

VOLUME 22 · NUMBER 2 · SUMMER 2010

Studies in American Indian Literatures

EDITORS

JAMES H. COX, University of Texas at Austin

DANIEL HEATH JUSTICE, University of Toronto

Published by the University of Nebraska Press

The editors thank the Centre for Aboriginal Initiatives at the University of Toronto and the College of Liberal Arts and the Department of English at the University of Texas for their financial support.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Studies in American Indian Literatures (SAIL ISSN 0730-3238) is the only scholarly journal in the United States that focuses exclusively on American Indian literatures. SAIL is published quarterly by the University of Nebraska Press for the Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures (ASAIL). Subscription rates are \$38 for individuals and \$95 for institutions. Single issues are available for \$22. For subscriptions outside the United States, please add \$30. Canadian subscribers please add appropriate GST or HST. Residents of Nebraska, please add the appropriate Nebraska sales tax. To subscribe, please contact the University of Nebraska Press. Payment must accompany order. Make checks payable to the University of Nebraska Press and mail to

The University of Nebraska Press
PO Box 84555
Lincoln, NE 68501-4555
Phone: 402-472-8536
Web site: <http://www.nebraskapress.unl.edu>

All inquiries on subscription, change of address, advertising, and other business communications should be addressed to the University of Nebraska Press at 1111 Lincoln Mall, Lincoln, NE 68588-0630.

A subscription to SAIL is a benefit of membership in ASAIL. For membership information please contact

R. M. Nelson
2421 Birchwood Road
Henrico, VA 23294-3513
Phone: 804-672-0101
E-mail: rnelson@richmond.edu

SUBMISSIONS

The editorial board of SAIL invites the submission of scholarly manuscripts focused on all aspects of American Indian literatures as well as the submission of poetry and short fiction, bibliographical essays, review essays, and interviews. We define "literatures" broadly to include all written, spoken, and visual texts created by Native peoples.

Manuscripts should be prepared in accordance with the most recent edi-

tion of the *MLA Style Manual*. *SAIL* only accepts electronic submissions. Please submit your manuscript by e-mail as an attachment (preferably in Rich Text Format [RTF]).

SAIL observes a “blind reading” policy, so please do not include an author name on the title, first page, or anywhere else in the article. Do include your contact information, such as address, phone number, and e-mail address, with your submission. All submissions are read by outside reviewers. Submissions should be sent directly to Daniel Heath Justice at

sail@chass.utoronto.ca

Rights to the articles are held by the individual contributors.

All rights reserved

Manufactured in the United States of America

Quote from “The Gift Outright” from *The Poetry of Robert Frost* edited by Edward Connery Lathem. Copyright © 1923, 1969 by Henry Holt and Company. Copyright © 1951 by Robert Frost. Reprinted by permission of Henry Holt and Company, LLC.

Lines from “To Elsie” by William Carlos Williams, *The Collected Poems: Volume I, 1909–1939*, are copyright © 1938 by New Directions Publishing Corp. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing.

“The Place Where Clouds Are Formed” and “Pain of Speaking” from *Where Clouds Are Formed* by Ofelia Zepeda. Copyright © 2008 Ofelia Zepeda. Reprinted by permission of the University of Arizona Press.

SAIL is available online through *Project MUSE* at <http://muse.jhu.edu>.

Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in *Anthropological Index*, *Arts & Humanities Citation Index*, *Bibliography of Native North Americans*, *Current Abstracts*, *Current Contents/Arts & Humanities*, *ERIC Databases*, *IBR: International Bibliography of Book Reviews*, *IBZ: International Bibliography of Periodical Literature*, *MLA International Bibliography*, and *TOC Premier*.

Cover: Photo courtesy of Bonita Bent-Nelson © 2003,

design by Kimberly Hermesen

Interior: Kimberly Hermesen

GENERAL EDITORS

James H. Cox (Production) and Daniel Heath Justice (Submissions)

BOOK REVIEW EDITOR

James H. Cox

CREATIVE WORKS EDITORS

Joseph Bruchac and LeAnne Howe

EDITORIAL BOARD

Chad Allen, Lisa Brooks, Robin Riley Fast, Susan Gardner, Patrice Hollrah,
Molly McGlennen, Margaret Noori, Kenneth Roemer, Lisa Tatonetti,
Christopher Teuton, and Jace Weaver

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS

Bryan Russell and Kyle Carsten Wyatt

EDITORS EMERITUS

Helen Jaskoski, Karl Kroeber, Robert M. Nelson, Malea Powell, John Purdy,
and Rodney Simard

CONTENTS

vii From the Editors

ARTICLES

- 1 Unearthing the Chumash Presence in *The Sharpest Sight*
MELODY GRAULICH
- 22 Concocting Terrorism off the Reservation:
Liberal Orientalism in Sherman Alexie's Post-9/11 Fiction
STEVEN SALAITA
- 42 Publishing Sámi Literature—from Christian Translations
to Sámi Publishing Houses
KIRSTI PALTTO
- 59 Apelles's War: Transcending Stereotypes of American
Indigenous Peoples in David Treuer's *The Translation
of Dr. Apelles*
DAVID YOST

REVIEW ESSAY

- 75 Another Indian Looking Back: A Review Essay on
Recent American Indian Poetry
ROBERT DALE PARKER

BOOK REVIEWS

- 86 Titu Cusi Yupanqui. *An Inca Account of the Conquest of Peru*.
Trans. Ralph Bauer
JONATHAN D. STEIGMAN
- 89 Louise Erdrich. *Shadow Tag*
MARGARET NOORI
- 96 Lisa Brooks. *The Common Pot: The Recovery of
Native Space in the Northeast*
MARGO LUKENS
- 100 Contributor Biographies
- 102 Major Tribal Nations and Bands

FROM THE EDITORS

A couple of years ago Daniel had the opportunity to visit with an extraordinary scholar from Australia who was working hard to make a space in her English department for Indigenous literature and looking to other English and Indigenous studies programs in the British Commonwealth, including Canada, for guidance. This scholar's struggle was supported by local community members and many of her colleagues but made quite difficult by some people in the administrative levels of her institution, whose responses ranged from apathetic to hostile. The most memorable comment came from an administrator who very comfortably insisted that "Aborigines won't have a real literature until they have a Shakespeare."

While this statement might be more overtly obnoxious in its smug stupidity than we might prefer, the sentiments are not that unusual. How many of us who do work in this field, when we tell a new acquaintance what it is we study, are met with some variation of the questions "Really? I didn't know that they *had* a literature?" or "So you're talking about their myths and legends, right?" Sometimes those conversations end in the interlocutor learning something as we launch into a passionate affirmation of the rich and varied archive of Indigenous literary expression; sometimes, perhaps, we just sigh, shoulders drooping, and wonder how it is that, in the twenty-first century, there is still so much ignorance (sometimes willful, most often not) about Native peoples' literature and artistry.

Part of our mandate at *SAIL* is to increase scholarly *and* public recognition of and engagement with Indigenous literatures, pri-

marily of the United States and Canada but increasingly worldwide. While some essays are more theoretically dense than others, *all* are expected to be accessible to a broad readership, with invitational prose that challenges but never condescends to its readers. As a result, every issue is something that can be shared with astute readers, be they working in English departments, laboratories, restaurants, buses, ranches. . . . Anywhere there are readers, that is where *SAIL* belongs. Every issue offers testimony of the richness, the depth, and the complexity of Indigenous literary expression, and every issue offers a rebuttal to the idea that there is no Indigenous literature.

This issue is a perfect case in point. It begins with three critical essays that take up specific creative texts by three diverse Native writers. Melody Graulich's study of Louis Owens's *The Sharpest Sight* examines how the novel "unearths" Chumash presence and challenges the rhetorics of erasure that have mythologized the supposed vanishing of the Chumash people, thus opening up a heretofore underexamined aspect of a novel typically read for its Choc-taw content. From there, we move to Steven Salaita's provocative study of Sherman Alexie's post-9/11 works *Flight* and *Ten Little Indians*, where he asks difficult questions about Alexie's representation of Muslim characters, the legacies of U.S. colonial violence, and the problematic and recurring specter of terrorism in these works. Rounding out the critical essays is Dave Yost's study of the "textual war" at the heart of David Treuer's *The Translation of Dr. Apelles* and the ways in which Treuer's narrative offers a significant challenge to culturalist readings of Native literature, as well as reader expectations of what that literature should or even can be.

As is something of a tradition in *SAIL*, the critical essays are joined by other works that offer a transnational snapshot of Indigenous writing. First, Sámi writer and editor Kirsti Paltto provides an important assessment of the history and current state of Sámi literature and publishing—a vibrant body of work deserving of far more attention by scholars in our field. The issue concludes with our regular book review section, led by Robert Dale Parker's remarkable review essay of Salt Publishing's Earthworks series and its sharing of Indigenous poetry with a global audience.

Together, the contributions to this issue articulate a sophisticated understanding of the depth, the range, and the diversity of Indigenous literature. So read it, and then share it. When somebody says, “I didn’t know there was such a thing as Indigenous literature,” give them this issue, or direct them to our past issues. Tell them of our thirty-plus years of scholarship in the field. Share with them the work of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers as well as the current ones.

And remind them that we do not *need* a Shakespeare to have a literature, as we have something more than just a historical literary tradition: we have a *living* literature, and that deserves more than celebration—it deserves respect.

James H. Cox and Daniel Heath Justice

AMERICAN INDIAN CULTURE AND RESEARCH JOURNAL

Now available online!



UCLA's *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* is a quarterly academic publication dedicated to scholarship about American Indian peoples. AICRJ publishes articles and reviews of recent work from a variety of disciplines, including history, literature, health, anthropology, sociology, political science, and others.

