogue that is refreshing in its political vision.

#### NOTE

1. Wounded Knee, a town in South Dakota on the Pine Ridge Reservation, home to the Oglala Sioux people, was the site of a 71-day conflict between the American Indian Movement (AIM) and the U.S. Marshals Service, which began on February 27, 1973. The Oka Crisis (July 11–

September 26, 1990) refers to a violent land dispute between the Mohawk community of Kanesatake and Oka, Quebec, in which Canadian military forces were called in at the behest of Quebec premier Robert Bourassa. In Caledonia, Ontario, there is an ongoing land-claims dispute between certain members of the Six Nations of the Grand River, who since 2006 have occupied the disputed tract, and provincial and federal governments.

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## Domestic Resistance

Gardening, Mothering, and Storytelling in  
Leslie Marmon Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes*

STEPHANIE LI

Leslie Marmon Silko began her most recent work, *Gardens in the Dunes* (1999), intending to write a novel that would not be political. Following the publication of *Almanac of the Dead* (1992), which was simultaneously hailed as one of the most important books of the twentieth century and condemned for its angry self-righteousness, Silko specifically sought nonpolitical subject matter for her next project. As she explained in an interview,

everyone was complaining—not everyone, but some of the moaners and groaners about my work, who think that Chicano or Native American literature, or African American literature, shouldn't be political. You know, easy for those white guys to say. They've got everything, so their work doesn't have to be political. So, I was like, oh, okay, so you want something that's not political. Okay, I'm going to write a novel about gardens and flowers. ("Listening" 163)

Silko initially planned to focus her novel on two women and their gardens, with "[a]bsolutely no politics" involved (161). However, after researching the history of gardens, she found that she "had actually stumbled into the most political thing of all—how you grow your food, whether you eat, the fact that the plant collectors followed the Conquistadores. . . . I realized that this was going to be a really political novel too" (164). Silko's belated recognition of the political nature of gardening underscores how seemingly innocu-

ous domestic activities carry significant import for cultural preservation and strategies of resistance.

As displayed throughout *Gardens in the Dunes*, gardening reflects social values and the complex ways that humans relate to and conceive of the natural world. This can have profound repercussions for oppressed people, for as Terre Ryan argues, "Silko's gardens demonstrate that imperialism begins in our own backyards" (115). In locating the basis of colonial power in what may be perceived as an incidental pastime, Silko demonstrates how fundamental domestic acts bear profound political significance. Gardening reveals basic beliefs about the relationship between humans and the earth. For example, Grandma Fleet honors Indigenous values by recognizing the old gardens as a source of food, shelter, and identity, and she passes this respect for the earth on to her grandchildren. By contrast, many of the white characters in the novel adopt a more domineering and colonialist approach to the natural world; Edward develops a lucrative orchid business, and Susan re-creates her garden each year for her aesthetic pleasure.

Although gardening is the key trope of Silko's novel, her additional emphasis on mothering in *Gardens in the Dunes* serves as a critical corollary to the ways in which domestic activities encode political positions. By drawing explicit parallels between the act of gardening and that of mothering, Silko further suggests the politicized nature of caretaking and indicates that treatment of the earth reflects attitudes about maternity and female power. While both gardening and mothering involve creation, cultivation, and the propagation of life, these acts are also united by how many Native American cultures perceive the earth. As Mary Gopher explains, "In our religion, we look at this planet as a woman. She is the most important female to us because she keeps us alive. We are nursing off of her" (qtd. in Farley 77). In linking gardening and mothering, Silko affirms Lisa Udel's contention that there is no separation between caring for children and caring for the earth: "Many Native women valorize their ability to procreate and nurture their children, communities, and the earth as aspects of motherwork" (Udel 43). Udel further explains, "women of color engage in activi-

ties to keep their families unified and teach children survival skills. This work is viewed as a method of resistance to oppression rather than gender exploitation” (51). Through their emphasis on cultivation and preservation, the forms of gardening and mothering practiced by the Sand Lizard people of Silko’s novel can be understood as critical modes of domestic resistance against both cultural and physical genocide. This approach is intimately connected to a relationship to the earth grounded in a process of storytelling that Donelle N. Dreese terms “mythical reterritorialization” and defines as “a form of postcolonial resistance by American Indian writers” involving “the retelling and relocating of the mythical stories and histories with their own voices, on their own terms, and in their own places” (44). The stories about gardening and mothering presented in Silko’s novel explore how narrative encodes cultural identity and empowers individuals to embrace the earth as a nurturing force rather than as a resource to be exploited and abused for capitalistic profit and personal gain. Indigo draws upon the natural world as a signifier of cultural narratives such that the earth mothers her through its preservation of familial stories. By then implanting her own stories in the world around her, Indigo also succeeds in gardening the earth with new narratives that nurture her Sand Lizard heritage. In this way, the interrelated activities of gardening, mothering, and storytelling combine to achieve a powerful means of resistance against oppression and cultural erasure.

As she explores a series of mother-child relationships in *Gardens in the Dunes*, Silko demonstrates that the nature of one’s maternal bond significantly informs attitudes toward the earth. This dynamic is most apparent in the contrast she draws between Indigo and Hattie, whose respective maternal relationships strongly influence their approach to the earth and the wealth of stories it can provide. With her intent focus upon the interrelated themes of gardening and mothering, Silko explains that she has produced a text that examines how best to interact with others:

*Gardens in the Dunes* really is about now. It all connects together and it gives you a psychic and spiritual way to try to live within this. . . . It gives you a way, but it gives you a

quieter, more personal, more interpersonal way. . . . I guess it's offering people another way to see things and possible ways to connect up, in a spiritual way, to withstand. . . . [I]t's about how you hold yourself together, and how, in that situation, seemingly powerless people can get things done. How people can mean things to one another, how humans, on the most simple interhuman level, can help to sustain each other. How the embattled animals and plants and the embattled people can help one another and keep one another going. ("Listening" 183–85)

Given the narrative complexity of Silko's previous works, at times *Gardens in the Dunes* reads as disarmingly simplistic. The language is plain, and the text lacks the sophisticated metaphors found in Silko's other novels. However, Silko's comments on how the text offers its audience a "way to try to live" suggest that she is deeply invested in influencing the lives of her readers. Just as mothering and gardening are critical to individual and collective identity formation, so storytelling also has the power to instill cultural values that in turn resist forces that seek to disrupt the unity of ethnic groups and destroy the memory of oppressed peoples. In *Gardens in the Dunes*, Silko affirms the notion that to mother is to tell stories that include children in a narrative that connects them to other people and to the natural world. We may thus approach her novel as a story that seeks to mother its readers, although the subject matter of the text indicates that Silko's intended audience is not composed of children. Instead, Silko directs her novel at a population in need of external guidance, readers who may gloss over the importance of gardening and caretaking to cultural and personal identity. *Gardens in the Dunes* is not an example of children's literature, but its unadorned language and sharply contrasting characters serve to emphasize the overarching value system functioning in the text while its discursive descriptions and anecdotal asides recall the comfort of bedtime tales. By presenting opposing styles of gardening and mothering as well as their personal and social consequences, Silko leads readers to recognize the importance of honoring the earth. In this way, she instills values

in her audience in much the same way that a mother influences a child. Despite Silko's initial impulse to write a novel apart from politics, she has produced a text that demonstrates the immensely political nature of caretaking with respect both to the earth and to the development of future generations.

#### MOTHERING AMONG THE SAND LIZARD PEOPLE

Silko's depiction of Indigo's relationship to Mama and Grandma Fleet reflects the importance of maternal figures in Laguna Pueblo life. Women are at the center of this matrilineal culture, which strongly values the role mothers play in passing down cultural knowledge to future generations. Moreover, as Paula Gunn Allen explains, appreciation of one's mother is crucial to understanding one's identity and place in the world:

At Laguna Pueblo in New Mexico, "Who is your mother?" is an important question. At Laguna, one of several of the ancient Keres gynocratic societies of the region, your mother's identity is the key to your own identity. Among the Keres, every individual has a place within the universe—human and nonhuman—and that place is defined by clan membership. In turn, clan membership is dependent on matrilineal descent. . . . [N]aming your own mother (or her equivalent) enables people to place you precisely within the universal web of your life, in each of its dimensions: cultural, spiritual, personal, and historical. (209)

Although the Sand Lizard people of *Gardens in the Dunes* are a fictional creation, Mama and Grandma Fleet demonstrate the primary role of women as guardians of collective and personal identity. In this matrilineal culture, "Sand Lizard mothers gave birth to Sand Lizard babies no matter which man they lay with; the Sand Lizard mother's body changed everything to Sand Lizard inside her" (Silko, *Gardens* 204). The ability of the female body to create children that are entirely Sand Lizard illustrates the power of mothers to both determine and preserve cultural identity.

In her previous work, Silko has examined this critical relationship between the mother-child bond and cultural survival. As Charlene Taylor Evans notes, Silko presents mother-daughter relationships as a type of “epistemology or ‘way of knowing’” (172). Evans argues that these bonds serve as crucial vehicles for the transmission of cultural knowledge and identity:

Mothers and daughters serve as the bridge of continuity for Native American posterity; thus they help preserve the embodiment of cultural values, of the past, and of the individual and collective identities of Native American people. The knowledge they transmit is essential to redemption or survival for a threatened or endangered society and helps maintain their true identity by providing the cultural underpinnings that counter the invasive and corrosive influences of Western culture. (172–73)

In this conception, women come to embody cultural knowledge as they act as central figures for the preservation of Native American identity.

While Evans highlights Silko's use of mother-child relationships as a way to transfer “information for understanding who Native Americans are as a people” (175), Patricia Jones notes the conspicuous absence of a maternal figure in *Storyteller* (1981). She observes that “through her palpable absence,” the mother becomes “the very center of the text” (217). This absence points to the significance of “mythical and surrogate mothers” that heavily populate Silko's text (215). These women, while not biological mothers, are deeply invested in caring for members of the next generation and play a key role in *Gardens in the Dunes*. Although Indigo is orphaned early in the text, she has many maternal figures in her life, including Grandma Fleet, Sister Salt, Hattie to some extent, and, perhaps most importantly given her long isolation from her family, the earth. As Rayna Green explains, Indigenous culture has long conceived of “mother” as a category beyond blood: “in Indian country, that role was never understood necessarily only as a biological role; grandma was never understood as a biological role; sister and aunt

were never understood in the narrow confines of genetic kinship” (66). This concept gained even more importance in the wake of the genocidal practices wrecked upon Indigenous populations such that motherhood is understood as a form of resistance for Native women (Udel 47).

Allen’s discussion of the term “mother” in Laguna Pueblo society highlights the communal nature of child-rearing. As Allen writes, “Of course, your mother is not only that woman whose womb formed and released you—the term refers in every individual case to an entire generation of women whose psychic, and consequently physical, ‘shape’ made the psychic existence of the following generation possible” (209). Children need an array of maternal figures in their lives in part because child rearing requires storytelling, which, as Silko notes, is also a dynamic, collective process. In the oral tradition of storytelling, she observes that the “ancient Pueblo people sought a communal truth, not an absolute truth. For them this truth lived somewhere within the web of differing versions” (Silko, *Yellow Woman* 32). Evans argues that storytelling in many Native American cultures is inextricably linked to child rearing or mothering. In this way, women as a collective entity can be understood as critical guardians and sources of cultural narratives. “Just as females are life-givers in the physical biological sense,” Evans writes, “they likewise generate, maintain, and sustain the lives of the Native American people through the narratives. Daughters inherit the stories and must tell and retell them to maintain and sustain their culture” (178).

This vital storytelling role can also be applied to the earth, for as Silko demonstrates in *Gardens in the Dunes*, the natural world acts as a key source of stories that are of particular importance to Indigo during her prolonged separation from her family. The earth functions as a maternal figure for her in the physical absence of her family by connecting her to her cultural identity.

The relationship between the earth and cultural narrative is of particular importance because, like Silko’s own Laguna Pueblo community, the fictional Sand Lizard people regard story as a prin-

cial means of education and as a fundamental component of child rearing. According to Silko, “the way of teaching is to tell stories. All information—scientific, technological, historical, religious—is put into narrative form” (“An Interview” 147). Moreover, as Silko explains, stories provide individuals with a sense of personal and collective identity:

That’s how you know, that’s how you belong, that’s how you know you belong, if the stories incorporate you into them. There have to be stories. It’s stories that make this a community. People tell those stories about you and your family or about others and they begin to create your identity. In a sense, you are told who you are, or you know who you are by the stories that are told about you. (“A Conversation” 12)

This notion of storytelling as fundamental to identity formation is explored throughout *Gardens in the Dunes*. Characters like Indigo and Sister Salt who possess a strong knowledge of their culture’s stories are juxtaposed against others such as Hattie who lack the self-definition and community orientation provided by meaningful social narratives. In presenting these characters, Silko highlights the ways that a tradition of storytelling can counteract attempts at cultural genocide and acts of physical violence. The process of making and participating in meaningful social narratives allows Indigo to thrive despite the absence of her biological mother through most of the text. By contrast, Hattie, though surrounded by family, lacks cultural stories by which she can understand her own experiences. Storytelling may thus be understood as both a means of cultivating personal identity and as a way of resisting cultural erasure.

The difference between Indigo and Hattie may also be understood by how they interact with the most fundamental maternal figure in the text, namely, the earth. The relationship of each to the natural world again links mothering to gardening, but more importantly it emphasizes how the earth can act as a critical source of cultural narrative and therefore personal identity. While Indigo experiences the earth as a series of coded stories that validate her

Sand Lizard heritage, Hattie yearns for such a connection and only finds meaningful attachment in her exile from the United States. The consequences of such contrasting relationships to the earth is profound: while Indigo is able to sustain her sense of self despite the separation from her family, Hattie remains lost and uncertain about her future and her basic purpose in life. Although Indigo is the literal orphan in the text, Hattie's estrangement from the earth leaves her far more vulnerable to exploitation.

INDIGO: IDENTITY THROUGH  
STORIES AND THE EARTH

Indigo's values and her sense of self are strongly influenced by the stories she hears from Grandma Fleet, Mama, and Sister Salt. As the family huddles together for warmth, "Grandma Fleet and Mama told the girls old stories about the land of perpetual summer" (*Gardens* 22). These stories promise a better life and provide the young girls with a sense of belonging while also having a powerful healing effect. During the cold winter, "Sister Salt and Indigo imagined the summer heat, and the cold winds were not so oppressive" (22). Grandma Fleet's stories illustrate the importance of respecting nature and instruct the girls on how to establish mutually beneficial relationships with the environment. She tells them of people who made the mistake of killing the snakes of the desert springs, causing the water to disappear. Many of Grandma Fleet's stories are intimately connected to the land, describing the cycles of nature and the return of deceased Sand Lizard people. These tales present the world as an integrated universe where the presence of humans is inextricable from the processes of nature. As a result, Indigo learns to recognize rain as a manifestation of her ancestors, and she understands the old gardens to be a place of sanctuary. Just as Silko observes that, through story, "the complex of Pueblo knowledge and belief was maintained" (*Yellow Woman* 30), so the Sand Lizard people preserve their values and customs through oral narratives.

Despite the power of story to maintain cultural memory and

unity, the way of life of the Sand Lizard people is severely endangered by the threat posed by whites to Native American children. In addition to enduring extreme poverty and abuse, Grandma Fleet and Mama are constantly in danger of having Sister Salt and Indigo taken from them. In her essay "Spider Woman's Web: Mothers and Daughters in Southwestern Native American Literature," Helen Bannan notes that "the greatest American threat to Native American generational continuity was the governmental policy of capturing Indian children for boarding schools, where, in the name of vocational education, Indian children were taught to reject their heritage and adopt American cultural patterns" (274). As a site of assimilation and the destruction of Sand Lizard culture, the Sherman Institute is strongly associated with death and silence. In her first few months at the school, Indigo "had watched three girls from Alaska stop eating, lie listlessly in their beds, then die, coughing blood." Although Indigo does not speak to the Alaskan girls, "she knew what their message was: she had to get away or she would die as they had" (*Gardens* 70). In the institute, there are no stories to link the children to their family identities. Significantly, Indigo escapes from the school because of her strong identification with her culture. She recalls, "Sand Lizard people were not afraid of capture because they were so quick. Grandma Fleet taught the girls to wait and watch for the right moment to run" (71). Emboldened by the memory of her ancestors and by her identity as a Sand Lizard, Indigo successfully runs away.

