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MEMORIAL FOR KARL KROEBER (1926–2009)

Karl Kroeber, editor emeritus of *SAIL*, died at age eighty-two on Sunday, November 8, 2009. He passed away at his home in Brooklyn, New York, with his family at his side. Karl had retired in May from his position as Mellon Professor of the Humanities and professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia University. He was the son of author Theodora Kracaw Kroeber and anthropologist Alfred L. Kroeber and the brother of science-fiction writer Ursula K. LeGuin and anthropologist Clifton Kroeber.

His major scholarly and teaching interests were English Romanticism, American Indian literatures (especially oral narratives), and children's literature. Kroeber was a prolific and highly respected scholar of English Romanticism.

Kroeber started *SAIL*, which during his editorship (1977–87) was published at Columbia University. In 1999 ASAIL honored him at the MLA Convention in Chicago for his contributions to *SAIL* and American Indian literatures. He also wrote and edited books on these literatures: *Artistry in Native American Myths* (1998), *Native American Storytelling: A Reader of Myths and Legends* (2004), *Traditional Literatures of the American Indian: Texts and Interpretations* (1981; 2nd ed., 1997). In addition, Kroeber coedited *Ishi in Three Centuries* (2003) with his brother Clifton.

With his passing, we have lost a superb literary scholar, inspiring teacher, and dedicated friend of American Indian literatures.

For an announcement of his death and comments by former Columbia students, see Alexa Davis, "Columbia Mourns Loss of

Karl Kroeber,” *Columbia Spectator* (Wednesday, November 11, 2009): <http://www.columbiaspectator.com/printer/view?nid=28062>.

For more information about Kroeber, see the special issue of *The Wordsworth Circle* (2007) entitled “In Honor of Karl Kroeber” (<http://www.rc.umd.edu/reference/wcircle/index.html>). See also Gene Ruoff, “Romanticism with a Difference: The Recent Criticism of Karl Kroeber,” *boundary 2* 18.1 (Spring 1991): 226–37, available through JSTOR. The essay reviews Kroeber’s *British Romantic Art* (1986), *Romantic Fantasy and Science Fiction* (1988), *Romantic Narrative Art* (1960), and *Romantic Landscape Vision: Constable and Wordsworth* (1975).

A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff
Professor Emerita of English
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FROM THE EDITORS

We want to take this opportunity to offer our most sincere thanks to Jane Hafen for her work as *SAIL*'s book review editor. Jane has resigned from the position after seven years of doing the rewarding though, we imagine, sometimes tedious job. Please thank Jane, too, the next time that you see her for doing one of those tasks of such critical importance to our field. Book reviews are part of the academic currency in which we deal. They are often the first publication we have as graduate students, and they go on the vitas that we send to prospective employers, submit to department committees deciding merit raises, and place in promotion and tenure dossiers. Jane devoted considerable time and effort to this section of the journal. By doing so she helped to sustain the intellectual conversation by bringing you the voices of a broad range of scholars. Thank you, Jane, on behalf of all *SAIL* readers.

This issue of *SAIL* offers new perspectives on two familiar authors, Leslie Marmon Silko and Wendy Rose. Kathleen Godfrey's interview with Rose coincides with the recent publication of Rose's new book of poems, *Itch Like Crazy*, in the Sun Tracks Series at the University of Arizona Press. Rose reflects in the interview on such topics as identity, hybridity, and the search for family. *Itch Like Crazy* has on its front cover praise from Silko, whose novel *Almanac of the Dead* is the subject of Miriam Schacht's essay. Hemispheric in scope but rooted at the Laguna Pueblo, the novel models a mobile Indigeneity. This mobility is, Schacht argues, crucial to the maintenance of Indigenous nations.

We are also fortunate to have Emilio del Valle Escalante introduce many *SAIL* readers to Quechua author Gregorio Condori Mamani. He reads Condori Mamani's prison testimonio from the mid-1970s as an inspiring challenge to Western modernity and colonialism: "I argue," Escalante writes, "that Condori Mamani's stories represent an 'every day form of resistance' where we identify a politics of memory that challenges the triumphalism and historical hegemonic discourses of Peruvian society in order to reclaim, re-conceptualize, and articulate an alternative Andean worldview that proposes decolonization." In the essay, Escalante focuses primarily on the political import of the "fictive" or "mythic" stories that Condori Mamani heard in prison and relates to his readers. In the next piece, Craig Womack takes as his focus Toni Morrison's representation of American Indians in *Paradise*. In dialogue with the scholarship on Morrison's efforts to document the intersections of African American and Native American peoples and histories, Womack considers the insubstantial historical American Indian presence in *Paradise* and their absence from the narrative present. Where exactly, Womack wonders, are the Indians in *Paradise*?

Calls for papers have been released for two conferences that many ASAIL members and *SAIL* readers attend: NALS and NAISA. Please remember that ASAIL now has an Emerging Scholars Professional Development Fellowship that provides travel assistance for graduate students and advanced undergraduates. The applications must be filed prior to the conference. See the News and Announcements section at the back of this issue for more details.

Our thanks, too, to Kirby Brown, who served the journal as editorial assistant for the last year, and to Kyle Wyatt, who continues in that role. We have a deep and abiding appreciation for all their efforts. Finally, please join us in welcoming Bryan Russell as our new editorial assistant.

James H. Cox and Daniel Heath Justice

Gregorio Condori Mamani and the Reconceptualization of Andean Memory in Cuzco, Peru

EMILIO DEL VALLE ESCALANTE

Every place you walk, you have to have a story.

So you know where you come from; and know where you are;
and see where you are going.

Edward Johnson

In the struggle for dignity, there is an apparent turn to the past, but,
and this is fundamental, the final horizon is the future.

Subcomandante Marcos

In the chapter “Stories from Jail” from *Andean Lives*, Gregorio Condori Mamani talks about how he is falsely and unjustly incarcerated for nine months for eating a stew made with meat of a stolen cow (60). In his experience in jail, he not only learns how to weave ponchos, blankets, and shawls to survive but also learns mythical stories from other *runas* or Quechuas that explain the origins of his people, the land, and the relationships between humanity and Mother Earth. The image of jail in this chapter is a powerful one. For Indigenous peoples, jail has been the place where the repression of our most dignified liberties has historically taken place. Jail has served to reorganize and regulate the Indigenous body to make it function under the institutional and societal structures implanted by colonialism.¹ Yet, while jail is supposed to be a place of punishment and repression, for Condori Mamani, ironically, it becomes a school, a space where Andean knowledge is constructed, exchanged,

and distributed among *runas*. He says: “we’d keep on working the wool, laughing without a worry, listening to the storytellers spin their tales. I’ve never heard so many stories as there in jail, and even now I can still remember some of them” (61). Storytelling, as we see here, becomes a political act that reveals the ways in which the violence of colonization has continued and the efforts of those who have experienced it to reimagine the world in alternative ways.

This essay explores Gregorio Condori Mamani’s testimonial narrative in *Andean Lives*. It will particularly focus on his mythical stories in order to show the narrator’s critique of Western modernity. I argue that Condori Mamani’s stories represent an “everyday form of resistance” (Scott) where we identify a politics of memory that challenges the triumphalism and historical hegemonic discourses of Peruvian society in order to reclaim, reconceptualize, and articulate an alternative Andean worldview that proposes decolonization. Indeed, Condori Mamani’s experience highlights the activity of Indigenous peoples who have consciously had the purpose of effecting change in their conditions of existence by appealing to or applying pressure on a dominant order, whether it is government or other forms of power such as capital, the media, or public opinion. His narrative grounds a struggle over interpretation and representation in which he poses a challenge to academic scholarship that is framed in terms of who owns the past, whose history is it, who has the right to tell it, and on what grounds can and should it be told.

For those not familiar with *Andean Lives*, the text includes the testimonial narratives of Condori Mamani and Asunta Quispe Huamán, who are Indigenous Quechua speakers from southern Peru. According to Jill Wightman (17), their narratives were recorded in the mid-1970s by Peruvian anthropologists Ricardo Valderrama Fernández and Carmen Escalante Gutiérrez and published in 1977 in a bilingual Quechua-Spanish edition. Condori Mamani, who was in his sixties at the time his story was recorded, was working as a “strapper,” someone who transports goods on his back through the markets and streets of Cuzco like a human pack animal. He talks about his life, starting with his childhood as an orphan forced into servitude; he then speaks of a short period in the army, nine months

in jail for eating a stew made with meat of a stolen cow, the death of two wives and a son, folktales and cosmological beliefs, work in a textile factory, and finally his life in Cuzco with Quispe Huamán, his third wife. Quispe Huamán's narrative, on the other hand, talks about violence at the hands of family, employers, and husbands—including Condori Mamani—and the deaths of several of her children.²

Andean Lives has been considered a *testimonio* (Gelles; Cornejo Polar; Díaz Caballero; and Zevallos-Aguilar), which according to John Beverley's definition is "a novel or novella-length narrative in book or pamphlet (that is, printed as opposed to acoustic) form, told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration is usually a 'life' or a significant life experience" (30–31). Since most of the times the narrator of a *testimonio* is a person whose conditions of subalternity do not allow her/him direct access to the circuits of representation, the account depends on a mediator who records or collects, orders, edits, and publishes the narrative. This particular aspect separates *testimonio* from other genres such as "autobiography" or "autoethnography" (Pratt 6).³ In addition, in *testimonio* the narrator for the most part tends to express a political urgency to communicate a "problem of repression, poverty, subalternity, imprisonment, struggle for survival" (Beverley 32). We certainly find all of these characteristics in *Andean Lives*. However, rather than focus on these particular aspects of the *testimonio*, my interest in this essay will be in highlighting the political urgency and project that emerges from the "fictive" stories narrated by Condori Mamani.⁴

There are a number of significant studies of *Andean Lives*. These, however, have seldom focused on the narrator's myths about the foundation of the city of Cuzco, Apu Ausankati, and Mother Snow and her three sons Birnaku (thunder), Elaku (rain), and Chanaku (wind-storm). Much of the criticism on the book has discussed, among other things, whether or not we obtain an "authentic" narrative from the narrators since the acts of transcribing, translating, and editing all mediate Condori Mamani's and Quispe Huamán's

voices (Gelles 4). Other critics have focused on the linguistic aspects of the narrative, analyzing Quechua structural forms of narration versus Spanish ones (Borel; Howard-Malverde). Others have problematized the relationships between the subaltern informants and bicultural intellectuals (Zevallos-Aguilar 246). Yet others have argued that Condori Mamani's *testimonio* does not have any "political intentions," and it relates merely to a narrative of personal and individual survival within a society that marginalizes and alienates indigenous peoples (Cornejo Polar 203). Following this analysis, others argue that Condori Mamani's *testimonio* oscillates between a mythic narrative inherited from Andean ancestry and an autobiographical discursivity. The narrative, according to this reading, depicts a process of subjection and repression of ancestral values by Peruvian modernization, and also Condori Mamani's failure to adopt Western modernity due to the fact that he is illiterate and a monolingual speaker of Quechua (Díaz Caballero 354).

To complement and problematize the existing criticism on *Andean Lives*, in this essay I will focus on Condori Mamani's mythical stories, which I read as part of a political effort to construct an Andean epistemology that reaffirms Quechua history, tradition, and cultural experience in Peru. The notion of myth I use in this essay, besides "unverifiable and typically fantastic" stories (Bierhorst 3), is related to Joan Henley's approach. Myths, according to Henley, may function on the panhuman level of meaning in three different ways: first, as explanatory myths, which recount "the past, showing how things came to be as they are"; second, as admonitory or cautionary tales that "warn of the dangers of unwise actions"; and finally, as exemplary narratives that illustrate ways of "outwitting enemies, through craft and cunning, and of dealing with threats to the social order" (49). The mythical stories Condori Mamani narrates function at the first and second level of narration Henley describes.

The first story, an explanatory myth, describes the foundation of the city of Cuzco, a story Condori Mamani learned from one of the town elders, Laureano Cutipa. Cuzco—"the home of our ancestors" (22), he says—was built by the Inka in an open and flat *pampa* or open plains, but its walls and houses would constantly fall down

because of the strong winds sent by Inka Qulla, the owner of the wind. Mindful of this, the Inka make a pact with her by which she allows him to lock up the wind for one day so that he can finish building his city. If not finished by then, Inka Qulla says, her winds “will sweep away everything” (22). The Inka then decides to tie up the sun in order to prolong the day. With the advice of his wife, he also builds the mountains all around Cuzco to protect it from Inka Qulla’s winds, “and those are the mountains that’ve been there ever since” (22), Condori Mamani concludes.

In the second and third stories that Condori Mamani narrates, we recognize the admonitory or cautionary level of mythical meaning. He talks about a *misti* or *mestizo* cattle rancher who is looking to buy cattle around the communities of the mountain lord, Apu Ausankati.⁵ Ausankati, dressed as a peasant, appears to the *misti* and offers him cattle and one of his daughters to marry. The *misti* accepts and wakes up the next morning in the middle of “a strange town, with herds of cattle, llamas, and alpacas covering the mountains like clouds” (61). He then decides to go visit his family with his wife. On their way there, they stop in Cuzco to have something to eat and drink. Apu Ausankati’s daughter tells him that he needs to be thankful for their meals and drinks and that he needs to make offerings and say prayers to her, “because before eating or drinking anything—Condori Mamani says—, you must make offerings with it, that is, you have to blow its fragrance toward the earth and venerable awkis, who feed on the fragrance of those offerings” (62). The cattle rancher instead gets drunk and curses and hits his wife. In the blink of an eye, she vanishes from his side, taking the llamas and all the riches they carried with them. The next day, the cattle rancher finds himself alone “with no wife, llama, cargo—nothing at all” (62). When he goes back to the mountain of Ausankati to look for his wife and riches, he disappears, and nobody “knows if he was punished or killed” (62).

Finally, Condori Mamani narrates the importance of choosing a good crop keeper during the Carnival Monday dedicated to Saint Cyprian.⁶ The chosen crop keeper is “to watch over the potato patches, protecting them from hail, pests, and frost” (44). For the

entire harvest season, the crop keeper lives in a small hut and, once hail arrives, he is to burn incense and dried onions, make libations of kerosene and holy water while singing, and pray to Saint Cyprian so that the hail goes away. In the story, hail is personified as the three misbehaved sons of Mother Snow, Birnaku (thunder/lightning bolt), Elaku (frozen rain), and Chanaku (strong wind).⁷ They travel in the hail and, every season, try to destroy the harvests by battling crop keepers. Chanaku, the “craziest of them all—says Gregorio—he doesn’t heed anyone, and he’ll strip and glean the fields of everything. When he enters the fields, he steals it all, taking the potatoes, broad beans, and the rest of the crops. He carries off their life spirit” (45). The ceremonial acts made by the crop keeper to Saint Cyprian are meant to protect the harvests from hail.

What kind of cultural significance and meaning do these stories convey? What kind of human experience do they mythologize or allegorize? To start with, we notice that the stories share an intimate and spiritual relationship between humanity and the gods, represented in the figures of Inka, Inka Qulla, Apu Ausankati, and Mother Snow and her three sons. The stories all mix myth with social causation, as in the case of the cattle rancher who refuses to recognize in his wife’s advice an awareness of a powerful natural force. Their relationship can be understood allegorically since it presents myth as reconciling opposing forces through acts of self-determination. In order to heal society from those who refuse to recognize the supernatural power of the mountain spirits, Apu Ausankati punishes or destroys the cattle rancher, who turns into a symbolic embodiment of oppression against those very forces. On the other hand, success is achieved if obligations are fulfilled, like Inka and Inka Qulla, or if the respect and authority of the deities are recognized through spiritual pacts and ceremonies, as in the case of the chosen crop keepers that become guardians of the harvests. In this context, Condori Mamani ties social justice and personal balance to the empowerment of the spirits of the mountains and the recognition of their value and relevance in society.

In addition to the stories, Condori Mamani emphasizes Andean moral values when he describes Ayni and the relationship between

Indigenous peoples and Earth Mother—values that, as we will see later, counteract the capitalist mode of production being established in Cuzco. Ayni, or reciprocity in Quechua, is a “fundamental principle of Andean socioeconomic organization that consists of the reciprocal exchange of goods and services” (*Andean Lives* 175). Condori Mamani stresses the importance of this intercultural value when he says, “You have to return each ayni you’ve received with all your heart. If you’ve got draft animals and your relatives or friends need them, you’ve got to lend them out” (43). In relation to Earth Mother, he also says, “You can neglect your wife and even forget all about her, but never the land, never Earth Mother. If you forget about Earth Mother, she’ll forget about you too” (41). These statements establish not only the political importance that land and Ayni have for Condori Mamani and his people but also a cultural identity based on a spiritual and material foundation that is sustained by his unique relationship to Earth Mother and the spirit of cooperation embodied in Ayni. He establishes a “difference” between his own cultural perspectives in order to separate himself from an “other.” In this context, with the stories he narrates and his references to these Andean cultural values, the narrator constructs a narrative in which he urges readers to attach positive value to these Andean beliefs, while at the same time he makes an epistemological connection with his ancestral past.

This connection to the Andean past can also be drawn when we consider the similarities in the thematic and narrative structures between the stories narrated by Condori Mamani and those included in Frank Salomon, Jorge Urioste, and Francisco de Avila’s *Huarochirí Manuscript*, an Andean text produced in 1609 that records myths from the community of Huarochirí in western Peru.⁸ The stories of Apu Ausankati and Mother Snow and her three sons are similar to those of Paria Caca and his son Maca Uisa in the *Huarochirí*. Like Apu Ausankati and many other Andean deities, Paria Caca is a mountain that made its first appearance as five eggs that later became five falcons and, later yet, became five men, the founders of the human groups that appear as the main collective protagonists of the *Huarochirí*. Paria Caca, according to Frank

Salomon (6), symbolizes ethnic unity. He is a mountain, a stormy being of the heights, that made himself known to humans by favoring a poor man with power to defeat the rich. As a mountain he is “a majestic double-peaked snowcap visible on the eastward horizon from the heights of Huarochiri” (6). He also battled other deities in order to secure the monumental landscape of snowcaps and lakes where pilgrims bring their llamas to eat and drink water.

The story of Maca Uisa, on the other hand, resembles that of the sons of Mother Snow, especially Chanaku. In the *Huarochiri*, Maca Uisa resembles a trickster that personifies and allegorizes rain. He is playful and mischievous (*travieso*), and his actions are at times aggressive and humorous:

As soon as they brought him up a hill, Maca Uisa, child of Paria Caca, began to rain upon them, gently at first.

The natives of the country said, “What could this mean?” and began to ready themselves.

When they did so, Maca Uisa reduced all those villages to eroded chasms by flashing lightning and pouring down more rain, and washing them away in a mudslide (115).

At another time, Maca Uisa responds to the prayers of the *capayama* peoples (one of the races created by Paria Caca), who ask him for rain for their crops. The next day it begins to rain, and the community is happy. The rain continues for several months until the elders of the community gather together and tell Maca Uisa: “Everyone is mad at us. Don’t send us too much water! . . . Shutter off! Hold back on the water. Shutter off!” (140–41).

The role of myth for Indigenous peoples is to provide accounts of the origins of the universe and the relationship of humanity to it (Florescano 300). For that reason, each time reality is modified—by natural disasters, invasions, political changes, conquest, and so forth—myths are also modified in order to respond to specific realities as a way to revitalize and/or reconceptualize the experience of their narrators and communities. Following this line of thinking, the commonalities and differences of the stories of the *Huarochiri* and Condori Mamani tell us that Andean peoples have reacted to

different circumstances several times before, each time creating a new epistemological order that was connected with the past. In their orientation toward the significance of the Apus or spirits of the mountains as well as their respective allegorization of the wind, rain, and lightning, the stories reveal Andean peoples' recognition of and exposure to their natural resources, their history, and their attachment to them. In this sense, the stories evidence a tendency to express moral norms of action and behavior shaped by Andean people's relationship to their past and environment.