Subscriptions:

Institutions (print & online) \$245; 2 years \$450
Individuals (print only) \$40 per year; 2 years \$70
Single Issue \$15

Foreign Subscriptions Add \$20



Name/Institution

Street Address

City

State

Zip

Phone Number

Email

MetaPress ID (if applicable)



Send to:
AICRJ Subscriptions
UCLA American Indian Studies Center
3220 Campbell Hall, Box 951548
Los Angeles, California 90095-1548

(310) 206-7508 sales@aisc.ucla.edu
www.books.aisc.ucla.edu/

Make checks payable to the Regents of the University of California

Unearthing the Chumash Presence in *The Sharpest Sight*

MELODY GRAULICH

The world was like that, full of hidden, half-forgotten things.

Louis Owens, *The Sharpest Sight*

He had arrived at a convergence of patterns; he could see them clearly now.

Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*

“Tangled, mixed, interrelated.” In these three words police deputy Mundo Morales succinctly sums up Louis Owens’s representation of the racial history of California. “Indians, Mexicans, gringos, mixed-bloods” are all “caught up” in the story of migration, dispossession, erasure, and survivance that is *The Sharpest Sight* (197). Throughout the novel Mundo ponders his family’s role in this colonial story, knowing that the “Morales[es] used to own all this place, . . . given it by a Spanish king” but recognizing that his family is not an innocent victim of the “gringos,” that their dispossession is part of a larger pattern:

And it belonged to the Indians and we sold it for a quart of whiskey, Mundo thought. That’s all it had taken Dan Nemi’s grandfather to get his cattle onto the grant and begin the take-over that, in only ten years, would make him sole owner of all the Morales land. Back when it was illegal for a Mexican or an Indian to testify against a white person in court. (42–43)

While Owens's second California novel, *Bone Game*, exposes the history of the Ohlone, who lived, and live, on the northern coast of Monterey Bay, *The Sharpest Sight* is set in the coastal foothills at the southern end of the Salinas Valley, Owens's childhood home, which, as Hoey McCurtain points out, "all used to be Chumash country, you know. Everything you see. And now there ain't no Chumash here at all, and we're here. . . . Us Indians are a mixed-up bunch. It's like somebody took a big stick and stirred us all up" (19).

Attention has been paid to the Choctaw mythology and history in the novel; to Owens's satirical references to canonical writers; to his use of "blended mythologies" (Dwyer 43); to his style, which "conjoins indigenous and alien cultural materials" (Taylor 221); but no one has explored how Owens, attentive to the interplay between land, local Indigenous identities, and intersecting tribal histories, crafts the novel on remnants of Chumash culture through nature symbolism and landscape descriptions that reference Chumash stories and through the Chumash material objects Cole and his brother dig up.¹ The Chumash also surface in the (erased) genealogy of one of the novel's main characters. Mundo knew he "was part [generically] Indian, though no one in the family had ever liked to admit it. Pure Castillian, they had always pretended" (197). Not until the novel's end does he find out that he is descended from the Chumash. Hoey turns out to be wrong that "there ain't no Chumash here at all" as Owens subtly counters the age-old story of the "vanished" Indians.

In this novel so self-consciously about "design" and interrelationships, Owens drops brief references to the Chumash into the landscape of the text for the reader to unearth. An early passage establishes the model for the reader.

[Cole McCurtain] would think about the people who had made [the arrowheads and stone figure], trying to imagine their lives in the coastal hills. Chumash, a people who seemed to have vanished into the pale hills the way the river disappeared into the sand. He'd heard that there were a few of them left somewhere, but he'd never seen one of them. And then he and Attis, who were Indians too, sort of, came to dig up what those vanished people had made. It was funny. He would

try to understand the convergence, what strange design could have brought Choctaw blood so far from Mississippi to find these Chumash things. (53–54)

Cole's brother, Attis (both, at this point in the novel, "sort of" Indians), found the arrowheads and the "white stone doll . . . as crudely formed as the arrowheads were fine, its face and limbs merely suggested by the carver" while digging a cave behind their house (53). (In the twentieth century, archeologists and adventurers removed many Chumash carvings from caves, which also contained rock paintings.) Having lost Attis, "the brother he'd known . . . better than he'd known himself," to the Vietnam War, Cole cherishes the memory of that day, of all of his times with Attis in the California foothills (22). In tribute to those feelings, uncertain about the rituals of his ancestors, he places the arrowheads and doll in a leather bag Attis made, which he carries with him or wears around his neck. His Choctaw uncle Luther later refers to it as "a medicine" and reminds him to wear it (116). (I will return to Owens's representation of Attis as a transmitter of the Chumash.) Like Cole, readers are asked to dig into the Chumash past and attempt to understand the convergences between various characters, natural forces, and the Chumash.

This passage about the Chumash, like many others in the novel, is autobiographical, generated from Owens's deep and abiding connection to the California foothills. The incident was so significant to him that he returned to the story again and again. Describing one of his childhood homes in the Santa Lucia Mountains, he writes,

That was a secure and private world, where my older brother, Gene, looked up at me from deep in the cave we were digging and said, "Look at these Indian things," and we sat together in the sun to study two lovely arrow points and a tiny white stone doll dug from six feet down in the shaley earth. What were those Indians, I wondered. . . . Why had they set such things so carefully in the earth, and where were those people now? ("Motion" 175)

We naively collected the beautiful items, taking the doll to our mother as a gift. We thought it strange and disappointing that

she “lost” the little carving almost immediately, and it was not until years later that I realized she had respectfully returned the figure to the soil from which it had come. (“Mapping” 207)

Owens’s retrospective understanding of his mother’s actions offers a fitting end to the story, for “not until years later” would he attempt to find out the answers to his boyhood questions about the “Indian things” and “where were those people now.” He must have been tempted to put this touching concluding detail into his novel, but he chose not to. Instead, Choctaw/Cherokee/Irish Cole (and other characters) wear the items of Chumash material culture, thereby creating a physical connection, a “convergence,” with the Chumash even though Cole does not know enough about them to understand why the material expressions of their worldview should protect him.

Owens presents no clear answer to this question but implies that Cole’s journey to recover his cultural identity originates in his sense of feeling “indigenous to the place” that is the Chumash homeland. The phrase belongs to Potawatomi Robin Wall Kimmerer, who points out, “Traditional knowledge is rooted in intimacy with a local landscape where the land itself is the teacher” (101). Cole has been well taught by the land, but he is ignorant of the Chumash lived presence on it, where, Owens suggests in a cross-Indigenous move, his traditional knowledge must originate. His desire to understand “why they had set such things so carefully in the earth,” a metaphor for their efforts to preserve their history, is a desire to understand their cultural identity, rooted in the land.

Owens’s focus on mixed-blood and cross-tribal convergences such as this one has been controversial among some Native writers, but recently Sean Kicummah Teuton has pointed out that “in situating Indigenous literature within narrative histories that intersect, scholars expand and empower Native Studies” (xv). Owens’s exploration of Cole’s connection to the Chumash through their land, stories, and material culture allows him to excavate a seemingly vanished tribe in *The Sharpest Sight*.

The Chumash people and their culture were decimated by the Spanish conquest of the California coast and by the mission system,

but a large portion of their oral tradition lives on, preserved in part by John P. Harrington, who spent decades working with six Chumash informants to record their stories. As Robert O. Gibson notes, “The project eventually produced several thousand pages of notes that today stand as a testimony to the rich religious and cultural traditions of the Chumash Indians” (32). These stories offer insight into recurrent image patterns in the novel—the oak trees, the flooding Salinas River, the bridges, Cole’s leather medicine bag. I have no direct evidence that Owens read these stories, but anyone familiar with his work knows how widely he studied North American Indians and Indigenous California history and about his meticulous research. Unearthing the submerged Chumash stories in *The Sharpest Sight* helps readers understand what was lost or destroyed in California’s colonial past, a history still “buried” today. As Owens says,

I guess one thing I’m working on in most of my writing is the way America has tried, and continues to try, to bury the past, pretending that once it’s over we no longer need to think about it. We live in a world full of buried things, many of them very painful and often horrific, like passing out smallpox-infested blankets to Indians or worse, and until we acknowledge and come to terms with the past we’ll keep believing in a dangerous and deadly kind of innocence, and we’ll keep thinking we can just move on and leave it all behind. (qtd. in Purdy 11–12)

Owens’s young protagonists possess that “deadly kind of innocence” until they explore the past—and indeed, so did the boy Owens and his brother Gene. And yet like Owens and his alter-ego, Cole, we can also find sustenance and a sense of connection to what we dig up out of the past. I contend that Owens, who claims “silence a people’s stories and you erase a culture,” seeks to find a way to let the Chumash influence the “tangled, mixed, interrelated” identities of contemporary Californians (“Mapping” 211).

Owens uses Chumash references to implicate the young protagonists of the novel in his design. In an early comic passage, Hoey and Cole discuss the “Indian stuff” Cole learned in Boy Scouts, including “how to mash up acorns and make flour.” When Hoey asks, “How’d

that acorn stuff taste?," Cole responds, "Like shit" (55). One of the few things California schoolchildren of Owens's generation were taught about the state's original inhabitants was that acorns were a major food source. Exactly Owens's age, I made and ate "acorn mush" in fourth grade in the foothills of the Salinas Valley, where the Chumash lived; the mush tasted so bitter because our teachers did not understand that it needed to cure to get rid of the tannic acid. Acorns appear frequently in Chumash mythology, where what appears to be food is sometimes really feces, a detail that perhaps provokes Cole's comment (see Blackburn 85).