The abduction of Indian children devastates familial relationships, causing intense personal trauma while also threatening cultural continuity. Without children to carry on the traditions and values of the ancestors, and without mothers to provide the future generation with a sense of identity and belonging, the Sand Lizard people are in danger of extinction. From this vantage point, mothering not only fulfills deep emotional needs for intimacy and love but also functions as a political act that ensures the survival of a people. As Evans notes, "As innocuous as the stories may sometimes appear to be, they are powerful weapons against assimila-

tion” (177). Indigo’s escape from school reveals that the mothering and care she received as a young child empower her with the strength and confidence to resist her captors. As Indigo runs from the Sherman Institute, she is comforted by the memory of her escape with Sister Salt from the soldiers at Needles. Her escape thus enacts a preexisting cultural narrative; although she is physically alone, she is part of a larger historical legacy of survival and resistance. The natural world also gives her the courage to continue by providing vivid reminders of her family. In her solitude, she reflects, “Somewhere Sister Salt and Mama looked up at the same sky. She was not so far away from home: some of the same birds lived here” (*Gardens* 73).

The stories told to Indigo by Mama and Grandma Fleet not only provide the young girl with a powerful cultural identity but also present the world as a network of signifiers that refer to meaningful stories and personal memories. The earth acts as a source of Indigo’s heritage and as a conduit for narratives that provide comfort for her. Certain natural objects such as plants, animals, and land formations are associated in Indigo’s mind with memories of her family. In this way, the natural world occupies a maternal position toward her, providing Indigo with reminders of her individual and collective identity. Silko discusses the relationship between story and the natural world in *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* (1996), noting that stories are often inextricable from the land. She explains, “in the case of many of the Pueblo narratives, it is impossible to determine which came first, the incident or the geographical feature that begs to be brought alive in a story that features some unusual aspect of this location” (33). Indigo’s understanding of the ancient gardens reflects this relationship between story and place, as many of Grandma Fleet’s narratives are derived from actual locations.

However, as a runaway, Indigo must expand her conception of the natural world beyond that of specific landscapes in order to access the stories of her past. For example, after escaping from the Sherman Institute, Indigo is comforted by the sound of bees:

Here she stopped to rest and to listen for her pursuers, but the only sound was the bees, a soothing sound that reminded her of the bees that hovered at the spring above the old gardens. When Indigo was little, Grandma Fleet used to tease that the bees sang a lullaby for Indigo's nap so she must not disappoint them. (*Gardens* 71)

The way that the bees provide solace to Indigo and connect her to her family highlights Silko's contention that cultural narratives are manifest in nature. Moreover, Silko's use of the bees in this passage reflects Indigo's nomadic status. Separated from her geographic home, Indigo must rely on parts of the natural world other than specific landscapes to connect with her past and her cultural history. As a traveler, Indigo comes to appreciate those aspects of nature that, like her, are mobile and possess a meaning that can be transplanted across geographic spaces.

The notion of the natural world as a maternal figure that offers comfort and identity through its connection to stories illustrates Silko's description of storytelling as "a whole way of being." She continues:

When I say "storytelling," I don't just mean sitting down and telling a once-upon-a-time kind of story. I mean a whole way of seeing yourself, the people around you, your life, the place of your life in the bigger context, not just in terms of nature and location, but in terms of what has gone on before, what's happened to other people. ("A Leslie Marmon Silko Interview" 71)

Having listened and absorbed the stories of Grandma Fleet and Mama, Indigo knows who she is and where she belongs. This powerful sense of identity and self-assurance, which is deeply rooted in the natural world, enables her to flee the destructive Sherman Institute and to resist possible dissolution of her cultural roots. In concert with Dreese's formulation of "mythical reterritorialization," stories function here as a source of strength by which Indigo can maintain her identity as a Sand Lizard even when she is isolated from her family.

THE INVERTED MATERNAL ROLES  
OF HATTIE AND INDIGO

Although Indigo is the ostensible orphan in *Gardens in the Dunes*, Hattie exhibits the uncertainty and disorientation of an abandoned child. Unlike Indigo, she lacks a mother who nurtures her with stories and teaches her to value the natural world. Only Mr. Abbott, who “planted a white oak tree in the front of the yard the day Hattie was born” (95), demonstrates any real affection for her. Mrs. Abbott’s concern for her daughter reflects her preoccupation with money and social status. She worries that Hattie’s academic pursuits will ruin her prospects for marriage, warning that “no man wanted a professor for a wife” (75). According to Mrs. Abbott, Hattie is a type of commodity to be traded in marriage for added material gain, an approach to women that is strongly at odds with the mores of the Sand Lizard people. Noting this contrast, Louise Barnett argues, “*Gardens* systematically poses such an Indian character against a white woman in order to show the superiority of a social organization grounded in the female role” (29). This observation can be extended to demonstrate the contrast between opposing cultural approaches to the natural world.

Hattie comes from a society in which women are expected to be passive and subservient to their husbands, which in turn leads to a domineering approach to nature. This crucial link between the oppression of women and the exploitation of the earth has been well theorized by such ecofeminists as Vandana Shiva, who writes, “Passivity as an assumed category of the ‘nature’ of nature and women denies the activity of nature and life” (191). By requiring obedience and conformity to traditional gender roles, Hattie’s mother impedes her daughter’s growth and stifles any meaningful relationship she may have to the natural world. Mrs. Abbott frowns upon Hattie’s academic pursuits even as these studies seek to redress the lack of “mythic roots in North America” that Barnett notes is especially damaging for white women (28). Without narratives that reflect her identity, Hattie becomes alienated from other people and the earth. She accepts Edward’s attempts to commodify

plants and flowers and does not challenge Susan's aesthetic exploitation of the earth. Hattie functions largely as an empty vessel to be filled with the beliefs and ambitions of others. Despite her obvious desire for meaning, as evidenced by her dreams and appreciation of the European gardens, Hattie is unable to act upon these impulses and instead bases her identity in the expectations of others.

Angelika Köhler argues that Hattie "seems to play the role of the white teacher who instructs the exotic 'outsider' how to behave properly in Western civilization." Köhler reads this as an extension of the "white woman's male environment" that "expects her to adjust more willingly to her traditional female role" (238). Because of Indigo, Hattie begins to envision herself as a mother and to conform to the gender role expected of her. Silko writes, "It was the Indian girl who stirred Hattie's maternal instincts and caused her to change her mind; now she wanted to conceive a child; that was quite clear" (*Gardens* 294). However, despite the emergence of Hattie's maternal sensibility, as Köhler warns, Hattie remains constrained by dominant patriarchy and is unable to confront its oppressive hold. Her lack of culturally and personally affirming stories ultimately makes her an inadequate mother who fails to challenge injustice in a constructive way. Because she has no narratives that validate her experience and secure her identity, Hattie fails to engage in the process of storytelling—both as a listener and as a teller—that is so crucial to productive mothering.

Hattie demonstrates an inability to narrate her own experiences following her assault by Mr. Hysop. Only after she becomes ill and Lucille tells Mrs. Abbott about the crime does Hattie admit to having been assaulted. Moreover, upon hearing that Laura and her husband have separated, Hattie becomes disconcerted and "stammered inanely that she was sorry" (289). When confronted with conflict, Hattie responds with silence, mimicking the failure of articulation that defines her own difficulty to express herself. Hattie exhibits a similar hesitation when listening as Indigo describes her previous life with her family; she is incapable of both telling and hearing stories. On numerous occasions Indigo refers to her past, but Hattie does not engage the girl or demonstrate

an interest in understanding her life history. Although Indigo describes frightening images involving “slave hunters” and “the children tied together in a line,” Hattie disregards them as fictional, silencing Indigo as she has been silenced (233). By mimicking the repressive style of her own mother, Hattie demonstrates her inability to adequately nurture Indigo.

While Hattie fails as a surrogate mother for Indigo, the latter emerges as a strong maternal figure. Indigo’s nurturing qualities are first evidenced in the old gardens where she imagines that the squashes “were fat babies that hadn’t learned to talk yet. Indigo carried them one by one, cradled in her arms, so that she would not damage them” (56). She also treats her adopted parrot, Rainbow, like a child, telling it stories in the same way that Grandma Fleet and Mama comforted her with tales of the old gardens and ancestors (227). Significantly, Indigo draws upon a description of her physical homeland to tell these stories, again demonstrating the key connection between narrative and the earth. Indigo even imagines new adventures that describe her and Rainbow together, providing the parrot with the type of belonging that Silko mentioned a child receives by listening to the stories of her culture. Moreover, Indigo discovers that telling her stories has a beneficial effect for her as well; while on the train, “[S]he found if she talked to the parrot the nausea wasn’t as bad” (227). By telling stories, Indigo validates her own self and culture amid the severe alienation and loneliness she experiences while away from her family. Unlike Hattie, who cannot narrate any aspect of her life, Indigo develops a vibrant relationship with others and with her environment based upon storytelling.

The dynamic between Indigo and Hattie becomes inverted following the latter’s separation from Edward. Although Hattie resolves that “she loved Indigo dearly—Edward’s deception and all the rest did not matter so long as she secured Indigo’s happiness” (394), once Indigo is reunited with Sister Salt, Hattie is forced to confront “a dreadful sense of how alone she was” (412). Hattie realizes that the bond she formed with Indigo lacks the depth and intimacy of the relationship shared by the two sisters. While Hattie was profoundly changed by her encounter with Indigo, especially with

regard to the maturation of her maternal feelings, Indigo never needed Hattie to awaken or complete a part of her identity. Moreover, without Indigo to give her purpose, Hattie recognizes that “she was the one who no longer had a life to return to” (441). Hattie mourns her loss of Indigo, and in her grief, she “pulled the bedding to the floor off the horsehair mattress, and wept because this was Indigo’s custom” (414). Hattie’s attempt to mimic Indigo’s behavior reflects her own loss and confusion. Without Indigo’s presence to focus and guide her actions, Hattie simply does not know how to act, and therefore she resorts to imitating Indigo.

Although Hattie’s decision not to return to her parental home represents a nominal departure from her stifling upbringing, she is a woman without a place and therefore without an identity. This vulnerability is most prominently indicated by the violent attack she suffers by an anonymous assailant near the reservation. Following the assault, Indigo and Sister Salt care for Hattie, enacting a complete inversion of mother and child roles; Hattie becomes the daughter who is dependent on the younger women for food, shelter, and a sense of self. Although Hattie files a report of the crime, she soon realizes that “the townspeople protected one another” and her assailant will not be brought to justice (461). Hattie’s assault and the passive response of the police parallel the oppression faced by the Native Americans in the novel and underscore what Köhler identifies as “her growing awareness of experiences of life that she shares with the Indian girl, since they are ultimately both denied the right to decide on their roles and positions in the American cultural system” (239). Just as Hattie’s attacker will never be found nor her belongings returned, so the people who perpetuate violence against the Sand Lizard people and other Indigenous groups will never be indicted. In this way, Silko demonstrates how dominant patriarchy oppresses women and Indigenous communities in related manners.

Despite this key commonality, by exploring how Hattie and Indigo each respond to oppression, Silko critiques opposing approaches to resistance. These characters represent a central difference in conceptions of political activity, what Udel terms “Native

traditions of ‘responsibilities’ as distinguished from Western feminism’s notions of rights” (43). According to Patricia A. Monture-Angus, “Responsibility focuses attention not on what is mine, but on the relationships between people and creation” (28). This contrast is evident in the parallel flights of Indigo and Hattie. When Indigo escapes from the Sherman Institute, she has a clear goal, to return to the old gardens and reunite with Mama and Sister Salt; she has a clear responsibility to her family and to the land. However, when Hattie flees her parents following her assault, she has nowhere to go. The dirty, cluttered alleyways that she encounters heighten her alienation and contrast with the trees and brush that initially comfort Indigo after she leaves the Sherman Institute. For Hattie, there is no natural world to guide her, no larger narrative by which she can identify her story with others. This confusion leads her to light a barn on fire, thereby destroying half the town of Needles.

At the corrals, she let the terrified horses run free, and followed them to a hill east of town, where she watched—amazed and elated by the beauty of the colors of the fire against the twilight sky. As the flames snaked over to catch the roofs of buildings on either side of the stable, the fire’s colors were brilliant—the reds as rich as blood, the blues and whites luminous, and the orange flame as bright as Minerva’s gemstone. (475)

This arson attack is the first moment in the novel that Hattie demonstrates aggression, initiative, and power. Although it is an act of destruction, the fire creates colors and light that recall images from the gardens Hattie encountered in Europe. Momentarily, the fire replicates the beauty and power of those images while also representing a strong rejection of her society. However, we must also read the fire as a sign of Hattie’s failed resistance. It does not succeed in bringing about justice or improving the lives of women like Hattie; it ultimately causes immense destruction. The garden images flame for moments, lacking the longevity and sustained power of stories like those of the Sand Lizard people. Without her

own basis of meaningful narratives, Hattie fails to actualize constructive politicized resistance. Although she empowers herself with the individual right to seek vengeance for her assault, she takes no responsibility for the destruction that she causes or for establishing change that might benefit other women like herself.

The stark contrast between Hattie's and Indigo's responses to oppression provides key insight into the nature of meaningful resistance. Hattie boldly destroys Needles, but she does nothing to change the patriarchy and systemic sexism that has caused such tragedy for her. Her failure is best demonstrated by her departure to England; she cannot constructively confront oppression in the United States. Although she finds comfort and stability among the stones of the old gardens, there is no suggestion that Hattie will ever experience motherhood or interact with a substantial community of her own. By contrast, Indigo thrives in the old gardens, accompanied by Sister Salt and the little grandfather. She successfully grows Laura's gladiolus plants and discovers that they are edible as well as beautiful. Thus she not only transplants the flowers into her native ground but also finds a new, beneficial value for them. Most importantly, however, Indigo continues the tradition of storytelling by relating tales of her travels through Europe to Sister Salt. These stories demonstrate Indigo's comfort with new narratives and experiences that enhance and expand Sand Lizard culture, much like the transplanted gladiolas. Her flourishing life in the old gardens demonstrates the critical necessity of forms of resistance based in domestic activities. Hattie's violent conflagration does little to combat forms of oppression, whereas Indigo's quiet perseverance and commitment to the basic necessities of life prove to be the most resistant actions of all.

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# “Mix-Ups, Messes, Confinements, and Double-Dealings”

Transgendered Performances in  
Three Novels by Louise Erdrich

J. JAMES IOVANNONE

Louise Erdrich's early poem "The Strange People" portrays a dynamic understanding of gender echoed in many of her later fictive works.<sup>1</sup> Narrated by a speaker who is half antelope, half woman, the poem details the relationship between a masculine hunter and his feminine prey. The antelope-woman is not wounded by her hunter's weapons, as his bullets merely "enter and dissolve" (8). The only thing that can hurt her, touch her heart, is honest dialogue and exchange, representing a commingling of self and another, hunter and hunted, human and animal, man and woman. The poem suggests that gender is experienced as a wound, a site of conflict and discord, a transformation, a negotiation between men and women, masculine and feminine—an exchange that redefines and transcends both. Erdrich's blurring of animal and human subjectivities echoes Judith Butler's assertion that issues of identity fundamentally question who or what is defined as human and to what extent. Butler writes, "The terms by which we are recognized as human are socially articulated and changeable. . . . The human is understood differently depending on its race . . . its sex . . . its ethnicity. . . . Certain humans are recognized as less than human. . . . Certain humans are not recognized as human at all" (*Undoing Gender* 2). In questioning not only who or what counts as human but also, by extension, the connectivity existing between a variety of subject positions, Erdrich places an examination of issues of identity—namely those of gender, race, and sexuality—at the forefront of her project as a writer.