In addition, these mythical stories also demonstrate that Andean peoples at various times have managed to reconceptualize their history, memory, and values as systematic responses to colonialism (Salomon 3). In both the *Huarochiri* and Condori Mamani's stories, the mythical constructions of Andean memory, constructed within contexts marked by colonialism, represent a chance to take pride in Andean heritage in response to the Spanish invasion and Peruvian modernization. The stories contrast the human condition with imagined alternatives that reinforce a present and future where the ancient deities represent an Andean greatness that equals and challenges Western knowledge. The stories can be read as a response to colonizing agents that want to take away what belongs or once belonged to Indigenous peoples by constructing a narrative that exhibits autonomy and self-sufficiency. Even when the stories of Chanaku and Maca Uisa display acts of hostility toward Andean peoples and communities, they also convey the necessity to establish a relationship and balance between humanity and the Andean spiritual and natural worlds. In this way, these mythical stories reassert Andean people's historical origins, heredity, and spiritual connections by tying their existence and experience to their past.

In the case of Condori Mamani, his stories reconceptualize Andean memory in the present in order to communicate a collective response to the concerns and problems provoked by Peruvian modernization in the 1970s.⁹ In a way that is similar to the *Huarochiri* narrator's struggles with Christianity, Condori Mamani sees modernization as threatening the ways of life and traditions of his people. In his narrative, these concerns come across in references to

the past as a way to show or challenge what is going on in the present. He states, for instance, that “there was plenty of food back then, not scarce like it is now” (25). Later he refers to his return to the Lord of Huanca’s shrine by saying,

it is not like it used to be in the old days, when people would also come down from the high country, from as far away as the Puno Lake, with hundreds and hundreds of llamas, horses, and burros. Nowadays the Lord of Huanca’s shrine is scary and enough to make you crazy. Everything is money, money, money, and the cars and trucks swarm there like ants. (31)¹⁰

We find similar concerns when he talks about Ayni and how this cultural tradition is not practiced as much in Cuzco anymore: “once all those villagers come to live here in Cuzco, that custom no longer lives in their hearts. That’s why here in the shanty towns they work only for money—and there is no ayni” (41).

Condori Mamani’s statements display an obvious reservation about the small-scale expansion of urban commerce taking place in Cuzco, which has been introducing capitalist modes of production since the beginning of the twentieth century. The 1960s especially saw the rapid growth of the tourist industry and large-scale migration to the city, which began to modify social relations by the growth of competition for jobs that consequently generated class inequality. In cultural terms, Marisol de la Cadena points out that the tourism boom contributed to the emergence of public “festivals and stimulated creative cultural activity ranging from folk dance troupes to elite official representations of Inca history, as well as the production of religious rituals” (35). While these festivals recognize and display the Indigenous presence in Cuzco, they also represent ways in which Andean cultural values and religious rituals become commodities that may lose significance and meaning. In this context, Condori Mamani suggests that, rather than creating cohesive and intercultural forms of coexistence, the growth and expansion of these industries have introduced capitalist cultural values that have been modifying and dismantling Andean ways of life, transforming them into cultural capital in the name of “money, money, money.”

According to Bain Attwood and Fiona Magowan, by telling stories we remember the past,

but to remember the past is also to reform the present or to change the future. In this context, by recounting histories of colonialism, indigenous peoples have not only created an understanding but also a critique of it, and in constructing stories of freedom they have been able to challenge their oppression. (xii)

In this sense, any oral tale is a political attempt to reflect upon the narrator's own position within a society and speaks of his efforts to respond to it by either acting or reimagining social relations. If we consider Condori Mamani's narrative within this line of thinking and within the context of a world in which modernity or globalization approaches with new cultural and economic forces that threaten so-called traditional values, we can argue that "telling stories" is a way to challenge globalization and its mode of production in order to inscribe another history, another possibility.

Notwithstanding the obvious essentialism that emerges from Condori Mamani's discursive construction of the Andean world, by making references to "how things used to be" or "back then in the old days," he develops a narrative that criticizes his present situation and that of his people. The stories and the cultural values he emphasizes define the present as different from the past, and they suggest that the present condition is marked by a continuous colonial experience that needs to be eradicated. The promise of modernity (prosperity, emancipation, progress, etc.), Condori Mamani suggests, has failed him and his people, and it has brought not only an imposition by outsiders but also a decline in the moral, material, and spiritual values of the Indigenous peoples in Cuzco. With the emphasis on the deities, the stories express a desire to escape from tutelage and dependence in order to become autonomous and self-reliant, to build a vision of collective unity and reciprocity. Furthermore, addressing "those days" or "back then" reflects a powerful attachment to the past, which Condori Mamani, at the same time, envisions as better and as a possible future. As Partha Chatterjee says, "it

is our attachment to the past which gives birth to the feeling that the present needs to be changed, that it is our task to change it" (19–20). In this sense, with his narrative Condori Mamani crafts "a picture of 'those days' when there was beauty, prosperity and a healthy sociability, and which was, above all, [the creation of his people]. 'Those days' for us is not a historical past; we construct it only to mark the difference posed by the present" (Chatterjee 20). Thus Condori Mamani's *testimonio* constitutes a transformed version of the world consisting of a reimagined future in which Andean values, grounded in tradition, contribute to rethink and modify society from the perspective of the Andean world.

Contrary to what some interpret as a narrative of "victimization" or a narrative that lacks "political intentions," Condori Mamani's discourse is, to follow James C. Scott, an "everyday form of resistance." It is "a struggle over the appropriation of symbols, a struggle over how the past and present shall be understood and labeled, a struggle to identify causes and assess blame, a contentious effort to give partisan meaning to local history," as well as "an effort by the poor to resist the economic and ritual marginalization they now suffer and to insist on the minimal cultural decencies of citizenship" (Scott xvii–xviii). This insistence is expressed by Condori Mamani when he says: "I'd like all of us strappers living in Cuzco, young and old alike, to get together and form a union so we don't have to live this kind of life. That way we'd be united as one, a single voice" (103).

Despite the conscious effort to give light to what are obviously deprived and marginalized material conditions of existence, Condori Mamani's ideological objectives are to reject modernities that are established by others in order to validate and empower the ethnic, linguistic, and cultural differences of Andean peoples and to epistemologically restore and rearticulate Andean values within contemporary society. In this way, he inscribes his narrative in a long tradition of Indigenous resistance to colonialism. Indeed, Condori Mamani's *testimonio* ties its struggle not only to the narrators of the *Huarochiri* but also to those of the *Popol Wuj* in Mesoamerica during the colonial period, or his Indigenous contemporaries in the rest of the Americas who have reaffirmed and reconceptualized their

memory and history through storytelling. This is precisely what Simon Ortiz calls the “consciousness of the people” with regard to the oral tradition in Native American societies, since it is built upon continuity and continuance and expresses a belief system that “must be included and respected in every aspect of Native American life and outlook” (9).

Yet, while it is important to recognize this politics of memory as another way to relate, understand, and reconceptualize the past, we also need to be aware of the role of memory in oral and conventional history. That is, in the invocation of stories like those of Inka Qulla or Apu Ausankati, the professional historian may consider Condori Mamani to be unreliable since the stories do not have a “historical” foundation we can locate in the historical record, nor do they refer to a specific time or event. The stories may also show inconsistency, distortion, or exaggeration regarding the agency of their subjects. Moreover, Condori Mamani denies discontinuities and refuses to believe any sense of alterity: “Present and past are brought into greater proximity; ‘then’ and ‘now’ get entangled with one another, [challenging] history’s notion of linear or evolutionary development, and thus of progress” (Attwood 253). Furthermore, the oral history and memory represented by Condori Mamani, contrary to the discourse of historiography, gives us a nonobjective narrator who makes sense of the past in the present, at times giving us a variety of “pasts” that take us in different directions. The purpose of the narrator or storyteller is not so much to provide accuracy but rather to create a narrative that is true to his or her own past.

But in the discussion of “objectivity” with regard to oral and conventional history, scholars also need to be aware that their work involves interpretations, which according to Edward Said,

depend very much on who the interpreter is, who he or she is addressing, what his or her purpose is in interpreting, at what historical moment the interpretation takes place. In this sense, all interpretations are what might be called *situational*: they always occur in a situation whose bearing on the interpretation is *affiliative*. It is related to what other interpreters have

said, either by confirming them, or by disputing them, or by continuing them. (154)

Said helps demystify the role of the producers of oral and conventional history by reminding us that there are no “apolitical” readings.

In this context, it would be pertinent to consider Condori Mamani’s *testimonio* as an example of a what Dipesh Chakrabarty calls “subaltern past,” which is a discourse that has acquired an “inferior” or “marginal” status since it represents a moment or point “at which the archive that the historian mines develops a degree of intractability with respect to the aims of professional history” (101). Subaltern pasts in this sense represent experiences of the past that cannot be captured by the discipline and, therefore, resist historicization. Nonetheless, subaltern pasts and storytelling feed the discourse of history since much of the information about the Indigenous world in the Americas is the result of oral history and storytelling. Notwithstanding the ironies and contradictions, subaltern pasts exist concomitantly with history and are valid and alternative ways to relate to the past.

Taking into account these limitations and the conflictive relationship between oral and conventional history, we need to consider Condori Mamani’s ideological and strategic objectives in telling stories. For all that matter, Condori Mamani may be fabricating or “inventing traditions” (Hobsbawn) in which he tells Valderrama Fernández and Escalante Gutiérrez what they want to hear.¹¹ While we are aware that the two anthropologists hold the power of editing and publishing Condori Mamani’s *testimonio*, we cannot overlook the fact that he is perfectly aware of his role as a narrator whose personal account and stories are transcribed into a book. In other words, he knows that the hegemonic narrative of history and modernity have been told from a non-Indigenous perspective, denying him and his people their version of what happens. Therefore, these narratives have been implicated in the colonization of the Andean world.

Given the opportunity to narrate history, Condori Mamani strategically uses and even manipulates Valderrama Fernández and

Escalante Gutiérrez to his own advantage. He administers his own discourse to establish homologies between the past and the Indigenous subject in order to make his stories visible to others. Like other Indigenous activists and intellectuals, he constructs a narrative that functions as a “historical” source that can be retrieved for the empowerment of future generations of Andean peoples. The stories, in this context, acquire a significance that defines an epistemological struggle for the rights of Indigenous peoples living in a subaltern or disenfranchised position. His *testimonio* is an attempt for the possibilities of self-fulfillment, not only of himself, but also of his own community. In this sense, and to paraphrase the words of Subcomandante Marcos, with his stories, Condori Mamani is “reading the future which has already been sown yesterday, which is being cultivated today, and which can only be reaped if one dreams.”

NOTES

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1. During the colonial period in Mexico, for instance, Fray Pedro de Gante describes some of these practices of “lacking up” children:

one thousand children were gathered together, and we kept them locked up day and night in our house, and they were forbidden any conversation with their fathers and even less with their mothers, with the only exception of those who served them and brought them food; and the reason for this was so that they might neglect their excessive idolatries and their excessive sacrifices, from which the devil had secured countless souls. (qtd. in Mignolo 67)

2. In this essay, I do not analyze Quispe Huaman's *testimonio* since it deserves to be studied in its own right. I am currently working on an analysis that explores and compares the struggles and demands of Indigenous women in Latin America in which I put into dialogue voices from the Andean and Mesoamerican regions. Besides Quispe Huaman, I also include

Dolores Cacuangó, the Zapatista comandantes in Chiapas, and Rigoberta Menchú.

3. According to Mary Louise Pratt, autoethnographies refer to instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer's own terms. If ethnographic texts are a means by which Europeans represent to themselves their (usually subjugated) others, autoethnographic texts are those the others construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations. (7)

4. The genre has originated several debates that include questions of authenticity, claims of "truth," and royalties. For these discussions, see Jara and Vidal; Beverley; and Gugelberger.

5. The word *misti* is derived from the Spanish word *mestizo*, and it is the "term used by indigenous peasants in the southern Peruvian highland to refer to nonindigenous peoples" (Condori Mamani et al., *Andean Lives* 177–78).

Apu, in Quechua, means "the spirit of the mountain."

6. Carnival Monday takes place during Holy week. Saint Cyprian or San Cipriano was originally a powerful magician who later became a Christian bishop that gave up witchcraft. He supposedly burned his books of magic that compiled spells and esoteric knowledge from diverse sources. People pray to him for protection against powerful forces, spells, and malevolent spirits.

7. "Chanaku" also means the youngest son in Quechua.

8. *The Huarochiri Manuscript* was compiled by the vicar in the province of Huarochiri, Francisco de Avila (?–1647). Some critics, like G erald Taylor, challenge the assumption that the book was written by Avila. Taylor attributes the stories and writing of the book to one narrator, Tom as, who was one of Avila's servant and who knew how to read and write in Spanish.

9. The project of modernization in Cuzco can be traced back to the beginning of the twentieth century, marked by the completion of the railroad line between Cuzco and Arequipa in 1908. From here on, the city began a cultural and economic transformation characterized by new technological innovations, including electric services that officially began in 1914; the opening of factories for industrial production of wool, cocoa, and hides; and the growth of urbanization. For a study that analyzes these processes of modernization in Cuzco from 1895 to 1924, see Kr uggeler.

10. The Lord of Huanca is a yearly pilgrimage that takes place every Sep-

tember 14 near Cuzco. It has its origins in the 1600s when Diego Quispe, an Indian who escaped Spanish oppression in a mine, hid in the slopes of Apu Pachatusan (“one that sustains the Earth” in Quechua). One night, Quispe is visited by a mystical being—some say it was Jesus—who tells him to spread the message about the apparition. Once the priests of Our Lady of Mercy hear the story, they send an artist from the Cusquenian School to where the apparition took place to paint an image of the Lord on a stone. To commemorate the appearance, in 1676, they also built a chapel that they named The Lord of Huanca. The place is also important because Apu Pachatusan generates water. The yearly celebrations of the Lord of Huanca include baptisms, weddings, and communions.

11. Here I am referring to the consequences of narrating testimonial narratives and the claims to “truth,” issues raised by David Stoll about Rigoberta Menchú’s famous testimonial account, *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1983). These arguments and debates may be considered relevant by some to other testimonial narratives like that of Condori Mamani. For those unfamiliar with this discussion, there is much criticism about the so-called Rigoberta Menchú controversy. See, among others, Arias and Morales.

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Tribal Paradise Lost but Where Did It Go?

Native Absence in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*

CRAIG S. WOMACK

I hope to interpret Toni Morrison's 1997 novel *Paradise*, set in Indian Territory and, later, after 1907 statehood, in Oklahoma, a work that recalls the history of African American self-rule towns, in ways that might advance new methods for studying the intersections of African American and Native American representations in both fiction and criticism. I cannot examine all scholarship on Afro-Indian relations, so I would like to focus on criticism that speaks to issues of representation in creative works: Tiya Miles and Sharon Holland's collection *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country* (2006) and Joseph Brennan's *When Brer Rabbit Meets Coyote: African-Native American Literature* (2003).¹ While some recent criticism has celebrated Toni Morrison's treatment of Native characters by interpreting her portrayals as affirmations of Native culture, I want to look at the tensions between African Americans and Native Americans inside and outside of Morrison's work, especially in light of the burgeoning body of criticism on black-Indian literature. While surveying these responses, I want to discuss my own position that fits somewhere in between dismissal of Morrison for missing the boat on Indians and ecstasy over any mention of Native people whatsoever no matter the quality of her depictions.

Miles and Holland's path-breaking anthology, *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds*, is an interdisciplinary volume of essays that ranges from autobiographical analysis to scrutiny of tribal elections contested over treatment of African American constituents, to the way

hip hop has influenced Indigenous Hawaiian music, and to critical pieces about plays and novels. In the latter regard—that is, the book’s literary content—I will first turn to an essay titled “Native Americans, African Americans and the Space That Is America: Indian Presence in the Fiction of Tony Morrison,” written by Virginia Kennedy, who teaches English at the University of Scranton in Pennsylvania, a critic I hope to both honor and challenge for calling our attention to Morrison’s references to Native people.

Kennedy’s project, like other critics writing in the anthology, is to bring to light the intertwined histories of African Americans and Native Americans. Kennedy seems to hope, further, to credit the Nobel Prize-winning author for reinvigorating these shared stories in creative work. In Kennedy’s own words, “The fiction of Toni Morrison . . . explores legitimate historical connections between black and Indian peoples on American soil that have remained outside the realm of traditional historical accounts” (197). Kennedy goes on to say that, “In Morrison’s fiction, African Americans and Native Americans bump into each other, come across each other, and interconnect with each other. They share experiences and bloodlines, because as these fictions assert, they *are* together in the American landscape” (198).

Paul Pasquaretta, author of “African-Native American Subjectivity and the Blues Voice in the Writings of Toni Morrison and Sherman Alexie,” which is part of *When Brer Rabbit Meets Coyote*, seems to agree: “the interrelationships between black and Indian communities are central, if subtle elements of the writings of Toni Morrison” (279). For my purposes here, I am as interested in the subtle as the central.

Thus, it is the quality of the bumps, so to speak, the crossed paths, and the interconnections that concern me as much as the mere fact of their occasional crossing. By noting the difference between a crossed and a shared path, I want to comment on the rather fleeting examinations of shared African American and Native American destinies in Morrison’s work. Specifically, I will argue that it is not the actual historical interactions that have been ephemeral but their depictions in Morrison’s writing that do not achieve their full poten-

tial. Rather than concentrate on all three of the novels that most frequently reference Indians, *Song of Solomon*, *Beloved*, and *Paradise*, I will focus on the latter, which hits closest to home in my case since it takes place in Oklahoma, where my family and tribe hail from, at least in terms of our recent history since Indian Removal in the 1830s, which uprooted us from homes in the Deep South.² Before contrasting Kennedy's affirmational response to a more skeptical critic, Louis Owens, who represents the other side of the spectrum and argues that Morrison erases Native realities, I want to explain which details of *Paradise* create the backdrop for this discussion of Native presence.

Paradise, with its huge cast of characters—I lost count after sixty—abandons the tradition of a single literary protagonist to opt instead for an entire community as its focus, the towns of Haven and Ruby. It is an Altmanesque—if I can slip into film jargon for a second—montage, a wide canvas, to mix metaphors, of scores of intertwined stories. *Paradise* is about the challenges of African American self-determination, since it fictionalizes the history of all black towns in Oklahoma that sprung up in the Reconstruction era when blacks fled the South for a foreign country within and outside of the United States, for Indian Territory, and, later, the new state of Oklahoma after it joined the union in 1907, seeking greater opportunities to govern themselves and forge their own destinies. Some readers might reasonably expect the novel to delve into the fact that the initial founding fathers of Haven left the United States, the implications of expatriation usually being the subject of some discussion in fiction about Americans who move to foreign countries and of special historical interest in this case because of back-to-Africa movements and other black migration issues in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Before statehood, Indian Territory constituted a unique racial frontier, different from that of the United States, and scholars like Gary Zellar, in works such as *African Creeks: Estelvste and the Creek Nation* (2007), have documented the unique status of Black Indians in southeastern tribes who held political offices and exerted powerful influences on tribal communities. Surely this environment

within tribal jurisdiction had something to do with the attraction to lands outside, but near, that same jurisdiction and provided some of the impetus for African American newspapers in the territory and, later, in Oklahoma, as they started encouraging African Americans from the United States to immigrate as tribal lands were being lost to the tribes and opened up to non-Indian settlement.

Already, we might note a monkey wrench thrown into the pot of African American self-determination given the displacement of tribal peoples that provided the lands for black migration. Readers, then, might also expect the novel to deal with Indian resettlement in the territory that makes Haven and Ruby possible or the models of Indian government that surround Haven and Ruby that might have some bearing on the self-determining aspirations of the two new black towns—that is, the influences of the territory on the newcomers and the influence of the newcomers on the territory.

Oklahoma became a state in 1907, and the very first act of the new legislature was to put into law hardcore Jim Crow laws. Segregation and racism are the foundational core of the illegal state, whatever values the musical might claim to the contrary. Speaking of the wind that comes sweeping down the plain, surely, the territorial racism must have taken the wind out of the sails of many coming there for greater freedom, yet black towns continued to be established even after the illegal legislature began its coup d'état at the state's founding.

The novel *Paradise* concentrates on some of these problems, the black settler's discovery of the bitter milk and honey in the all too familiarly racialized Jordan. The town of Haven, established in 1890, becomes the initial home to a group of immigrants who only find themselves moving further west, to Ruby, in 1950, in what might be described as a last-ditch effort to hold their community together. What comes to light is that the real danger they face is not external racism in their failure to escape Jim Crow but the hatred in their own town—a precarious waltz between fear of self and fear of neighbor. This fact is a turning point in making an argument that both a qualitative and quantitative Indian presence is central to a novel about African Americans: Morrison's theme that an African

American community may find its own liberation thwarted by fear of its neighbors depends on recognizing the existence of those neighbors, which, in this case, includes the substantial interactions of Native people both in the history of the town's founding and its contemporary struggles to continue. *Paradise* recalls minimal information about the former issue and none about the latter.