In *The Sharpest Sight*, acorns are linked to the disturbed young heroine, Diana Nemi, who believes that by murdering Attis, she is taking revenge for her sister Jenna's death (she was killed by Attis in a psychotic break) and, perhaps, framing her father. Inheritors of what Owens calls "the systemic land theft [in California] that had made a few white men rich," the Nemi girls fall from grace for the sins of their fathers (101). Owens extends the Christian imagery by representing Diana as a rebellious Eve: her emerging womanhood and sexuality, once innocent and natural, have become perverted (perhaps the acorns are her apple), and she persistently—and rightly—blames her father. A hunter, associated with the moon, darkness, and endings, a grove of trees, and a watery pool, she also seems kin to the Roman goddess Diana, as critics such as Chris LaLonde have pointed out. Owens offers readers guidance in understanding characters such as Diana.

[C]ontemporary Native American authors are requiring that readers cross over the conceptual horizon into an Indian world. In addition to Roman and Greek mythology, today it helps a great deal if a reader knows Choctaw, Chippewa, Navajo, or Blackfoot mythologies in order to read Native American works. . . . To cite an example with which I am intimately familiar, a reader should know something about both European and Choctaw mythologies and cultures to understand what to make of a mixedblood character significantly named Attis McCurtain who, while spinning in a black river, encounters tribal bone pickers in my second novel, *The Sharp-*

est Sight. In a multicultural world both the name Attis and the traditional bone pickers have significance. If we miss one, we miss the whole. (“Beads and Buckskin” 20)

In the Greek mythology Owens expects his readers should know, Attis is a god of vegetation and a sacrificial victim whose death and resurrection near the vernal equinox bring about the renewal of fertility to the earth. His effigy is hung in a huge pine tree, a convergence with Choctaw mythology, where the dead body is put to rest on a scaffold of trees, where it remains until most of the flesh is gone. Near the close of *The Sharpest Sight*, in the springtime, Cole finds Attis’s body deposited by the flooding Salinas River, “cupped . . . as if he had been placed there with loving precision,” in the arms of “four small oaks,” trees prevalent in the California foothills and significant in Chumash mythology (251–52). The river has already stripped the bones of much of the flesh, but, like the Choctaw bone pickers, Cole is necessary to bring Attis’s journey to completion, cleaning the bones and taking them to Mississippi to his Choctaw relatives. (The Greek meaning of Cole is “victory of the people.”) Only then can spring lengthen and the riverbed become again a rich source of life in chapters 53 and 54 (259–61).

To readers familiar with Chumash mythology, Diana, like Attis, is an ironic figure, a murderer, an anti-fertility goddess. In connection to Diana, one of the primary symbols of the life cycle for the Chumash, the acorns, offspring and seeds of the oak, become associated with death and destruction. The Chumash “viewed” the moon to be a single woman, a “cleansing agent over all that was considered ‘dirty,’ . . . [who] affected all other earthly creatures, even the oak,” and Diana appears to be a negative manifestation of her (Hudson and Underhay 75). The “sacred grove” of Owens’s life-denying Diana is made up of the oaks that surround her home, a site of repeated dispossession, once belonging to the Moraleses and before that the homeland of the Chumash. When Diana visits her sister’s grave, “beneath a live oak,” she counteracts the life-resurrecting forces of spring: “In the early summer Diana had gone there to pluck the sprouted acorns from the grave, hating the little curling

roots that split each shell and twisted into the earth like the tails of pigs” (190). Later in the novel she steals Cole’s life-sustaining medicine bag, which connects him to the land and to the power of the Chumash culture.

Death also calls to her from “an ancient white oak” in Diana’s grove when she hears a “great horned owl” and imagines herself soaring with the owl along the river where Attis’s body floats (149). She becomes the voice of death, the role played by owls in Choctaw mythology: as Owens writes, “we feared the owls that brought warnings of death. To hear the owl was to know death was near” (“Shared Blood” 197). Yet looked at from a cross-Indigenous perspective, Diana’s association with owls suggests the duality of her role in the novel. For the Chumash, “[t]he Owl represents clarity of mind and spirit, and wisdom” (Waiya, par. 14) and is often the “personal spirit guide” or “dream helper” of shamans and doctors (Timbrook and Johnson). According to pharmacologist James Adams, who recorded and sang a version of the Chumash owl song, “Yamaqueeday,” used in healing ceremonies, “The owl song is the song of the ‘Antap,’ the [shaman] healers. The owl protects us as it flies at night with its keen vision and keeps danger away. Traditionally, many ‘Antap’ had owl feathers on their clothing or in their hair.”²

As Mundo’s Viejo says, Diana is “not entirely wrong” in the actions she takes (223). Attis’s murder of Jenna was the act of a madman, his spirit destroyed by Vietnam, and Diana’s murder of him allows him to enact the myth of sacrifice and resurrection that will bring the universe back into balance, to heal. The healing capacity of the owl plays another role in her story as well. Diana, in her “deadly innocence,” becomes a victim of violence at the hands of Jessup, the character dedicated to the dark designs at work in the universe, allowing Hoey, waiting outside her house to murder her father, to display his “clarity of mind and spirit, and wisdom.” Instead of resorting to murder, Hoey becomes a healer, building a sweat lodge (used by both Choctaw and Chumash) to heal the girl who killed his son. Significantly, he encourages her to “let go of the things that prevent you from breathing” (242), a key practice of Chumash healing (Adams and Garcia, par. 13). Afterward, sitting with his back against

an “oak tree,” he hears “in the branches of the tree a great horned owl beg[i]n to call in a deep, cautious voice” (243). Here the owl is the voice of Chumash survivance.

Owens also uses natural imagery associated with the Chumash to characterize Mundo, but the Chumash appear more directly, if belatedly, in his story. Like California, whose “Mission” architecture and focus on its Spanish heritage whitewash history, Mundo’s family denies their Indigenous past and erases the presence of those they dispossessed. Owens excavates Mundo’s Chumash ancestry, later writing, “Because I wanted to explore mixed and relationship identity—the liminal landscape of the mixedblood—more fully, I also included in *The Sharpest Sight* a young mestizo named Mundo Morales who discovers in his own blood an inextricable web of inherited identities” (“Motion” 182). Owens often uses the metaphor of the “web” with Mundo, echoing Silko and emphasizing convergence and design.

Although he suspects he is part “Indian,” Mundo does not find out until he finally fulfills his plan to ask the elderly Mondragon sisters “about the threads that linked him to them somehow in a past that was as distant and ambiguous as the winter sky” (143). At the top of the family tree they have maintained for years are three names, the Spanish family patriarch, his “Castillian” wife, and Adelita, a Chumash girl the “patrón took from the mission.” “Moraleses,” they tell him, were “sired by the old patrón on a slave girl” (228). The cross-cultural name Owens chooses, however, suggests that she is more than a victim, for “Adelita” was a legendary *soldadera* in the Mexican Revolution, the subject of a *corrido*, so well known that women of strength and bravery came to be called “adelitas” (Longeaux y Vasquez 445). The sisters have begun to chart a “whole new tree. . . . Adelita’s Indian people are over there, off the paper.” This “new chart . . . goes backwards instead of forwards” (230). In telling his history of California, Owens is also “going backward” to insert the Chumash presence in order to go forward.

When Adelita died after being converted to Catholicism, which prevented her from joining her own people, the dead Moraleses, ashamed of their own blood, “made her an outcast, wandering

between the worlds of dead because no one would claim her" (228). Adelita's story adds a deeper layer of denial and dispossession to the novel—and she needs to be accepted and laid to rest in a story parallel to Attis's. Even Mundo's Viejo had not known about her until he died and took pity on her and "made them take her in" (229). In addition he has tried to track down her dead relatives, but, he says, "You can't get there from here" (230). Because it is the ghostly presence of his Viejo who returns to earth to lead Mundo to his past, we see Adelita as an ongoing, albeit ghostly, presence in his life. Owens gives the Viejo one of the novel's concluding lines: "My grandson has become more comfortable with the dead. . . . He knows at last who he is" (262). Perhaps he knows in his blood, as we will soon see, but his lack of knowledge about the past leaves him with more questions than answers, leaves him "imagining the young Chumash girl, one of his grandmothers, taken by the brutal patrón. Or had it been love? Maybe the great man had rescued her from pain and taken her to his heart? Maybe she had ruled the heart of the man, and his relations had ostracized her in death for that reason" (230-31). What could he know, having been denied information about California's first inhabitants, his "Spanish" past systematically romanticized, culturally appropriated, while its descendants are called "spics" in local bars (208)?³

The work of Chad Allen helps provide an answer. He argues that "rebuilding the ancestor and becoming ancestors for future indigenous generations is a major theme" in American Indian literature (161). "Once identified," he says, "knowledge of specific indigenous bloodlines—ties to specific nations, bands, families, and individuals . . .—can serve as a catalyst for the recuperation of an integrated and successful contemporary American Indian identity" (177-78). Mundo begins this process as the novel ends—"the dark one who bears the name of the world is becoming aware now that his own story is very, very old and complicated," says Luther (244)—but his identity will always require the integration of his Spanish, mixed-blood Mexican, and Chumash blood. Yet even early in the novel Mundo seems to possess what N. Scott Momaday calls "blood memory." (Owens makes an ironic reference to the concept in *Bone Game*

when the postmodern trickster Alex Yazzie says, “We’re going to bring back all those bow-and-arrow skills. Give that memory in the blood a wake-up call, so to speak” [81].) As Allen describes,

What I call the blood/land/memory complex is an expansion of Momaday’s controversial trope blood memory that makes explicit the central role that land plays both in the specific project of defining indigenous minority personal, familial, and communal identities (blood) and in the larger project of reclaiming and reimagining indigenous minority histories (memory). (16)

This is Owens’s project, a relatively straightforward one in his portrayal of Mundo but far more complicated in his treatment of Attis and Cole, as we will see.