Like the antelope-woman of “The Strange People,” throughout her series of interconnected novels Erdrich frequently includes characters that combine, perform, and transcend masculine and feminine gender identities. In “Blurs, Blends, Berdaches: Gender Mixing in the Novels of Louise Erdrich,” Julie Barak analyzes this idea of gender exchange, observing:

The plethora of mixed-gendered tricksters in Erdrich is her literary response to the present and constant perception of opposition in her life and in the lives of her characters. The fact that so many of her characters are mixed-gendered tricksters leads to the conclusion that one of the most threatening aspects of contemporary life in America is its insistence on strictly bifurcated gendered behavior. (58)

Barak argues that many of Erdrich’s characters blur masculine and feminine gender roles and are of a mixed-gender status. Mixed-gender characters are defined as those who “are described either as exhibiting or in some ways acting out opposite sex role mannerisms or behaviors” (51).

In attempting to establish a framework for understanding the gender mixing of Erdrich’s characters, Barak suggests that such practices be read in light of the Native American figure of the “berdache”—a role that existed historically in many Native American cultures and that represented a third category of gender identity, existing outside traditional Western understandings of male and female, men and women. Cultural anthropologist Serena Nanda conceptualizes the role of the “berdache” in the following manner:

The berdache in the anthropological literature refers to people who partly or completely take on aspects of the culturally defined role of the other sex and who are classified as neither women nor men, but as genders of their own. It is important to note here that berdache thus refers to gender variant roles, rather than a complete crossing over to an opposite gender role. . . . American Indian cultures included three or four genders: men, women, male variants, and female variants. (12–13)

Barak also notes that the ability of “berdaches” to perform both masculine and feminine genders led many communities to imagine them as significant.<sup>2</sup> Based on these definitions, Barak then suggests not only that the figure of the “berdache” provides a useful framework for understanding Erdrich’s characters, but also that many of these characters can be read as “berdaches.”

While Barak’s notion of gender mixing is certainly one of the most illuminating contributions to the body of Erdrich scholarship focusing on issues of gender, many of her arguments are both problematic and dated. In particular, Barak’s application of the “berdache” figure to Erdrich’s characters is deserving of further critical attention in light of recent scholarship within Native American studies and anthropology examining gender and sexuality in Native cultures. The books *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality* (1997) edited by Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang and *Men as Women, Women as Men: Changing Gender in Native American Cultures* (1998) by Lang revisit and revise scholarship produced on the figure of the “berdache.” These two volumes argue that within contemporary scholarship on Native American gender and sexuality the term “berdache” has been problematized and replaced with the term “two-spirit,” coined in 1990 by Native Americans during the third Native American/First Nations gay and lesbian conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Originating as a term for contemporary Native American gays and lesbians as well as people who have been referred to as “berdache” by anthropologists and other scholars, “two-spirit” has come to refer to a number of Native American roles and identities past and present, including Native American/First Nations gays and lesbians, Native American gender categories, traditions of gender diversity, transvestites, transsexuals, transgendered people, drag queens, and butches (Jacobs, Thomas, and Lang 2).

The term “berdache” is now viewed as inappropriate and insulting by many American Indians and anthropologists, who suggest that whenever the term “berdache” is used it should appear in quotation marks to indicate its offensive etymological origins and colo-

nial implications. Originally from the Persian *bardaj* and evolving to the French *bardache*, the term refers to a passive homosexual partner or one who is the recipient of sperm. It has also been translated as “kept boy,” “male prostitute,” or “a boy kept for unnatural purposes” (Jacobs, Thomas, and Lang 4). Thus the term was not one chosen by Native American cultures themselves but was applied to them by their European colonizers. Native American cultures have historically had their own terminology for these roles that are highly specific and vary from tribe to tribe.<sup>3</sup> Based on its masculinist origins, the term “berdache” is also particularly troublesome in its application to women’s gender and sexual diversity within Native American cultures—for example, in Barak’s use of the term in describing characters from Erdrich’s novels *Love Medicine* and *Tracks* such as Margaret, Lulu, and Fleur. Drawing on the work of anthropologist Walter L. Williams, Sabine Lang notes, “the application of the term ‘berdache’ to females who effect a change in gender roles is inappropriate because the word originally derives from a term for male prostitutes, as well as because females in the role of hunters and warriors would also be conceptualized in Native American cultures as being different from male ‘berdaches’” (8–9).<sup>4</sup>

In this essay, I argue that Erdrich moves beyond what Barak describes as gender mixing in relation to such traditional figures as the “berdache” to synthesize traditional notions of “men” and “women” into new understandings of gender that transcend binary categorization. Instead of reading her characters through a framework such as that of the “berdache” or two-spirit, I propose reading many of Erdrich’s characters as *transgendered*. While the term “transgendered” is often used to describe a wide variety of gender identities and expressions, I use the term to represent gendered identities that exist beyond binary categories of male and female, masculine and feminine, heterosexual and homosexual. It is not my intention to suggest that Erdrich’s characters are *literally* transgendered but rather that reading them through a *transgendered framework* exposes new possibilities for gendered expressions.<sup>5</sup> To understand Erdrich’s theorization of gender only through Native

figures such as the “berdache” and the two-spirit fixes this theorization within a purely ethnic framework. If we are to understand many of Erdrich’s characters as working across or beyond existing notions of gender, we must also examine how such an engagement is formulated from a multiplicity of sources and perspectives that are not exclusively Anishinaabe or, more broadly, “Indian.” While Erdrich certainly engages Anishinaabe gender roles within her fiction, most notably in her use and transposition of traditional Anishinaabe folklore and myths into contemporary contexts, these roles do not completely define her understanding of gender. Just as gender, for Erdrich, is fluid and multiple, so are the sources of inspiration from which she draws. For example, in the endnotes to her 2001 novel *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*, Erdrich writes that she was inspired by Diane Wood Middlebrook’s *Suits Me: The Double Life of Billy Tipton*—a biography of a jazz musician who was born biologically female but lived his entire life as a man (357). Tipton’s story is in many ways a “real-life” version of the experiences of Erdrich’s character Agnes DeWitt/Father Damien, who engages in a lifelong performance as a reservation priest and is also a skilled musician—a connection that will be explored in greater detail later in this essay. Thus any sustained exploration of Erdrich’s theorization of gender must be attuned to her use of both Native and non-Native sources.

Within Erdrich’s fiction, a critical distinction exists between gender mixing and being transgendered. Whereas mixing implies the coming together of old categories that still retain their distinctive elements within the mixture as a whole, I use the term “transgendered” to highlight the formation of new understandings of gender and sexuality that elude and subvert binary models. This is why, in light of Barak’s framework, it would be inadequate to simply replace her use of the term “berdache” with the modern designation of “two-spirit.” Although the term “two-spirit” gestures toward a third option for gendered expression existing outside of masculine and feminine heterosexual models, it is similar to Barak’s notion of gender mixing in that such a designation is accomplished through a blending of traditional masculine and

feminine attributes as opposed to rejecting the primacy of binary designations of gender themselves and representing a wider range of possibilities for gendered performances. To apply the term “two-spirit” to Erdrich’s characters retains the notion that only three possibilities exist for gendered expression—masculine, feminine, or a blending of the two—a designation that, I argue, is directly in conflict with her larger project.

In general, Erdrich’s transgendered characters are better able to navigate, survive, and lead meaningful lives in a world that is highly gender stratified, as compared with characters who attempt to conform to rigid categories, illustrating how synthesizing new understandings of gender and sexuality can function as critical sites of resistance to dominant, oppressive, and regulatory ideologies.<sup>6</sup> Erdrich’s characters create such subversions through the enactment of various gendered performances that parody, undermine, and expose normative identity constructs. As Judith Butler writes in *Gender Trouble*, “gender [is] a corporeal style, an ‘act,’ as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where ‘performative’ suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning” (139). Like gender, the concept of performance also implies a critical exchange, a possible transgression, a destabilization between self and other, performer and audience, spectator and spectacle, that transcends formerly discrete boundaries. Drawing on the work of J. L. Austin and Jacques Derrida, Butler argues that categories of identity such as gender are rendered culturally intelligible through embodied actions normalized through their repetition, or what she refers to as a “stylized repetition of acts” (140).<sup>7</sup> Because no expressions of gender are original but can be understood only through continued repetition, Butler argues that with each performance or repetition the potential emerges to alter the repetition, thereby altering the expression of gender produced by the repetition itself.

It is not incidental that Erdrich’s characters who challenge discrete boundaries of gender are also, in some way, performers: Cyprian Lazarre is a vaudeville performer and acrobat, the trickster Nanapush is a great storyteller and orator, and Father Damien

is a skilled pianist. In representing scenes of gendered performance within her fiction, Erdrich opens the possibilities of altering the expressions of gender in the performances she describes. Through representing gender *as* a performance, Erdrich first exposes binary understandings of gender as constructed and subsequently opens a space within literary representation for the rearticulation of these categories. For both Erdrich and Butler, performative spaces function as sites of contestation, negotiation, and resistance. However, whereas Butler concedes that because embodied actions always exceed the intentions of the subject, it becomes difficult to determine what ultimate effects a change in the repetition of gender will achieve, Erdrich uses representations of gendered performances within her fiction as a means of enacting particular effects upon her characters and readers. In representing gender as performance, Erdrich opens a space within her fiction that allows her readership to *think gender differently*. Within Erdrich's writing, agency is located not just in exposing gender as a construct but also in examining the ways in which the interstices existing between the normative repetitions of gender can effectively be mined to question not only categories such as masculinity and femininity *but also the category of gender itself as a meaningful category of human classification*. Erdrich's fictional representations can be read as an extension of Butler's project in terms of their application within fictional works, as well as the challenges posed to the notion of gender performance when examined in relation to Anishinaabe mythologies.

While much has been written on the gender mixing that occurs in Erdrich's early novels (*Love Medicine* through *The Bingo Palace*), it is in her more recent works that these early explorations of gender and sexuality come to fruition and are most deftly addressed, namely in *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* (2001), *The Master Butchers Singing Club* (2003), and *Four Souls* (2004).<sup>8</sup> Focusing on these three novels, this essay explores three critical sites of transgendered performance: Cyprian's "balancing acts" in *The Master Butchers Singing Club*, Nanapush's "trickster drag" in *Four Souls*, and Agnes/Father Damien's "priestly performances" in *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*. In enacting

such an investigation, I examine theories of performance such as Butler's performative gender and Mikhail Bakhtin's carnivalesque in addition to depictions of gender within traditional Anishinaabe folklore to show that, through her representations of gendered performances, both Erdrich and her characters create new possibilities, new acts, new modes and spaces of gendered expressions.

#### BALANCING ACTS: CYPRIAN'S CARNIVALESQUE

[Carnivals] were the second life of the people, who for a time entered the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality, and abundance.

Mikhail Bakhtin

Throughout her 2003 novel *The Master Butchers Singing Club*, Erdrich uses images of performance and balancing to examine how certain sexual identities are suppressed and, alternately, how these identities might find some means of agency and productive expression. Cyprian Lazarre—a queer, sexually repressed vaudeville performer who is able to perform amazing acts of balancing—attempts a romantic relationship with his stage partner Delphine Watzka, but their romance is perhaps more of a performance than their vaudeville show. The balancing acts that Cyprian performs are not just literal acts of balancing; they can also be read as representing the complex set of negotiations and sacrifices that individuals with non-normative identities must make in order to survive in repressive contexts. Cyprian's queer desire affects not only him but Delphine also, as she must remain complicit in these acts, maintaining the fragile nature of the performance. As a human table, while Delphine literally serves as the foundation for Cyprian's balancing tricks, she is also the foundation on which the performative nature of their relationship is based.

Early in their partnership, Delphine realizes the following about Cyprian's balancing: “[He] called himself a balancing expert. [She] realized it was really the only thing he could do. Literally, the *only* thing he could do” (18). Cyprian is unable to do anything except balance (literally and figuratively) as all his energy must be concen-

trated on maintaining a particular performance—that of heterosexuality—whether on or off the stage. When he has sexual experiences with men, they take place in liminal or hidden spaces—for example, in parks, concealed behind bushes.

Balancing is also connected to Cyprian's description of "the nowhere" (24)—the mental and physical place where he must go in order to act out his queer desires. When Delphine questions him after he has gone off with a man, he replies that he has been "nowhere." For Cyprian, the idea of "nowhere" is not used as an evasive answer. Rather, it is used to describe an actual mental and physical place where individuals must go in order to articulate certain non-normative desires that society at large does not give them the language, the tools, or the means to express: "He did not say this to her smoothly or in a manipulating way, but painfully, as though he really had been *nowhere*" (24). Cyprian must literally go to a space that does not exist—in that such a space does not signify within dominant narratives of gender and sexuality—in order to claim some sort of existence that is representative of his actual desires.

The most direct link between balancing and "the nowhere" comes with Cyprian's description of how he balances. He says that balancing is like a dream in which "you know that you are dreaming. If you become too aware of knowing you are dreaming, you wake up. But if you are just enough aware, you can influence your dream" (27–28). Again, the idea of balancing functions both literally and figuratively. In one sense, Cyprian's metaphor alludes to his acrobatic feats, but at the same time, he is encapsulating the stress of secreting a non-normative identity in the small town of Argus, North Dakota, after World War II. The concept of dreaming relates directly to all that must be concealed or hidden in order for Cyprian to be viewed as a "normal" functioning member of society. Balancing is a state of ignoring and acknowledging your desires at the same time, of being both present and absent, and if you upset the balance, you fall. Cyprian says that "When you fall . . . you must forget that you exist. Strike the ground as a shadow strikes the ground. Weightless" (28).

In *Rabelais and His World*, Mikhail Bakhtin echoes this idea of a

dual identity based in performance in his analysis of the medieval practice of carnival:

It could be said (with certain reservations, of course) that a person of the Middle Ages lived, as it were, *two lives*: one that was the *official* life, monolithically serious and gloomy, subjugated to a strict hierarchical order, full of terror, dogmatism, reverence and piety; the other was the *life of the carnival square*, free and unrestricted, full of ambivalent laughter, blasphemy, the profanation of everything sacred, full of debasing and obscenities, familiar contact with everyone and everything. Both these lives were legitimate, but separated by strict temporal boundaries. (129–30)

The idea of living an official *and* a performative life resonates deeply with the example of Cyprian. The Bakhtinian notion of performance as a means of undermining cultural authority illustrates the fact that Cyprian's balancing is not constructed merely in reaction to oppressive structures; it is also productive, reactionary, subversive. As Michael Holquist writes in *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World*, "Carnival . . . is a means for displaying otherness: carnival makes familiar relations strange. . . . [Carnival highlights] the fact that social roles determined by class relations are *made* not given, culturally produced rather than naturally mandated" (89). In creating a performative space where non-normative desires can be expressed, Cyprian troubles the legitimacy and authenticity of gender and sexuality categories. Cyprian is a liminal figure whose name literally means "a wanton person" (*The American Heritage Dictionary*), and the fact that he can perform heterosexuality while at the same time finding a critical space in which to perform queerness undercuts the primacy, the naturalness, of heteronormative ideologies. Cyprian is also a *Lazarre*, a surname that Erdrich uses in many novels to represent mixed-race individuals of a particular familial line that exists on the borders of society and community. The Lazarres exist both inside and outside the reservation community, allowing them to negotiate and represent multiple spaces and points of view that other characters cannot. Cyprian's balanc-

ing shows that identities are not fixed or rigid but precariously constituted, in flux, shifting, and transitory. Just as a slight movement can upset a performer's balance, deliberately altering a performance can function as an act of resistance against the dominant culture.