Disturbingly, the novel opens with the phrase, "They shoot the white girl first" (3). Just seventeen miles from the town, migratory women have established a multiracial colony, a kind of sanctuary, in a former convent that had at one time schooled Cheyenne-Arapahoe girls in its heyday yet had closed down around the same time Ruby itself was founded. The women gathered at the convent live outside the authority of the founding fathers of Ruby, and the men decide their independence must be ended by any means necessary, which culminates in a vigilante group that goes out to the convent in the early hours of dawn and executes its residents.

To say the very least, this is a novel about African American self-determination gone awry, and the title of the book, of course, is an ironic one. The issue of the nature of the relationship between the founding fathers' hatred of the convent women, however, and how that psychosis relates to their attitudes about their Indian neighbors, and the women's legacy of educating Indian students as the very foundation of their beginnings as a community the men will come to hate, goes unaddressed in the novel.

Given the complexity and even the space the novel creates for skepticism in regard to human liberation in the African American community of Ruby, one might wonder, then, if Kennedy's "Indian presence," to borrow the phrase from her title, where blacks and Indians "share experiences and bloodlines, because as these fictions assert, they *are* together in the American landscape" (198), can be anything other than a perilous collision given the inability of Ruby's citizens to love each other, much less *the* Other. What strikes me, however, is not the fact that Indian and Black communities collide but that they do not—and they cannot because one of those communities is completely missing from the contemporary sections of the book set in the 1970s and barely present in the historical passages.

In the accounts of Ruby's and Haven's origins, occasional, problematic, and often nondescript references are made to individual or even small groups of Indians. As a collective, however, as tribal nations that people the territory and then Oklahoma and thus shape the destiny of the two towns, they are nonexistent. There is no red corollary to the black towns of Ruby and Haven in spite of the reality of Indian towns throughout the state. There is no way to talk about self-determination for any race in the state of Oklahoma without addressing Native communities in some significant way.

Further, beyond the demands of realism when one's choice of artistic expression is historical fiction, the lack of attention to Native presence creates symbolic problems in relation to the novel's exploration of the notion of African American autonomy because a major theme is the idea that such a concept will turn into oppression when liberation struggles become too narrowly focused to consider the way they shape and are shaped by surrounding communities. Rather than analyze the way the town rejects these neighbors, as the novel does beautifully in its exploration of the male leadership's fears of the convent women, one of those groups of neighbors, surrounding Native communities, is simply treated as if it does not exist in contemporary time. Thus, these facts about both the novel's relationship to history and its relationship to itself in terms of its most important ideas contextualize the debate about Indian presence or absence taken up by the critics.

One such reader who sees more collision than collusion is Louis Owens. Better put, Owens leans toward arguing that Morrison ignores Indians altogether, largely by examining her nonfiction essays rather than her novels. Owens's critique bears an interesting, if somewhat obscured, relationship to the Kennedy article. Kennedy ends her analysis of the fiction of Toni Morrison with a footnote that credits a personal conversation. It states, "I am indebted to Professor McAllister for engaging in in-depth discussion regarding my disagreement with the negative interpretation of Native presence in Morrison's *Playing in the Dark* expressed by Louis Owens in sections of *Mixedblood Messages* (1998) and *I Hear the Train* (2001). It was my initial discomfort with Owens's perceptions that led to the line of inquiry in this essay" (217n7). After reading the Kennedy footnote, I

looked up Owens's quote, curious about why it might have caused Kennedy to go to the trouble of authoring an essay. Owens writes,

It is not only the male mainstream of critical privilege that serves to silence Native American voices. In *Playing in the Dark*, her less-than-penetrating examination of what she calls "Whiteness and the Literary Imagination," Toni Morrison shows a surprising refusal or inability to acknowledge the Native American presence in the figuration of whiteness in racialized America. Morrison's first chapter opens with the declaration, "I want to draw a map, so to speak, of a critical geography and use that map to open as much space for discovery, intellectual adventure, and close exploration as did the original charting of the New World" (3). The unmistakable discourse of colonial discovery and appropriation clearly marks this strange beginning, making it difficult for any reader to ignore the significance of Indianness in New World figuration. Throughout her book, however, Morrison simply ignores the Native "red" presence that shadows her critical map. Although she does pause to ask rhetorically if America might be seen as "raw and savage . . . [b]ecause it is peopled by a nonwhite indigenous population," she answers herself with a quick and simple "perhaps" before proceeding to ignore entirely the implications of her own question. She refers several times in her text to Melville or Tashtego or a ship called the *Pequod*—or the fact that Melville's narrator and protagonist, having begun the novel in bed with a Native, ends the novel floating on the same Native's empty coffin. Morrison interrogates what she calls Hemingway's "Tontos," who, she says, "are almost always black," but she ignores entirely the implications and problematics of this discourse of Indianness within her own text. Throughout the "discovery" and "exploration" charted in *Playing in the Dark*, the Native American presence is implicitly invoked and routinely erased. (37–38)

Given that the Owens discussion is never brought into the main body of Kennedy's essay but squirreled away in a footnote, I won-

dered how Owens's objections to Morrison got shifted to an aside in an essay partially titled "Indian Presence in the Fiction of Toni Morrison." While Owens deals with Morrison's nonfiction rather than her novels, still his concerns regarding Morrison's methodology seem central, not peripheral, to Kennedy's analysis, especially if at least the possibility exists that Morrison duplicates some of these problems in her fiction. The quote simply is not "footnotable" in light of its centrality to the arguments Kennedy wishes to make since it challenges the very heart of Kennedy's claims about Native presence; to restate Owens, "the Native American presence is implicitly invoked and routinely erased." One wonders why Kennedy, for example, would not either defend *Playing in the Dark* or, given her focus on the fiction, argue that Morrison does a better job in the novels—or any number of other approaches to the gauntlet that Owens throws down.

A Morrison fan myself since I rely on her novels, including *Paradise*, for courses I teach on intersections of African American and Native American literatures, as well as other works for a jazz literature class I offer—besides believing I have been profoundly educated by them personally—I am more inclined to defend her in light of the Owens charge than Kennedy did. I will thus observe that the only thing that might compare to Morrison's less-than-penetrating gaze regarding Native Americans is Native writers' less-than-penetrating gaze when it comes to their depictions of African Americans—when they write of them at all. In this observation I include the failings of my own novel, *Drowning in Fire*, which has an Afro-Creek character of some prominence by the name of Jimmy Alexander but privileges his Creekness over his blackness, and my critical study *Red on Red*, which fails to make Afro-Creeks the subject of its literary analysis. If, as James Baldwin's essays suggest, white America has failed to recognize the black face staring back at it in its own mirror, this blindness seems as relevant to the red gaze as well.

For the sake of brevity, if I have to choose among so many possibilities of why Morrison is a great writer, I admire the way in which she treats history as the subject of morality in the best sense of the term, similar to the way Ralph Ellison wrote of the obligations of

modernism to concern itself with other issues besides aesthetics, especially in terms of America's vexed relationship to race matters and to the reality, as authors have now famously captured in titles, that race matters.

And this is why depictions of Indians matter in this particular novel about African Americans—Morrison's examination of the potential of civil rights struggles to fall prey to the very oppressive power structures they hope to subvert hinges on a developed analysis of the meaning of Indigenism. The idea of sharing space with Indigenes, the meaning of those who migrate and those already there, undergirds every aspect of the novel, literally and symbolically, and this topic is explored in relation to the history of slavery, black migration to the territory, troubled women fleeing to the convent, the struggle over community authenticity in Ruby as certain citizens are deemed legitimate and others not, the tensions between town factions, and much else. Indigenism is studied, in fact, from every angle except one—the territory's Indigenes. This exclusion weakens the philosophy of *Paradise*.

The Reverend Richard Misner, a progressive pastor whose liberation theology does not seem to provide him with sufficient tools to resist patriarchy, debates the school teacher Patricia Best over the subject of whether or not Africa constitutes a meaningful homeland for American blacks (209–13). The passage is revealing in the way it remains abstract rather than concrete, in terms of naming settlers and Indigenes. In prioritizing abstraction over exemplification, Misner fails to analyze those Native communities most affected by the founding of Haven and Ruby. The reverend asks,

can't you even imagine what it must feel like to have a true home? I don't mean heaven. I mean a real earthly home. Not some fortress you bought and built up and have to keep everybody locked in or out. A real home. Not some place you went to and invaded and slaughtered people to get. Not some place you claimed, snatched because you got the guns. Not some place you stole from the people living there, but your own home, where if you go back past your great-great-grandparents, past theirs, and theirs, past the whole of Western his-

tory, past the beginning of organized knowledge, past pyramids and poison bows, on back to when rain was new, before plants forgot they could sing and birds thought they were fish, back when God said Good! Good!—there, right there where you know your own people were born and lived and died. Imagine that, Pat. That place. Who was God talking to if not to my people living in my home? (213)

While Misner's impassioned plea examines displacement in some metaphysical sense, the names of those displaced in Indian Territory—tribes, families, individuals—go unsaid. Throughout the novel a discussion of the material circumstances that result from the dispossession of Native people is unexamined. This problem becomes especially acute in the 1970s portions, when this disagreement between Richard and Pat takes place and when Native people, who were at least named in earlier time frames, are removed from all references. If this turn away from Indigenous specificity is meant to be seen ironically, what passages in the contemporary story debunk it or at least cast it into an ironic light? The failure to name Native people in the 1970s leaves gaping holes in our understanding.

If the men of Ruby are violent enough to execute women at gunpoint, there might be a way to link their psychosis to land theft that has always been a bloody, and patriarchal, proposition and specifically to federal laws like the Dawes Act of 1887 and the Curtis Act of 1898, which assaulted more communal forms of coexistence in the territory, a necessary topic in relation to understanding the evolution, the history, and the contemporary meaning of the convent women's collective ideology—a subject that never really becomes clear in the novel.

Richard Misner is ineffectual in terms of stopping the murders. His progressive ideology is overpowered by the shooters' sexism—but a powerful discussion might result if the novel took up the notion of how the structures of colonialism work in favor, to quote Flannery O'Connor, of the violent who bear it away, in favor of hatred trumping liberalism. The novel, however, pays scant attention to the relationship between settler and Indigenous cultures in the past, and none in the present, and the quoted debate between

Misner and Best is the closest we get to a consideration of the topic of Indigenism.

It is obvious that I am less convinced than Kennedy regarding Morrison's effective treatment of Native people, but I also take a different stance than Owens inasmuch as I want to delve into the matter more than he did. First, his coverage of the problems in Morrison's work is far too brief given the complexity of the subject. The quoted passage is the sum total of Louis Owens's comments on Morrison (although he repeats a briefer version of the same quote in *I Hear the Train*). Secondly, he says nothing about her fiction. While Owens deals with erasure, I want to comment on those passages in *Paradise* where Morrison does, on occasion, reference Indians, passages before the 1970s period when they seem to go missing.

While discussing more of the critics, as well as actual passages in the novel, I hope it becomes apparent that I believe a certain relationship between novels and history is unavoidable, a position Owens does not clarify in his brief attention to Morrison's nonfiction writing. Although it might be a mistake to hold fiction to a simplistic, unmediated, one-to-one relationship with historical fact, while ignoring the very problem of historical objectivity, surely, it is just as unlikely to proceed as if novels have no relationship whatsoever to history and the problematic realm of historical fact. Such a position would underexamine, among other things, the meaning of genres and what kinds of differences are implicit in the subgenre of historical fiction compared to other kinds of novels. To my way of thinking, we can only take relativism so far, and a position that all fiction and all history are equally indeterminant is an impractical one given the reality that we cannot avoid the chore of making sense of the world we live in. The critic Minh T. Nguyen, who defends the position that Joy Kogawa's novels, and human experiences more generally, can be scrutinized in relation to their historical accuracy, writes,

the two novels [*Obasan* and *Itsuka*] point up the necessary act of interpreting and adjudicating between various truth claims and competing accounts of the world; they caution against the retreat into a noncognitivist relativism that avoids

all responsibility for hermeneutical and normative adjudication. Importantly, Kogawa's work upholds the character Aunt Emily's belief that "it matters to get the facts straight." To gain an adequate understanding of the past, we try to gather all the facts. In the process, we might find that some accounts of the past will be partial and even contradictory, but we must subject what we find to evaluation and adjudication, in order to get the facts straight. (178)

This passage, I hope, exemplifies my position relative to Kennedy and Owens: I am interested in both *Paradise's* historical accuracy and the adequacy with which it explores its own themes. Rather than claiming that Morrison does not deal with Indians at all, or that merely mentioning them creates a positive Native presence, positions that I believe represent two untenable extremes, I want to look at the quality of her depictions.

Other essays in *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds* much more effectively examine the tensions between Indians and African Americans, especially the Oklahoma essays in the volume. Melinda Micco's chapter, for example, delves into a controversial Oklahoma Seminole election in which the U.S. District Court intervened in determining the outcome because of the disenfranchisement of Seminole Freedmen voters in 2000. Micco discusses how recent events like the 1990 Judgment Fund and the 1999 Mineral Rights Bill helped to bring the conflict to a head. Looking further into history, Micco discusses black and Seminole military and other types of alliances both in pre-Removal Florida and Oklahoma. Micco makes an informed stand by advocating neither disenfranchisement nor the United States' usurpation of tribal government. Micco's work includes oral research among both the Freedmen and Seminole tribal officials.

Micco clearly asserts the legitimacy of Seminole Freedmen as part of the Seminole Nation by relating the ways in which they have had a long-standing recognized presence there—she does not dance around the issue as so many scholars have in the tribal world: "Seminole Freedmen and their ancestors were a meaningful part of the Seminole Nation from its founding in the Southeast" (142).

Yet Micco also carefully parses media portrayals of the case and the ways in which they have oversimplified it. It is inaccurate, she writes, “to portray our tribe as an ‘Afro-Indian’ one” (142). Micco effectively demonstrates that Seminoles cannot be viewed as one monolithic identity (like lumping them all together as “black Indians”) by explaining the Seminoles’ fourteen-band structure and other factors that make them unique.

A more thorough fictional account of the diversity of Seminoles, or the tribal nations most relevant to the history of Haven and Ruby, could help explain the diversity and the tensions among different factions Morrison traces in the fictional towns. Do other communities that surround the black towns, white or Indian ones, also face their own versions of internal strife? What light might this shed on the Oklahoma African American towns? While a novelist cannot cover everything, one might reasonably expect her to at least mention the existence of such things.

Micco’s research further highlights a vital factor utterly missing from Morrison’s novels. Seminoles, like other Native nations in Oklahoma, are governmental entities, for one thing, and they have survived into the modern world, for another. Like all governments, Seminoles and other Native nations face ongoing crises and challenges. There is a structure that holds *Paradise* together in the contemporary sections: whenever Cheyennes—the tribe most commonly alluded to in the novel—are mentioned, they are referred to in the past tense while Ruby’s black citizens have made it into the modern world as civic leaders of their own community. Recently, I visited the Cheyenne-Arapahoe Web site and saw, among other things, a registration form for Cheyenne voters that would suggest, I think, they made it past 1970. *Paradise* needs to account for why they did not make it into the contemporary sections of the novel.

Political leaders cannot exist in isolation, even when they try to, as do the patriarchs of Ruby. Yet they fail at keeping the outside world out. If for all their isolationism, Ruby’s leaders cannot avoid their surroundings, why is their complacency never disrupted by Indian neighbors the way it is by the convent women and even visitors who drift in, like the family from Arkansas who end up dead in

a snowstorm outside of town or the racist rednecks who frighten Ruby's youngsters by coming to town and exposing themselves? If outside influences creep in, would not some of these welcome or unwelcome disruptions include Native ones? How does Ruby's government compare or contrast with the Cheyennes'? Do they have no bearing on each other whatsoever?

Ruby's political structures suffer because of lack of serious consideration of women who might present alternative viewpoints to the overbearing male leadership. What would happen, however, if they considered other models? Might neighbors confirm their patriarchy or challenge it? How does the overall patriarchy of Oklahoma shape that of Ruby, and vice-versa? Sense of place—the influence of environment—means something in fiction.

Let me turn to some specific examples in the novel. The convent, which closes as a boarding school just before the town of Ruby is founded seventeen miles away in 1950, at one time provided Cheyenne-Arapahoe girls with a Catholic education. The language that describes these young women, however, casts them into a realm of mystery that is difficult to comprehend. All evidence to the contrary given the contemporary realities of the Cheyenne-Arapahoe Nation located in present-day Oklahoma, these girls simply disappear from the landscape. Consider these phrases and sentences whose fragmentation I emphasize because of its related symbolism:

“. . . a schoolroom, where stilled Arapaho girls once sat and learned to forget” (4)

“. . . the last boarding Arapaho girls had already gone when the fifteen families arrived” (10)

“The same wind that once lifted streams of Cheyenne/Arapaho hair also parted clumps of it from the shoulders of bison, telling each when the other was near” (186)

“The good sweet Indian girls were long gone—snatched away by their mothers and brothers or graduated into a pious life” (227)

The question, of course, is after the school closes, what becomes of these young women? Do they go the way of the buffalo, as one sentence might suggest? Why do we never see them in the vicinity of Ruby or anywhere else? How could a generation of parents who sent kids to school up until 1950 just simply disappear? Why does the novel give no indication whatsoever that the Cheyenne Nation still exists in contemporary time?

Nothing is more telling in these regards than the story of two of the young boarding-school women, Penny and Clarissa, the only Indians in the novel who have a name and are given dialogue. What is significant about this is that in the entire corpus of Morrison's work, tallying all her novels, Native people have a total of eighty-five spoken words if I'm counting correctly, and I am the first to admit that this is a problematic assertion. You would gain a handful of words maybe, depending on who you considered an Indian in *Song of Solomon*, for example. *Paradise*, with its fifty-eight words of Indian speech (a word count I am more certain of), accounts for a very large proportion of this dialogue. This reductive and problematic claim makes a dramatic point, perhaps too dramatically, yet in *Paradise*, a 318-page novel, only two Indians are given a name, and they have a handful of sentences when Penny and Clarissa beg one of the convent women for money. Significantly, the two of them are lumped together into a single undifferentiated voice, in which Penny/Clarissa harasses Consolata, a long-term resident who had actually been at the convent at the time of its founding.

All of the Indian speech in the novel can easily be quoted in one lump sum, which I will now do. This incident occurs just before the closing of the convent, and it is part of the prehistory of the women refugees who will later take up residence there after it closes. Penny and Clarissa plead, "Where do you keep the money, Consolata? Please, Consolata. Wednesday they take us to the Correctional. Just a little, Consolata. In the pantry, yes? Well, where? There was one dollar and twenty cents from Monday alone. . . . We helped you, Consolata. Now you must help us. It's not stealing—we worked hard here. Please? Think how hard we worked" (238).

If earlier the girls were compared to buffalo, here they graduate

to Indian maidens, since immediately after the dialogue the narrator concludes, “Their voices chanting, soothing, they swayed their hair and looked at her with the glorious eyes of maidens in peril” (238). Virginia Kennedy, in the opening of her essay, quotes Toni Morrison’s refrain “Silences are being broken” (qtd. in Kennedy 196) from Morrison’s article “Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro American Presence in American Literature.” Breaking silence, however, is an odd way to describe Morrison’s treatment of Native characters given their paucity of speech in *Paradise* and everything Morrison has ever written.

A curiosity surrounds the demise of Penny and Clarissa, one that relates to all the Cheyenne students. What in the world happens to them after the school closes? How is it that the next occupants of the convent after the nuns, the women who seek refuge there from various sorts of abuse, never have any contact with Cheyennes or any other neighboring Indians? In terms of the philosophy of the women’s postconvent sanctuary, how does it relate to—or deviate from—the Catholic Indian education that preceded it? Because such questions are left unexplored, the meaning of the bonds the women have forged together remain vague in the novel. While we get their separate story strands that lead up to them coming to the commune, and even see them engaged in work there after their arrival, we do not have as rich an understanding of what they have come to mean to each other. Ironically, more philosophy is revealed about the men in Ruby who hate them.