Mundo has no knowledge of the Chumash, but from the very beginning of the novel, Owens symbolically reveals his Chumash blood through his behavior. The novel opens shortly after the most significant ceremonial day in the Chumash calendar, the winter solstice (King 71). Mundo finds himself drawn to a bridge over the Salinas River, “swollen at flood-stage, nervous and out of control,” “the thick brown water mov[ing] past, clots of yellow foam and trash in the troughs of waves” (3, 10).

It was an underground river. . . . Most of the year it was nothing, like the people who had come to live along its banks, just a half-mile-wide stretch of sand and brush and scattered trees. But in the winter and early spring, when the rains came pounding down out of the coastal mountains, the river rose out of its bed and became huge, taking everything in its path. Growing up on the edge of the river, he’d come to wait each year for the rising waters, grown to love with a kind of ache the seasonal violence when the river tried to destroy everything within reach. It was a strange, violent backwards, upside-down river. (5–6)

And then, sliding slowly from beneath the bridge, was a face [Attis’s]. The long, black hair washed away from the forehead,

and the eyes were open and fixed. He saw the dark eyes and broad nose and the mouth drawn back over white teeth and the body like one of the drowned logs swinging slowly so that now the feet aimed north. A hand rose in the choppy water as if in casual farewell. And then only the river. (6)

Mundo is repeatedly (at least five times) drawn to bridges over the river, remarking later to his wife, “I keep feeling like there was something that brought me to that bridge right when I was there” (100). Descriptions of the flooding river—and memories of its seasonal tranquility—dominate the novel.

The Chumash mythological past was inhabited by supernatural creatures—some malign, some benign, some celestial (notably the “Sky People,” including the moon deity)—as well as “First People” with both human and animal characteristics. As Travis Hudson and Ernest Underhay note, “For reasons not explained in the myths, a transformation of the cosmic composition took place during antiquity to bring the universe to its present form. It involved a great flood” (40). This flood was the most significant event in the Chumash past. The only survivor, Spotted Woodpecker, was saved when his uncle, Sun, threw him acorns. After the flood, historical time began, and First People became the flora and fauna that made up the Chumash ecosystem. Hudson and Underhay explain further, “Man was also created at this time, and death was instituted” (40). “One of the most interesting [of the First People] is the old woman Momoy, who becomes the narcotic plant *Datura meteloides* at the time of the Flood,” Thomas Blackburn notes (36). Like the Choctaw, the Chumash believed the soul could live separately from the body, especially after death, and the stories describing the soul’s long journey to Šimilaqša (the Land of the Dead) are quite detailed. For our purposes, the key moment is when the soul confronts “a body of water that separates this world from the next, with a bridge that the soul must cross to reach Šimilaqša.” A Chumash informant, María Solares, recounts what happens:

The souls of murderers and poisoners and other evil people never reach the bridge, but are turned to stone from the neck

down. They remain there on the near shore forever, moving their eyes and watching other souls pass. When the pole begins to fall the soul starts quickly across, but when it reaches the middle two huge monsters rise from the water on either side and give a loud cry, attempting to frighten it so that it falls into the water. If the soul belongs to someone who had no [fetish or spirit helper] or who did not know about the old religion and did not drink toloache [datura]—someone who merely lived in ignorance—it falls into the water, and the lower part of the body changes to that of a frog, turtle, snake, or fish. The water is full of these beings, who are thus undergoing punishment. . . .

Once the soul has crossed the bridge, it is safe in Šimilařa.
(qtd. in Blackburn 100)

Tormented by the sight of his dead friend who, a murderer, could not cross the bridge, but determined to stand by him, tempted by the siren cries of the novel's sultry murderess, Diana, and threatened by the dark designs of its truly evil villain, Mundo nevertheless remains footsure and steady. Threatened by death, in Vietnam, the "dead place," and in California, he, unlike Attis, manages to keep his soul intact. He stands in the middle of the bridge, reaching toward the future but also beginning to listen to the voices of the dead, who can tell him about the past. His attraction to the bridge bespeaks his liminal status as a character who must look back to move forward.

Throughout the novel, characters envision the flooding Salinas washing away the corruption of the historical past. Diana thinks in Christian terms, imagining the flood destroying the sinners and their sins: "it would cleanse the earth of her father's foul constructions, of all the works of men, of her own bloody sinew and bone" (189). Yet her visions also echo the role of the Chumash moon deity: "Water was rising over everything, rushing from the bowels of the earth in a fountain until it covered all, cleansing the earth in a whirling flood" (197). The Choctaw recounted a similar story, probably corrupted by the missionaries who preserved it, of a cataclysmic flood that resulted from the "Great Spirit's" anger at the "corrupt

and wicked” (Bushnell 531). No supernatural being causes Owens’s flood: the dammed river cannot follow its natural seasonal course. The sinners, referenced through allusions to Jonathon Edwards, are those who attempt to control nature.

By uniting the flood with a river, Owens emphasizes a convergence between Choctaw and Chumash mythology. While I argue that Mundo’s blood memory draws him to the bridge, he may also have been influenced by a story Attis told him in which a bridge plays a key part, a story very similar to the one recounted by Solares.⁴ Mundo remembers:

Attis began to see the dead, the lonely ghosts . . . wandering the jungle, ghost patrols marching forest trails. . . . And at night, in whispers, he would describe them to Mundo, explaining how the dead never left, how the war was being crowded with the dead who kept fighting in their death-sleep. He’d talked of shadows, and wondered aloud. “There’s a slippery log, Mundo. Most people can get across and find the bright path to a good place, but murderers can’t get their footing. They fight to stay on, but they always slip. They try to hang on, but their hands won’t hold. They fall into a black river full of snakes and dead things, and they go into a whirlpool that takes them around and around until they wash ashore in a terrible, dead place that they can never leave.” (131; for the Choctaw story, see Cushman 167)

Attis’s recounting of this story is another example of blood memory. Cole knows little about Choctaw beliefs—and there is no evidence that Attis knows more—until Onatima and Luther tell him that “every person has two shadows, . . . an inside shadow and an outside one,” but “only in death did one become two” (110, 113). When a murderer dies, his “inside shadow is taken down a black river full of snakes to a place where all the trees are dead and the people cry and suffer all the time” (111), while the outside shadow wanders, haunting others, feeling a “terrible loneliness” (112). After Vietnam, Attis, unlike Mundo, cannot get his footing; a murderer, he knows he cannot cross to the “good place,” symbolized by the innocent prewar

days in the California countryside with Jenna and Cole, when the riverbed is represented as a sunny, generative place. By picking and returning his bones, Cole saves Attis from being one of the dead who cannot leave the place that stole his soul. As Onatima says of Attis's outside shadow, "He's waiting for his bones, and he can't go on until we bring them back" (113). Although I cannot locate any specific Chumash stories about twins, Owens's reading of Momaday and others may have led him to represent Mundo and Attis as the novel's hero twins: best friends who sign up together for a war fought largely by people of color, they are simultaneously joined (by virtue of where they are led by their blood memories) and separated in the novel's first chapter, when Mundo, whose future is represented by his baby, stands on the bridge as Attis passes beneath it.⁵ Readers are encouraged to believe in the novel's ending that Mundo will be able to bridge his past and his future, and his name makes clear that he is the novel's moral center.

But despite the tragic consequences of the Vietnam War, Attis too has served as a bridge between the past and the future, summoned to find evidence of the Chumash presence in California and transmitting fragments of their stories. Pointing out that "Momaday develops 'blood memory' as a trope for continuity across indigenous generations," Allen adds that one "related narrative tactic" is "the re-recognition of the artifacts of indigenous memory" (162). By focusing on the importance of the Chumash artifacts to Attis and Cole, Owens uses blood memory, I suggest, as a trope for continuity across Indigenous national boundaries. As Hoey says, "Us Indians are a mixed-up bunch" (19).

In an interview, Owens commented, "Stories, it seems to me, come out of the earth, and every culture's stories reflect the natural world within which that culture was formed" (Lee 39). Allen makes a similar point when he writes, "I argue that the blood/land/memory complex, like Momaday's trope blood memory, names both the process and the product of the indigenous minority writer situating him- or herself within a particular indigenous family's or nation's 'racial memory' of its relationship with specific lands" (16). Despite a complicated relationship to the state's history, Owens wrote lov-

ingly about the landscape that shaped him. The material items he found as a boy, reflecting the Chumash's relationship to the natural world he so loved, shaped his understanding of story. His California novels examine the natural world and the cultural productions that landscape produced in the past—he returned, for instance, to the story of Joaquin Murietta, the story of a Mexican written in California by a mixed-blood Native author. In digging a cave to unearth the Chumash artifacts, Attis intuitively unearths their story. Later Cole dreams of Attis coming to give him the evidence of a buried past, “opening [his] closed fist to show the stone doll” (68–69). In a passage echoing Momaday’s “Man Made of Words,” Cole thinks, “A long time before men had made the two points in the bag, chipping an idea of who they were into obsidian and flint, and somewhere nearby someone had picked up a white stone and imagined the figure in the bag. And now the old uncle was telling Cole he had an Indian name, a Choctaw name” (75). By trying to understand the expressions of the dead, Cole comes to understand, for the moment, who he is and how everyone is interconnected.