The performative nature of Delphine and Cyprian's relationship enables them to survive in a world where compulsory heterosexuality is the norm. As a pair, Delphine and Cyprian are able to navigate various normative societal constructs with more ease than they would be able to if they were not members of such a partnership. Their performance of heterosexuality directly enables acceptance in the community, as Delphine is held in higher regard by the residents of Argus for being "married," and Cyprian is able to find male friendship within the butchers' singing club. Together, they are also better able to resist the forces of Sheriff Hock, who suspects Delphine's father Roy of murder. In contrast with Delphine, her friend Clarisse suffers at the hands of the sheriff for her non-normative choices of resisting his sexual advances, remaining single, and running a funeral home. To Hock, such an identity is unacceptable, and he is willing to blackmail Clarisse with charges of murder as a means of restoring the normative order—in other words, so she will marry him. Clarisse ultimately murders Hock. Refusing to work within the law represented by him, she escapes by going further outside it.

Cyprian can be read as a transgendered character most directly in relation to his partnership with Delphine. Because Cyprian's queer identity balances both masculine and feminine elements, Delphine shares a camaraderie with him that she has been unable to find with any other man. "After thinking of it for some time, [Delphine] decided that she now felt a kinship with him that was more female than male. It seemed as though she could tell him anything that went on in her woman's heart, and he would understand it, he would know the truth of it, having felt it in his own" (79). Whereas initially Delphine thinks the only thing Cyprian can do is balance, she later discovers that within the protected space of their relationship he is able to be more "himself," performing a variety of traditionally masculine and feminine tasks. In fact,

Cyprian blossoms in the face of crisis. Not only is he able to help Delphine deal with the bodies found in Roy's cellar and with illegal liquor runs, but he is also able to cook, clean, listen, and nurture. Because of Cyprian's transgendered status and his desire to balance, to belong, Delphine finds in him a confidant that she is unable to find in anyone else, despite the lack of sexual passion in their relationship.

Delphine eventually drives Cyprian away because of this lack, but she later discovers that sexual passion and desire do not necessarily create the most functional and rewarding relationships. When she has the chance to pursue a romantic relationship with the handsome butcher Fidelis, she is similarly unrewarded and unfulfilled. To a certain degree, Delphine finds comfort in the fact that she does not love Fidelis in a terribly passionate manner, as she does not want to feel subjugated to him or to her own desires. With Fidelis, Delphine does not feel compelled to perform the traditional scripts of heterosexual romance. Like Cyprian, Delphine can also be read as transgendered, as her gendered performances similarly combine masculine and feminine elements that subvert normative narratives of heterosexual love and desire. For this reason, the real "romance" of *The Master Butchers Singing Club* can be read as occurring between Delphine and Fidelis's wife Eva, as the pair clearly care for one another in a passionate and embodied way. Eva's love for Delphine is powerfully expressed on her deathbed, when, dying of cancer, she tells her: "I want you, only you, to handle my body. And please write to my *Mutti*. Tell her that you took care of me. Tell her this: I loved you" (138). Similarly, after Eva's death, Delphine describes her absence as a "woman-shaped hole" (267), stating that she would rather be buried with Eva in between her and Fidelis as opposed to on Fidelis's other side (345). Delphine does not marry Fidelis, partly because of her romantic inclinations toward him, but also out of love and respect for Eva.

The most subversive performance of the novel comes after Cyprian leaves Delphine, eventually pursuing a relationship with a man—Vilhus Gast, another acrobatic performer. The show the men perform in Argus provides a space where queer desire can be made manifest through the homoerotic nature of a stage per-

formance that pokes fun at and undermines assumptions of normative heterosexuality. As Bakhtin notes, carnivalesque performances can be read as “a vast and manifold literature of parody” (4). Cyprian and Vilhus perform graceful acrobatic acts in which they are in close proximity, wear tight black gymnasium suits and other exotic costumes, and perform with various animals such as snakes (318–20). Here, snakes are used as symbols of the subversive potential of non-normative desire: “They wound and unwound the snake as it became more alert, tried to curl them into its coils and draw them close” (319). As Wendy Doniger notes, the snake is “an animal often implicated in the mythology of androgyny” (293). This merging of animal and human bodies directly relates to the identities being blurred, challenged, and rewritten within the context of the performance. The dance in which the snakes are used is entitled the “Dance of Death,” symbolizing the manner in which particular identities are ignored and oppressed—literally rendered nonexistent, dead, and invisible, though subsequently brought to life, reanimated, and parodied in the men’s performance.

Cyprian and Vilhus also use performance to parody the notorious figure of Adolf Hitler, for which they receive resounding rounds of laughter and applause. “Along with the spiders, Cyprian also donned a swallowtail suit coat and polished black leather boots. His legs were still comically bare. He was Adolf Hitler with intestinal gas” (318–19). In *Gender Trouble*, Butler points to the subversive potential of laughter to undermine normative, socially produced identity categories and, by extension, authoritarian culture. She writes:

The loss of the sense of “the normal” . . . can be its own occasion for laughter, especially when “the normal,” “the original” is revealed to be a copy, and an inevitably failed one, an ideal that no one *can* embody. In this sense, laughter emerges in the realization that all along the original was derived. (138–39)

For the audience, as well as for Cyprian and Vilhus, the performance functions as a site of critical humor in that it undermines a variety of cultural codes and regulations. In undermining

the authority of Hitler as a cultural figure, Cyprian also undermines the normative identity categories produced by the cultural authority that Hitler is symbolic of. Also at work in this passage is Bakhtin's vision of the "grotesque body," which he defines as

a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed: it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body. . . . Eating, drinking, defecation, and other elimination (sweating, blowing of the nose, sneezing), as well as copulation, pregnancy, dismemberment, swallowing up by another body. . . . In all these events, the beginning and end of life are closely linked and interwoven. (317)

Additionally, Holquist writes that the grotesque body is "*intercorporeal*. . . . the body cannot be conceived outside a web of interrelations of which it is a living part" (90). In portraying the body of Hitler (as well as the cultural authority symbolically attached to it) as grotesque, Cyprian undermines such an authority, exposing the extent to which normative identity categories are, in fact, cultural productions. As opposed to suggesting a notion of identity that is individual and fixed, the grotesque body suggests an understanding of identity that is fluid, relational, and "in the act of becoming" (Bakhtin 317).

Cyprian's acts of balancing serve as an adept metaphor for examining not only the complex negotiations involved in enacting and maintaining queer identities in repressive heteronormative contexts but also the extent to which parody and performance, in true Bakhtinian style, can interrogate and alleviate cultural authority.

TRICKSTER DRAG: NANAPUSH'S  
TRANSGENDERED ANTICS

You're born naked and the rest is drag.  
RuPaul

The trickster Nanapush blurs gender identities throughout his multiple appearances in Erdrich's novels, perhaps most directly

in *Four Souls*. As Jeanne Rosier Smith notes in *Writing Tricksters: Mythic Gambols in American Ethnic Literature*, trickster figures are particularly well suited to engage in multiple types of identity subversion:

Interpreter, storyteller, and transformer, the trickster is a master of borders and exchange, injecting multiple perspectives to challenge all that is stultifying, stratified, bland, or prescriptive. Tricksters embody the complexity, diversity, and paradoxes of literary studies today, which demand the recognition of competing voices. . . . It is no accident that many contemporary writers and critics call upon the trickster in their expression of contemporary life and thought. (xiii)

Additionally, Julie Barak writes that “many definitions of trickster label him or her as a liminal figure, living on the edges of the worlds of animal and human, physical and spiritual, male and female” (58).

Nanapush’s transgendered performances in *Four Souls* draw directly on Anishinaabe folklore, which Erdrich reworks into a contemporary context as a means of critiquing binary, Western models of gender representation through the presentation of an alternate paradigm. Within Erdrich’s oeuvre, Nanapush can be read as a performative repetition of the Manitou Nana’b’oozoo from traditional Anishinaabe mythology.<sup>9</sup> Within the mythology of the Manitou, Nana’b’oozoo is represented as a half-human, half-Manitou trickster figure who is simultaneously divine and humanly fallible. As a trickster figure who exists across a wide range of spaces and subject positions, the Nana’b’oozoo of traditional Anishinaabe lore performs both masculine and feminine attributes into new expressions of gender and sexuality. In Basil Johnston’s recounting of a traditional Nana’b’oozoo tale, “Nana’b’oozoo not only wanted to know what it was like to be a man with a woman, but he was equally curious to know what it was like to be a woman with a man. Perhaps he wanted to learn how to conduct a romance by being the object of a man’s embraces and kisses. Nana’b’oozoo disguised himself as a woman by wearing women’s garments and

attaching rabbit's fur between his legs" (82). Through her spinning of Anishinaabe myth into a contemporary tale, Erdrich uses such traditions to suggest that, like Johnston's definition of the Manitou themselves as spirits existing beyond physical reality, possibilities for gendered expressions exist beyond constructed human perceptions of everyday life.

Identity subversions in general abound in *Four Souls*, most notably when Nanapush speaks before the Tribal Council (which is convening to decide upon the fate of the reservation's land) wearing the medicine dress (a dress imbued with special powers) that Margaret has made. The medicine dress is able to facilitate such subversion, as it allows the wearer to blur identity categories, stepping outside the bounds of his normative self in order to gain powerful insights and new critical perspectives. It is significant that the power of the medicine dress stems from the fact that none of its materials have been made by whites, as dominant white patriarchal discourse supports divisive, binary notions of identity, whereas the dress allows the wearer to navigate these categories in a more fluid manner.

Nanapush initially puts on the medicine dress as a joke to poke fun at Margaret's dancing ability—"Dagasana, please . . . let me put on the dress and show you how to do it!" (143). However, his wearing of the dress ultimately serves a serious purpose, as it allows him to save some of the remaining reservation land through the new perspectives that he gains by taking on the attributes of feminine gender. Although Nanapush is humbled by his experiences of performing feminine drag (after he has attempted to impress Margaret, drinking too much wine stolen from the convent cellar, and being thrown in the reservation drunk tank), his insights do not stem solely from his discomfiture. Such insights come directly from both his embarrassment at being drunk while wearing a dress and his willingness to accept his own "femaleness." Here, the idea of "femaleness" represents the aspects of identity that one seeks to suppress or hide, as these aspects may not conform to normative societal definitions. Nanapush does not conform to strict gender binaries; rather, he celebrates and exposes the fact that those who

work beyond them often possess the most critical insight and wisdom. For these reasons, Nanapush can be read as a transgendered character throughout his multiple appearances in Erdrich's novels. For example, in *Tracks*, Nanapush, while attempting to heal Lulu's feet after she has run through the snow in her dancing shoes, expresses the desire to be a woman, to mother: "Many times in my life, as my children were born, I wondered what it was like to be a woman, able to invent a human from the extra materials of her own body" (167).

Nanapush takes on the attributes of feminine gender to the extent that he becomes concerned about the convincingness of his performance while dressed in drag. Upon his "escape" from the drunk tank, he says, "Although I was horrified at my situation, I had to admit that I felt pretty good in Margaret's dress—it was soft, and the air was cool, flowing up against me from underneath. Also, from what I saw in the mirror, it was becoming to me" (*Four Souls* 151). The tensions that Nanapush experiences in this passage expose the tensions that exist in a society that is highly gender stratified, as the danger and pleasure of transgressing gender are experienced simultaneously. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler echoes the idea of discomfort and pleasure existing simultaneously within a drag performance. In what is perhaps her most oft-cited passage, she writes:

*In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency.* Indeed, part of the pleasure, the giddiness of the performance is in the recognition of a radical contingency in the relation between sex and gender in the face of cultural configurations of casual unities that are regularly assumed to be natural and necessary. (137–38)

Nanapush's pleasure in performing feminine drag allows him to subvert the problematic intentions of the family of white tourists he encounters on his way to the Tribal Council meeting, as well as to subvert another self-other binary between that of white tourist family and Indian bodies existing for the pleasure of an "other-

ing” white gaze. When Nanapush is called an “ugly old woman” by the family’s little boy, he responds, “I am embarrassed to say this, but the boy’s remark hurt my vanity” (152). In a last-minute retaliation, Nanapush saves the day when posing with the family for a photo by lifting his skirt before the camera’s shutter, exposing his double-sexed nature, hopefully causing the family to rethink the way they have been “othering” the members of the reservation community. Nanapush takes great pleasure in exposing (literally) what Butler refers to as the “radical contingency” of categories of gender, sexuality, and race that have been formerly assumed to be coherent, natural, and stable. Nanapush’s encounter with the tourists also exposes that alternate spaces of gendered performance are never wholly free from the imposition of dominant ideologies. Rather, those engaging in performances outside the gender binary remain constantly vulnerable to multiple forms of violence and oppression.

The powers of the medicine dress come to full fruition when Nanapush reaches the Tribal Council meeting, during which he makes an impassioned speech imbued with the new critical insights he has gained from his time spent in drag. In his speech Nanapush calls attention to multiple binary oppositions such as friend and enemy, love and hate, and old and new (155), ultimately concluding that these distinctions do not matter—he will attempt to speak his “truths” despite them. He states: “I am not afraid, as others may be, that my manhood will be compromised by such a little thing as wearing a skirt. . . . It wasn’t that the dress spoke to me. It was that my ears were open to hear all I missed when I was arrayed like a man” (156). When the council rejects the settlement, deciding to retain possession of their ancestral land, Nanapush concludes that “the dress worked. The medicine was the sacred shame that it provoked in me” (156). Not only is Nanapush revealing the false contingency of identity categories, but he is also revealing the hidden privilege that certain identities are given over others. In relinquishing some of his masculine privilege, Nanapush is able to enter into a more dynamic and productive understanding of gendered relations. The medicine dress draws attention to the fact that those

individuals who possess the most critical agency are those who are able to incorporate a diverse range of perspectives and who view identity not as fixed but as a dynamic transformation and exchange of knowledge between “selves” and “others.”

The critical lessons learned through the dress are also indicative of traditional Nana’b’oozoo stories in which the trickster’s misdeeds often result in the learning of an important lesson by not only Nana’b’oozoo himself but also the story’s audience.<sup>10</sup> As Johnston notes, “despite his good intentions, Nana’b’oozoo often fell short of carrying out his objectives. Something always interposed itself between his intent and his fulfillment of it and resulted in mishap or indiscretion. . . . He learned, but slowly, as do most men and women” (94–95). Johnston explains that stories about the Manitou in general functioned to “allow native people to understand their cultural and spiritual heritage and enable them to see the worth and relevance of their ideas, institutions, perceptions, and values” (xiii). Based on Johnston’s explanation of the Manitou stories, it can be argued that the story of Nanapush’s transgendered antics within *Four Souls* functions as Erdrich’s presentation of a contemporary Manitou story that seeks to impart an important lesson about formations of gender, race, and sexuality to her readers.

As Margaret notes in *Four Souls*, identity formation and creation is much like the “women’s work” of sewing. We do not exist as unified wholes; rather, we are composed of a variety of stitches, mended and reworked, rewritten, revised again and again. Through such a description, conceptions of identity are similarly rewritten and situated within a framework existing distinctly outside of patriarchal process. As Margaret states:

To sew is to pray. Men don’t understand this. They see the whole but they don’t see the stitches. They don’t see the speech of the creator in the work of the needle. We mend. We women turn things inside out and set things right. We salvage what we can of human garments and piece the rest into blankets. Sometimes our stitches stutter and slow. Only a woman’s eye can tell. Other times, the tensions in the stitches

might be too tight because of tears, but only we know what emotion went into the making. Only women can hear the prayer. (176)

While this passage could be read as potentially reifying gender binaries, it is important to recognize the extent to which Margaret's description of sewing also functions as a metaphor for women's writing. As Andrea L. Harris notes, within women's writing "sewing . . . is a figure for narration" (58). The idea of "women's writing" questions the way gender is normatively represented, as it seeks to create a mode of representation outside of binary, patriarchal models. For Erdrich, developing a method of "women's writing" functions as a means through which gender can be represented differently. In addition to describing the subversive potential of sewing, this passage also describes the subversive potential of literature, of writing to challenge, reform, rework—to see beyond exterior surfaces to the elements that compose the fabric, the act, the performance.