Penny’s and Clarissa’s story ends in disappearance. The narrator tells us that, just before the school shuts down, “Penny and Clarissa had been taken east and, as was later learned, escaped from the bus one night in Fayetteville, Arkansas. Except for a money order, made out to Consolata and signed with a storybook name, they were never heard from again” (241). Evidently, they pay Consolata the money they owe her just before dropping out of—not school—but history. One wonders where all these girls, and the rest of their people, went. Were they taken up in the Indian version of the rapture of the church? Their erasure oversimplifies the fact that the self-determining town of Ruby, modeled on African American yearnings for

freedom, sits on, evidently, western lands taken from Native tribes in Reconstruction treaties signed in 1866 or other treaties depending on where the exact location of the novel is.

A slippery geography that defines the physical space of the novel contributes to these problems of representation. Some places mentioned, like Logan County and the Canadian River (the Oktahutchee in one of the living languages of the territory—that is, Muskogee Creek), exist on the map, and in living space, by the names such places choose for themselves. Yet Ruby, we are constantly told, exists somewhere outside these locales. Just where outside, at least this Okie, who has relatives in Logan County and who has spent considerable time astride a horse riding along the Cimarron River in the region, cannot tell. Cheyenne country would be further west of Logan County, but is it further west of Ruby since it would seem Ruby's location relative to the county is a mystery? Where is Ruby, and where is its original site of Haven? Since the novel embraces both geographical realism and whatever the literary term is for geographical fudging, it is hard to say. If the Cheyennes are further west, why are they constantly referenced, in regard to the town's founding and the convent's early history, as if Ruby might be in Cheyenne jurisdiction? If Ruby is outside of Cheyenne jurisdiction, wherever it might be in Oklahoma, how is it these characters never see a Native person anywhere given the Native population in every Oklahoma county?

Why does this matter? Because pinpointing geography is at the heart of the novel's themes, the way livelihood and culture are determined by the precise location of lands and who has jurisdiction where. This is the very impetus for the original migrants who escape limited opportunities due to their location in the Deep South and the foundation for determining the meaning of migration once the settlers have arrived in the territory. One of the early experiences of the migrants, for example, is rejection by Oklahoma blacks who turn them away because they are not affluent enough, and they have to move to another part of the state.

Paul Pasquaretta writes, "In *Paradise*, Reconstruction converges with federal allotment policies in the establishment of a town of Oklahoma freedmen" (279). Half of this statement is true. Recon-

struction history is examined, particularly the way in which relatives the novel calls the Eight Rock faction had suffered a fall from prominent Louisiana politics that led them to seek opportunities elsewhere, but federal Indian policy in relation to allotment is almost never mentioned in the novel.

Yet how can we understand the changes in the fortunes of the Eight Rock families, which constitute part of the Reconstruction history of the novel, if we do not know exactly what has opened up for them in the territory where federal Indian law becomes the new political paradigm? The place they migrate to also has a history and a location just as the Reconstruction South does. Where are the Eight Rocks located in the territory, and what are the possibilities and limitations of their jurisdiction there? If we were reading a novel that takes place in Dixie, would it make any difference if the characters were in Virginia or Mississippi, or is the South the same throughout the region? In a novel about expatriation—that is, one in which Americans land on foreign shores in Europe—would we want to know what nation they are in? Would it make no difference if they were in Germany instead of England?

How far can the Eight Rocks expand, for example, before running into Indian jurisdiction? How do these limitations on their freedom affect their outlook? How does it relate to their new selves in the territory? How has arrival on foreign “shores” shaped them?

Beyond geography, how is it that none of the residents of Ruby are Native people themselves with roots in the territory? Let me tell a brief story. Some time ago, I visited one of the all-black towns, Vernon, Oklahoma, just outside of Dustin, in the eastern part of the state, Hughes County, with some Creek friends of mine. Rosemary McCombs Maxey was driving her Prius, which has Creek license plates. A horse was walking down the main street of town and not many people still live there, but it is marked by a sign that tells some history and names founding families. A bar there, Mister G’s, is the source of constant jokes among Indians in that neck of the woods. Whenever someone is late, they are accused of stopping at Mister G’s. Any Creek will recognize Muscogee tribal names on the sign that we read on what is left of the main drag of Vernon.

This is to say that some of those families are either Creek themselves or related to Creeks through marriage. We had not been there five minutes before a truck pulled up, a friendly old man who still lived in town. He wanted to know who we were in a nonthreatening Okie kind of way that we all understood immediately. He was asking us if we were related to anyone in Vernon. None of us were, but a car full of Creek Indians certainly could be related to black folks in Vernon, Oklahoma, and our driver explained that she was not kin but had gone to high school with certain people she named. I intend this brief anecdote to signify the impossibility of an all-black town, like Ruby, evidently near Indians, having such minimal contact with Native people.

I realize there are certain things at stake when drawing on such embodied knowledge. Implicit somewhere in my claim is the notion that personal experience in Oklahoma might usefully inform discussions of the place. This creates challenges for novelists who cannot experience first-hand all the many worlds of their characters. Yet they can try to imagine them—and they can allude to these complexities in their works by at least mentioning them even when not all subjects can possibly be developed fully.

In fact, speculation, for better or worse, remains a central component of fiction writing, and it is a different matter than simply avoiding important subjects by not saying anything about them at all. My first-person accounts might suffer their own set of limitations by potentially overdetermining why my individual experience should be mirrored in Morrison's fiction, a possibility, for certain, of a rather narcissistic expectation. Yet embodied experience *must* be a central component of Black-Indian studies given the absence of the subject in written texts, and Toni Morrison's novel is a case in point. In this essay, and consistently in my other writings, I engage multiple epistemological modes that mix scholarship and personal storytelling because it is necessary to better understand written works that have suffered extreme limitations because of their overreliance on textual modes and lack of consideration of erased histories that are often revealed in realms that are deeply personal.

Based on experience and the world of the novel itself, then, I am

suspicious of the fact that the book has no black Indian characters whatsoever, with the exception of an unnamed “redbone girl” from Virginia, not from Oklahoma, who Menu Jury wants to marry, but the town fathers reject her and manipulate Menu to the point that he gives up (278). If a “redbone” is possible in Virginia, why not in the territory and Oklahoma? Why does the community stop marrying (or at least trying to in the face of prejudiced opposition) Indians after they move to a location where they are surrounded by them? Why are there no black Cheyenne kids in a novel that constantly asserts Cheyennes were around in its early history, when in fact a school for them run by Catholic nuns existed on its outskirts? The novel could at least suggest what keeps these unions from occurring by virtue of whatever combinations of Cheyenne, African American, and Oklahoma racism work against them.

There is, indeed, a possible explanation. If Ruby is actually in or near Cheyenne country rather than in the eastern part of the state, the western tribes have a much less pronounced history of interactions and intermarriage with African Americans. What is surprising is the degree to which the novel avoids such central topics. If the point of the novel is the avoidance of each other on the red, black, or both sides of the color line, how does this phenomenon play itself out in the story? Further puzzling is the issue that the historical reality of less-involved relations between the western tribes and African Americans cannot explain the disappearance of Cheyenne people in a modern fictional setting when they exist in passages that take place earlier.

The contemporary portions of the novel are set in the early 1970s, and they are a reflection of how a frontier community yearning for black self-rule morphed into a civil rights movement that creates tension between so-called progressives in the novel like the Reverend Richard Misner and many of the town’s founding fathers who have embraced the notion of freedom through a conservative rural work ethic embodied in the town of Ruby, which they believe provides them with unprecedented opportunities and a safe haven from the racism of the outside world, which is best dealt with by isolationism, never leaving town, and regulating contact with outsiders. As

with any number of reflections on civil rights, the novel scrutinizes whether the integration movement worked and what happened to certain communities who supported and resisted it. Given its time period in the early 1970s, this is an early report on the successes and failings of the movement.

Indian country during those same years is marked by the most intense period of Native activism in the twentieth century. Robert Warrior's and Paul Chaat Smith's book *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (1996), scrutinizes four short years, 1969–1973, when college students took over an island in the San Francisco Bay, occupied the Bureau of Indian Affairs on the Washington Mall, held the FBI and a cohort of armed government officials at bay in the hamlet of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, and much else. Warrior and Smith analyze the shift from boarding-school assimilation that had characterized a previous generation to the new emphasis on “red power” that marked the sixties and seventies radicals, without which they would have never imagined such daring forms of protest.

On a more visceral level, anyone, white, red, or black, who lived in states like Arizona, New Mexico, or Oklahoma during the early seventies wondered if their state's Indians, after all a significant proportion of the population, were going to do the same thing as South Dakota's had. In fact, not only were Oklahomans thinking this, but Oklahoma Indians accounted for a good number of people at Wounded Knee and these other protests.

On a more philosophical plane, even the methodology of Warrior and Smith begs comparison to Morrison's in *Paradise* since she attempts to chronicle those who contributed to civil rights work yet remained out of the limelight, the unsung heroes who never made the hall of fame. Similarly, the authors of *Like a Hurricane* disavow repeating the biographical emphasis on the usual names such as Russell Means, Dennis Banks, the Bellecourts, Leonard Peltier, and so on, and opt for the “little people,” especially the women, without whom nothing could have happened. There is a history of the workers, not the talking heads. Rich comparative possibilities abound in terms of black and Indian civil rights.

Morrison's novel, while taking place in these exact years, instead concentrates on Cheyenne disappearance, not the fact that they were still around, and likely some of them were putting together supplies to transport up to Wounded Knee to help people out at the occupation, and others, somewhat like the conservative founding fathers of Ruby, were shaking their heads and pointing fingers at the young rabble-rousers. It is inevitable that people in Ruby, who disagree on the meanings of civil rights in a state like Oklahoma, would mention something about Indians. If nothing else, many of us who live there are aware of the hostility between the two groups, especially given the southeastern tribes' history of slave holding and their more recent morally reprehensible decisions to disenfranchise Indian freedmen. This constitutes the reality of our legacy, and, believe me, it comes up in conversation on both the red and black side of the color line.

Paradise, however, infrequently refers to Native people even in its historical references. One exception is the young female students in the convent before it closes in the early 1950s. Another is when Big Daddy, one of the founders, rides sixty-five miles in some direction or other from the original town of Haven into Logan County in 1920 to get medicine since the town is in the grips of a pneumonia epidemic (153). He encounters a group of Sac and Fox men who warn him to stay out of the nearby town whose incendiary racism is officially noted by its name, Pura Sangre. The scene is certainly emblematic since the more contemporary town of Ruby will itself devolve into an enclave of enforced blood purity and will eventually exterminate an entire community of women, marked not only by their independence from patriarchal rule but also by their racial ambiguity. The Sac and Fox men, however, seem like mere props since, as is almost always the case in Morrison's writings when Indians are alluded to, they are neither quoted nor given names. Indians seldom get to speak on their own behalf. These are not the sum total of the book's references to Indians—Choctaws and others are mentioned in extremely brief passages of a sentence or so, all marked by the latter fact: the speechlessness, lack of differentiation, and anonymity of those alluded to.

One of the ambiguities of *Paradise* is that it seems uncommitted to the proposition of whether it is actually historical fiction or not. It features realistic conventions like naming existing towns, counties, and geographical features, as well as paralleling the history of specific black self-rule towns modeled after places like Boley, Oklahoma, which Booker T. Washington visited and praised in 1905. Both Boley and Langston, the latter one of the towns that published advertisements seeking black immigrants, are specifically named in the novel. The Langston ad had read “Come prepared or don’t come at all,” and the prejudice that immigrants face at the hands of more affluent blacks, suggested by the ad’s coded elitism, is built into plot structures in the novel.

The topic of what readers might reasonably expect from historical fiction in relation to objectivity is much vexed, and because of the uncertainty of the “rules,” especially given the slippery nature of historical fact itself, novelists frequently receive criticism, often unfairly, for not meeting readers’ expectations when they demand the factual. Yet even outside historical fiction, in genres that most deviate from mimesis, works often deeply engage real-life social commentary as part of their imaginary worlds. However vexed the relationship, no novel entirely escapes its interconnections with genres like nonfiction.

While I certainly learn a lot from reading *Paradise*, especially in relation to the human dilemma of today’s liberator turning into tomorrow’s despot, I do not learn much about Native people, and we constantly circle back to the same question: why are Indians both named in the past and erased from the present? *Paradise* is like a school teacher who holds a piece of chalk in one hand that writes the word “Indian” on the board while immediately erasing it with the other. Here Owens’s phrase “implicitly invoked and routinely erased” seems apropos. Can the novel escape one of the simpler explanations for this phenomenon: it simply duplicates images of vanishing Indians represented in countless works written by non-Native, and sometimes, Indian authors?

In one of the contemporary passages, Nathan DuPres, the oldest man in town, gives a speech in 1976 before the annual Christmas play

in Ruby. He recalls a troubling dream in which an Indian, “Cheyenne, I believe” (205), to use his exact phrase, tells him the town’s water is fouled, an eerie reminder of the poison that has brewed hatred and factionalism in the community. Apart from the familiar pattern established in the historical sections of the Cheyenne individual not having a name and being paraphrased rather than quoted, there is an important deviation—a Native person is mentioned in contemporary time. Yet in many ways this is a rehearsal of the older references. The unnamed man is dreamed rather than walking down Ruby’s main street or marrying one of its citizens. Nonetheless, I am intrigued by the fact that Nathan recognizes the man’s tribal affiliation, however uncertainly. The only conclusion is that somehow Nathan might be able to distinguish a Cheyenne from their neighbors, let’s say, the southern Pawnee.

Naturally, one wonders how Nathan might be able to do this without having some kind of contact with Native people, yet nothing indicates the citizenry is around Indians. Has Nathan, and the rest of Ruby, seen Indians or not? The novel *Paradise* buries its own explanation of contexts, not just in terms of whatever its responsibilities might be to social realism but in regard to important questions about fictional characterization such as “what formulates the basis for Nathan’s knowledge?” An exploration of what the town’s citizens know or don’t know about Indians seems central to any understanding of who they have become in their adopted environment and the very process of that adoption. Adoption, it seems to me, implies a relationship between adoptees and adopters.

Virginia Kennedy defends Morrison’s ghostly Indians by arguing that their ethereality actually creates a presence, not an absence, in the land. She writes,

The Native ghosts of Euro-American imagination haunt the landscape to suggest that an *actual* Indian presence has vanished. Constructed as phantoms of a former presence and relegated to a supernatural realm, these ghosts haunt the edges of Euro-American consciousness but are essentially powerless in the shaping of nation.

Morrison's ghosts function in a manner directly opposed to this lack of agency. They exist as a "real" presence within the physicality of American space and therefore critique the invasive and destructive behavior of the dominant culture. (201)

Yet one wonders, apart from simply proclaiming this to be true, how it works—that is, how these Indian ghosts create presence, in the "actual," to borrow Kennedy's own term, language of Toni Morrison's novels where their absence, especially in the contemporary sections of *Paradise*, do not mark a presence but, well, simply an absence. They do not contribute enough to the modern story to shape its meaning, to have any real effect on the characters' contemporary lives, much less "shape nations," even their own. They more resemble the vanishing stereotype than subvert it since they would have to at least be mentioned in order to critique it. The truth of the matter is that they do not even exist as ghosts unless readers are willing to count the single instance of Nathan's dream. In her treatment of *Paradise*, Kennedy says more about patriarchy in relation to the town leaders' attitudes about the convent women than she does about Indians—largely, I believe, because the Indian references in *Paradise* work against her thesis regarding Native presence.

The idea of the strength of the ghosts, that their absence creates a presence, only works if the disappeared communities are Indians. Morrison has yet to write a novel in which African Americans are made manifest to her readers by not mentioning them at all in the modern world or by only depicting them as ghosts. A more reasonable argument to make would be that, if Morrison wants to create Indian ghosts, she should also balance those depictions with some Native people who are very much tangible in contemporary society, who make some significant dent in the story.

I would argue that in order to turn ghosts into people we need more, and the starting point begins with honestly naming the things that have created tensions between Native American and African American communities rather than pretending like they do not exist or turning problematic depictions into affirmations. I want to turn briefly to the ending of *Song of Solomon*, which some have seen as a positive reclamation of a tribal identity. By challenging such inter-

pretations, I want to discuss how we might do better work in Afro-Indian studies.

Kennedy, writing of the novel's conclusion, states, "In a gesture that unites him to his African grandfathers and Indian grandmothers and that is made possible only by his new understanding of connection to the land, Milkman leaps toward Guitar" (210). Problems abound in an affirmational reading of Milkman's leap. It is immediately preceded by the execution of a more immediate relative than Milkman's Indian grandmothers, his favorite aunt, named Pilate, whom his best friend Guitar has just shot. Further, Milkman's leap may be suicidal. Then there are all the Cooperesque touches with the Indian ghosts who are left as vestigial remnants in the landscape.

Let me turn, briefly, to the Indian grandmothers. In tracing Milkman's genealogy, Kennedy recalls, "The first Macon Dead, a freed slave and, as Milkman learns eventually, married to an Indian woman named Sing, carved a home in land that had been the site of their pain" (207). Yet when Milkman learns of his Indian relatives through stories recounted to him by a school teacher named Susan Byrd, his tribal connection is missing one important thing: a tribe. Nowhere in the novel is there even the slightest speculation regarding what Milkman's tribe *might* be considering his Virginia roots and the history of Native people in that part of the Southeast.

Paul Pasquaretta does a better job than Kennedy in terms of tracing the tensions between black and Indian communities by investigating slavery during the colonial period and other historical factors. His more historical approach is amplified by the volume itself. One of the real strengths of *When Brer Rabbit Meets Coyote*, the collection in which Pasquaretta's essay appears, is its introduction, which gives a detailed summary—for a literary anthology—of the history of slavery by emphasizing the ways in which American Indian slavery has been understudied and underestimated and how the reality of black and Indian slaves serving masters together forged a synthesis of bloodlines and cultures. In *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds* this is also the case—the written and oral historical research culminates in essays that are much stronger than the interpretations of fiction.

Yet when Pasquaretta turns toward the conclusion of *Song of Solomon*, he falls into some of the same traps as Kennedy: “Milkman’s most significant discovery on his journey to Virginia is the identity of his Native American grandmother. As he learns from Susan, Sing’s niece, Macon’s grandfather Jake was raised by Sing’s mother, Heddy Byrd, an Indian woman” (280). An important question, of course, is how do these discoveries, in and of themselves, forge an identity? What is it about himself, exactly, that Milkman has learned? Is a genealogical fact, by default, meaningful? To borrow Pasquaretta’s term, just what is “significant”?

Some might see in all this a mere lapse into identity politics or overdetermined biological notions of race on my part. I argue, however, that we overromanticize Milkman’s discovery when we credit him for a newfound maturity based on unspecified information he obtains about his “blood.” I do not deny the possibility that Milkman may be on to something—but he has a lot more homework to do before it becomes meaningful. How can he turn this extremely limited knowledge about his ancestry into a relationship with a particular Native community or Native communities in general or even a more informed relationship to African Americans? The question is a challenging one, and it deserves a complex treatment rather than simply retreating into affirmations. Morrison, in my view, has written a more complicated novel than that. If I were able to meet Milkman I would not disavow his research—I would encourage him to do even *more* of it.

It would be a mistake to claim that demanding more of Milkman in terms of expecting him to delve into a deeper history of his ancestors necessarily means descending into identity politics. As Linda Martin Alcoff observes, “One of the problems is that identity politics is nowhere defined—nor is its historical genesis elaborated—by its detractors. So the very thing we are discussing is surprisingly vague. Identity politics is blamed for a host of political ills and theoretical mistakes, from overly homogenized conceptions of groups to radical separatism to essentialist assumptions” (313). It would be unfortunate to dismiss as identity politics a critical claim that holds Morrison’s characters to a high standard of learning something about

themselves. Such is not identity politics—it is a rather necessary act of interpreting novels by assessing changes in their characters.

If we hope to do the kind of comparative work that will shed light on our communities or on fictional representations of them, one of the realities we have to face is the variable historical circumstances that have created differences in the ways Native Americans and African Americans configure identity, and we need to acknowledge the fact that these dissimilarities have created tensions, sometimes even enmity, between us. Most obviously, in terms of a different kind of public status, tribes have what is known as a “trust” relationship to the U.S. government in federal Indian terminology, which has to do with a recognition of treaties and the existence of tribes as governing bodies. African Americans and other ethnicities in the United States are not recognized on this same legal basis.