The pouch, its contents, and its symbolism of cross-Indigeneity resurface in *Bone Game*. It protects Onatima as she carries it to California around her neck because Luther thought Cole would need it. Caught up in another story about the violent dispossession of Native peoples, his life out of control, hallucinating on peyote, unable to separate the past from the present, Cole sees Attis, alive and dead, and is tempted by death, wanting to be joined again with him. Uncle Luther, his face “shining with love,” steps into the terrifying vision to offer Cole “the little medicine pouch,” which he puts around his neck (200, 201). Luther believes that Cole has been offered a “vision,” and Cole believes the pouch is central to its meaning: “Throughout the morning he had tried unsuccessfully to piece together the vision, coming always to the pouch and the sensation of being lifted from the earth by his brother’s hand” (204). The imagery echoes Attis’s discovery of the Chumash artifacts in the earth. Cole’s respect for the Chumash’s “idea of who they were,” transmitted to him via Attis, will allow him to bargain and make peace with the troubled spirit of the Ohlone gambler, to escape death. Yet Cole is

aided by yet another cross-tribal convergence.⁶ On his cross-country trek, Luther has helped a Navajo man, who gave him a medicine bag full of pollen. “You best add that to your medicine there,” he says to Cole (208). Had Owens lived to complete the stories only begun in his California novels, there is no telling what might have ended up in that leather pouch. . . . And perhaps Cole, like Owens’s mother, might have returned the Chumash figure and arrowheads to the land that engendered them.

* * *

Although Hoey might think that the Chumash are gone, Cole knows better: he says to Mundo, “You think those Indians are all gone from here? They’re not. You go out in the hills at night some time and listen” (182). The Chumash may have been largely invisible in California during the years Owens grew up there, the 1950s and 1960s, but various Chumash bands have made themselves heard at the turn of the twenty-first century. Beginning in 1978, they mounted a successful protest, including a nine-month occupation, against the building of a natural-gas plant at Point Conception, on the California coast, a site they call Humqaq, the “western gate,” deemed a sacred “pan-Indian” site (Brown 187–92). They have continued to defend Point Conception from development, protesting against the U.S. government’s plans to build a “spaceport” there, on land annexed by Vandenberg Air Force Base, arguing that the site should be protected under the guidelines for the National Register of Historic Places.⁷ In 2003, the Santa Ynez Chumash opened a successful casino in Santa Barbara County, which has met with vocal resistance (see Walsh). On their Web site, the Santa Ynez point out what the casino supports:

Since Native American gaming became a reality for our tribe, we have begun to realize our dream of economic self-sufficiency. The revenues we earn from our Chumash Casino Resort are used to support vital government programs for our tribal members. From improved health care to increased educational opportunities for our tribal members and descendants, the lives of our tribal members have been greatly enhanced. (par. 2)

While the Chumash are willing to improvise to ensure their survival, they also recognize the sustenance of what Allen calls the “artifacts of indigenous memory.” When an anthropological study commissioned a “tomol,” their traditional canoe, the first to be built since mission days, descendants of the Channel Island Chumash borrowed it in 1976 to retrace “ancient trade routes” between the islands, but it was ultimately sold to a museum (Cordero 12). In 1996 they established the Chumash Maritime Association, which built a tomol for the use of the Chumash themselves. The tomol, writes Julie Cordero, “tells us a story of what was in the past and what will be in the future. It requires us to answer the questions of our future as indigenous coastal people” (8). In *The Sharpest Sight*, Owens too insists that California’s past is part of its present—and its future.

NOTES

I would like to thank my co-conspirator and collaborator Susan Bernardin for many conversations about Louis Owens.

1. See, for instance, Maggie Dwyer, Paul Beekman Taylor, and Carolyn Holbert. In *Grave Concerns, Trickster Turns: The Novels of Louis Owens*, Chris LaLonde provides some historical background about the Chumash, but his conclusion about their role in the novel is quite different from mine:

Owens links the Salinas River with Native Americans when he writes of Cole thinking of the Chumash (the original inhabitants of the area of the coast and coast range from around the present-day San Luis Obispo south to below Ventura) as “a people who seemed to have vanished into the pale hills the way the river disappeared into the sand.” The Chumash were “the first major group of California Indians to be discovered by Europeans,” the Spanish explorer Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo first contacting them in 1542, and the mission system in which they were indoctrinated beginning in the eighteenth century broke the circle by severing the people from their culture and exposing them to the diseases that annihilated them. In order to avoid suffering the fate of the Chumash, Cole must work to restore the world to balance by finding his brother’s bones and returning them to Mississippi. (76)

2. Adams wrote this in a September 17, 2007, e-mail to me. For Adams’s

rendition of the song, visit <http://ecam.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/full/neh090/DC2>. Adams has studied Chumash culture and healing for over ten years and learned the owl song from his Chumash teacher and coauthor, Cecilia Garcia.

3. As El Viejo says, Mundo's ancestry is even more complicated, a "mess" including "Irishmen and Italians" and "a Chinese gentleman from Canton [who] planted the seed of Moraleses with interesting eyes in one of your great grandmothers" (230).

4. Many Indigenous peoples share a similar story; Louise Erdrich employs an Ojibway story about crossing a bridge in *Love Medicine*. For a recounting of the myth, see Vizenor (85). In Erdrich, see especially chapters titled "The Bridge" and "Crossing the Water."

5. In "The Ludic Violence of Louis Owens's *The Sharpest Sight*," Taylor argues that Owens "conjoin[s] . . . cultural myths of sacrifice that involve twins, brothers, or warrior pairs, one of whom dies, making the other a 'last survivor'" (218). He sees Attis and Cole as this pair.

6. In yet another example of such cross-tribal convergences, Jacqueline Kilpatrick has explored what she sees as the parallels between Owens's representation of Luther and Onatima and the Blackfoot stories of Old Man and Old Woman, which Owens himself discussed in writings about James Welch's *Winter in the Blood* (58).

7. Their spirited resistance has prompted a backlash from some, who cite an essay by anthropologists Brian Haley and Larry Wilcox to suggest that anthropologists' reconstruction (or indeed imagining) of a unified Chumash culture has unduly influenced self-designated Chumash traditionalists to participate in "an invention of tradition" (761). "Quotes from [their] article have been used by local California newspapers to raise questions in the public's mind about the legitimacy of many Chumash families to participate in legal hearings about ancient Chumash sites" (Anderson, "Haley and Wilcox," par 2.). For more on these controversies, see Web sites maintained by John Anderson: <http://www.angelfire.com/id/newpubs/haleylwil.html> and <http://www.angelfire.com/id/newpubs/spaceport.html>.

WORKS CITED

- Adams, James D., and Cecilia Garcia. "Palliative Care Among Chumash People." <http://ecam.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/full/2/2/143l>. Web.
- Allen, Chadwick. *Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian*

- and *Maori Literary and Activist Texts*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2002. Print.
- Anderson, John. "Haley and Wilcox: The Chumash Controversy Continues." <http://www.angelfire.com/id/newpubs/haleywil.html>. Web.
- . "The Chumash Indians and the California Spaceport." <http://www.angelfire.com/id/newpubs/spaceport.html>. Web.
- Blackburn, Thomas C. *December's Child: A Book of Chumash Oral Narratives*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1975. Print.
- Brown, Michael F. *Who Owns Native Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2003.
- Bushnell, David I. *Myths of the Louisiana Choctaw*. Lancaster, PA: New Era, 1911. Print.
- Cordero, Julie. "'Like I'd Been There Before': The Tomol Brings Her People Back into Balance." *News from Native California: An Inside View of the California Indian World* 2.5 (Spring 1998): 7–12. Print.
- Cushman, H. B. *History of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Natchez Indians*. 1899. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1962. Print.
- Dwyer, Maggie. "The Syncretic Influence: Louis Owens' Use of Autobiography, Ethnology, and Blended Mythologies in *The Sharpest Sight*." *Studies in American Indian Literature* 10.2 (Summer 1998): 43–60. Print.
- Erdrich, Louise. *Love Medicine*. Rev. ed. New York: Harper Perennial, 2009. Print.
- Gibson, Robert O. *The Chumash*. New York: Chelsea, 1991. Print.
- Haley, Brian D., and Larry R. Wilcox. "Anthropology and the Making of Chumash Tradition." *Current Anthropology* 38.5 (December 1997): 761–93. Print.
- Holbert, Carolyn. "'Stranded in the Wasteland': Literary Allusion in *The Sharpest Sight*." *Studies in American Indian Literature* 14.1 (Spring 2002): 1–25. Print.
- Hudson, Travis, and Ernest Underhay. *Crystals in the Sky: An Intellectual Odyssey Involving Chumash Astronomy, Cosmology, and Rock Art*. Santa Barbara, CA: Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, 1978. Print.
- Kilpatrick, Jacquelyn. "Taking Back the Bones: Louis Owens's 'Post'-Colonial Fiction." *Louis Owens: Literary Reflections on His Life and Work*. Ed. Jacquelyn Kilpatrick. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2004. 53–78. Print.
- Kimmerer, Robin Hall. *Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses*. Corvallis: Oregon State UP, 2003. Print.
- King, Chester D. *Evolution of Chumash Society*. New York: Garland, 1990. Print.