PRIESTLY PERFORMANCES: THE  
PASSION OF FATHER DAMIEN

Remember, you are doing the act all the time, on stage and off. You've got to live the part, you've got to *wear* it.

Billy Tipton

Erdrich's 2001 novel *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* chronicles the transformation of Agnes DeWitt into the reservation priest Father Damien Modeste. While this novel is the earliest of the three examined, I have chosen to address it last, as Agnes/Damien's performances of gender represent the most transgressive of those described within Erdrich's oeuvre in terms of both content and duration (the fact that the performance engaged in by Agnes/Damien is lifelong).<sup>11</sup> Throughout the novel Erdrich invokes the notion of saintly passion as a frame for understanding Agnes's gender transformation. Father Jude Miller, who has come to the Little No Horse reservation to investigate the life of the infamous nun

Sister Leopolda/Pauline Puyat, instead decides that Father Damien is the “true” saint of the reservation, placing his life in line with the tradition of saintly passions that he defines as “*a written account of the sufferings and death of one who laid his life down for the faith*” (336). While Father Miller invokes the notion of saintly passion in a traditional Christian sense, Erdrich employs the notion in a subversive manner, linking passion directly to Agnes/Damien’s sexual and gendered transformations.

As the definition of a passion suggests, Agnes’s gender transformation into Father Damien is prompted or made possible by experiences of intense suffering and grief. After her husband Berndt is murdered by a bank robber known as “the Actor,” Agnes, whose home is destroyed by a flood, stumbles upon the body of Father Damien Modeste the first, on his way to the Little No Horse reservation. Given the perfect opportunity, Agnes becomes an actor herself, transforming her identity into that of the first Father Damien as a means of assuaging her suffering over the loss of Berndt by finding a way to step outside the heterosexual framework of their relationship. Agnes’s ability to become Father Damien Modeste illustrates Butler’s assertion that there exist no original or essential identities, only copies and repetitions. Erdrich’s intentional labeling of the Father Damien that Agnes comes across as “Father Damien Modeste the first” calls attention to the impossibility of such a designation.

By changing her identity and stepping into a new role, Agnes similarly transforms her relationship to everything else in her life. Not only is Agnes transfigured, but the world she inhabits is transfigured as well. Directly prior to Agnes’s transfiguration into Damien, her beloved piano is destroyed and sunk in the river by the flood, marking the end of another deeply erotic relationship in her life, her connection to the music of Chopin. In transfiguring her gender, Agnes also transfigures her grief, making it lighter, more manageable, as she comes to exist outside of and beyond the structures of gender and sexuality that it is implicated in. In stripping away the superficiality of the feminine, Agnes transfigures heterosexuality, as well as the grief linked directly to it. Erdrich sig-

nificantly titles part 1 of the novel “The Transfiguration of Agnes.” *The American Heritage Dictionary* defines “transfiguration” first as “a change that glorifies or exalts” and secondly as “the sudden emanation of radiance from the person of Jesus that occurred on the mountain.” Erdrich’s use of the term “transfiguration” directly links Agnes’s change to notions of performance, as not only does Agnes adopt a new identity, but she adopts a specific masculine religious role that she must convincingly perform—that of a priest. Agnes details the difficulty involved in such a performance through a list that she creates entitled “Some Rules to Assist in My Transformation” that includes items such as “1. Make requests in the form of orders” and “5. Admire women’s handiwork with copious amazement” (74). Agnes’s list can be read as a script for a stage performance of masculinity, whereby the creation of such a list itself exposes masculinity as a construction. Erdrich’s incorporation of the list also functions to expose the difficulties involved in the enactment of various gendered performances. Sites of performance never function as sites of pure agency but always involve a variety of struggles, contestations, and negotiations.

After establishing herself in the reservation community and coming into her priestly role, Agnes as Father Damien astutely notes the extent to which all identities are manufactured through performance, including not only the identity of Damien but her former selves of Agnes and the nun Sister Cecilia as well—selves one might falsely define as more “authentic.” Damien thinks to himself, “Between these two, where was the real self? It came to her that both Sister Cecelia and then Agnes were as heavily manufactured of gender and pose as was Father Damien. And within this, what sifting of identity was she? What mote? What nothing?” (76). In this passage Erdrich directly riffs on a similar line from Diane Wood Middlebrook’s biography of Billy Tipton. Speaking of Tipton’s lifelong performance as a male jazz musician, Middlebrook writes, “*she* was the actor, *he* was the role” (11). Middlebrook’s formulation of Tipton’s gender performance (or of gender performance in general) is distinctly revised by Erdrich within her novel. Whereas conceptualizing gender performance in terms of actors

and roles maintains the notion that a subject can be assigned an “original” gender, Agnes’s inability to distinguish which of her multiple gendered selves is more “real” instead suggests that as opposed to actors and roles there are only actors, that all gender is elaborately staged.

Butler’s theory of gender performance is particularly useful in understanding how Cecilia/Agnes/Damien’s transformations establish gender as an act, as

gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*. The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. (*Gender Trouble* 140)

The notion that gender is naturalized through a repetition of various acts that are then gendered is paramount, as it establishes gender as a role (in this case, a priestly or religious role) that one adopts, as opposed to an essential or core identity. Damien goes on to note that his current identity has been directly shaped by the actions of “the Actor” toward Berndt, for just as “the Actor” adopts various disguises in order to enact his crimes, Damien manages his loss through performing the role of a priest. In linking “the Actor” and the notion of performance with the identity of Damien, Erdrich suggests that the notion of an authentically gendered self does not exist. Rather, every gendered identity and relationship is manufactured and enacted, with no particular enactment being any more “natural” or “real” than the next.

Throughout the novel, Erdrich undercuts any assumption that Agnes/Damien can easily be identified within a binary framework of gender. Although Agnes becomes Father Damien, it is inaccurate to say that she becomes a man. When Agnes is asked to identify her gender by the trickster Nanapush, she responds by stating, “A

priest" (230). While Agnes assumes the masculine role and position of a priest, she does not become a man in the Western binary sense of the word. She is positioned within the novel in a liminal space that transcends both masculine and feminine identity markers. Erdrich suggests that one's identity is shaped more greatly by one's passions and desires than it is by the fixed imposition of external categories, evidenced by her use of shifting gendered pronouns and names in relation to Agnes/Damien throughout the novel. Agnes's passion lies in her role as a priest, evidencing how erotic fulfillment and desire can exist outside of the heterosexual quest for romance. By becoming a "priest" as opposed to a "man," Agnes/Damien is most accurately read as a transgendered character.

Agnes/Damien's piano performances of Chopin also represent what Carla Kaplan terms as "an alternative economy of sexual desire" (17). Throughout the novel, Erdrich represents musical performance as both erotic and transgressive, as "capable of mayhem" (Kaplan 17). The erotic and disruptive potential of music is dramatized in the following description of Agnes's first incarnation, Sister Cecelia:

She was locked into the music, held there safely, entirely understood. Such was her innocence that she didn't know she was experiencing a sexual climax, but believed rather that what she felt was the natural outcome of this particular nocturne played to the utmost of her skills—and so it came to be. Chopin's spirit became her lover. His flats caressed her. His whole notes sank through her body like clear pebbles. His atmospheric trills were the flicker of a tongue. His pauses before the downward sweep of notes nearly drove her insane. (15)

Erdrich's representation of musical performance as erotic serves to trouble not only binary models of gender but also binary models of sexuality through the depiction of desires that are not focused on or defined by a gendered object but that, rather, are—like Chopin's notes—fluid and expansive. The erotics of performance within the novel subvert heterosexuality and homosexuality as the only

possible options for human erotic expression through the representation of desires not rooted in binary models of gender. Agnes/Damien's piano performance as coupled with his performance as a priest represents the multiple layers of performance that a subject can engage to subvert normative identity constructs. Just as the possibilities for gendered expression within Erdrich's fiction are multiple, so are the performances that her characters can engage in. In a scene that combines his role as both priest and musical performer, Father Damien uses music to charm a nest of snakes living underneath the reservation church:

There were at least a hundred. More. Another moved, quick as a lash. Yet another seeped forward and Agnes put her fingers back upon the keys. . . . Agnes continued to play. . . . Growing weary, [she] at last hit upon the Kinderscenen from Schubert and finally, playing "Sleep" repetitively and with all the kindness of a good parent, she succeeded in driving the snakes . . . back to their beds. (219–20)

Agnes's performative repetition of Schubert's "Sleep" creates the effect of lulling the snakes—who can literally be read as phallic symbols, and by extension, symbols of binary representations of gender and sexuality—to sleep.

It is in *The Last Report On the Miracles at Little No Horse* that Erdrich directly invokes the historical figure of the "berdache," which she links to Father Damien's transgendered status as a means of calling attention to possibilities for gendered expression existing outside of Western binary frameworks. Damien is immediately recognized as ambiguously gendered by Kashpaw, who drives him to the Little No Horse reservation, comparing his ambiguity to that of a well-known "berdache" Wishkob:

He was a shrewd man, and he sensed something unusual about the priest from the first. Something wrong. The priest was clearly not right, too womanly. Perhaps, he thought, here was a man like the famous Wishkob, the Sweet, who had seduced many other men and finally joined the family of a great war chief as a wife, where he had lived until old, well

loved, as one of the women. Kashpaw himself had addressed Wishkob as grandmother. (64)

Kashpaw does not vilify or judge Damien's ambiguity; rather, he accepts it as a legitimate possibility of gendered expression.

In comparison to Damien's role as a priest, Serena Nanda notes that, within many Native American societies, individuals historically identified as "berdaches" often—but not exclusively—occupied a special ceremonial status and were viewed as highly valuable members of their communities due to their blending of masculine and feminine work roles that allowed them to cultivate unique skills. For example, male gender variants could be warriors while at the same time being skilled in childcare (15–17). Erdrich echoes this idea of the historic "berdache," incorporating multiple work and gender roles in her discussion of the Winkte included within Father Damien's history of the Puyat family (153).<sup>12</sup> Like the Winkte, who is a skilled hunter and runner, Father Damien occupies a special role within the reservation community and is a trusted and revered figure due to his incorporation of both masculine and feminine behaviors. Through Damien, Erdrich draws a critical link between transgendered status and the ability to effect social change, as Damien becomes a powerful figure in the reservation community. Counter to Barak's use of the "berdache" as a framework for understanding Erdrich's mixed-gender characters, in *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*, Erdrich suggests that traditional Native American gender roles are one possibility, among many, for understanding the potential of human expressions of gender. While Damien's performances of gender do reiterate several significant aspects of the "berdache" role, they also greatly exceed them through his occupation of multiple spaces of performance.

Whereas the transgendered body is often vilified and positioned as pathological or deviant within medical as well as other discourses, in Erdrich's fiction, the transgendered body becomes a "holy" or saintly body, as through the revelation of Father Damien's various passions, we learn that the true saint of the novel is not Sister Leopolda but Damien himself. For Erdrich, the normative

body is not the body that conforms to binary modes of gendered expression; rather, *the normative body is the transgendered body, the transgressive body.*

In *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*, Erdrich significantly links the blurring of gender to literary tradition, suggesting that literature, from the works of Shakespeare to the present, has often provided a space in which alternate visions and critiques of dominant gender categories have been able to emerge and be explored. In contemplating such a literary history, Agnes thinks to herself:

For it was through books that she felt her life to be unjudged. Look at all of the great *mix-ups, messes, confinements, and double-dealings* in Shakespeare, she thought. Identities disguised continually, in a combative dance of illusions and discovery. Hers was hardly the most sinful, tragic, or bizarre. (199; emphasis added)

In this passage, Agnes uses the phrase highlighted in my title to describe the gender bending that takes place in the works of Shakespeare and, by extension, in literature in general to establish literature as a critical site of resistance to oppressive gender categories. The linking of alternate visions of gender to literary spaces is also echoed in the transgressive relationship between Agnes and Father Gregory Wekkle, a queer priest who, struggling with his own sexual identity, is attracted to Agnes's ambiguous gender status. When the two sleep in Damien's cabin, they are separated at night by a great wall of books. When Agnes and Gregory finally act upon their feelings for one another, they do so by entering into this liminal boundary that separates their respective identities and spaces. Quite literally, they enter into the possible, challenging, and subversive world of literature: "as Gregory tipped his chin questioningly forward into that final space, he felt that he had ducked into a cave. Once he entered that half sphere of shadow, he was lost. They lay down together among the scattered books" (200). Agnes and Gregory enter a critical space where an exchange, a discovery, takes place, where formerly discrete boundaries are momentarily

transcended, exposed, cast away like clothing, like pages, like old skins. They are transfigured by this experience—but more importantly, Erdrich’s readers are as well.

Just as Nanapush says of the Anishinaabe people at the conclusion of *Four Souls*, Erdrich’s novels show us that genders must not remain fixed and static. Rather, they must change, we must change, “change and become” (210).

#### NOTES

An immense thank you to Kari J. Winter for her guidance and for generously commenting on multiple drafts of this essay.

1. An earlier version of “The Strange People” was first published in Erdrich’s collection *Jacklight* (1984) and reprinted in *Original Fire: Selected and New Poems* (2003). I quote the version from *Original Fire*.

2. The notion that “berdaches” were universally afforded a special social standing within traditional Native American cultures has been troubled by Lang, who, citing Walter L. Williams’s landmark study *The Spirit and the Flesh*, notes that, “In his detailed investigation of the ‘berdache’ phenomenon, Williams dealt mainly with those groups in which women-men [biologically male gender variants] enjoyed high standing as recipients of especially potent latent spiritual power” (11), while failing to address those societies in which “berdaches” were not held in such high regard.

3. See Lang for a table of traditional terms applied to biologically male gender variants, defined in Lang’s study as women-men (248–51), and for a table of those applied to biologically female gender variants, defined in Lang’s study as men-women (263–65).

4. See Williams’s *The Spirit and the Flesh* (11).

5. In *Undoing Gender*, Judith Butler provides a useful definition of the term “transgender” as “[referring] to those persons who cross-identify or who live as another gender, but who may or may not have undergone hormonal treatments or sex reassignment operations” (6).

6. Consider the example of Erdrich’s character Sita Kozka from her second novel *The Beet Queen*, who throughout her life attempts to conform to strict definitions of idealized femininity. Ironically, it is after Sita has died that she is able to enact her most convincing feminine performance. Put differently, Sita is best able to conform to the rigid structure

of binary gender identity when she herself has become lifeless, rigid, and literally dead. For a further discussion of gender performance in *The Beet Queen*, see Winter.

7. See Austin and Derrida. Interested in how language can create tangible effects, Austin defines “performatives” as utterances that accomplish or create what they say. Whereas Austin is primarily concerned with spoken language, Derrida extends Austin’s analysis through his investigation of the performative in writing. Arguing that no language is original but rather always has a previous context and is thus continually recited each time it is used, Derrida argues that this process of linguistic re-citation or repetition functions as performative. For Derrida, language is not stable but has the potential to be transformed each time it is reiterated. In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler argues that what Derrida forgets in his theorization of performative repetition is the ways in which the body is created through language. Thus, her theory of gender performance is an attempt to understand how the body is rendered culturally intelligible in terms of regulatory categories such as gender, created by embodied actions that are repeated.