Due to the historical realities of chattel slavery, which have to do with the purchase and relocation of humans treated as property, specific knowledge of tribal affiliations is sometimes either murky or entirely lost in African American families who have knowledge of Indigenous roots but not knowledge of or association with specific tribal nations.

For better or for worse, and I think it is some of each, in many Indian communities, being related to “an Indian woman named Sing” would not always be considered a tribal identity. In such communities, people expect those who claim tribal affiliations to name the families they are related to who still reside in the homelands of a specific tribe or tribes. Some people might expect even more official forms of recognition like legal citizenship in a tribal nation, but a baseline requirement would often be simply being able to tell your story, who your relatives are, in relation to a particular tribal nation. For certain, these matters are hotly contested rather than generally agreed upon among Native people, but one might speculate that Milkman’s discoveries about identity, in their very early formulation at the end of *Song of Solomon*, might be viewed skeptically in some Indian circles. One might read the ending of this novel less affirmatively than Kennedy or Pasquaretta.

In terms of history, a colonizing process of the most severe sort,

human enslavement, has often divested African Americans of specific knowledge about tribal connections. When families are lost to each other, by being sold and relocated, and other less dramatic forms of enforced amnesia, family history is also stolen, colonized, removed, sold down the river. And it only gets more complicated.

Terminology, for example. In African American communities, when people use the term *freedmen*, they often mean emancipated former slaves. In southeastern tribes now located in Oklahoma, the term refers to African Americans who—until recently after tragic and wrong-headed tribal decisions to disenfranchise them, many of them made as constitutions were rewritten in the late 1970s and early 1980s—were full citizens of their respective tribal nations.

Pointing to a different sense of the term *freedman*, in her article, for example, Melinda Micco always capitalizes it because in this case she is referring to specific Seminole bands. Unlike the sense of ambiguity among some African Americans about their Native backgrounds, the southeastern freedmen have their own rolls, the Freedmen Rolls, a complicated subject in and of itself, that connects them to a specific tribal nation, and many of them have close ties to recognized tribal family lines and connections to specific cultural institutions and practices through black Indian towns and churches. So different are they from other African Americans that when blacks, some illegally, began pouring into the territory in the 1880s, they did not always get along well with tribal freedmen who often viewed themselves as Indians even though they looked black. Sometimes they could not even speak the same language, which is to say that they did not have English in common when the Indian freedmen only spoke a tribal language and the black freedmen only spoke English. While I cannot give this complicated subject its due, we might note at least two very different senses of the term *freedman* among Indians and African Americans.

Further, anyone who has taught in Indian country knows that Blackfoot people, let us say, drawing on my own teaching experience, in another country, southern Alberta, on the Canadian side of the border, might not configure Indian identity the same way as Indians in Oklahoma do. To further complicate matters, we could

observe that internally, even in the same tribe, there are differences. In some communities, for example, older generations maintain that speaking the tribal language is the primary identity marker, while their children and grandkids, who do not speak the language, maintain it is something else.

For these reasons, apart from all of my criticism of it, I am excited about the potential of Virginia Kennedy's essay as a starting point for these discussions and especially happy about the way the anthology *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds* provides a fuller context for the Kennedy piece. Unlike *Paradise*, especially strong are the essays about Oklahoma Afro-Indian issues which delve into many of the complexities I have just alluded to. Miles and Holland take the discussion into the realm of the historical instead of the realm of the hysterical—and here I am not referring to Morrison but to attempts to discuss these matters in Indian country. Some tribal leaders have expected those with tribal backgrounds to sign on to their disenfranchisement campaigns, sometimes literally, by posting petitions on their Web sites to support referendums that have gotten them in such hot water with the black caucus in Congress and other groups who have stood up against tribal racism.

Intellectuals like Miles and Holland open up a space that can potentially challenge monolithic assumptions that the official tribal position is, or should be, in favor of disenfranchisement. They do this by delving into historical particulars, the wonderful messiness that teaches us what, surely, we should already know: there are a lot of different kinds of Indians, a lot of different kinds of black folks, and we learn more about our histories when we talk about what that difference means. Central to this endeavor should be the idea that those differences do not provide justifications for disowning one another. I think we may also apply this commitment to complexity toward our analysis of novels where fictional spaces need not be claimed as monolithic utopias for Afro-Indian affirmations that may not exist or that oversimplify the messiness. Instead, novels can be scrutinized for the challenges they bring to light as we learn how to understand our mutual destinies.

In terms of the future of Afro-Indian fictional studies, I hope

we witness a turn not only to novels with tangential references to black Indians but also to those works of fiction that directly take up the subject. Such literatures may be limited, but in southeastern studies I can direct people to Creek writer Alexander Posey's stories "Jes' Bout a Mid'lin, Sah," "Uncle Dick's Sow," "Uncle Dick and Uncle Will," and "Mose and Richard." These stories feature the freedman communities of Possum Flat and Coon Creek inside the Creek Nation at the turn of the twentieth century. Cherokee-Creek writer Eddie Chuculate's exceptional coming-of-age story about a Creek adolescent and his experience of tribal racism because of a young African American girl who befriends him, titled "Yo Yo," is published in the spring 2001 issue of the *Iowa Review*. Other tribal specialists, I imagine, could also guide scholars to fictional works that more directly take up these issues.

I credit the motivation for this essay to a student presentation an undergrad, Andrae McConnell, gave at the University of Oklahoma. He talked about his personal response, as a young African American man, while reading Geary Hobson's *The Last of the Ofos*, when confronted with its Native protagonist's frequent use of the word *nigger*. Andrae said he had already written the book off before finishing it. Then he got to the ending, when the book's protagonist, Thomas Darko, largely due to personal relationships, maturity as an older person, and listening to friends, vows not to use the term anymore, and does not. Andrae's point was not so much whether or not Thomas's justification for his former ignorance is convincing, but Andrae used his own unease as a reader as a jumping off point to explain the frequency with which black and Indian communities had "written each other off" when, if each had just hung in there a little longer, they might have learned something about not just each other but themselves.

My point, like Andrae's I hope, is not so much to point out the deficits in *Paradise* but to mark these missed opportunities which, in fact, do not have to keep being missed. I doubt if my own body of work can hold up even as well as Morrison's if someone reversed the terms and looked at the way I depict African American characters. That fact, however, does not alter the urgency with which we must

close some of the gaps that have divided us, given the colonizing process that has so powerfully kept us from knowing one another.

NOTES

1. See, for example, James F. Brooks's *Confounding the Color Line*. While Brooks's collection does not include any literary essays per se, it serves as an important precursor to the later works that take up literature by means of an interdisciplinary and strongly historical approach.

2. At some point I will make reference to my own experience as an Oklahoman, an Oklahoma University professor, a tribal person, a Creek Indian, a visitor to one of the all-black Oklahoma towns. Since a large body of recent scholarship exists on the legitimacy of subjectivity, I will point readers toward some of the prevalent works rather than mount a theoretical defense of the value of citing personal knowledge. Joan Scott argues that personal experience can constitute evidence and readers might examine her 1988 monograph *Gender and the Politics of History*. Satya Mohanty, who is often associated with a think tank out of Cornell, Stanford, and other places, a group of scholars who would begin to identify themselves as "post-positive realists," certainly influenced thinking about the role of truth claims given the prevalence of relativism in philosophy and theory. Readers might consider his 1997 work *Literary Theory and the Claims of History: Postmodernism, Objectivity, Multicultural Politics*. The group of scholars just referenced created an anthology together: *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism*, published in 2000 and edited by Paula M. L. Moya and Michael R. Hames-Garcia. Their work, among many other things, takes up the legitimacy of insider perspectives in minority studies by considering factors of epistemic status. It seems to me enough ground work has been established by other scholars that, while I might need to explain why my particular first-person claims about Oklahoma experiences are valid, I do not need to justify the integrity of all claims to experience.

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“Movement Must Be Emulated by the People”

Rootedness, Migration, and Indigenous Internationalism in
Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*

MIRIAM SCHACHT

A journey to Paguate from Laguna . . . retraces the original journey from the Emergence Place. . . . The eight miles, marked with boulders, mesas, springs, and river crossings, are actually a ritual circuit, or path, that marks the interior journey the Laguna people made: a journey of awareness and imagination in which they emerged from being within the earth and all-included in the earth to be the culture and people they became, differentiating themselves for the first time from all that had surrounded them, always aware that interior distances cannot be reckoned in physical miles or calendar years.

Leslie Marmon Silko, “Interior and Exterior Landscapes:
The Pueblo Migration Stories”

In the front matter of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* readers discover a map of the Americas with several boxes that contain keys not for interpreting the map but for understanding the book. The boxed text includes the following: “When Europeans arrived, the Maya, Azteca, Inca cultures had already built great cities and vast networks of roads. Ancient prophecies foretold the arrival of the Europeans in the Americas. The ancient prophecies also foretell the disappearance of all things European” (14). In this text the European presence in the Americas, though destructive, is not permanent. Further, what Silko is suggesting with “the disappearance of all things European” is not that people and things with European roots will disappear but instead that their Europeaness

will cease to exist. The Indigenous nature of the Americas is powerful enough to absorb new technologies and new people without losing any of its Indigenousness. America is not hybrid; it is, will be, and always has been Indigenous. *Almanac of the Dead* thus describes an Indigeneity that is at once both firmly rooted in the local land and also mobile, moving internationally and across both new and traditional boundaries.

The characters in *Almanac of the Dead* reflect the importance of movement. Everyone is in motion, and even the map on the endpapers is composed as much of vectors as of fixed locations, the connections between places being as important as the places themselves. The map's locations are connected with lines tracing the journeys of characters or materials with labels like, "Sterling accidentally goes to Tucson" or "cocaine to finance arms" (14–15). Tucson, the locale of much of the book's action, is at the center, but the map extends as far as Haiti (marked as "The First Black Indians") and Cuba; Alaska is indicated as well. These connections establish the book's intertribal and international orientation, and the examples of Haiti and Cuba in particular detail both the possibilities and the problems that Indigenous peoples face in an international struggle. The map is not made to geographic scale; instead, the distances correspond to an interior scale—a "journey of awareness and imagination" (37) much like the migration story Silko describes in her essay "Interior and Exterior Landscapes: The Pueblo Migration Stories," which provides the epigraph to this article.

Silko's map also suggests the importance of travel and mobility in maintaining Indigenous communities. Anishinaabe author Gerald Vizenor considers maps an important element of Indigenous stories: "Maps are pictures, and some native pictures are stories, visual memories, the source of directions, and a virtual sense of presence" (170). The map in *Almanac of the Dead* provides precisely what Vizenor describes: a map of directions, memories, and stories. The Indigenous communities on the map are firmly rooted in place, connected to the land and their ancestors. This rootedness exists alongside the mobility of Indigenous individuals who are fighting for their own or their communities' survival. Those people who

physically move away from their community—whether by choice, coercion, or some combination of the two—are still members of the community; physical absence does not necessarily translate into isolation and is in fact sometimes necessary to ensure the survival of the rooted community.

The novel sprawls; at 763 pages and containing more than fifty characters, it eschews linear structures and often flows into what appear to be tangential narratives. Silko has said that she “could not think of the story of the *Almanac* as a single line moving from point A to point B to point C” (“Notes on *Almanac of the Dead*” 140), and as a result, the novel’s structure is more like a spiderweb than a straight line. At the spiderweb’s center is an ancient almanac of prophecies that has been handed down through generations of Indigenous people; from here, stories radiate outward. Lecha, an old Yaqui woman, is the almanac’s current keeper, a job passed to her by her grandmother Yoeme. Lecha has hired a young white woman, Seese, to help her with the almanac. Seese, meanwhile, is hoping for news about her abducted baby. Lecha’s twin sister Zeta, living on a ranch near Tucson, is engaged in cross-border smuggling activities. Sterling, a man recently exiled from Laguna Pueblo, helps Zeta with the ranch work. Both sisters have connections with Indigenous peoples in Mexico, among them the Mayan Indian twins Tacho and El Feo. These male twins are leading a people’s army, the Army of Justice and Redistribution, northward toward the border; they are aided by the Indigenous Marxist Angelita La Escapía, who has procured guns and financial support from the Cuban government and others. The Army of Justice and Redistribution is mirrored in the United States by the Army of the Homeless, a group of the disenfranchised organized by Clinton, an African American Vietnam veteran, and Root, a disabled white man. All of these characters, though they are at times unsympathetic to the reader, are nevertheless allied with the forces working for the liberation of the Americas from colonial and corporate domination.

Another set of characters is referred to in the novel as the Destroyers, an allusion to a legendary Laguna “secret Destroyer clan, which worships destruction and death,” which Silko describes in

her 1994 essay “Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit” (70). The Destroyers in *Almanac* represent the forces of colonialism and multinational corporate capitalism. Generally part of government, high finance, or the real-estate industry (or all three), these characters include Menardo, a Mexican businessman selling insurance to large corporations against any kind of disaster, whose secret shame is that his grandfather was one of “the Indians” (258). On the U.S. side of the border we find Max and Leah Blue, a pair of real-estate developers trying to usurp the land and water rights of Indigenous peoples in order to squander the valuable resources on desert golf courses. There are also a number of gay men, most of whom pathologically link sex and death, like Beaufrey and Serlo, two aristocrats whose only pleasure comes from the destruction of others.¹ In addition, the Destroyers include an assortment of military officers, weapons and organ dealers, and pornographers, for whom sex, death, and commerce have become inextricably intertwined.

As the novel progresses, the forces of liberation and oppression come into increasing conflict, and an all-out battle for the future of the Americas begins—a battle the ancient almanac predicts will be won by Indigenous peoples and the disenfranchised, those who have already rejected the European ideas of capitalism and state-based nationalism in favor of Indigenous worldviews. Like the map in the endpapers, the novel’s scope stretches from Mexico to Alaska, Arizona to Haiti, and across more than five hundred years of history. It combines history, legend, storytelling, almanac fragments, prophecy, Marxist political theory, Mayan codices, talk shows, novelistic discourse, and more, as it chronicles a revolutionary uprising of tribal peoples across the Americas against five hundred years of colonization—a colonization already foretold by ancient stories.

[T]he old story came back to Sterling as he walked along. The appearance of the Europeans [in America] had been no accident; the Gunadeeyahs [the Destroyer clan] had called for their white brethren to join them. . . . No wonder Cortés and Montezuma had hit it off together when they met; both had been members of the same secret clan. (760)

In *Almanac*'s version of the Conquest, Europeans have been instruments, not actors.² Silko presents Columbus's voyage and the subsequent conquest of Mexico as events foretold by Indigenous prophecies and thus, in fact, emanating from the Americas rather than Europe. Therefore, even colonization itself emanates from the power of Native people—albeit from the evil Destroyer clan, those who “caused the old-time people to flee to Pueblo country in Arizona and New Mexico, thousands of years before” (760). But just as the almanac foretells the Europeans' arrival, so too does it predict the “disappearance of all things European,” as the book's front matter notes. Even at the very beginning of the colonial enterprise, its destruction—which the novel chronicles—is already assured.

Almanac of the Dead also refigures the colonization of the Americas in terms of the colonizers' abandonment of their homelands. Mobility that lacks any connection to the land is dangerous because the connection of people with the land is primary and sacred. To leave one's land without intention of return and without honoring the place of origin is a form of betrayal—one the European emigrants practiced on their own homeland. In an early section of *Almanac*, Menardo reflects on what his Indian grandfather had told him about the Europeans:

He thought their stories accounting for the sun and the planets were interesting only because their stories of explosions and flying fragments were consistent with everything else he had seen: from their flimsy attachments to one another and their children to their abandonment of the land where they had been born . . . their God had created them but soon was furious with them, throwing them out of their birthplace, driving them away. The ancestors had called Europeans “the orphan people” and had noted that . . . few Europeans had remained whole. They failed to recognize the Earth was their mother. (258)

As Adam Sol notes, the “colonization of the Americas in general is seen as the ‘abandonment of the land where they had been born,’ rather than the daring adventures or flights from persecution famil-

iar to us" (38). This "abandonment" is figured in the novel as a casting out, as the gods of Europe turn their backs on the people, an interpretation that again places agency somewhere other than with the colonizers. The Europeans failed to recognize the earth as their mother, and they also fail to see that land—and connection to the land—is sacred.

Not all immigrants to the Americas share the colonizers' lack of connection to the land. *Almanac* suggests that African slaves in particular were able to retain a bond with their ancestral lands while also establishing a respectful bond with the Americas. Clinton, a homeless African American Vietnam veteran whose first appearance comes in a chapter titled "First Black Indian" (404), is the novel's prime example of African-American syncretism. Clinton, who has his own radio show, has a strong interest in the history and traditions of Africa, and an equally strong interest in Haiti, where the cultures of Africa and the Americas unite. Black Haitian culture and people include elements of the native Arawaks, who aided early runaway slaves before their communities were largely destroyed, and Clinton plans to dedicate his first radio broadcast after the revolution "to the children born to escaped African slaves who married Carib Indian survivors . . . the first African-Native Americans" (410). The presence of descendants of African slaves suggests yet another history of migration, a forced migration based on colonialism and the drive for profit, as Africans were taken from their communities and sold as slaves far from home. The novel posits that, much like the lost community members in Pueblo stories, the descendants of slaves are still recognized as part of an Indigenous community. They may no longer know their specific tribal origins, but for Silko they are still, in a larger sense, tribal people.

Through the character of Clinton, who is reclaiming ancient African traditions, Silko suggests that for African Americans, a homecoming is possible—a return to the spiritual, if not physical, community of Africa. In her effort to make connections between Africa and the Americas, however, Silko tends to oversimplify the diversity of African cultures. She often treats the continent as if it were one culture rather than many—suggesting, for example, that

all African peoples share the same deities. Nevertheless, the novel's belief that African and Native American peoples share a spiritual kinship creates a vision of an internationalist movement that can acknowledge the power of rootedness while reaching out to other peoples and continents, although this vision may reduce the complexity of other cultures and regions.

In Silko's view, Africans and Native Americans are both tribal people, and the syncretism of Haiti shows the spiritual kinship between Africa and America:

From the beginning, Africans had escaped and hid in the mountains [of Haiti] where they met up with survivors of indigenous tribes hiding in remote strongholds. In the mountains the Africans had discovered a wonderful thing: certain of the African gods had located themselves in the Americas as well as in Africa. . . . Right then the magic had happened: great American and great African tribal cultures had come together to create a powerful consciousness within all people. (416)

Silko's tribalism entails a worldview that acknowledges the sacredness of the land and of the physical world. The land and objects are characters in their own right, not merely passive but active, a fact that Clinton recognizes in both Native American and African religions, as well as in their syncretic Haitian iteration.

Haiti is a key point of transit in the novel, and in a novel whose central concern is decolonization, the history of Haiti is instructive both as example and as warning, as important for its successes as for its challenges. Haiti was the location of the first lastingly successful anticolonial revolution, in 1791.³ The forces arrayed by the Western world against Haiti as it moved from colonialism to independence were immense, showing that political independence won by one small country did not necessarily mean the end of imperial, economic domination. The Haitian experience serves to demonstrate to Clinton and other characters that alliances like those between the Afro-Caribbean population and the Caribbean Arawaks are important, but such alliances on a small scale are not enough. While the unity of Africans and Indigenous Americans on one small island

is worth celebrating, it is only through the larger unity of all tribal peoples throughout the continents of America and Africa that imperialism in its modern form of globalization can be effectively countered.

The history of Haiti can also be read as a testament to the power of stories. Haiti faced not only colonialism but also colonial epistemologies and responses, which materially affected the young revolutionary democracy's ability to succeed and support its people. As Haitian historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot shows in *Silencing the Past*, Haiti's accomplishments were initially not even recognized in Europe, as the colonial mentality did not allow for the possibility that black people had successfully resisted whites and set up a functional government.

When the news of the massive uprising of August 1791 first hit France, the most common reaction . . . was disbelief: the facts were too unlikely; the news had to be false. . . . Confirmation did not change the dominant views. . . . A serious long-term danger coming from the blacks was still unthinkable. (90–91)

The imperialist worldview was incapable of imagining, let alone recognizing, Africans and Afro-Caribbean peoples as agents, as subjects rather than objects—even in the face of clear evidence. This lack of recognition led to political and economic troubles for Haiti, and it illustrates clearly the power of stories. Imperialist narratives left no space for black agency, and so Haiti was isolated, attacked with economic force when it could not be taken militarily. And because Western Europe was largely in control of global economic systems, Haiti's economy, which had become dependent on trade after colonization, served as a means of imperial control and domination. Haiti's history shows that independence must be not merely political, not merely the decolonization of the mind, but the decolonization of the economy as well—ideal and material at once.