- LaLonde, Chris. *Grave Concerns, Trickster Turns: The Novels of Louis Owens*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2002. Print.
- Lee, A. Robert. "Outside Shadow: A Conversation with Louis Owens." *Louis Owens: Literary Reflections on His Life and Work*. Ed. Jacquelyn Kilpatrick. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2004. 20–52. Print.
- Longeaux y Vasquez, Enriqueta. "The Mexican-American Woman." 1970. *Takin' it to the Streets*. Ed. Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines. New York: Oxford, 2003. 445. Print.
- Owens, Louis. "Beads and Buckskin: Reading Authenticity in Native American Literature." *Mixedblood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1998. 12–24. Print.
- . *Bone Game*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1994. Print.
- . "Mapping, Naming, and The Power of Words." *Mixedblood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1998. 205–13. Print.
- . "Motion of Fire and Form." *Mixedblood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1998. 165–83. Print.
- . "Shared Blood." *Mixedblood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1998. 190–204. Print.
- . *The Sharpest Sight*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1992. Print.
- Purdy, John. "Clear Waters: A Conversation with Louis Owens." *Studies in American Indian Literature* 10.2 (Summer 1998): 6–22. Print.
- Santa Ynez Chumash Web site. http://www.santaynezchumash.org/economic_impact.html. Web.
- Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Ceremony*. 1977. New York: Penguin, 1986. Print.
- Taylor, Paul Beekman. "The Ludic Violence of Louis Owens's *The Sharpest Sight*." *Louis Owens: Literary Reflections on His Life and Work*. Ed. Jacquelyn Kilpatrick. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2004. 195–213. Print.
- Teuton, Sean Kicummah. *Red Land, Red Power: Grounding Knowledge in the American Indian Novel*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2008. Print.
- Timbrook, Jan, and John. R. Johnson. "People of the Sky: Birds in Chumash Culture." <http://sbnature.org/research/anthro/chbirds.htm>. Web.
- Vizenor, Gerald. *Summer in the Spring: Ojibwe Lyric Poems and Tribal Stories*. 1965. Minneapolis, MN: Nodin, 1981. Print.
- Waiya, Mati. "Chumash Values." <http://www.wishtooyo.org/projects-educational-chumash-values.htm>. Web.
- Walsh, Thomas J. "Chumash Deal with Respect, Resentment." *Reno Gazette Journal*. Jan. 27, 2003. <http://www.rgj.com/news/stories/html/2003/09/27/52764.php?sp1=rgj&sp2=Special+Reports&sp3=New+Deal&sp5=RGJ.com&sp6=news&sp7=business>. Web.

Concocting Terrorism off the Reservation

Liberal Orientalism in Sherman Alexie's Post-9/11 Fiction

STEVEN SALAITA

Sherman Alexie is arguably the most visible Native writer today (among those, to be more specific, who participate in or are associated with the category of "Native American literature"). A prolific novelist, poet, screenwriter, essayist, and short story writer, Alexie commands large audiences (and honoraria) wherever he reads or speaks, and all of his recent books have become bestsellers. Given his exalted status in the American cultural zeitgeist, Alexie has been the subject of much discussion among literary critics, book reviewers, and cultural commentators, conferring to Alexie both a direct and emblematic role in conversations about American literary multiculturalism. Alexie is something of an exemplar of a new epoch of American literature, then, one in which an ossified national identity has been decentered and replaced with a postmodern internationalism. In this essay I want to explore his representation of Arab and Muslim characters in the framework of what I call liberal Orientalism, which, roughly defined, is a representation of Islam and the East more broadly rooted in the liberal principles of American multiculturalism. Unlike the unmodified Orientalism, liberal Orientalism is not an attempt to invent or oversee but a mode of representation, one in which moral questions arise from a nexus of issues central to the United States' relationship with the Muslim World. It is a form of Orientalism that is used liberally and one that is deeply engaged with the idea of a liberal society.

In Alexie's recent fiction, Muslims are always metonymical of tacit intimations about America as a fundamentally good multicult-

tural experiment whose conflicting mores are problematic but not ruinous, unlike the external violence that has afflicted the United States. Muslims occupy this metonymy without participating in the multicultural experiment; they are too busy supplementing it by inflicting the violence. In this sense, they act as a catalyst for a type of American self-examination that transcends unicultural participation; this self-examination encompasses the anxieties of military and colonial violence as it is deployed in response to forms of terroristic violence that contravene the anguished principles of liberal democracy. Some basic questions allow us to look at the presence of liberal Orientalism in Alexie's post-9/11 fiction: Why are his modern-day terrorists inevitably Ethiopian or Muslim? Why does he confine acts of Muslim terrorism to a fantastical reproduction of the oversexed Muslim male? And why do Muslim taxi drivers in Alexie's work seem to care so much whether or not their passengers are Jewish? I will examine these issues through critique of Alexie's short story collection *Ten Little Indians* and his novel *Flight*.

In her introduction to the edited collection *Shades of the Planet*, which painstakingly explores America's new literary epoch, Wai Chee Dimock suggests that "what we nominate as 'American literature' is simply an effect of that nomination, which is to say, it is epiphenomenal, domain-specific, binding only at one register and extending no farther than that register" (4). *Shades of the Planet* is valuable, but even its comprehensive focus does not account for Native literature, which has a uniquely intricate relationship with the category of American literature, in keeping with the complex affiliations of national identity among Indians. Because North America's Indigenous peoples predate the taxonomical criteria that underline "American literature," they simultaneously complement and complicate the category. Much recent Native literary criticism has attempted to extract Indian art from an "American" orientation in favor of national identifications that cohere with tribal polities (Justice; Weaver, Womack, and Warrior). Alexie amplifies the ambiguities of American national identity: on the one hand, he is frequently held up as an emblem of a new multiethnic America, but on the other hand he reveals the limits of the American celebration of literary multiethnicity.

Alexie's comment in a *MELUS* interview illuminates the basic conflicts of "American literature" as a category, especially in relation to the categories of "Native" and "American." Asked about the critical focus on possible connections between ethnic writing and experience, Alexie responds,

I think it's lazy scholarship. For instance, Gerald Vizenor and I have nothing in common in terms of what we write about, how we write, and how we look at the world. There'd be no reason to link us other than our ethnicity. He has much more in common with experimental writing, like William Gass's *In the Heart of the Heart of the Country*.

I guess the problem is not that I'm labeled as a Native American writer, but that writers like John Updike and Jonathan Franzen aren't labeled as White American writers. They are simply assumed to be the norm, and everybody else is judged in reaction to them. (Nygren 153)

Some critics might not be sympathetic with Alexie's complaint, though. In his fiction, Alexie always provides a named ethnicity for each character, even when the importance of such information is not evident. In his recent fiction, this tactic highlights minority exoticism as a contrast to white majoritarian normativity. Alexie contributes to the adjectival categorizing of American literature even as he resists it. As Ron McFarland puts it, "In most of his writing, sooner or later, Alexie is a 'polemicist,' which is to say, a 'warrior,' and there is nearly always controversy and argument, implied or direct, in his poems and stories" (27).

These philosophical and aesthetic intersections make Alexie such a compelling literary and cultural figure in today's United States. I would like to look more closely at how Alexie's post-9/11 fiction both deifies and decenters American ethnic categories. Instead of raising these questions through analysis of Alexie's Indian themes (so called based on their cultural exposition), I would like to examine Alexie's thematic journeys outside of Indian Country, in those times when he comments on American multiculturalism, something he does frequently. Alexie is fond of deploying favorable characters who are

African American, a community for which he clearly feels an affinity. These characters include celebrities such as Robert Johnson and Muhammad Ali in addition to invented characters who range from transients to white-collar technocrats. In deploying African American characters, Alexie almost always creates an arena for the development of a dialectical interculturalism, which I employ to denote continuous but not necessarily harmonious interchanges around both the idea and practice of ethnicity, as when the protagonist of the short story “What Ever Happened to Frank Snake Church?” meets Russell, “a thin and muscular black man” (206), and the two become mutual “priests and confessors” (208).

The priests and confessors of “What Ever Happened to Frank Snake Church?” seek their absolution in basketball, through which forty-year-old Frank Snake Church attempts to earn redemption for a promising athletic future he abandoned and an adulthood without vigor or excitement. Russell, a personal trainer who learns of Frank’s glory days as a promising basketball talent, coaches Frank back into playing shape, a process that relieves Frank of much of his life’s stress. Frank ends up injuring his knee, however, ending his aspirations to play ball again. The story first appears to be a tragedy, a tale of a downtrodden man who works hard to re-achieve a dream that destiny ruined for him only to have destiny interfere ruthlessly again. In reality, basketball is only a metonym for Frank’s and Russell’s existential struggles with tragedy and meaning. The story is filled with religious language—Russell’s “scrapbook was his bible, and every one of his clients was a prophet” (207)—and has a character named Preacher, an African American playground legend who badgers Frank during a game of HORSE, during which both players goad one another with racial taunts.

There is much of symbolic value in the story, but I highlight it to illustrate how Alexie attempts to create community on the margins of American life by emphasizing the irony of race as something that is permanent but mutable. Alexie is adept at creating characters that never quite fit into tidy niches of American life, even if they are rooted in particular cultural practices or traditions. “What Ever Happened to Frank Snake Church?” is largely allegorical, but the

constant references to race ground it in a starkly realistic world that illuminates interpersonal conflict and disparate power structures. Frank, Russell, and Preacher share not merely their legal and temporal status as ethnic minorities but also a philosophical and spiritual outlook that is ardently trained on communal rather than on individual well-being. They gravitate toward one another because of a common need for an escape from the anxieties of an individualistic American modernity. The interpellation of loneliness, desire, and frustration between Indian and black characters, in this story and others, usually entails a critique of the alienation inherent in a capitalistic society, in which ethnic minorities become surplus to a technocratic economy and a disaggregated social structure. The presence of numerous African American characters in Alexie's fiction is generally an act of reverence, a way for Alexie to acknowledge the continued effects of historical injustices.

This intersection is where Alexie is often at his funniest and most luminous, but least ambiguous, for Alexie frequently moves beyond Indian-white and black-Indian relations. His exploration of a multiethnic United States is topical, compelling readers to think about a variety of moral and political questions about culture and terrorism. This particular motif, the one focused on the role of terrorism in the evolution of a multiethnic American body politic, produces what I call liberal Orientalism. Given the complex history of the term *Orientalism*, which includes its progression from an area of study to a methodological critique and finally to an accusation that connotes anti-Arab racism or Islamophobia, I would like to emphasize the adjective *liberal*, although it too is weighed down with irresolvable complexity. I mean a few things at once with the phrase *liberal Orientalism*, all of them indicative of a thematic dynamic that Alexie not only inhabits but also helped create.