8. Important early essays on gender and sexuality in Erdrich’s work include those by Susan Castillo, Louise Flavin, Susan Meisenhelder, Katherine A. Nelson-Born, Julie Tharp, Annette Van Dyke, and Kari J. Winter.

9. In his study of Anishinaabe supernatural mythology *The Manitous*, Basil Johnston writes that Manitou refers to “realities other than the physical ones of rock, fire, water, air, wood, and flesh—to the unseen realities of individual beings and places and events that are beyond human understanding but are still clearly real” (xxi–xxii).

10. Trickster stories involving the premise of trickster characters learning important societal lessons due to experiences of cross-dressing exist within many Native cultures. For example, in their collection *American Indian Trickster Tales*, Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz recount a Nez Percé story “Coyote and Fox Dress Up” that is strikingly similar to Nana-push’s experiences in *Four Souls*, in which the two title characters decide to dress in drag in order to attract husbands to provide food for them. Coyote and Fox find two Wolf Brothers who provide food for them but eventually want to marry and cohabit—actions that would certainly expose the pair’s performance of gender. Coyote gets them out of their predicament through engaging in sex with Wolf Mother, surprising her in her sleep, an act that brings the Wolf Brothers to her aid. With the Wolf Brothers occupied, Coyote and Fox are able to escape, but not before learning that performing another gendered identity is not as easy as one

might think, just as Nanapush suffers the consequences of insisting he can perform the medicine dress dance better than Margaret (63–65).

11. In *The Last Report On the Miracles at Little No Horse*, Erdrich uses names and pronouns fluidly in describing Agnes/Damien, a style I mimic in my analysis.

12. Winkte is the traditional Lakota (Oglala) term for biologically male gender variants (Lang 249).

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# Native Writer Profile

Ralph Salisbury

ARNOLD KRUPAT

The following brief essay will appear in slightly different form as the introduction to Ralph Salisbury's forthcoming book, *Light from a Bullet Hole: New and Selected Poems, 1950–2008*. Salisbury, a Cherokee from Iowa, born in 1926, has contributed to many journals and anthologies. Formerly editor-in-chief of *Northwest Review*, and the recipient of many awards, he is the author of nine books of poetry and two books of short fiction. He is currently professor emeritus at the University of Oregon and lives in Eugene, Oregon, with his wife, the poet Ingrid Wendt.

Now in his eighty-third year to heaven, Ralph Salisbury has gifted us with a volume of new and selected poems in which there is no diminution of powers but an amazing further blossoming.<sup>1</sup> The selected poems range from his earliest volume, *Ghost Grapefruit and Other Poems* (1972), through the chapbooks *Pointing at the Rainbow: Poems from a Cherokee Heritage* (1980) and *Spirit Beast Chant* (1982), on to *Going to the Water: Poems of a Cherokee Heritage* (1983), *A White Rainbow* (1985), *Rainbows of Stone* (2000), *War in the Genes* (2006), and *Blind Pumper at the Well: Poems from My 80th Year* (2008).

*Light from a Bullet Hole* reprises "Some of the Life and Times of Wise-wolf Salt-town," as Salisbury etymologized his name in an autobiographical prose piece published in 1994 in *Returning the Gift*, and it brings us up to date.<sup>2</sup> In "Scarlet Tornadoes," from *Ghost Grapefruit*, we discover that it was left to his father's "brother to tell me / that we were Cherokee," while in "A Black Half Moon," from *Spirit Beast Chant*, the child growing up tries out the names: "The

Cherokee—Tsaragi—Cave Men—Groundhogs / ‘Yunwiya’ their real name—‘The People’—his own.”<sup>3</sup> From *A White Rainbow* come the poems “A Cherokee History Chapter Written Near the Globe Theater Site” and “Cherokee Initiation Rite: 1981,” which may be compared to “Breed Kid’s Initiation Rite: 1981,” from *Rainbows*. “Three Visitations or Evocations,” from the recent *Blind Pumper at the Well*, is dedicated to Joe “Dog” Smith, and it begins, “Old friend and fellow Cherokee.”<sup>4</sup> Also from *Rainbows* comes the lovely and moving “Being Indian,” which opens, “Who we were seemed simple when gun / dropped meat onto plates.” Its last stanza details change:

The path to Granny’s apples and tales  
 Turkey Creek’s bramble-tangled bank;  
 the road snow, mud or dust, from my parents’ farm,  
 to redskin-plundering Carnegie’s free—  
 now tax-supported—library—war,  
 for national survival through colonial tyranny,  
 was my Medicine Way into the 20th Century,  
 being what I was not ever simple again.

The title poem of *Rainbows*, “A Rainbow of Stone,” chronicles  
 my Cherokee people’s buffalo, deer,  
 plantations, even our holy town,  
 Echota, generations gone.

To crime, monoxide, disease,  
 and other city uncertainties.<sup>5</sup>

But in a vision that persists through Salisbury’s work early to late,  
 the poem concludes by imagining a time when

even the arrogant sky-  
 scrapers will bend,  
 and,

balled into foetal curl,

the whole earth will be toe-to-toe  
 rainbows, my own and Thunder’s and your home  
 again.

In another poem from *Blind Pumper*, the poet appears at fourteen, in “War on, One Brother Sixteen, and I, Fourteen, Try to be Men.” At fifteen, as “Direction of Storm,” from *Going to the Water*, tells us, the young poet was struck by lightning on his family’s Iowa farm: it “bleached my world / white like hospital sheets.” In “Green Gophers,” one of the new poems, the older poet sings back this young man

who dreamed  
of targets too big for my air rifle to kill  
and was naughty, though never successfully,  
in stopping the singing of birds,  
and joined, as soon as I could,  
the really naughty army.<sup>6</sup>

The teenage World War II Army airman appears in many of the poems.<sup>7</sup> Thus, earlier, in “Green Smoke,” the poet had remembered how, at

. . . eighteen, I saved eight men,  
Nine if I count myself,  
.....  
and now I’m a poet  
And try to save everything  
I love.

The young boy and war veteran as well as family and friends are “saved” in these poems. Salisbury’s Irish mother makes several appearances, and we hear of his uncle, Sheriff Dyle Salisbury. Other family members are “saved” in “For Mary Turner Salisbury” and “To My Mother’s Father”; “Sky Bent,” from *Blind Pumper*, is dedicated to “Aunt Jenny, my other mother,” and from *Going to the Water* we have “For Uncle Jimmy Harkin.” No family member appears so frequently, perhaps, as the poet’s father. In “A Declaration, Not of Independence,” in *Rainbows*, Salisbury writes of his “Cherokee dad,” who, “Social-Security time come, . . . could not prove he’d been born.”

. . . He could pay taxes, though,  
 financing troops, who'd conquered our land,  
 and could go to jail,  
 the time he had to shoot or die,  
 by a Caucasian attacker's knife.

This incident is deeply etched in memory and appears many times.<sup>8</sup> "Being Indian," for example, recalls

A pistol, in the hand  
 which had patted my head,  
 our wood-box as full  
 as I could get it, dropped  
 a drunk dead, blade falling from white fist—

"Beginning," from *Ghost Grapefruit*, also remembers that hand: "Dad—Hand hard as the hitching-post." And in "Elegy for a Father/Friend," another of the new poems, there is once more his father's

. . . hand, which had flattened attackers  
 And shot a drunken knifer and stitched shoe soles in prison,  
 that hand, which gripped my shoulder once  
 as comrades screamed, from bombers, burning again  
 in dream. . . .

That hand often held a pipe, smoke from which, over the years, wafts through a great many poems.

As he grows older, the young airman finds himself a resister and a citizen-witness to five more shooting wars, two of them presently ongoing. From *War in the Genes* we have the richly meditative interweaving of the personal and public in "His Country Intending 'Regime Change' in Another Country, He Takes a Walk, Good, He Is Told, for His Aging Constitution." The poet testifies both to state terrorism—"ours," probably unintentional—in "The U.S. Bombs a Hospital for the Mentally Ill While invading Grenada, Which Spain Originally Took from Indians," and to fundamentalist terrorism—"theirs," methodically intentional—in "Before 9/11/01, and After." Salisbury writes,

I heed the silence of thousands in  
 My daughter's voice,  
 Phoning, three miles from explosions, to reassure  
 Her mother and me  
 Just after the World Trade Center went down.<sup>9</sup>

\* \* \*

The new and selected poems in *Light from a Bullet Hole* make stunningly clear the ways in which Ralph Salisbury continues to model the traditional *and* modern (postmodern, if you will) roles of the poet as Cherokee humanist and Indigenous cosmopolitan.<sup>10</sup> Marked by deep roots and varied routes—he has read and taught in Italy, England, Norway, Germany, and India, and he has helped to translate into English the work of the Finnish Sami, Nils-Aslak Valkeapaa—he is a little like the *postindian* but deeply *tribal* characters in Gerald Vizenor's novels, *The Heirs of Columbus* and *Dead Voices*.<sup>11</sup> This is to say that Salisbury writes, as he put it in the dedication to *Rainbows*, in the interest of all “the human tribe of this world” and the animal tribes as well. In the preface to that volume, he cited Luigi Pirandello's observation that a parent does not give half his love to one child and half to another, but all his love to both, affirming, “I would give all of my love to my Indian people and all of my love to my white people. I am not part Indian, part white, but wholly both.” Finally, there is no “war in the genes.”<sup>12</sup>

Nor among the generations. The great William Butler Yeats, as he aged, wrote of fabled Byzantium, “That is no country for old men.”<sup>13</sup> But Salisbury, a far more generous man, would say instead that every country—*that* and *that* and *this* one, too—is “for” both old men and also the young; for women, like his wife, the fine poet, Ingrid Wendt, and for their daughter, Martina; all times and places and countries good for all members of our human tribe, young and old alike.

The title of Salisbury's *Going to the Water*, which I have not glossed yet, is based upon an epigraph identified as a “Sacred Formula of the Cherokee”: “*This is to take oneself to the water with, to help oneself.*” It comes from a collection of Cherokee healing for-

mulas known as “the Swimmer manuscript,” named for A’yun’ini, or Swimmer, a master Cherokee healer of the late nineteenth century. James Mooney, Swimmer’s editor, explained that “This formula for going to the water . . . is for the purpose of obtaining long life” (306). In “Green Cows,” one of the new poems, Salisbury says,

I write  
 That beech leaves’ years and miles of survival  
 hid bushels of mysteries hands  
 raced appetites of squirrels and rot  
 to bag and crack metaphoric shells from,  
 for anyone living, and leaving—growth ring  
 on growth ring—a poem.

Like Swimmer’s sacred formulas, Salisbury’s poems will heal us and help us obtain long life—or as Swimmer’s contemporary, Walt Whitman, put it at the close of his *Song of Myself*, they will be “good health” to us and “filter and fibre [our] blood.” It is both a pleasure and a privilege to have them newly gathered here before us.

#### NOTES

1. Cf. Dylan Thomas, “Poem in October”: “It was my thirtieth year to heaven. . . .”

2. “Wise Wolf Salt-town” had first appeared in “Out of the Rusty Teeth,” from *Going to the Water*, and he appears again in “Grandfather Wise Wolf At War,” from *Rainbows*, both poems included in this volume. Other, earlier autobiographical essays appear in *Speaking for Ourselves* (Faderman and Bradshaw) and *I Tell You Now* (Swann and Krupat).

3. The title comes from the first poem of this volume, “Ghost Grapefruit,” in which the poet tells us,

My poems are filed in grapefruit crates  
 whose cardboard spacers shape air—  
 which Shakespeare also shaped—  
 like grapefruit segments for  
 ghost Hamnets. . . .

It was only in 1983, in *Going to the Water*, that Salisbury reprinted “In the Children’s Museum in Nashville,” which had appeared in 1960 in the *New*

*Yorker*, gaining for Indian subject matter a measure of mainstream attention a full nine years before N. Scott Momaday's Pulitzer Prize for *House Made of Dawn*. It is the intention of this brief essay, as will be seen further, to encourage critical attention to the body of Salisbury's work, early to late, which now spans almost fifty years.

4. The "blind pumper" is identified in "To My Heart, an Emancipation Proclamation":

Old Slave, blind pumper at the well,  
one brother already dead,  
you kept me alive,  
through hunger and fever, to chop ice  
and save cattle from thirst.

The earlier *Rainbows of Stone* contained the poems "After Heart Surgery" and "After Heart-Bypass Surgery Another Ritual for Continuous Struggle." These all appear in the present volume.

5. Salisbury's title may recall Simon Ortiz's earlier volume, *Woven Stone*. There are many points of connection between Salisbury and the younger Ortiz, a subject for further study. Also of considerable interest are Salisbury's interactions with other Native American poets, in particular, Duane Niatum and Wendy Rose.

6. The title of the new volume also comes from the title of one of the poems. "Light from a Bullet Hole" contains this extraordinary image: "milk / from my mother's nipple is light / from a bullet hole." Consider also this image, from "Elephant Shoes," from *War*, in which the speaker addresses a man who wears "the god-awful elephant shoes / of the usual things you have to do." Salisbury's imagery is very much in need of further study.

7. The boy with the air rifle reappears in "Two Birds, One Air Rifle BB and a Summer Without Rain," from *Blind Pumper*. Among many other poems remembering the boy and World War II, see in particular the last stanza of "This Is My Death Dream" from *Rainbows* and "A God's Knife Near" from *Pointing*.

8. In addition to the poems cited below, see, among others, "For Don Monroe" from *Blind Pumper*. The dedication of section 2 of *Rainbows* reads, in part, "for my dad, imprisoned, then pardoned." The structures of several of the books are also in need of further study.

9. See also "Nightmare After 9/11" in *Blind Pumper*.

10. A type of what K. Anthony Appiah has called the "cosmopolitan patriot." See "Cosmopolitan Patriots."

11. Cf. Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* and James Clifford's *The Predicament of Culture*. See Valkeapaa's *Trekways of the Wind and The Sun, My Father*; the *postindian* appears most prominently in Vizenor's *Manifest Manners*; the concept is developed in several later texts.

12. Readers of this journal will know the degree to which this remains a vexed issue in some of the work of Sherman Alexie.

13. See Yeats, "Sailing to Byzantium." Yeats's "An Irish Airman Foresees his Death" is perhaps recalled in the title of Salisbury's "A Cherokee Airman Remembers Two Wars" (from *Blind Pumper*). But many poets are referenced, echoed, and named in Salisbury's work. There are Wordsworth in "Boyhood Incident Recollected in Tranquility" (from *Ghost Grapefruit*), Keats in "'Seasons of Mist and Mellow Fruitfulness'" (from *Blind Pumper*), and Eliot in "Murder in a Cathedral, Investigation, 2003" (from *War*), for example. There is a poem for William Stafford, and others are dedicated to Octavio Paz and Cesar Vallejo. Many other writers are mentioned. It may also be useful to note that Salisbury studied with Robert Lowell.

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## Book Reviews

Dawn Karima Pettigrew. *The Marriage of Saints*. American Indian Literature and Culture Ser. 52. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2006. ISBN: 0-8061-3787-8. 161 pp.

Christina Ann Roberts, *Seattle University*

The haunting nature of tragedy and the importance of human connections are the themes that bind Dawn Karima Pettigrew's *The Marriage of Saints*. Pettigrew does not focus on one central protagonist or offer a simple climax in this novel; rather, she weaves together a rich tapestry of poems and stories, all of which illustrate the tragic and beautiful history of a Cherokee family, the StandsStraights. Pettigrew's novel, her second following *The Way We Make Sense* (2002), is a testament to the enduring power of family and love.