Given the prominence of Haiti's role in Silko's book, the reader might reasonably expect that Cuba would play the part, so familiar from leftist discourse, of a country that has achieved both ideal and material liberation. However, Silko's take on Cuba is determined by

the Cuban erasure of Indigenous history, the one-sidedness of the Cuban Revolution's historiography, and Cuba's failure to acknowledge the contribution of Indigenous peoples to its decolonization struggles. Thus, for Silko the Cubans have become merely a variation on a European theme; they are still the colonizers, because like Menardo, the insurance man who is ashamed of his Indian heritage, they do not understand their own Indigeneity.

On the book's map, Cuba is identified only with the character of Bartolomeo, a resolutely dogmatic Marxist sent to help train the Indians to use Cuban arms and achieve their revolution. Bartolomeo and his political backers stand not for internationalism but for paternalism, particularly leftist paternalism, and the attempt to assimilate Indigenous political struggles into a pre-existing leftist worldview. Bartolomeo represents a Leninist interpretation of Marx's work that posits the necessity of a vanguard party, an elite group of intellectuals who will prepare the way for a communist utopia. This is the primary type of Marxism discussed in the novel, and Marxism-Leninism lends itself quite easily to the paternalism that Bartolomeo displays. Angelita La Escapía, one of the leaders of the Indigenous Army of Justice and Redistribution, accuses Bartolomeo of precisely the same kind of colonial attitude Trouillot identifies in European responses to the Haitian revolution. Angelita considers that, "Indigenous American uprisings had been far more plentiful than any Europeans wanted to admit, not even the Marxists, who were jealous of African and Native American slave workers who had risen up successfully against colonial masters without the leadership of the white man" (527). The Leninist vanguard is cast here in racial rather than class terms, linking Bartolomeo's Marxism directly with colonialism. Bartolomeo's insistence on his privileged place as a vanguard fighter and his concomitant refusal to acknowledge Indigenous history are what finally kill him. He stands in for "all Europeans" (527) as he is put on trial in an Indigenous Mayan village and convicted of "crimes against history" (531). At his trial, Angelita La Escapía reads a list of "a few of the *big* uprisings and revolutions" in the Americas, a list that runs for about three pages and spans the time from 1510 (Hateuy's rebellion against European

slave hunters in Cuba) to 1945 (the formation of the National Federation of Peasants in Bolivia). Whereas Haiti is liberation on an ideal level but without material power, Cuba is material liberation without the ideal. Cubans like Bartolomeo are still in thrall to colonialist views of Indigenous people. Neither the ideal nor the material can be ignored in a successful uprising, and this is why so many of Silko's characters keep notebooks and almanacs of stories unrecognized in the dominant narratives and why they fight simultaneously on political and economic levels, engaging with multinational capitalism and Marxist theory while battling to restore Indigenous land rights.

Silko treats Marx with sympathy but is aware of his limitations when applied to an Indigenous context. Marx is a storyteller, and like all storytellers, his words have immense power. But Marxism has no place for the sacred—the land, animals and objects are present primarily in terms of their utility. As Vine Deloria Jr. notes in his essay on Native Americans and Marxism, “Circling the Same Old Rock,”

Rejecting the [Marxist] idea that there is a human world distinct from the rest of existence, American Indians would include experiences of wholly religious content within the scope of their inquiry. . . . Marxist exclusion of some kinds of experiences, particularly those which seem to motivate human beings, appears wholly unnecessary and weakens the explanation that Marxists would expect us to accept. (120)

The recognition of the sacred is part of what distinguishes Indigenous internationalism from the proletarian International. Ancestral lands are the center of the Indigenous struggle, and at issue are not the fruits of or profits from those lands but the lands in and of themselves. According to *Almanac of the Dead*, only those who recognize the centrality of the land for its own sake can take part in the struggle for true liberation.

The roots of Silko's liberatory Indigenous internationalism lie in a world without nation-states and borders. “Native Americans acknowledge no borders,” the map at the beginning of *Almanac of the Dead* states. While this might suggest that Silko is romanticizing

the pre-Conquest Indigenous past—which was by no means devoid of territorial conflict—Bernie Harder offers another possible interpretation. Harder distinguishes between cultural or political boundaries and borders as sites of state violence and control:

State borders continue to be the locus of conflict between Native people and dominant societies internationally. The fragmentation that the nation-state imposes on indigenous nations and peoples is a result of conflicting constructions of space, culture, and identity. . . . *Almanac of the Dead* . . . [challenges] the legitimacy of the dominant ideology [of the nation-state] with alternative views grounded in an older historical reality of the First Nations in North and Central America. . . . Power, as practiced by the state, is weak in comparison to the nature of power that protects the sovereignty of tribal people. . . . The novel demonstrates that the state's right to exist in America is based on force, not legitimate power. The problem of the border shifts radically from the illegitimacy of particular borders to the illegitimacy of the state itself as the instrument of colonial oppression against historically valid nations, such as the many First Nations on Turtle Island—America. (95–96)

The distinction Harder makes here, between European nation-states and sovereign Native nations, is, when recast in the novel's terminology, the distinction between tribalism and nationalism. Silko's tribalists insist on cultural sovereignty while organizing internationalist opposition to national and corporate power.

As she has noted many times in interviews and essays, Pueblo cultural traditions are central to Leslie Marmon Silko's writing. Although it has lost some of its land base, Laguna is still located in its ancestral area in what is now central New Mexico. The Pueblo peoples underwent displacement and destruction as a result of colonization (notably in the aftermath of the 1680–92 Pueblo Revolt, when the Spanish made a concerted and violent effort to destroy existing Pueblo social and political structures), but the Pueblos' history of travel and migration is a different one from the often more

familiar history of Southeastern tribal removals like the Cherokee Trail of Tears. In “Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective,” Silko discusses the relation of the land to story:

One of the . . . advantages that we Pueblos have enjoyed is that we have always been able to stay with the land. Our stories cannot be separated from their geographical locations, from actual physical places on the land. We were not relocated like so many other Native American groups who were torn away from their ancestral land. And our stories are so much a part of these places that it is almost impossible for future generations to lose them. (58)

In part as a result of this history, the Pueblo Indians, even more than other Indigenous peoples, are perceived as not just anchored in place but almost immobile. However, Silko counters this perception in a number of ways, in particular through the character of the Barefoot Hopi, a leader who plays an important role near the end of *Almanac of the Dead*:

The message [of liberation] had arrived. The Barefoot Hopi was the messenger.

The Hopi had no permanent location but kept moving. . . . The Hopi traveled the world to raise political and financial support for the return of the land to indigenous Americans. (616)

The statement that the Barefoot Hopi “had no permanent location but kept moving” shows the importance of motion in a Pueblo context. Place and land are of vital importance in Pueblo culture; the Pueblos are deeply rooted in their ancestral lands. As Silko says, “our stories cannot be separated from their geographical location” (“Language and Literature” 58). However, it is equally important to recognize that this rootedness does not preclude travel and migration, both individual and communal. Moreover, such mobility does not make anyone less than Pueblo, removing them from the community, but rather is in keeping with the traditions and stories of the Pueblos.

In her essay "Thoughts on Migration by Santa Clara Pueblo," Santa Clara author Tessie Naranjo suggests that motion is a central element of Pueblo thought:

In terms of migration stories the essential thing is that movement happened. Santa Clara people acknowledge that the old people moved continuously—and that was the way it was. . . . Movement is one of the big ideological concepts of Pueblo thought because it is necessary for the perpetuation of life. Movement, clouds, wind, and rain are one. Movement must be emulated by the people. (248)

Movement thus is not only important but also necessary for life to continue. It is also important not because of the distance traveled but simply because it happened; the *movement* of migration, not the final destination of the migration, is the essential element.

The stories related by Silko in "Interior and Exterior Landscapes: The Pueblo Migration Stories" show the value of such movement in a Laguna context. The stories describe places that are still visited by the people today: "Laguna people continue to follow the same route that, according to the Migration story, the ancestors followed south from the Emergence Place" (35), an eight-mile journey between Laguna and Paguete Pueblo. Here is a relationship similar to that described by Naranjo: the key to the story is not in the relatively short distance traveled but in the journey's symbolic importance, describing "an interior journey the Laguna people made: a journey of awareness and imagination in which they emerged . . . always aware that interior distances cannot be reckoned in physical miles or calendar years" (37). The length of the journey is less important than the fact that it was made.

The Kochininako/Yellow Woman stories, which frequently appear in Silko's work (for example, in *Storyteller*, several short stories, and her book of essays *Yellow Woman and the Beauty of the Spirit*), provide another illustration of the importance of movement. The movement in this case is not the migration of an entire Pueblo but one individual's travel and contact with others (non-Laguna people and animals). In one Kochininako story that Silko retells, Laguna Pueblo is suffering from a great famine:

Each day, Kochininako has to walk farther and farther from the village to find fresh water for her husband and children. One day she travels far, far to the east, to the plains, and she finally locates a freshwater spring. . . . Just as she fills her water jar and turns to hurry away, a strong, sexy man in buffalo-skin leggings appears by the pool. . . . Able to transform himself from human to buffalo in the wink of an eye, Buffalo Man gallops away with her on his back. Kochininako falls in love with Buffalo Man, and because of this liaison, the Buffalo People agree to give their bodies to the hunters to feed the starving Pueblo. (“Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit” 70–71)

Kochininako’s willingness to move, to travel “far, far to the east,” and her liaison there with Buffalo Man are the factors that allow her people to survive the drought. Without such mobility on the part of individuals, the community could not have stayed in place, on the same land where their ancestors lived. Movement is indeed “necessary for the perpetuation of life.” Kochininako’s mobility, while individual, is very much in service to the community.

It is equally important to note that never in her travels is Kochininako removed from the community. As Maori author Linda Tuhiwai Smith notes in *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Indigenous concepts of space and place often do not translate well into Western concepts of space and distance. In particular, Smith suggests that the Western notion of distance is not shared by Indigenous cultures.

One of the concepts through which Western ideas about the individual and community, about time and space, knowledge and research, imperialism and colonialism can be drawn together is the concept of distance. [In the Western view, the] individual can be distanced, or separated, from the physical environment, the community. (55)

Smith’s reading of the differing concepts of distance illuminates the fact that Kochininako’s physical location away from the center of her community need not—and does not—translate into a distance from the community itself. However far she may have traveled, she

is still an integral member of her community. Though she may be with the Buffalo Man at a freshwater spring far, far to the east, Yellow Woman is also still with her community, and her community is also with her. Other Pueblo stories bear this notion out; while protagonists are often physically removed from the community either by space or transformation, they never cease being part of the community. Even as they become coyotes or eagles, are stolen away into the sky or onto unreachable ledges, and stay gone for years at a time, they are still at heart Pueblo people and are always, in the end, recognized by the community.⁴ Travel, and even transformation, thus do not equal distance from the community; physical distance does not translate into spiritual or communal distance. And just as the community contains all individuals, each individual also contains the community.

Silko's novels often present characters who, without any transformation at all, are initially not fully recognized or even rejected by their community—indeed, Sterling in *Almanac* is banished from his home. Even so, like Tayo in *Ceremony*, Sterling ultimately returns home and is at least grudgingly accepted as part of the community. While this reunion differs substantially from the more joyous ones related in the traditional stories, it nevertheless underscores the fact that even banishment from and by the Pueblo cannot permanently sever the communal connections.

This sense of connectedness not only is of paramount importance in *Almanac* but also forms a central component in Indigenous internationalism. As Silko explains in her 1996 essay "Interior and Exterior Landscapes: The Pueblo Migration Stories,"

Pueblo potters, the creators of petroglyphs and oral narratives, never conceived of removing themselves from the earth and sky. So long as the human consciousness remains *within* the hills, canyons, cliffs, and the plants, clouds, and sky, the term *landscape*, as it has entered the English language, is misleading. "A portion of territory the eye can comprehend in a single view" does not correctly describe the relationship between the human being and his or her surroundings. This assumes the

viewer is somehow *outside* or *separate from* the territory she or he surveys. Viewers are as much a part of the landscape as the boulders they stand on. (27)

Rather than conceiving of themselves as distant from the earth or the animals, Silko's tribal activists are within the landscape, intimately connected to the land. They are aware of the land as not merely landscape and understand that its worth cannot be measured in monetary terms.

Indigeneity, in *Almanac*, is also a quality of the land itself—material and spiritual, the land and the ancestors are together, and therefore the land is Indigenous. Indigeneity is a belief and a power, not a fixed group. Thus, Silko's text posits a critical, activist Indigeneity that requires a connection with the land and the ancestors as well as an understanding of the global links between struggles, belief in the old traditions, and the willingness to accept new ideas.

The leaders of Silko's border-crossing Indigenous movements share an international orientation and a clear willingness to adopt new technologies and ideas and absorb them into their own cultures. Silko's Indigenous warriors know their way around computers and guns, often speak multiple languages, and understand the connection between other peoples' struggles and their own. In fact, other peoples' struggles *are* their own, for all the tribal armies are fighting a common enemy, multinational corporate capitalism, and a blow against the enemy in Africa weakens it in America.

It is El Feo's task, as leader of the Army for Justice and Redistribution, to "remind the people never to lose sight of their precious land" (524), to ensure the return of the land "to the people whose ancestors had lived on the land for twenty thousand years continuously" (524). The spirits of the ancestors are a part of the land, and they are what allow the tribal army to succeed. This, then, is the paradox of Silko's Indigeneity: Indigenous people are disempowered, but through their connection to the land, they have great power. Indigeneity thus exists at the nexus of dispossession and power, which are intimately connected to the land. Indigenous internationalism is, at its heart, about the continuing presence of the ancient in a modern world and the understanding that ancient and modern,

rooted and international, local and global, fixed and traveling, are not oppositional pairs and need not be in contradiction with, but are instead complementary to, each other.

NOTES

1. Silko's lamentable use of homosexuality as a metaphor for misogynistic Western society and her connected, very problematic invocation of anti-gay stereotypes is discussed in detail by Janet St. Clair in "Cannibal Queers: The Problematics of Metaphor in *Almanac of the Dead*."

2. This common theme in Silko's work is further elaborated in *Ceremony*, where white people are the product of a contest between evil Indigenous sorcerers, akin to the Destroyers in *Almanac*.

3. The term "successful" is, clearly, not without its problems; I use it here to indicate that Haiti is the earliest country to revolt against colonialism and prevent further foreign military occupation or political colonialism. That Haiti still suffers the effects of not merely political but economic imperialism is, of course, without question.

4. See, for example, "The Ants that Pushed on the Sky" (Lummis 147–60), "The Sobbing Pine" (Lummis 194–99), "The Taos Boy Captured By Cheyennes: The Bear Doctor" (Parsons, *Tewa Tales* 43–45), and "The King's Son Becomes a Deer: The Stolen Mirror" (Parsons, *Taos Tales* 151–53), as well as two stories that Silko retells in *Ceremony*: the boy who turns into a bear (128–30) and the man who turns into a coyote (139–41).

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INTERVIEW

“A Blanket Woven of All These Different Threads”

A Conversation with Wendy Rose

KATHLEEN GODFREY

Wendy Rose’s powerful voice emerged in the early 1970s with the publication of her first volume of poetry, *Hopi Roadrunner Dancing* (1973), and subsequent volumes *Lost Copper* (1980) and *The Half-Breed Chronicles* (1985). Her participation in the American Indian Movement and her critique of white shamanism earned Rose a reputation as a critical and impassioned participant in the development of American Indian thought and criticism. Moreover, her confident voice on behalf of mixed-blood, urban, and detribalized Indians intervened in fierce debates about Indian identity. Refusing to be confined to just one discipline, Rose has been a painter and professor of anthropology in addition to her literary endeavors. Her most recent volume of poetry, *Itch Like Crazy* (2002), was published at a difficult time in Rose’s life, both personally and professionally.

On August 9, 2008, my colleague C. Lok Chua and I met with Wendy Rose and her husband Arthur Murata at their store, Oh Grow Up, in Oakhurst, California. Just a few months earlier, Rose had celebrated her sixtieth birthday. Thus, this interview was an opportunity to reflect on Rose’s career so far, revisiting some of her most influential works and gauging the evolution in her ideas. About five years earlier, Rose retired from her position in anthropology at Fresno City College because of poor health. Although much of her energy since then has been devoted to treating her thyroid condition, she still holds strong opinions about the complex identities that are becoming more characteristic of an increasingly globalized world. Surrounded by science-fiction paraphernalia and in front of

a window with striking views of the Sierra Nevadas, Rose gave powerful voice to her continued thinking about American Indian literature and experience. During the interview, we paused twice when customers entered the store; these breaks occurred at what seem now like natural breaks in our conversation.

At one point in the interview, Rose used the evocative phrase in the title, “a blanket woven of all these different threads,” a phrase that also could describe her life. Rose’s talents and abilities have been broad and deep; she has excelled as a poet, artist, and teacher. She has explored her mixed-race ancestry and given voice to such diverse historical figures as Robert Oppenheimer, Julia Pastrana, and her own relatives of Hopi, Miwok, and European backgrounds. Her life is indeed a beautiful blanket, one that has warmed and supported her readers and students, but one that also challenges us as we seek to weave together the diverse threads of humanity.

KG: When I was preparing for this interview, I looked up some of the other interviews you’ve done and I noticed that there wasn’t one that was very, very recent. So I wondered if, as a way to segue into the interview, you could update us on your life.

WR: Oh, gee. Well, I was teaching at Fresno City College until about five years ago and then had to retire for medical reasons. There really isn’t too much to tell. I’ve been working in my shop up here in Oakhurst, selling science fiction— and fantasy-related collectibles and my line of jewelry, which is called Laughing Lizard. But professionally the last five years have been pretty quiet.

KG: To the readers of this journal, you are best known as a poet, but, of course, you’ve also been an artist, anthropologist, teacher, administrator, and now a store owner. Like a number of Americans, you’ve also connected with a number of ethnic identities. How have you negotiated amongst those identities, especially given the fierce turf wars that sometimes play out within communities?

WR: Well, I guess the best answer I have to that would be that I don’t really try to juggle it too much; lately I just don’t even think about it particularly. It used to be, I guess, part of my writing. As a teacher, I would bring it into the classroom in the sense that, for

example, in the California gold rush, I would talk to my students about not only being descended from Native people who were dealing with the people in the gold rush, but also being descended from people who were themselves the gold seekers to show that everyone of us has this kind of mixed history inside of us—that every one of us represents all of the players, in a sense, that there’s no white-hatted heroes over here and black-hatted villains over there, but all of us are a complex interweaving, we’re all a blanket woven of all these different threads.

KG: So, you don’t feel like you ever had to really confront some of the infighting in some of those groups?

WR: Sure, sure. [*Laughter.*] Yeah, and there’s always going to be people who, perhaps to make themselves feel more genuine or to make themselves feel pure, are going to look at us who represent the mixture more overtly than they do as being less than or not being truly part of that blanket that I was talking about, but life is too short to have to accommodate them all the time. Growing up, of course, when you’re young, it’s so important how other people think about you. I think one of my favorite sayings that I heard recently is that when you’re twenty, you’re real concerned with how other people see you and so you’re always strutting and putting on your best show for other people. When you’re forty, you think “Well, I’m not going worry about that anymore. I’m just going to do what I want and I don’t care what other people think when they look at me.” And when you’re sixty, you realize that they weren’t looking at you in the first place. And now I’m sixty, so . . . [*laughter*].

KG: The volume *Itch Like Crazy* uses the metaphor of “itching” to describe the experience of being multiracial in the U.S. Could you talk a little more about that?

WR: Well, it’s used in that book to observe restlessness or lack of ease with whatever the circumstances are, whether that’s a matter of being mixed-blood or whether that’s a matter of being on the side of the colonizers, in the sense that they left where they were. Their financiers obviously thought in terms of whether or not they could profit politically and financially from the explorations. But also looking at just the ordinary crew members on those boats and look-

ing at the people who were given options—stay in debtors’ prison or go farm a colony—there was always an itch on their part, as well. So what I was doing was looking at “itch” as a global, historical kind of thing and at the same time I was looking at it as a personal thing: my itch to look for identity, my itch to find my place in that history as well.

KG: I really got that sense from the book—that in some ways you were writing yourself into that family lineage, something that you had felt separated from.