Liberal Orientalism conjoins two discursive traditions that are central to the moral suppositions of Alexie's fiction. The first tradition is that of a celebratory multiculturalism rooted in liberal discourses of American modernity. Noting ominously that "Multicultural USA reigns over all," E. San Juan Jr. argues that in multiculturalist discourses "all the margins, the absent Others, are redeemed

in a sanitized, uniform space where cultural differences dissolve or are sorted out into their proper niches in the ranking of national values and priorities” (6). The second tradition arises from the tendency to exoticize and hypostasize Eastern subjects, usually male, that broadly corresponds with Edward Said’s use of the term *Orientalism*. After 9/11, the classical Orientalists—including, prominently, Said’s main nemesis, Bernard Lewis—took up analysis of terrorism, consigning its ostensibly senseless violence to the premodern Arab and Muslim. As Mahmood Mamdani puts it, “The modern sensibility is not horrified by pervasive violence. The world wars are proof enough of this. What horrifies our modern sensibility is violence that appears senseless, that cannot be justified by progress” (4).

Liberal Orientalism, then, contextualizes Muslim terrorism with a multiculturalist dialectic. It upholds many of the assumptions underlying discussion of Muslim terrorism while actualizing a niche for Muslims in the American polity. It thus creates a tension between its inclusive self-image and the exclusivist structures innate to its fundamental logic. The exploration of a violence that is named as Muslim necessitates a discursive framework that tacitly upholds taxonomies of normativity and belonging in the United States. Liberal Orientalism complicates this pattern by outwardly rejecting those taxonomies and instead couching discussion of Muslims within liberal notions of multicultural progress. Here the adjective *liberal*, as it does when modifying *Orientalism*, highlights an intellectual tradition of cosmopolitan modernity more than it does an orientation on the American political spectrum. The cosmopolitanism celebrates American multiethnicity without challenging the capitalist structures of modernity in which ethnicity is both commodified and marginalized as physical and cultural surplus. Because this intellectual tradition represents a hierarchy, not an assemblage, Muslims do not yet participate in it at the status of agent. It is a tradition in which Orientalism can be performed liberally and with a sheen of enlightened contestation that in actuality strengthens Orientalist reckonings among the empire’s liberals.

Alexie’s uses of liberal Orientalism are especially interesting given his position as an ardent critic of the American dispossession of

Natives, a position that Alexie interjects into his fiction both explicitly and subtly. While his thematic commitments to various Native politics are sometimes criticized, the strength of Alexie's desire to dislodge Indians from a subordinated position within multicultural discourses is difficult to ignore. *Reservation Blues*, for instance, contains a humorous but unmistakably biting representation of liberal white yearnings for authentic immersions into multiethnicity through the characters Betty and Veronica, young women who seek spiritual immersions into the New Age image of authentic Indians. It is Alexie's portrayal of non-Native characters within a multiethnic American modernity that illuminates his engagement with liberal Orientalism. Alexie has explored terrorism more than once, deploying Muslim characters—that is, characters he names specifically as Muslim—in the service of a social analysis that explores the moral implications of terrorism as a form of violence and of the forms of violence that contextualize terrorism. The polemics of Alexie's fiction set the celebrations of American multiethnicity against the more complicated realities of an implicitly violent modernity. His characters, though, are only nominally hypothetical. Like Sacha Baron Cohen does with his Third World everyman Borat, Alexie outfits his terrorists with an Islamic origin and cultural orientation.

In *Ten Little Indians*, for instance, two stories use terrorism to foreground moral valuations in the framework of multiculturalism. In "Flight Patterns," mixed-blood Spokane and midlevel executive William goes to the airport early in the morning in a taxi driven by Fekadu, an Ethiopian Muslim who likes to tell cryptic stories. William shares many of his furtive prejudices with readers, an act of contrition in addition to forthrightness. During his travels, "William always scanned the airports and airplanes for little brown guys who reeked of fundamentalism. That meant William was equally afraid of Osama bin Laden and Jerry Falwell wearing the last vestiges of a summer tan" (107–08). Being himself "a little brown guy," William "understood why people were afraid of him, a brown-skinned man with dark hair and eyes. If Norwegian terrorists had exploded the World Trade Center, then blue-eyed blonds would be viewed with more suspicion. Or so he hoped" (108).

Here William inscribes himself in a consciously multicultural space. His brownness signifies an affinity with American norms even as it relegates him to an unsavory taxonomy. The body of the terrorist preoccupies William more than the ideology of terrorism: Jerry Falwell's fundamentalism is less threatening without a darkening of his skin. Alexie depicts the conjoining of ethnic bodies with the ideology of terrorism as cheeky and ironic, but such a move is arguably sincere in its moral deliberation. William is comforted by his assumption that American racial profiling is not punitive but practical. (It was brown people who hijacked the planes on 9/11, after all.) That assumption has a limit, though, encapsulated in the less certain, appended consideration "Or so he hoped." Although he appears unwilling to admit it—perhaps he is not fully aware of it—William could point to numerous examples of terrorism committed by blue-eyed blonds that did not result in any special profiling. By not begrudging those who would profile him, then, William immerses himself into a covenant that does not buttress white normativity but reinvents a multiethnic national identity predicated on non-Muslim citizenship. This covenant relies on convivial acceptance of difference vis-à-vis its identification of forms of extremism that do not cohere with America's peculiar modernity. In this way, Osama bin Laden and Jerry Falwell (with the requisite tan) are binarized against one another on opposite ends of America's political fringe and thus strangely depoliticized as competing, irrational fanatics who share more in common than either would probably care to admit. By rejecting both ends of the binary, William, an Indigenous person, can claim access to normative American-ness better than his brown-skinned cohorts, the Muslims.

Alexie deploys terrorism more directly in "Can I Get a Witness?" The story begins with its unnamed woman narrator lunching at Good Food, "a postcolonial wonder house that served Japanese teriyaki, Polish sausage sandwiches, Italian American pizza, and Mexican and Creole rice and beans" (69). Good Food provides the story with a philosophical tone that will later be crucial. Most of the story focuses on the narrator's existential discussion with a stranger amid bizarre circumstances. That discussion challenges many of

the United States' social commonplaces about war and terrorism, particularly the ethical complacency that arises through uncritical acceptance of state definitions of terrorism, along with its steadfast decontextualization. After the unnamed protagonist dines while contemplating existential questions, she rises to leave the restaurant only to see a "small and dark man" walk inside, shout in "a foreign language," and detonate a bomb (71). In the chaos of the aftermath, the protagonist awakes from her unconsciousness and makes her way down the street, running into a random white man who asks if she needs assistance. She and the man subsequently end up deep in conversation about personal and political issues.

The protagonist and her unnamed male companion speak cryptically about their personal lives before discussing 9/11, a subject that the postcolonial terrorist attack inevitably evokes. When the protagonist declares, "I don't think everybody who died in the towers was innocent," she is met by a resistance to her obvious but controversial point: "It's tough to be open-minded about this stuff" (89). Later, the man realizes that terrorism is a powerful force but not a threat greater than his own predilections: "Wasn't he more dangerous to the people who loved him than any terrorist could ever be?" (95). The story asks readers to discover a new understanding of violence, one that is not confined to spectacular forms of terrorism (as defined by corporate media), a distinct category because it is supposed to be both irrational and extranational. The idea of the implicitly violent technocrat recalls Hannah Arendt's phrase "the banality of evil," from *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, as well as Ward Churchill's infamous pronouncement that the workers in the twin towers on 9/11 were "little Eichmanns." The protagonist of "Can I Get a Witness?" is not so dramatic, but her point is to acknowledge the uncomfortable truth that violence is most often banal, not spectacular, and that all humans are in some way complicit in its existence. In this formulation, violence becomes less conspicuous, something interpersonal, dispersed through social systems that imagine themselves peaceable, and integral to American life, as with, for example, the business of capitalism, exemplified by the unnamed male's production of a video game in which killing civilians earns points.

Yet even as Alexie carefully disentangles perceptions of violence from its pornographic expressions like terrorism, he nevertheless limits it to typical significations. The terrorist who blows up the restaurant “would eventually be identified as a Syrian American born in Seattle and raised in upper-class comfort by his Muslim father and Catholic mother” (72). His Muslim ethnicity does not foreground his violent act, which is never explained: “The investigators would conclude the bomber was either the most careful, eccentric, and invisible terrorist of all time, or an unsolvable mystery” (72). Alexie does two important things here: he decontextualizes terrorism from political and historical phenomena, and he reinforces a causal link between ethnicity and violence, in this case Muslims with irrational bloodshed. While this double move seems contradictory, in the framework of Alexie’s disaggregated multiculturalism it is in fact archetypal. Naming the apolitical terrorist as a Muslim—he is actually Catholic on his mother’s side, but nobody identifies him as “Christian” or “half-Christian”—embodies a liberal Orientalist approach in which guilt and moral responsibility based on Muslim identification are implied but never endorsed.

Alexie skillfully incorporates continual doubt into the story, making it nearly impossible to glean from it a specific type of moral reckoning. The suicide bomber supported both Israelis and Palestinians, was a moderate Democrat, and seemed to harbor no ill-will toward the United States. These attitudes do not represent a dissolution of binaries as much as they do an embrace of them, an awareness of the need to encompass multitudes rather than succumbing to a narrow existence. The suicide bomber is not the only character who defies expectation. The two unnamed conversationalists sometimes quickly succumb to their base impulses but then seem to impulsively reject the simplistic reasoning underlying them. The male, for example, begins worrying about the female’s “brown skin and brown eyes,” which recalls William’s dilemma in “Flight Patterns,” before realizing, “I’m a racist who has watched too many Stallone flicks and too much Bill O’Reilly” (77). This shift in consciousness visualizes racism as a rightwing bromide or a fantastical simulacrum. Alexie’s characters examine racism without entering into any

concrete historicization, an act that influences the paradoxes that both deify and deconstruct Orientalism in his recent fiction. Here, as elsewhere, Alexie's characters sublimate a crude conflation of terrorism and Islam to a type of multiculturalist liberalism that questions but does not expunge its cross-racial assumptions.