While the stories and poems do not allow the reader to see the larger picture of the novel initially, Pettigrew leads the reader through carefully constructed titles and a linear chronology. Each story is accompanied by a revealing title, such as "The Pursuit of Darkness: Indiana RedPaint Telling" or "Mourner's Bench: Carolina StandsStraight Speaking." Pettigrew constructs each title so that the main part suggests something about the story to follow, while the subtitle reveals who is the focus of each story and what he or she is doing. This organizational format enables Pettigrew to provide touching and tragic glimpses into the actions and motivations of the main characters in the novel, while at the same time

she can explore the various consequences of trauma on members of the StandsStraight family.

*The Marriage of Saints* traces the StandsStraight's family line beginning with Jack StandsStraight's marriage to Oklahoma RedPaint and the birth of their four daughters—Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee Jane, and Indiana—and ending with the incorporation of Georgia's daughter, Lena, back into the family fold. In particular, the novel details the events that shatter the StandsStraight family and the miracles that allow for healing to take place. The family is torn apart by two tragic events: Indiana's death and Georgia's rape. Indiana's death is accidental, but the root cause of her death can be traced to Jack StandsStraight, who gambles with his daughter's life, using her as collateral in order to pay for entry fees in a rodeo. When he finishes in second place, he cannot repay his debt, which forces Indiana to pay the price. The day before she is to pay her father's debt, she falls down a well and dies. After her death, the first tragic event, Jack starts drinking and the remaining daughters leave, except Georgia.

In "None of This Could I Have Known: Nathan Hollow Stealing," Pettigrew illustrates the origin of Georgia's trauma and the tangible ways in which trauma continues to haunt individuals and families. Nathan Hollow, a local ice deliveryman, forces Georgia into the back of his ice truck and rapes her. Georgia acts quickly to marry another man and protect herself in case she becomes pregnant, but she continues to be haunted by the cold and gives birth to her attacker's daughter. Georgia is further afflicted by the cold when her husband dies in a car accident caused by ice and snow, and she begins to wander with her infant daughter. She soon forgets her identity and her past, until her mother prays to God for her return. Georgia cannot ignore the pull home, leaves her daughter behind, and returns to her mother during a snowstorm, nearly freezing to death. Oklahoma tries to save Georgia's daughter, but the cold will not loosen its grip on Georgia until she learns about the fate of Nathan Hollow. When Georgia is told that Nathan took a razor to his throat, she is miraculously cured and the cold vanishes, along with her life.

In addition to illustrating the haunting nature of tragedy, Pettigrew's stories and poems also reveal the complexity of contemporary American Indian identity. In "Vanity and Vexation: Lena Allen Mays Trying," Lena, Georgia's abandoned daughter, reflects on the idea of being "part" Indian:

That's so stupid, the way people ask if you are part Indian, like you should say, "Why yes, my left leg or my kidneys or the right quarter of my body," in reply. Nobody does that to any other group of people on the planet. Where I come from, if you walked up to somebody and asked, "Is your left arm Irish?" they'd knock you out. (122)

At another point, Lena comments on how "[a]ll the Indian maidens on the greeting cards are half dressed, and all the men are put-near naked and carrying bows and arrows," which she says is "funny, since most of the real Indians you see are wearing jeans and T-shirts" (134). Lena's comments provide Pettigrew a safe site to discuss the politics surrounding American Indian identity, particularly for those of Cherokee ancestry.

Even though Pettigrew's novel raises serious questions about contemporary American Indian identity and continued violence against American Indian women, it also expresses hope and healing. Throughout *The Marriage of Saints*, Pettigrew frequently mentions the importance of church for the Cherokee people in her novel, and religion provides a site of healing for the StandsStraight family. Pettigrew references Bible passages that expose nuances of character motivations, and she briefly mentions items, people, and places of religious significance—cast salt, shewbread, Judah, and Moab—all of which reveal greater depth to each story. Furthermore, religion ultimately reincorporates Lena into the family when she attends a church revival and unknowingly meets her aunt, Tennessee Jane. The final section, "The Worship of Angels: Bo and Sao Notices Rejoicing," contains a poem that sums up the novel's healing message:

What matters at last is the joining of hearts,  
 The glimpses of Eden,  
 That make us miss Heaven,  
 How, in one another, we find it again.

Pettigrew expresses healing in the joining of hearts and the intimate connections between people and their families. *The Marriage of Saints* is a moving and captivating novel worthy of greater analysis and consideration.

Stephen Hirst. *I Am the Grand Canyon: The Story of the Havasupai People*. 3rd ed. Grand Canyon, AZ: Grand Canyon Association, 2006. ISBN: 0-938216-86-5. 276 pp.

Timothy Braatz, *Saddleback College*

This book has had a few names. It first appeared, in 1976, as *Life in a Narrow Place: The Havasupai of the Grand Canyon*. In 1985 the Havasupai tribe published *Havsuw 'Baaja: People of the Blue Green Water*. It was essentially the same book, only with fewer photographs, and concluding with an author's note briefly summarizing a few political developments from the intervening years. Now the tribe, in cooperation with the Grand Canyon Association, gives us a third edition. The bulk of the text is unchanged except for some light editing, including new subheadings, but it feels fresher. Hirst, who spent eleven years at Supai, beginning in 1967, has returned and gives the first chapter more of a present-tense feel. In chapter 2 he works recent scholarship into a discussion of Havasupai origins. The change is subtle, but in comparing the speculations of non-Indian anthropologists to Havasupai accounts, Hirst appears now to have increased respect for the latter's claim to cultural and regional continuity. Also in the new edition, color photographs taken in the 1970s and 2005 by Lois Hirst, the author's wife, will make it easier for the casual reader to imagine Havasupais as contemporaries rather than only as historical people, locked in the past, staring out from old black-and-white prints. Unchanged, though, are moments of what I call the ethnographic perfect. For

example, Hirst writes, “A child receiving a cookie will break it into as many pieces as the friends with him” (11).

In the new preface, we learn that a Havasupai man “once referred to this book as ‘our Bible’” (xii). Hyperbole and tribal interests aside, the analogy works so far as the book is a varied and sometimes scattered collection of texts. Some sections are ethnographic surveys, by an outside observer, of Havasupai lifeways. There is a review of the history of Havasupai encounters with non-Indians—“strange-looking aliens from another world” (42)—beginning with Garcés in 1776, but mostly emphasizing the U.S. assumption of sovereignty over Havasupai lands. Hirst includes stories—oral history—taken directly from Havasupai informants. He also invents a story. “A Season on the Plateau,” he explains, “is a re-creation of the final years of the old life, distilling the stories and remembrances of Havasupai people, many gone now, whom I was privileged to know during my years among them” (109). The tribe’s repeated promotion of the book appears to validate this approach.

All of this feels like background to Hirst’s primary concern here: telling the story of the Havasupai land-claims struggle as seen from Supai, not from Washington. For centuries, Havasupai families tended summer gardens in canyon lands; then, as winter approached, they relocated to hunting camps on the high plateau. In 1882 an executive order pronounced Havasupai territory to be only the narrow bottomlands of Havasu Canyon. In the following decades, U.S. officials evicted Havasupais from other canyon regions and the surrounding plateaus. To regain access to their homelands, the impoverished tribe had to overcome opposition from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and environmental groups, most notably the Sierra Club. After years of persistent lobbying, the Havasupais won the support of Arizona’s congressional delegation, including the powerful Sen. Barry Goldwater, and the Nixon administration. Still, the outcome was in doubt until President Gerald Ford, on January 3, 1975, signed a bill returning 160,000 acres to the Havasupai tribe and guaranteeing tribal members the right to use 95,000 additional acres of national park land. Hirst’s account of this political

triumph is a lasting contribution to the literature of Native self-determination, resilience, and sovereignty.

The new title is an improvement. The original title referred to the limitations of the imposed reservation boundaries. The second title seemed to legitimize those limitations. My understanding of Upland Yuman group names is that, before the U.S. government created reservations and tribal categories, families identified themselves by their immediate geographical home. So when they moved to their winter homes, the people of the blue-green water would have become the people of the plateau. The new title—never mind the anthropocentrism—is a strong political statement claiming a broader territory. In 1971, at a public hearing regarding the National Park Service's master plan for the Grand Canyon park, tribal chairman Lee Marshall said, "I heard all you people talking about the Grand Canyon. Well, you're looking at it. I am the Grand Canyon" (207).

However, as "The Story of the Havasupai People," the book has its shortcomings. It is, most of all, the history of a people's response to U.S. imperialism. There are biographical glimpses of outstanding Havasupai individuals, but we do not learn much about internal politics, social and cultural developments, and changing relations with neighboring Indian communities. Hirst refers to 1960 as "a low point in their history" (192). Despair led to drinking, fighting, and suicide. But the Havasupais "had become battle-hardened, and the strongest of them knew they could still rally their people to overcome this despair" (193). Writing thirty years after the land victory, Hirst does not say if attitudes have changed, if access to the plateau has brought improved mental health. He also does not explain how it came to be that "Havasupai women now hold as high a status as men" (13). And the diabetes epidemic goes unmentioned. Perhaps Havasupai community dynamics are none of our business. A tribe so often exploited by outsiders is unlikely to approve a publication that places them in anything close to a negative light. Still, Hirst could have done much more with his new concluding chapter. The Red Butte uranium mine, Snowbowl ski resort development, and the DNA research scandal deserve more

than brief mention. Certainly, these public issues are not unrelated to the land-use debate of the 1960s and 1970s and reveal that the Havasupai struggle against outside encroachment is not over. For all practical purposes, Hirst's narrative still ends in 1975. Put another way, there is little new research in the latest edition. That is the problem with bibles.

Birgit Hans, ed. *D'Arcy McNickle's The Hungry Generations: The Evolution of a Novel*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-8263-3862-4. 333 pp.

John Lloyd Purdy, *Western Washington University*

Birgit Hans's edition of this early draft of D'Arcy McNickle's first novel, *The Surrounded*, has been long in the making, but it provides a wonderful addition to Native American literature. As Hans notes in her comprehensive introduction to the volume, McNickle produced this version in the early 1930s; *The Surrounded* itself was published in the spring of 1936. So, it has taken over seventy years for it to come to public life, and we should be thankful for Hans's dedication to the project.

The manuscript is housed with many of McNickle's personal papers at the Newberry Library in Chicago. Hans has made good use of this resource and others for her introduction, which provides a good context for the novel and includes previously unpublished correspondence, diary entries, and photographs, as well as the biographical details of McNickle's life. For those not aware of McNickle's story, the Newberry's Center for American Indian History is named for him. In fact, since he had not arrived for the celebration to honor him with its naming, those attending called the Albuquerque police to have them check on him and thus he was found dead in his home. I share this tale because it seems to add an ironic postscript to a life both public and private, acclaimed and marginalized. He earned ample academic and activist accolades as a historian, anthropologist, and organizer, while his earliest love, literature, waited for equal recognition that came only after his death.

The manuscript in the Newberry is handwritten and, given McNickle's almost illegible handwriting, Hans's accomplishment should be acknowledged as remarkable. (To illustrate the point, she has provided several sample pages of it in the introduction as well.) In the mid-1980s on a fellowship at the Newberry, I read this manuscript, looking for markers that would allow for fresh insights about its transformation into the published version. It was not an easy read, and—limited by the time framework of the fellowship and by the need of going through the other materials in his papers—I was not reading it as we usually read a novel. Therefore, when allowed the opportunity to read Hans's edition of it, I was first thankful and then pleasantly surprised. It is a remarkable novel in its own right. It does not possess all the characteristics that have come to be associated with Native fiction—although the comparisons of this volume with its first published version may reopen that debate—but it certainly provides a satisfactory narrative of the life of a young Salish man finding his way. There is no doubt that scholarship will reexamine the differences between this version and the previously published one, but taken on its own merits, this novel amply documents McNickle's early literary talent in a time that produced the likes of William Faulkner, Eudora Welty, Ernest Hemingway, and James Joyce.

The latter two authors are of note for *The Hungry Generations*, since a large section of it is set in Paris. The title, itself, is pulled from Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale," but it also alludes to the "Lost Generation" that Gertrude Stein named. The novel's protagonist, Archilde, spends years away from his Montana home, attending college and finally living the life of the expatriates in France. Here, Archilde reveals that—like McNickle, as Hans argues—he has "internalized the need for individualism and capitalism, two main values of the mainstream Euro-American culture" (11). These are certainly values that play throughout the text, including the battles between Archilde and his brothers over the family allotments. Unlike the published version, in which Archilde acts as mentor for his nephews Mike and Narcisse, here they are at odds. Communalism is present as Archilde settles his identity issues, but

by book's end he fits comfortably in a Euroamerican community rather than a Salish one.

For teachers and scholars of the literary production of the early twentieth century, and for those interested in how the canon evolved, this is a very useful text. It is a good read, and, as Hans states, it is an evocative lens into this era and the complexity of the personal negotiations that took place, particularly for those whose cultures were under attack and who faced the consequences of federal policy. It is a good companion piece to the works of others in the time, including John Joseph Mathews and Mourning Dove, but it could also prove useful in the contexts of more contemporary writers, particularly those who present fragmented families and societies trying to find the means to survive.

However, its greatest contribution is in its reflection of the ways McNickle's thinking changed in the 1930s. McNickle's *The Surrounded* broke new ground and, I would argue, marks a moment of transition in Native literatures. As I have argued elsewhere, *The Hungry Generations* is more closely aligned with the modernist novels of McNickle's non-Native contemporaries, whereas *The Surrounded* moves to deconstruct the culturally bound assumptions upon which their world rested. This early manuscript does not have one of the most radical elements of the first published version: the Salish renunciation of the Catholic religion. Today we call this resistance or survivance, and in literary history, we can chart its origins to the works of people like McNickle who, in the 1930s, began to imagine alternatives to assimilation.

Hans's edition is, as the title states, an exploration of the evolution of this thinking and its artistic articulation. It is well worth a read, both as a novel that describes a person coming into maturity and resolving dramatic conflicts—such as the death of the game warden, one residual plot element in *The Surrounded*—and as a critique of contemporary American values in the 1930s. The fact that the critique became more focused on Native issues in the revisions that followed only adds more interest to this volume.

Stephanie McKenzie. *Before the Country: Native Renaissance, Canadian Mythology*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2007.  
ISBN: 978-0-8020-9446-9. 233 pp.

Kirby Brown, *University of Texas at Austin*

*Before the Country* is the story of the adaptability, malleability, and persistence of Canadian romantic nationalist narratives even in the face of significant challenges both from colonized Aboriginal peoples and from colonial descendants disenchanted with the implications of those narratives. Drawing on a wide swath of dominant critical voices from Canadian literary scholarship—of whom Northrup Frye is a key figure in the study—McKenzie depicts Canadian romantic nationalism as a narrative response to a persistent perceived lack of a national-cultural identity, a concerted and immensely complicated effort to free Canada from its colonial history and intellectual dependency on Europe and the United States. McKenzie demonstrates how the effacing impulses of romantic nationalism, rooted in what she terms the “fallacious myth” of an empty, unpopulated land without history, ironically engendered among its adherents consistent and recurrent anxieties over place, purpose, and political and cultural autonomy that were firmly in place as the 1967 centenary of Canadian confederation approached. It is within this context of what Frye characterized as Canada’s long-awaited “Day of Atonement”—a ritualized event he believed would finally free Canada from its “[suspense] in colonial traditions” (qtd. in McKenzie 30)—that Aboriginal voices emerging from the Red Power Movement of the 1960s and 1970s challenged the authority and legitimacy of Canada’s nationalist narrative, “arresting” its teleological development and bringing its inherent tensions and anxieties into sharp relief.