WR: Well, doing the genealogy work actually has really given me a family for the first time, because I never felt a part of my family and I don’t know that my family ever saw me as part of them. I always grew up with the idea that I needed to find a family, I needed to find a place to fit in, and the genealogy has provided one way to do that. I find these ancestors and I learn something about their history, and now I even live about twenty-five miles from where some of them lived—in a way it’s easier to relate to them than to any living members of my family. They stay quiet [*laughter*].

KG: You don’t disappoint them, they don’t disappoint you.

WR: Right [*more laughter*]. I can only imagine, like science fiction, what would happen if I came face-to-face with a great-, great-, great-grandparent or something—how different we would be culturally, politically, every possible way. But I think it’s important to connect with the ancestors, so a large part of me figured that if I can’t connect with people that I’m actually related to who I have known, then at least I can find people that I never have any hope of ever meeting (they’re long dead), connect with them in a way, and see the connections between them. I ended up kind of being the family genealogist, as a result, and so I’ve provided a lot of this information to other members of my family; people I hardly even know, but they’re interested.

KG: Over the years, you’ve spoken about how we are all “half-breeds,” tapping into increasing globalization. That was one thing that was interesting to me when I went back and re-read some of your earlier work; you really seemed to be anticipating something that has become such an important part of our contemporary iden-

tity. How have your ideas about hybrid identities shifted over the years? [*Pause.*] Or have they?¹

WR: [*Laughter.*] Well, I hope they have. When I was younger, of course, it was more of a literal thing. As I've learned more about anthropology, for example, taking physical anthropology, I learned that our whole concept of race does not really have a biological basis at all. There's no real scientific basis for it—that all of us who are alive today descend from a very small number of ancient ancestors. At one time, I think I heard [that it was] down to something like 38,000 human beings left on earth because of some kind of a cataclysm that had happened. From that one small group of people, we all descend. Then they did the human genome and found that to really be quite true. The concept of race doesn't really exist. What exists, of course, are gene pools that merge into one another, and so what we see as racial differences really are much more localized than we think. So obviously things changed there in terms of thinking of race, but in terms of thinking of hybridization, that remained because of course it's not entirely a biological idea; in fact it's not really a biological idea at all. When I used the term "half-breed" initially it was more of a political term. I think it took on more of a spiritual meaning as I got older, in the sense that people who would not biologically be regarded as half-breeds at all who, as far as they know, are "racially pure" (in their world that's how they would see it) but who have been placed in some kind of a historical circumstance that is I guess partly ironic, something where they are in a boiling pot. But they didn't put themselves there, history has put them there. Or people like Robert Oppenheimer—who jumped into the pot and didn't know it was boiling until he got there—took on the term of half-breed as more of a, I guess, a sociological term in part and a spiritual term in part. And when I talk about "we're all half-breeds," of course obviously again, that's not a biological statement, and I think now I don't even really see it as a cultural statement. When I talk about "we are all half-breeds," I'm thinking in terms of how we operate in this world that we have so little control over our own lives. There is so much that is happening politically,

so much that is happening environmentally, that is so much bigger than all of us, that like the people who are listed in *The Half-Breed Chronicles*, we're not really able to control where we are in history and in the environment.

KG: Yeah, and with that increasing globalization and the transnational identities that grow out of that, you kind of see those as being the result of chance, in some ways, rather than choice?

WR: Yeah, although, of course, obviously somebody somewhere made a choice. Also in a more cultural sense, as you say, with globalization most of us don't even think about where the things that are influencing us and the things that are part of our lives came from. For the life of me, I can't remember now who wrote it, but there was a very famous essay, "100% American"—it's probably easy enough to find the author of that if you wanted to insert that somewhere.² "100% American" was written, I think, in the forties or fifties, and so it's a little old fashioned, but what it does is it follows the average American man who's getting up and getting ready to go to work and it follows him through his routine. What's he wearing? Where did it come from? Where did the practice of shaving come from? It follows every one of these material items in his life, the things that he does to get himself ready: brushing his teeth, the whole thing, and the implements that he uses, the tools that he uses, what he does at work. Then he comes home and so on, what he eats. It looks at the actual origin of every single one of these customs and items that he uses and ends with "then he sits down and congratulates himself for being 100% American" after noting that almost all of these things, of course, had an origin somewhere else, or if they originated in the Americas, it was with American Indians rather than with his presumed European ancestors. [*Laughter.*] People don't think about that. I used to have my students do an exercise. We would discuss American Indian contributions in both North and South America and that includes about 75 percent of the American diet and a large percentage of the diet globally at this point. I would just tell them: "Note what you eat today. Just go and eat whatever it is. Don't go looking for anything specific because of this thing, just tell me what you ate and where it came from originally." They couldn't have

something like, say, french-fried potatoes and ketchup—the potato is of course South American and the tomato is as well.

BREAK

KG: When I've taught your poetry in recent years, my students have felt a really strong connection to characters like Truganinny and Julia Pastrana—and ultimately through them I think they feel a connection to you as a poet. Could you describe your process of imagining and giving voice to these women?

WR: Oh, wow. Well, I can tell you how it feels, which I suppose is why I've never really tried criticism [*laughter*]. When I would hear or read about these people, it would be gut-wrenching to me to read these histories or to see a documentary on somebody or this kind of thing. In the case of Truganinny and Julia Pastrana, these are two people who I read about and in that gut-wrenching feeling that I mentioned, it feels as if the poem is writing itself. I would not presume to say that that person is speaking through me in any way, but it's an act of imagination on my part. But the sensation, the feeling, is as if that person was actually speaking to me.

KG: Is it the same when you imagine the thoughts and feelings of family members, or is there some kind of a difference in that process?

WR: When they are people who are ancestors and I never met them, yes. [*Laughter.*] If it's a family member who I actually know, then no.

KG: Your introduction to *Bone Dance* anticipates the recovery and reconstruction of your family in *Itch Like Crazy*. How would you describe the relationship between history or genealogy and imagination in this volume?

WR: In *Itch Like Crazy*?

KG: Yes. [*Long pause.*] Do you want me to ask the question again?

WR: Yes.

KG: I was reading in *Bone Dance* and you begin the introduction to that volume in *Coarsegold* and with your family's connection to Mariposa. Very soon in the introduction (I think it's the second paragraph), you say: "I feel certain ancestors here very strongly, both

immigrant and native. I know a few names, a few histories, but only feel some of the others” (xi). And then you go on and name some of those ancestors who also appear in *Itch Like Crazy*. To me, it seemed that you were working out some of the ideas that crystallized probably in *Itch Like Crazy*. I just wondered if you could talk about that relationship between history or genealogy and imagination or poetics, even.

WR: The genealogy and the history, of course, are naturally suited for each other because each is the other. Genealogy is history and these people all of course were part of their history. They were people of their time, of their circumstances, of the events around them. They were actors in their world. In terms of an act of imagination, that’s the only way that I can really make them talk unless I actually have something in writing from them. I do have a few things that they’ve written, but I’ve only used it to get information, not to try to put into the poetry. The act of imagination with my ancestors would be the same as with the characters in *Half-Breed Chronicles*, I guess. It’s an act of imagination, but at the same time it feels as if I can connect with that person. It feels as if there’s a connection there. I do feel it very strongly in this area—I mean the area around Mariposa. Along with northern Arizona, this is an area where I really feel that I can put my hand on the earth and feel the actual bones of my ancestors.

KG: That’s a nice segue into my next question. I was thinking about D. H. Lawrence’s idea of “the spirit of place” and his belief that place influences both our personal identities and our communal identities. I thought about you really spending the majority of your life in California, but in very different settings, and wondered in what ways do you think California influenced your family’s and your own identities?

WR: By the time I was born, my family had moved to the Bay Area and my mother was actually born in Berkeley. Her mother had been the one who moved from Mariposa to the Bay Area, and I think that she was part of a continuum of westward expansion, I guess, of going to seek one’s fortune. Her father had tried chicken farming down in Santa Monica after coming over here from England and

went up to Berkeley and established a photography studio, and her mother had left Mariposa and gone to the Bay Area, both of them seeking the same thing, seeking something in an urban area, seeking something on the coast that they didn't feel that they could find elsewhere. California, certainly, the gold rush especially, had a profound influence on my mother's family, bringing some of them here from Canada.

KG: *Itch Like Crazy* does seem to me to be grounded in the gold rush area, and I think when we met a year and a half ago, you talked about it as being a book that is grounded in that area, as well. What role do you think geography plays in your poetry and in *Itch Like Crazy* in particular?

WR: I think in my case it's always been a search for roots that I can connect to. I didn't feel that I could connect with the family that I was born into, with that generation. Both the genealogy and the poetry have been searching for those roots, and the place itself does exert a powerful influence. Parts of California—this part here, the Sierra foothills—as well as northern Arizona, both do have a powerful pull for me, probably more here in California, in the Sierra foothills, than in Arizona, in some ways. I think there is a spirituality to place, and I feel that maybe I can tap into it just a little bit.

KG: When we met a year and a half ago, you mentioned that you weren't completely satisfied with *Itch Like Crazy*. What are some of your concerns with the book?

WR: Mostly, I was ill at the time that it was being put together, and I wasn't really up to arguing about what was going to go where, how it was going to go together, and the final editing processes. My thyroid disappeared—it atrophied out of existence—and I didn't know what was wrong. One of the things that it does is that it affects your mind, and so it's difficult to think, it's difficult to focus, it's difficult to do much of anything, and the thyroid disease also causes depression. So when the book was being put together, my original idea was that the photographs, for example, and that the captions with the photographs, that these would be spread through the book as each person or each group of people appeared in the poems—that there would be their photographs there. Then when a decision was made

that the photographs would be in one section by themselves, then I thought that they should be first and not at the end of the book, that they should be like introducing the characters in a play almost, or at least not at the very end. But I just really wasn't capable at the time of fighting for what I envisioned the book to be, and also the poems that I really thought were the heart of the book were cut out of it. They never appeared. Again, that was an editorial decision and I wasn't up to fighting for what I wanted.

KG: Do you plan to publish a new edition of the volume?

WR: I would like to, but I haven't talked to anyone about it. It hasn't yet appeared on a best-seller list, so I don't think I have too much leverage. [*Laughter.*]

BREAK

KG: In an interview with Carol Hunter twenty-five years ago, you talked about how American Indian literature was classified as the domain of anthropology. What is your estimation of the position of American Indian literature in literary studies today?

WR: I think it certainly has gotten more attention as literature, as modern literature, leaving aside the study of the traditional literary forms and looking only at modern literature. It certainly has a better position in terms of being treated seriously by organizations like the MLA. Certainly some of the authors have gained some degree of public fame; people like Sherman Alexie have a considerable degree of success outside of that little literary sphere. That's all to the good. But I think there's still a sense that many have that only one Indian person can be, only one per generation maybe, I don't know what it is. It was Scott Momaday. Then maybe Leslie Silko for a while. James Welch. But still, they were really within the literary sphere. They're not people that were a household word, for most households, I would guess. So I'm glad that now there's more visibility. I sort of hate to say it, but I think that the casinos have made Indians more visible in general. [*Laughter.*] Not just the casinos, but what the casinos are able to do with the money they're making, being able to do things like support the San Diego symphony. This sort of thing.

KG: Just as an aside, a few years ago I went to the Native Literature

Symposium and they wanted to hold it on tribal ground, so they held it at a casino.

WR: Well, that's where the hotel and the hosting facilities are. When I began teaching at City College, most of the students had never even heard the term "Chukchansi," but they've heard it now.³ [Laughter.]

KG: So are there particular writers you admire today?

WR: I have to confess that I haven't really seen very much. I'm so far off the grapevine at this point that I don't even know what's happening in Indian literature at this very moment.

KG: You mentioned earlier that you just celebrated your sixtieth birthday. As you think about your career, what are you most proud of and why?

WR: [Long pause.] I think probably the teaching even more than the publishing.

KG: Why is that?

WR: I think that, as much as people might enjoy reading poetry, a few people anyway, I think that I felt much more part of the community and much more like I was making a real contribution that had real effects on somebody else's life as a teacher. There are specific examples that come to mind of people who'd been in prison and then they come and something in my classroom is really able to change their life in a positive way—or the students who come in who don't believe that they can do anything and they find out that they can. Obviously, there are not as many of those examples as you want, but it's a more real contribution, something that means more to me in a lot of ways than publishing the books which go out there and maybe somebody reads them and maybe they don't. I'm never going to know. It's always a surprise to me when somebody tells me that they've read one of my books. It surprises me because I never know about these things. I don't hear about the symposia any more. I don't know when these things are happening. I'm just off the beaten track and don't hear anything. But occasionally I will run into a student who, after one of my classes, for example in one case, became a lawyer specializing in Indian rights. That sort of thing means a great deal to me.

KG: So are you working on anything now?

WR: Right now I'm just trying to get back to where I can write again. Having had thyroid disease for so many years, untreated and undiagnosed, has really affected my ability to do almost anything, among other things, to just speak, extemporaneously, to be able to do anything. I haven't been able to do any art, or to write, or anything for about five years, and I'm just hoping that that will come back. Also the means in which I stopped teaching was pretty traumatic, and that's had a profound effect, too.

KG: Is there anything you'd like people to know about what you're doing now and where you are?

WR: I'm trying to find time to go up on the mountain. [*Laughter.*] Maybe I can find my voice up there again.

NOTES

I would like to thank Lok, P. Jane Hafen, and Samina Najmi for their help as I prepared for this interview.

1. Critic P. Jane Hafen has pointed out the problems with using the term "hybrid" when discussing American Indians: "'Hybridization' is a postcolonial critical term that masks assimilation and authenticity questions; it fails to acknowledge paradox and complexity. Additionally, the teleological caught-between-worlds polarization can only result in tragedy and the vanishing American rather than seeking modes of survival" (101n21).

2. The essay appears in Ralph Linton's *The Study of Man*.

3. The Chukchansi are a central California tribe with a large casino in Coarsegold. The tribe's success has allowed them to contribute to (and name) a minor league baseball stadium (Chukchansi Park) in Fresno.

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Book Reviews

Santee Frazier. *Dark Thirty*. (Sun Tracks: An American Indian Literary Series.) Tucson: U of Arizona P, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-8165-2814-1. 82 pp.

C. J. Dosch, *Syracuse University*

Santee Frazier “roam[s] / the uncited dirt between the streets and yards” to collect the images and voices that populate the poems of *Dark Thirty* (18). Frazier’s strength is his ability to render characters. His poems are stories, and his storytelling thrives in the details, the diction, and the visual forms he chooses for each voice. Writing in free verse, Frazier uses eclectic and organic forms, ranging from unrhymed couplets and blocked prose poems to simple fragments and phrases cascading down the page. As there is no single voice across the collection, there is no single structure of representing the fractured and desperate communities so necessary to the lives of his characters.

In early poems such as “Chauncey,” “Joe Bunch,” and “Nick Cheater,” the community is constructed through each speaker’s voice as he relates individual anecdotes, gossip, and commentary. Chauncey shares matter-of-fact observations about community members:

They said ol Caroline was moppin the floor,
usin gas, guess she caught farer, burned her leags good.

Calvin can barely keep them dentures in is jaw,
every time he talks, he's ah chewing like a horse. (8)

Joe Bunch, a bit more cantankerous, concerns himself with his lunch, his "heart's actin up," and protecting his "smell-good" from Chauncey's thirst (12). As the resident mechanic, Nick Cheater talks cars, work, and possible deals on "that Buick up dah road" (14). Individually these poems are best described as local color, but as part of the collection they function to populate Frazier's poetic community and remind us that the images of violence and addiction in later poems are not individual events and instances but part of the experiences of the community.

Being witness to violence and abuse is common in Frazier's poems. The voice of the witness is often that of a child like the speaker in "Hunter's Moon," who watches his grandfather beat his grandmother while he and his mother hide in the trees. Describing the scene with clarity, the speaker recognizes that escape is possible, but he neither condemns nor condones the violence. He merely catalogs it as part of his family:

It has been going on
for years, my mother, her mother,
sisters, whoever was left born
into this rage who did not run
into the night as we have.
Still we plan to return, (10)

After his grandparents fall asleep, they do return, and the speaker notes in closing that "when they wake, [he] will forget about leaving" (11). In several poems, Frazier questions the notion of violence as an inevitable part of life. Though his speakers clearly see all sides of violence, they rarely escape it. In "Ornament," the fourth-grader goes to school with an "eye / fat, red like / an ornament, / heavy as sleep" and reflects that the beatings he gets are the result of "learn[ing] / the stress" of his father (55–56). If these are the lessons learned from generation to generation, then the ex-lover's rhetorical question to the woman he has just stabbed in "Pickax" becomes

quite meaningful: “*How else could you have ended up?*” (26). This question lingers throughout the collection, and it becomes a fundamental concern of the poems featuring Mangled.

The subject of a third of the poems in the collection, Mangled is neither folk hero nor everyman. He is the son of a “plank-floor seductress” (18) and a “[p]aper-bagged glue / huffer . . . bean juiced and ashy” (20) who joins the circus to “[toss] daggers at full gallop” (17), goes to jail for cutting a man, has odd jobs, drinks, and ends up alone in a wheelchair with a “footless leg, stroke-face sagging off / his skull” (49). Mangled gets through life by wielding the power of violence with his knife as both performance and defense. But when this ability falters, so does he. Using Mangled as a metaphor for concerns of race, exploitation, despair, desire, and isolation from the community, Frazier excels at saying just enough to create vivid imagery, but not quite enough to make clear how the reader should feel about Mangled. Like much of Frazier’s collection, these poems function better as a cycle than as individual poems. The repetition and addition of detail across them creates a complex web of associations that give each poem a sense of depth beyond their individual capacity.

Increasingly lyrical and poignant in their blunt honesty, the poems in the final two sections have the immediacy and intimacy of autobiography without being confessional. Here the reader begins to feel the cars, corners, coin laundries, and apartment complexes that shape Frazier’s world and provide the *mise-en-scène* for broader reflection. The speaker in “The Robbery” questions how “the brief triumph of metal over flesh would rid [his] memory of the deafening crack of gunpowder,” but all he can do is question the desire without knowing the outcome (75). Frazier does not offer easy answers, only the recognition that “somehow we all end up here, / displaced, / documented” (78). For Frazier the “we all” extends beyond Natives and becomes all those living at the margins, struggling with present conditions, and surviving the habits of the past. In the end, hope is found in witnessing “a / face half [his] own” in the world around him (82).

Unashamedly sharp, hard-hitting, and articulate, Frazier’s poems

are “flitting blade[s] in / the dark” that cut away at romantic idealism to reveal Native lives as tender as they are grim (19). Resisting overt moralizing, this collection is like the tincture in the opening poem “Root Juice”; it contains an “ancient thing in plastic” that provides “the means to heal,” but there is “no hymn or myth [that] tells how this root grows” or how the healing takes place (3). Some readers might find Frazier’s medicine distasteful as his subjects involve sexual exploitation, domestic violence, drunks, huffers, and rough neighborhoods. However, others will gladly “[tighten their] mouth[s] for a drink” and find in *Dark Thirty* a vigorous contribution to contemporary Native American poetry (3).

Rani-Henrik Andersson. *The Lakota Ghost Dance of 1890*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2008. ISBN 978-0-8032-1073-8. 437 pp.

David Christensen, *University of Nevada-Las Vegas*

Although numerous Native American tribes across the North American West practiced the Ghost Dance religion during the latter half of the nineteenth century, most literature focuses on the Lakota Sioux ghost dance of 1890. The allure of the Lakotas’ dance certainly stems from the two major events that occurred, Sitting Bull’s death and the Wounded Knee Massacre. Rani-Henrik Andersson enters this scholarly landscape attempting to produce the most inclusive history to date. He places the dance in the context of Lakota culture.

An intricate web of misunderstandings and diverse viewpoints surrounded the Ghost Dance. To examine the many different ghost dance interpretations, Andersson divides the chapters among the main historical actors; the Lakotas, Indian agents, U.S. Army, missionaries, newspapers, and U.S. Congress each occupy a chapter. The introduction provides helpful background by discussing Lakota history, U.S. Indian policy, and the origins of Wovoka’s Ghost Dance.