Although, following Kenneth Lincoln, McKenzie refers to this perceived increase of Aboriginal intellectual production as a literary and cultural renaissance, she qualifies the term as implying less of a historical absence of Aboriginal writing than a long “silence” resulting from years of institutional marginalization and aggressively assimilationist policies; less an intellectual “reawakening” of

Native communities than a “rediscovery” of Native intellectualism on the part of non-Aboriginal publishers, intellectuals, and readers. Combined with the formation of intertribal political alliances, the assertion of Aboriginal land claims and challenges to court precedent, and widespread public protests and political activism, the Aboriginal challenge forced many Canadians not only to come to terms with their colonial legacy but also to revise the narrative paradigms that had long served to deny, if not erase, colonial violence. Revision is not renunciation, however, and McKenzie spends the second half of the book examining the various ways in which the voices, forms, and conventions of the Native Renaissance were appropriated, reified, and repurposed by non-Aboriginal writers into “a morality play that fit most neatly into a preconceived story” serving a “pre-existing agenda”—Canada’s escape from history through myth (53, 45).

Before McKenzie can demonstrate how and to what purposes Native aesthetics were deployed, she first engages in an extended attempt—just under sixty pages—to identify what exactly defines an “Aboriginal aesthetics.” McKenzie rejects reductive interpretations of Aboriginal writing as “protest literature,” pointing to numerous instances of community affirmation, cultural continuity, and security of self, identity, and place that also characterizes much of the writing of the period, what Elizabeth Cook-Lynn has identified as an aesthetics of affirmation and hope and what Daniel Heath Justice has termed “art for life’s sake.” Further, McKenzie notes the concern by Native writers to establish “longevity” and “continuity” in their narratives with respect to sacred and historical pasts, homelands, languages, and systems of belief—what Tom Holm and others have identified as components of Indigenous peoplehood.

Rather than pursuing what an aesthetics of peoplehood might look like, however, McKenzie falls back on conventional critical tropes, engaging in extended discussions about Native relationships to land, conceptualizations of time and space, the influence of orality, narrative authority and polyvocality, ceremonial and ritual aspects of language, and aesthetic hybridity, to name a few. In

doing so, McKenzie fails to consider some of the most compelling contemporary challenges and reconceptualizations of these interpretive modes in the field. The text could have greatly benefited, for instance, by taking into account Craig Womack's challenge to the intellectual and political efficacy of hybridity as a conceptual category in Native studies; by considering Cook-Lynn's explicit politicization of Native scholarship by placing sovereignty, land rights, and treaty responsibilities at the center of the discussion; or by engaging Taiaiake Alfred's insistence on interrogating the colonial implications of non-Aboriginal intellectual paradigms on Aboriginal self-governance. In confining herself to "Aboriginal" aesthetics, McKenzie misses numerous opportunities to examine *tribally specific* nuances within perceived aesthetic commonalities. More importantly, by restricting herself to an expressly formalist engagement with Native writers, their texts, and the historical and epistemological contexts from which they originate, she elides potentially more illuminating political questions her study raises about the relationship between First Nations intellectual production and the survival of Indigenous communities, nations, languages, land bases, and peoples. Her study is usefully contrasted to Lisa Brooks's work demonstrating how tribally specific conceptualizations of space affect how Native peoples represent themselves politically or to Chris Teuton's recent deployment of "vision" as a critical term to examine how Native peoples in-vision themselves into landscapes through tribally specific narrative structures.

Such misgivings about an otherwise fascinating story about the dogged persistence of romantic nationalist narratives are no doubt rooted as much in what the book is not as what it is, as much about what it does not (or cannot) do as what it does. *Before the Country* is not, at the end of the day, a narrative about Native writing, nor is it a narrative about "the Native" in Canadian national literature. It is a narrative about how non-Aboriginal Canadian authors reacted to historical, political, and aesthetic challenges posed by Aboriginal writing in the 1960s and 1970s and appropriated and incorporated Native aesthetic elements into an amended yet still intact romantic nationalist paradigm. To this end, the book succeeds brilliantly.

McKenzie's genealogy of romantic nationalism and contextual intersectionality of Canada's "Day of Atonement" and the Native Renaissance is indispensable to any survey of Canadian national literature or literary study of the period. In terms of literary criticism, her reading of Robert Kroetsch's *Badlands* illuminates how seemingly liberationist texts function within and reinforce the very narrative paradigms they ostensibly seek to undermine, and her analysis of Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe* insightfully challenges scholars to engage the intersecting histories of Indigenous and ethnic immigrant populations that nationalist-colonialist narratives attempt to reduce or erase. Further, her discussion of "transitional texts" proves useful for identifying and analyzing the mythopoetic processes by which "the nation" is not so much reinvented as it is continually recuperated through romantic origin narratives. For those working with an eye toward protecting and expanding Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination, strengthening Indigenous governments and communities, maintaining land bases and enforcing treaty rights, and advocating more tribally specific engagements with Native subjects, the book has very little to say about such concerns.

Bernd Peyer. *American Indian Nonfiction: An Anthology of Writings, 1760s–1930s*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P. 2007.  
ISBN: 978-0-8061-3798-8. 401 pp.

Amanda Moulder, *University of Texas at Austin*

Although earlier scholars of Native American culture often defined Indians as essentially "oral" and Native culture as antithetical to literacy, much current scholarship has turned its attention to the long history of Indian literary production. Bernd Peyer's new anthology, *American Indian Nonfiction: An Anthology of Writings, 1760s–1930s*, makes pointedly clear just how long-standing was Native Americans' sustained engagement with the written word. Peyer purposefully chose not to make this anthology an encyclopedic collection of texts. Rather, his selections reveal a number of

Native North Americans “for whom writing was a major occupation and who produced a substantial body of writings . . . that reflect in some way upon the development of Indian-white relations in the United States” (ix).

Quite a few of the included authors were so prolific that scholarly editions of their collected works have arrived on the academic scene in the past two decades. Peyer’s anthology comes on the heels of *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot*, edited by Barry O’Connell and published in 1992; Alexander Posey’s *The Fus Fixico Letters*, edited by Daniel F. Littlefield and Carol A. Hunter and published in 1993; *To Do Good to My Indian Brethren: The Writings of Joseph Johnson 1751–1776*, edited by Laura J. Murray and published in 1998; and *The Collected Writings of Samson Occom, Mohegan: Leadership and Literature in Eighteenth-Century Native America*, edited by Joanna Brooks and published in 2006.

The anthology’s introductory chapter provides a solid historical background to these texts. At the end of each author’s section, Peyer includes a brief biography of the author. The introduction and biographies contextualize the selections with discussions of important events in the development and use of writing and printed text by Indigenous North Americans. Peyer charts missionary activities and religious revivals of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, changes to educational structures within tribal communities, the antiremoval campaigns (victorious or otherwise) undertaken by different tribes, and historical shifts in the policies of the U.S. government and Euroamerican sociocultural attitudes toward tribal nations in the post–Civil War era.

In organizing the first half of the anthology, which is composed mainly of pre-twentieth-century texts (with notable exceptions like Will Rogers and Alexander Posey), Peyer takes a regionalist perspective. The first two sections include works by Mohegans, Mohicans, Pequots, and Senecas; the third section contains works by Cherokees and Creeks; and the fourth section includes works by Ojibwes, Potawatomis, and Odawas. This approach acknowledges the regional networks between Native intellectuals that formed, partially facilitated through the use of writing. Furthermore, it

underscores the fact that that the threats that North American tribes faced were often local, the results of an inconsistently applied, but consistently violent, colonialist policy. Many of the texts focus on similar themes: the struggle to maintain ancestral landholdings, the hypocrisy of so-called Christian Euroamericans, and the public debates over fraudulent treaties.

The last half of the anthology focuses on post-Civil War and early-twentieth-century authors “who wrote on national issues, most of whom were members of the Society of American Indians [SAI], the first national Indian intellectual network” (ix). This section makes apparent both the ways in which these later intellectuals built on the work of their ancestors and the constellations of intellectual and political connections created by the SAI. Peyer explains a shift in the way Native Americans during the postbellum era engaged in public discourse: to confront an increasing racist colonizer, the authors “had to operate within the extremely narrow margin of racial tolerance” (27). Thus, the politics represented in some of these texts makes some modern scholars uneasy. Regardless of whether or not scholars can sympathize with the authors’ politics, they can sympathize with their reasons: these intellectuals worked constantly to benefit their communities.

Although the last section includes quite a few Native women writers, the anthology is thin on selections from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women. Admittedly, the historical record is not rife with these voices, especially those of eighteenth-century Native women. Much of the scholarly work on Native women cannot focus on a substantial body of texts. Instead, scholars often find letters or petitions attributed to Native women (and usually filtered by amanuenses), and using these along with references to these women in other sources (letters, diary entries, newspapers), they locate Native women in history. These scholars focus on texts produced by and about these women, sometimes as individuals and often as members of larger communities. The conception of individual authorship under which Peyer’s anthology operates, therefore, has no room for some types of writing produced by Native women.

As is the case with all collections and compilations, *American Indian Nonfiction* implies a particular narrative of history. This is a narrative in which Native Americans used the available means of persuasion to make known their understandings of the world and to shape reality to their own designs. However, as it is structured, the narrative cannot do justice to the rich history of Indigenous female cultural mediators and tribal leaders in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Peyer's anthology will be a valuable resource for students of American Indian literature; it will be an even more valuable resource if accompanied by *Native American Women's Writing, 1800–1924: An Anthology*, edited by Karen L. Kilcup.

Still, the selection of readings in the anthology does offer a number of perspectives on how Native North Americans explored and understood their own tribal traditions and visions. These works reject the notion that Indians accepted Christianity at the expense of some sort of pure or authentic Indianness. Instead, the narratives show how their traditions and visions adapted as they wielded the discourses of Christianity in the face of unjust U.S. governmental policy. Furthermore, the collection shows how many Native authors, from Samson Occom to Luther Standing Bear, used English-language literacy for the purposes of decolonization.

Peyer insists that we see the relationship between Native authors' literary production and the discourses of colonialism. Furthermore, the substantial bodies of work produced by these writers underscore the fact that colonialism resulted in atrocious violence but failed to completely eradicate Native cultural values and lifeways.

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## News and Announcements

The Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures announces the ASAIL Emerging Scholars Professional Development Fellowship, which provides travel assistance honoraria of three hundred dollars (US) for graduate students and advanced undergraduates to attend and present at professional conferences. Applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis. Applicants must provide a cover letter, CV, and letter confirming acceptance to present at a professional conference on a topic relating to the study of Indigenous literatures or languages. Awards will be distributed at the discretion of the ASAIL president and treasurer based on funding availability. Send applications and queries to the current ASAIL President, Patrice Hollrah, at [patrice.hollrah@unlv.edu](mailto:patrice.hollrah@unlv.edu).

## Contributor Biographies

TIMOTHY BRAATZ is chair of the History Department at Saddleback College in Mission Viejo, California, and playwright-in-residence with the Chameleon Theatre Circle in the Twin Cities. His work includes *Surviving Conquest: A History of the Yavapai Peoples*.

KIRBY BROWN is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation and a PhD student at the University of Texas at Austin. His dissertation research examines the intellectual and political output of four Cherokee public figures who were artistically and politically active throughout the first half of the twentieth century—a period many refer to as the “Dark Ages” of Cherokee history. His article “Indigenous Communities, Indigenous Nations: Interrogating Contemporary Indigenous Intellectualisms” is forthcoming in *Sovereignty, Separatism, and Survivance: Ideological Encounters in the Literature of Native North America*.

ALEXANDER HOLLENBERG is a doctoral candidate at the University of Toronto, where he is currently writing a dissertation on minimalist narrative ethics in the works of Willa Cather and Ernest Hemingway.

J. JAMES IOVANNONE is a PhD student in American studies at the University at Buffalo in New York. His research interests lie at the intersection of contemporary multiethnic American literature and history, queer studies, and performance studies.

ARNOLD KRUPAT is the editor for Native American literatures for the *Norton Anthology of American Literature*, and he teaches literature in the Global Studies Faculty Division of Sarah Lawrence College. His books in-

clude, among others, *The Turn to the Native: Studies in Culture and Criticism* and *Red Matters: Native American Studies*. *All that Remains: Varieties of Indigenous Expression* has most recently appeared.

STEPHANIE LI is an assistant professor of English at the University of Rochester. She received her PhD in English language and literature in May 2005 and her MFA in fiction writing in 2003, both from Cornell University. Her book, "*Something Akin to Freedom*": *The Choice of Bondage in Narratives by African American Women*, was awarded the First Book Prize in African American Studies by SUNY Press and will be published later this year. It is both a historical study of black women in antebellum slavery and a literary analysis involving such authors as Harriet Jacobs, Hannah Crafts, William Faulkner, and Gayl Jones. She has published in such journals as *Callaloo*, *American Literature*, and *Legacy*.

AMANDA MOULDER is a PhD candidate in the Department of English and assistant director in the Department of Rhetoric and Writing at the University of Texas at Austin. Her dissertation research examines the literary and rhetorical traditions of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Cherokee women.

JOHN LLOYD PURDY is professor of English at Western Washington University. His works include *Word Ways: The Novels of D'Arcy McNickle* and *Nothing But the Truth: An Anthology of Native American Literature*. His book *Conversations in Indian Pubs: Reading Native American Fiction* is under contract with the University of Nebraska Press. He currently edits *The American Review of Canadian Studies*.

CHRISTINA ANN ROBERTS is of Gros Ventre and Assiniboine ancestry and was raised in the Seattle area. She recently completed her doctorate at the University of Arizona and is an assistant professor at Seattle University, where she teaches American literature courses with a special focus on American Indian literatures.

## Major Tribal Nations and Bands Mentioned in This Issue

This list is provided as a service to those readers interested in further communications with the tribal communities and governments of American Indian and Native nations. Inclusion of a government in this list does not imply endorsement of or by *SAIL* in any regard, nor does it imply the enrollment or citizenship status of any writer mentioned. Some communities have alternative governments and leadership that are not affiliated with the United States, Canada, or Mexico, while others are not currently recognized by colonial governments. We have limited the list to those most relevant to the essays published in this issue; thus, not all bands, towns, or communities of a particular nation are listed.

We make every effort to provide the most accurate and up-to-date tribal contact information available, a task that is sometimes quite complicated. Please send any corrections or suggestions to *SAIL* Editorial Assistant, *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, Department of English, 1 University Station, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX 78712, or send an e-mail to [klbrown@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:klbrown@mail.utexas.edu).

Cherokee Nation  
PO Box 948  
Tahlequah, OK 74465  
Phone: 918-453-5000  
Web site: <http://www.cherokee.org>

Chickasaw Nation

PO Box 1548

Ada, OK 74821

Phone: 580-436-2603

Web site: <http://www.chickasaw.net>

Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Nation

51383 Highway 93 North

PO Box 278

Pablo, MT 59855

Phone: 406-675-2700

Fax: 406-675-2806

Web site: <http://www.cskt.org>

Havasu 'Baaja Nation

PO Box 10

Supai, AZ 86435

Phone: 928-448-2731

Web site: <http://www.havasupaitribe.com>

Pueblo of Laguna

PO Box 194

Laguna, NM 87026

Phone: 505-552-6654

Web site: <http://www.lagunapueblo.org>

White Earth Indian Reservation (Anishinaabe)

PO Box 418

White Earth, MN 56591

Phone: 218-983-3285

Fax: 218-983-4299

Web site: <http://www.whiteearth.com>

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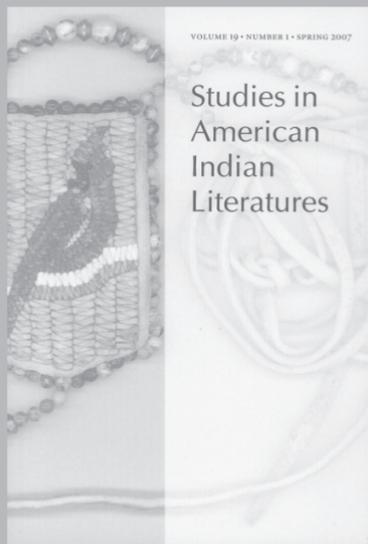
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