Andersson suggests that if not for the cut in rations along with drought and subsequent famine in 1890 Lakotas may have never taken up the Ghost Dance. The dire situation even pushed several

less-traditional Lakotas to dance, though exact numbers are impossible to determine. In addition, many Lakotas were upset with the Sioux Act of 1889, which broke up the Great Sioux Reservation, and blamed those Lakotas who signed it for the reservation's grim condition. The reservation system and Ghost Dance divided Lakotas, which created disorder. Many scholars, Andersson contends, have misinterpreted this disorder as rising Indian hostility toward whites.

For Lakotas, the Ghost Dance was a very familiar form of religious practice. The dance evolved through experiences, visions, and the influx of Lakota beliefs. Like a couple of previous scholars, Andersson argues that the dance was not a call for violence against whites. (See Jeffrey Ostler's *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wound Knee* and William S. E. Coleman's *Voices of Wounded Knee*.) Dancers became hostile only after whites and even fellow Lakotas who opposed the religion tried to interfere or stop the dance. Ghost shirts did not promote war; rather, they reflected traditional Lakota culture, and the imagined bullet-proof characteristic appears to have emerged after the army arrived. Whites, however, did not recognize the dance as a religious phenomenon but as a warlike gesture.

From the beginning, Indian agents demanded that Lakotas discontinue dancing and argued for the dance leaders' arrest. Yet in the fall of 1890, anxiety increased when a new presidential administration appointed inexperienced Indian agents on all Lakota reservations except Standing Rock. The agents at Cheyenne River, Rosebud, and Pine Ridge reservations called for military assistance. Andersson stresses that although the agent at Standing Rock wanted the dancing to end, his biggest concern was Sitting Bull's influence. The agent used the dance as an excuse to remove Sitting Bull and gain control of the reservation. Sitting Bull did not participate in the Ghost Dance, but he believed his followers could practice any religion they wished. Surprisingly, Standing Rock had the lowest numbers of ghost dancers, yet it saw the first bloodshed during Sitting Bull's failed arrest. Additionally, 150 of Sitting Bull's followers fled in the aftermath, and a few later died at Wounded Knee.

The chapter on the U.S. Army's involvement is intriguing. Army officers' investigations revealed that an uprising was unlikely. They believed Lakotas would stop dancing if given rations. Nevertheless, the calls from Indian agents along with public worries pushed the government to prepare for an outbreak and mass troops on the reservations. Once there, General Nelson Miles decided to use the dance to gain power over the Department of the Interior. The Army and Department of the Interior had long struggled over control of Indian affairs. Miles publicly stated alarmist tones about an outbreak, and he got what he wanted when the government put the army in control of the Lakota reservations. The army seemed to sympathize with the Lakotas' situation, but at the same time, it called for a strong force to stop the dance. Its presence frightened Lakotas. This fear as well as rumors caused Bigfoot to not surrender and lead his followers to Pine Ridge, where the army eventually caught up at Wounded Knee.

Like many army officers, Catholic and Protestant missionaries thought the Ghost Dance would not lead to an outbreak. Still, the dance challenged Lakotas conversion to Christianity, and therefore missionaries denounced it. Missionaries understood the dismal situation Lakotas were facing, but they believed that the dance was a result of the Indians' old heathenish ways. Nonetheless, the missionaries played a minor role in the Ghost Dance.

Andersson's thorough research of the newspapers pays off in providing new insights. Newspapers did not publish only embellished stories about an imminent uprising. Newspapers went through many phases where they often contradicted themselves by publishing stories that sympathized with Lakotas only to later produce articles that were alarmist or that exaggerated the state of affairs. In any case, newspapers reported many rumors and false reports that nurtured the growing anxiety and misunderstandings.

The U.S. Congress simply reacted to the Ghost Dance events and never took an active role. Even so, Congress wanted the dance to cease because it signified a return to barbarism, which went against U.S. Indian policy. Interestingly, Congress helped cause unrest on the reservations by cutting rations in an attempt to force Lakotas to farm and become self-sufficient.

Although the book points out the rival factions between progressive and traditional Lakotas, it would benefit from greater discussion of the differing interests among full-bloods and mixed-bloods as well as white men married to Lakota women. Still, Andersson's research is excellent; he draws on Lakota sources, even translating a few of these documents himself. The study gives Lakotas their own voice.

The book sifts through the numerous misunderstandings and interpretations of the Lakota ghost dance to uncover just why the event ended in tragedy. Andersson reveals how the many different perspectives created confusion between Lakotas and whites; the groups failed to understand each other. Andersson succeeds quite well in providing a comprehensive history of the Lakota Ghost Dance, which separates it from other recent works. Ultimately, the book demonstrates how understanding a particular tribe's culture is fundamental in comprehending and writing its history.

Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola. *The War in Words: Reading the Dakota Conflict through the Captivity Literature*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2009. ISBN 0803213700. 398 pp.

Erin Griffin, *University of Oklahoma*

The U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 is a topic that has been greatly contested and analyzed through the years and continues to garner attention as new perspectives enter the debate. Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, professor of English at the University of Arkansas, explores this topic through an analysis of captivity narratives in *The War in Words: Reading the Dakota Conflict through the Captivity Literature*. Derounian-Stodola's interest in the subject was fostered by her part-time residence in the northern Minnesota lake country, by family in St. Paul, and through prior work with captivity narratives in *The Indian Captivity Narrative, 1550–1590*, coauthored with James A. Levernier (1993), and *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives* (1998). Providing background in her methodology, the history of the war, and an analysis of twenty-four captivity narratives of both

Euroamericans and Native Americans, Derounian-Stodola offers another view of the events of 1862. The main argument throughout the work is that there is not one overarching truth to the war, nor are there only two sides to the story. Rather, the contextual analysis of each of the narratives demonstrates the complexity of the situation and the identities of those involved. She concludes her study by considering healing and conciliation for Dakotas and Minnesotans and stresses that Minnesota is “home” for many who, through respect and understanding, can reconcile our differences. Both the sources and the individuals she thanks in the preface exhibit her effort to gather a wide range of information and perspectives from many sides and backgrounds that aid in presenting a fuller understanding of the war.

Derounian-Stodola approaches this subject by making the uncommon point that there are many truths present in this history. Through contextualizing the lives of the narrators, she truly humanizes these stories that are often only thinly veiled propaganda with depictions of hostile savages on one side and innocent, victimized Minnesotans on the other. The author’s consideration and analysis of Native captivity stories is a newly emerging approach both to studies in captivity narratives and to literature on the war. In the publication and distribution of captivity narratives, as in all genres, the Native voice has had little representation. However, the choices Derounian-Stodola has made to represent the Dakota voice in these narratives—specifically, the narratives of Samuel J. Brown and Nancy McClure Faribault Huggan—are questionable and require a larger statement than she has provided. Though they have some Dakota ancestry, both Brown and Huggan clearly identify and convey their stories as Euroamericans. Despite this fact, both narratives are presented as “Native American” captivity narratives. As I write now, though I have some French ancestry, I am writing as a Dakota woman and identify as a Dakota, not as a representative of French custom or culture. That Brown and Huggan do not identify themselves as Dakota people should be given further consideration in the analysis and presentation of their narratives.

Throughout the entirety of the text, Derounian-Stodola recog-

nizes the problems of appropriation, linguistic labeling, blurred lines between fact and fiction, as well as the problematic nature of “editorial intervention” in Native narratives (164). These are facts that Dakota people, and more broadly Native people, are well aware of, and it is refreshing to find acknowledgment of them in this work. Perhaps, in addition to the author’s emphasis on diversity, the discussion of these points moves the reader closer to her final argument for understanding, healing, and conciliation, but there are critical points that lack emphasis or that are entirely missing. For example, consideration of the fear in which Dakota people lived during that time would increase understanding of the analysis of Brown’s and Huggan’s narratives. Some Dakota people were very willing to assimilate and convert to Christianity before and after the war, not because of religious conviction but because they were starving, dying, and being hunted and murdered. Conditional conversion may have been the result of the genocide of their people. The fear resulting from these factors permeated Dakota life, and its effects are still felt to this day. Thus, Derounian-Stodola makes a casual assumption that Dakota people today refrain from or are “disunited” about telling oral histories of the war because of “Dakota cultural practices of privacy, as well as the familiar fact that in 1862 Dakotas themselves were divided over whether to support the U.S. government against those who rose up against it” (166). This conclusion is based on a superficial understanding of Dakota people, communities, and why we do or do not share our stories with the more general public.

While Derounian-Stodola recognizes the ever-changing name of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, she refrains from definitively acknowledging it as a war as declared by Ta Oyate Duta (Little Crow). Possibly a result of this omission, she distracts the reader by referring to the war interchangeably throughout the entirety of her book as “the War,” “the Conflict,” and “the hostilities.” Also, traces of her bias as a Euroamerican scholar are present when she refers to the massacre at Wounded Knee as a battle (22) and as she privileges information about Dakota cultural practices given by a non-Dakota (196).

Overall, *The War in Words* presents a new perspective on the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, providing a deeper understanding of it through a more serious look at the complex identities and backgrounds of those who have shared its stories. This approach is a positive step forward in the way in which the stories are told, discussed, and debated. In addition, this work will undoubtedly provide an example of an approach to understanding the personal responses to war that may prove useful to those readers and scholars engaged in peace studies, truth commissions, and historical representations of war.

Paul Chaat Smith. *Everything You Know about Indians Is Wrong*. Indigenous Americas Series. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-8166-5601-1. 193 pp.

Julianne Newmark, *New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology*

During Paul Chaat Smith's life, he sometimes felt that he had missed everything or that he was perennially in the wrong place, geographically, temporally, ontologically. Yet, the series of previously published essays that comprise *Everything You Know about Indians Is Wrong* reveals that what Smith once perceived as "missing" or "wrong" now serves to catalyze Smith's questioning of Native art, text, and other forms of representation. Smith explains that during his life, he has been many things: a suburban adolescent malcontent (in Ohio and outside of Washington DC); a dissatisfied student at Antioch College; an intern for the Wounded Knee Legal Defense/Offense Committee; the founding editor of the American Indian Movement's *Treaty Council News*; an omnivore of literary and visual art; a fan of rock-n-roll; the coauthor with Robert Warrior of *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee*; and, today, the associate curator at the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). Taken together, the essays, whose previous publication venues have ranged from exhibition catalogues for museums and galleries in Canada and the United States to the National Geographic Society book *Native Universe: Voices of Indian America*, reveal that the story Smith now wants to offer is historical,

biographical, activist, technological, and, at the root, inconclusive because it is a story in which Smith is *asking* rather than *telling*.

Uniting Smith's essays in this collection is his overriding concern that many Indian artists "approach their work with statements, not questions," an approach that Smith conceives of as wrong-headed and one he strives to avoid (29). As a result, *Everything You Know about Indians Is Wrong* is a book of questions: Who will be the next Native "public intellectual" (161)? When will the missing books about Native leaders and critical historical moments appear, and why haven't they yet (161)? How should a "national" Native art and history museum (namely, the NMAI) function? Should it "challenge . . . white people, or . . . Indians?" (61–62). Should it be "about beautiful objects, or history?" (62). How can Native intellectuals confront "the anti-intellectualism in our own communities?" (85). If irony did not play a role in *Dances with Wolves* sweeping the Oscars, with the passing of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act, or with the "explo[sion]" of casinos "across Indian country," why were Indians doing this "funny, brilliant . . . stuff" on their own (148–49)? Smith indicates that the answers to these and other questions are not clear but that the questions themselves are crucial, viable, and compelling; we must consider them because, according to his title, many of the answers both Native and non-Native people have offered in the past have been "wrong." In fact, he explains, *most* of the answers have been wrong. The title "is not meant to be taken literally," but we must be reminded to think again, to question, and to understand that the "You" in his title "really means We, as in all of Us" (182).

Everything You Know about Indians Is Wrong is also a book about the interactions between Native people and technologies, as articulated through Smith's own involvement (as a writer, editor, art critic, curator, and cultural commentator) in practices of consumption, production, and reproduction of images and information. In discussing photography, film, music, painting, mixed-media installation, and performance art, Smith comments upon technologies that historically have functioned to both mirror and manipulate while serving cathartic purposes for the capturer/creator. On these lines, *Everything You Know about Indians Is Wrong* is itself a device

that encourages readers to reassess their own relationships to and assumptions about the images they consume and the ones they produce.

The first essay, "Every Picture Tells a Story," begins with a barrage a people, places, and technologies: cameras, a museum, Ishi, Smith's Grandpa Chaat, forty-eight glass lantern slides, and Sitting Bull. Regarding technologies of visual capture, namely cameras, Smith avers, "These devices would fundamentally change life on the planet. They were new to us, but they were almost as new to everyone else" (5). Because "being Indian" as disseminated by these image-preserving technologies was new to everyone a bit over a century ago, "the truth is" that Indians "didn't know a damn thing about being Indian" (5). These technologies educated everyone—or, rather, miseducated everyone. While Smith is certainly not the first to make such a claim, his sweeping proclamation resonates with readers when they reach the conclusion of this collection of essays: "all of Us" are called upon now to question these long-held assumptions regarding image and identity.

With the essay "Ghost in the Machine," Smith approaches the conclusion of the collection, considering again photographic technologies as employed by those whom he calls "the big game hunters," photographers and other artists who alight upon Native communities with the hope of, to paraphrase from the final paragraph of the essay, trapping history (175, 179). These "big game hunters" have an idea, long ago produced on lantern slides and celluloid, of the kinds of Indians they are looking for and the images they want to snap so that their dreams of "book deals and cable television infomercials" might come true (176). Smith asserts that "the amnesia and wistful romanticism" regarding Native people prevents these "hunters" from seeing that, "Heck, we're just plain folks," folks who are living complicated and interesting, or sometimes simple and boring, lives in the present (178). Throughout his essays, Smith indicates the difficulty that consumers of non-Native-made (and sometimes Native-made) images have long had in believing or accepting such a proclamation (178). He refers to many individuals whose images have become a part of a historical narrative (Geronimo,

Sitting Bull, Leonard Crow Dog, Russell Means), and he examines the contemporary works of others (James Luna, Pablo Tac, Faye HeavyShield) who strive to change the nature of Native images and image production.

Despite the periodic repetition of biographical information and the occasional difficulty that arises when an essay originally published in the catalogue for a particular gallery show is taken out of that context, *Everything You Know about Indians Is Wrong* is engaging, relevant, and at times humorous. Smith does not abide by disciplinary expectations, nor does he appear interested in offering a standard academic text. His essays were not originally written for such audiences. Nevertheless, Smith's personal narrative alongside his reiteration of important events in Native activist and aesthetic history would cause this book to be a memorable one for undergraduate students. For those who identify themselves as Native "culture critics" (as Smith describes himself), or as art historians, American or Native American studies scholars, or simply those interested (as Smith is) in "the big ideas," this book will not offer "answers." It does not propose theories, readings, or appear to employ the kinds of research preferred by the professoriate. For these reasons, one might critique Smith for the absence of primary- or secondary-source citation as well as for the periodic repetition of information across chapters. Some scholars will be left dissatisfied because Smith moves so quickly from topic to topic, naming numerous significant people and events without offering sustained analyses or crafting lucid thematic connections. Yet overall, Smith achieves what he sets out to do: he presents a historically sweeping, pop-culture-saturated, biographically informed, intermittently winking series of questions. *Everything You Know about Indians Is Wrong* will interest readers from outside of academia and will likely provoke those within it.

Robert M. Nelson. *Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony: The Recovery of Tradition*. New York: Peter Lang, 2008. ISBN 978-1-4331-0205-9. 197 pp.

Leah Sneider, *University of New Mexico*

In his critical examination of Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony*, Robert Nelson includes portions of previously published material in half of the chapters; the other half are entirely new. Therefore, many of us have read about half of Nelson's discussion in other forms and publications since about 1999. In other words, this text has been ten years in the making, evidence of Nelson's thorough thought, research, development, and dedication to providing new research on one of the most written about texts in the field.

In the introduction, Nelson posits that *Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony: The Recovery of Tradition* is his attempt at "a comprehensive study of the Pueblo and Navajo sources for this novel" akin to Susan Scarberry Garcia's study (*Landmarks of Healing*) of N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* (1). His goal is to connect the many stories *within Ceremony* as well the story of *Ceremony* to the traditional Pueblo stories as "print version[s] of an oral performance" while acknowledging the blending of culturally informed literary traditions displayed in a printed story (2). Therefore, Nelson, responding simultaneously to Paula Gunn Allen's criticism of the novel, clarifies that his approach is purely a printed text-to-printed text relationship, focusing on previously published ethnographic texts that include full-length transcriptions and/or interpretations of Pueblo stories, including most predominantly Franz Boas's *Keresan Texts* (1928), John M. Gunn's *Schat-Chen: History, Traditions and Naratives* [sic] of the *Queres Indians of Laguna and Acoma* (1917), and Leland Wyman's *The Red Antway of the Navaho* (1965). This project of "modern intertextuality" seeks to recover, reclaim, reintegrate, and reanimate these stories, "all with a view to healing" (3, 4).

By mapping both the placement and movement of stories within the story while maintaining a focus on the "backbone" of the story (the cultural and medicinal power of stories generally but also the

story of Tayo specifically), Nelson uncovers the departure-recovery motif in *Ceremony* common to Laguna ceremonial stories and story cycles (like the Yellow Woman stories), thus privileging Laguna “text and texture” (18). Nelson assuages fears regarding Silko’s source material coming directly from sacred clan stories. Instead, his printed text-to-printed text methodology reveals how the source material for the novel actually comes more directly from published ethnographic texts. Therefore, he claims that Silko’s novel “repatriat[es] Laguna ‘artifacts’” in order to keep the stories alive as the backbone of the people. Furthermore, in comparing Silko’s text directly to these ethnographic texts, Nelson reveals the specifics of Silko’s craft and performance as coming from a contemporary storyteller who liberates the stories from the confines of ethnography and brings them back to life.

Nelson’s methodology centers on the homological rather than analogical relationship between the text and the embedded stories. Homological relationships result from “two or more analogous entities [that are] derivatives of some preceding entity”; in other words, they are directly related because they spring from the same source (29). In the case of *Ceremony*, the narrative and the embedded texts derive from and are in the process of recreating or becoming a part of “the long story of the People” (29). Nelson thus begins to explore this homological relationship by focusing on the “four axes of Silko’s literary performance”: the homologies of character, function, cultural context, and motif (29).

Nelson attempts to figure out whose voices are present in the first four movements of the novel and ultimately who narrates Tayo’s story. He proposes that if the story centers on Tayo’s recovery and transformation, then perhaps he is his own storyteller and narrator. Yet, the movement from voice to ambiguously gendered voice allows the story to emerge from a liminal zone of space and time and grants it unlimited possibilities. Furthermore, passage through these text-based “hoops” places the reader within the ceremony itself, making us active rather than passive participants in Tayo’s healing and therefore homologous with Tayo. In this way, Nelson argues, the text itself becomes a storytelling performance.

The rest of Nelson's book explores these varied and multiple homologous relationships within the many-storied series while focusing on the characters, the functions of both character and story, the cultural context of character and story, and the various motifs that run through each story. These series-, character-, or motif-focused chapters include: sunrise, the Laguna sisters, the scalp ceremony, the Navajo, the witchery, and Arrowboy. There are also two chapters that explore motifs of departure and recovery (Pecayanyi and Hummingbird) as the backbone series of the novel. Nelson also includes several appendices that map out the text itself as well as the relationships between the embedded texts and previously printed ethnographic texts.

Ultimately, Nelson's exploration of homologous relationships reinforces emerging discussion surrounding an Indigenous "both/and" paradigm that is inclusive of rather than resistant to the Western "either/or" paradigm. More specifically, his reading of the novel pairs the theme of recovery and regeneration with its opposite, the destructive witchery and Ck'o'yo medicine, to show how polar opposites coexist in a homologous and mutually dependent relationship with each other.

Nelson's exploration is rich with insight into one of the most critically analyzed novels in Native American literary and cultural studies. He ventures forth into controversial territory regarding the source of the stories within Silko's text in order to add continued cultural and theoretical importance to the novel and its social ramifications, particularly for Laguna Pueblo people. His highly accessible text fulfills its purpose of aiding in the recovery of the Laguna storytelling tradition as exemplified in Silko's *Ceremony* and thus adds to the ongoing and developing conversation regarding literary nationalism or tribal-centered literary analysis. Nelson's text would be an integral read for anybody interested in the traditional significance of Silko's novel.

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 \$300 (U.S.) 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.

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Major Tribal Nations and Bands

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 bryan.russell@mail.utexas.edu.

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