Alexie's *Flight* is an exemplary novel of post-9/11 liberal Orientalism, not only because of its paradoxical content but also because Alexie speaks of the novel as a meditation on the morality of different types of violence. He has noted that "[w]hether you're left or right, Christian, Jewish or Muslim, everyone's ideas about the [Sept. 11 attackers] are really big. They were freedom fighters, or sociopaths" (Giese, par. 3). Despite its enormous presence in the American cultural and political imagination, 9/11 is a germane but ultimately superficial demarcation point for the theorization of a literary epoch. Not only does such a move ask readers and critics to envision literature in linear rather than synchronic time, but it also falsely presupposes the existence of new thematic dynamics that in fact existed in American writing well before 9/11. With Alexie, for example, his preferred motifs did not change after 9/11; they merely shifted into a more topical geography, one in which Muslims and terrorism have become central to conversations about race and ethnicity in the United States. Muslims and terrorism have not merely entered into those conversations; the multicultural dynamic itself has shifted to accommodate a proliferation of liberal Orientalism.

The novel follows the time-traveling exploits of its main character, Zits (whose real name turns out to be Michael), a teenage delinquent of Native origin who has lived in abusive foster homes throughout his life. In one of his prison stints, Zits encounters an unusually kind white person, Justice, who appears to have supernatural powers. Justice convinces an impressionable Zits to go on a shooting rampage in a bank lobby. At the moment that Zits is about to pull the trigger he leaves his body and undertakes a series of time travels that lead him to crucial understandings of his past and the makings of modern American society. He takes on various personas: a racist FBI agent attempting to crush a group of Indian activists that resembles the American Indian Movement; an Indian

child during the 1876 Battle of Little Big Horn; an elderly soldier of the Seventh Cavalry, perpetrators of the Wounded Knee massacre; an airline pilot named Jimmy who unwittingly trains as a pilot an Ethiopian Muslim, Abbad, who eventually commits some act of terrorism; and his homeless, foul-mouthed father. The scene with Jimmy and Abbad stands out because it is the only one in the story that does not deal with an Indian motif or Indian-white interaction. This is not to say that the scene is anomalous; it is consistent with the rest of the book in that it examines belonging, betrayal, and the morality of violence. Yet by deploying the scene Alexie situates himself firmly in a debate about 9/11 that has preoccupied Americans of all backgrounds ever since the event occurred.

Flight is especially apropos of post-9/11 America in relation to Abbad, the Ethiopian Muslim flight student who commits an act of terrorism:

Alexie thought about organizing the entire book around the air-travel teacher, whose appearance in a documentary fascinated the author. “He started crying—I forget which of the terrorists he taught—but he said, ‘He and I were friends; he would come to my apartment and drink. Some nights he’d get too drunk to go home, so he’d sleep on my couch,’” Alexie recalls. “In the midst of this epic tragic event, there was this smaller, more human betrayal, and it seemed to me that nobody has really talked about the way those terrorists betrayed friends.” (Smith, par. 5)

The terrorist in question, Abbad, is described as “an Ethiopian, a Muslim” (110), and arises as a remembered figure in the opaque memory of Jimmy, a flight instructor whose body the time-traveling protagonist, Zits, has come to inhabit. Abbad first appears to be gentle and friendly—“Abbad is a beautiful man. Small and dark and beautiful” (110)—but soon exhibits some worrisome behavior. He promptly begins needling Jimmy: “When I came to your door, when I said, *I want to be a pilot*, you immediately thought of September eleventh. You immediately thought I was another crazy terrorist who wanted to learn how to fly planes into skyscrapers” (110). Jimmy

denies this charge, noting that he and Abbad became close friends, but it turns out his denial is unnecessary: Abbad indeed committed an act of terrorism, the reason he enrolled in flight school in the first place.

One of the notable features of this section of *Flight* is how out of place it seems in relation to Zits's other experiences in time travel. Alexie discards the novel's oblique Indian motifs in favor of an ethical analysis of violence and racial profiling in post-9/11 America. Such themes correspond with other elements of Zits's journey into the past, but Abbad's story emphasizes a geopolitical event that has been conceptualized as an exceptional American moment in history. By evoking this history in the context of an anguished white American struggling with the guilt of his imagined complicity, Alexie reinforces the sanctification of American suffering at the hands of Muslim terrorists, but he simultaneously endeavors to undermine the causal fusion of Islam and terrorism. He accomplishes this seemingly irreconcilable move by highlighting anti-Arab racism and Islamophobia even as he outfits his Muslim characters, in this case Abbad, with clichéd attitudes that make them sound like burlesque extremists. Abbad, for instance, recounts having a gun pulled on him before being called a "sand nigger," but he undermines his sympathetic position by speaking in the bromides of a media terrorist, uttering, "You Americans love capitalism so much" (111), and, "Ah, you Americans, you let your wives control your destiny. That is not our way" (113). Despite the fact that Abbad promptly receives a cell phone call from his wife that humorously discredits his claim about American male obeisance, he is drawing from a particular rhetorical formulation that identifies a type of invented Muslim disgruntlement from which Alexie generates currency for the moral quandaries he introduces.

This rhetorical formulation includes some of the male protagonist's musings in "Can I Get a Witness?" At one point, he wonders,

didn't these self-martyring terrorists believe they would be rewarded with seventy-two virgins in heaven? Political posturing aside, didn't a few thousand stupid men believe terror-

ism was another way to get laid? What would happen if the United States offered seventy-three virgins to each terrorist if he abstained from violence? (74)

This formulation, humorous on its face but philosophically serious, conjures Gargi Bhattacharyya's observation "that there is something deeply and troublingly sexualised about the representation and conduct of the War on Terror and that this sexualisation tells us something about the racialisation of contemporary international relations" (12). Alexie enters into this paradigm through the discourse of the male character, for that character contemplates male Muslim sexual motivation without any facetiousness, accompanied by the belief that terrorism is an apolitical phenomenon performed by men of lustful stupidity.

Other notable formulations exist. In "Flight Patterns," William notes that "[b]ecause they were so often Muslim, taxi drivers all over the world had often asked [him] if he was Jewish" (114). Although Alexie adeptly complicates these notions, exposing them to be stereotypes, William upholds the negative assumptions that give rise to those stereotypes because he does not render his observation a hypothetical. Alexie supplies his secondary characters with ethnic and religious identities because he needs them to actually be Muslim; otherwise, his readers might fail to recognize a set of distinct moral imperatives that congregate specifically around Muslims and the United States, in particular discourses about multiculturalism, minority assimilation, and religious violence.

Alexie transcends the tropes of culture and religion and connects terrorism to class and gender, a move that interjects nuance into his fiction but nevertheless reinforces its liberal Orientalism. The terrorist in "Can I Get a Witness?" was upper class and well educated; in *Flight*, Abbad can afford private flying lessons and came to the United States not as a laborer but to acquire a degree in mechanical engineering. All of the terrorists in Alexie's fiction, hypothetical or real, are male, reflecting what Bhattacharyya calls "the objectification and scrutiny of the male Muslim body" (87). Because this move is in keeping with the demographics of real-life terrorists, people of

different cultural backgrounds who tend to be male, it recapitulates the narrative mythologies of masculine aggression to which Bhat-tacharyya refers. The male Muslim terrorist of Alexie's fiction was first created in corporate news broadcasts. Alexie's representation of Muslim terrorism is considerably more complex than those arising from corporate and state discourses, but certain base assumptions are common to both, particularly the requisite elements of economic success and male belligerence. In *Flight*, Abbad is both over-sexed and misogynistic, chiding (the likewise oversexed) Jimmy for not wearing "big" pants and spending more time at home with his "beautiful wife" (112); Abbad's sexist obstinacy functions in opposition to the ostensibly more enlightened Jimmy, who proclaims, "You might think you control your women, but it's always the other way around. Muslim women just have to be craftier. They can't say they're in charge, but they're in charge" (114). Both characters are flawed, but Abbad's violent proclivities lead him to perform his flaws in unconscionable ways, such as taking his wife and child on the airplane he used to kill other innocent people. Jimmy, cheating ways and all, is nevertheless rooted in modernity. Abbad exists outside of any normative American space in order to expose the limits of modernity.

Here *Flight* invokes a complex nexus of social issues through abstruse political dialogue. Jimmy recalls a conception of modernity in which male control of women is frequently conceptualized as a barbaric southern ritual, but he inscribes a sexist racism into that modernity by limiting Muslim women to a sort of clandestine empowerment that apparently belies Western women's unconfined agency. And by betraying Jimmy's inherent trust, Abbad is shown to have no sense of personal responsibility to close friends, only to the nebulous ideology that inspired his act of terrorism. Because that act was suicidal, Abbad's body—identified repeatedly as brown and Muslim—subsumes an Islamic propensity for destruction, one whose mindlessness always threatens to betray the sort of decorous American credulity that Jimmy embodies. Abbad thus becomes a political metonym that is necessary for Jimmy to sustain a scrupulous conscience despite his personal transgressions. Abbad is not

only a dreamscape in Jimmy's guilty imagination; he is also Jimmy's unacknowledged analogue, a foil whose irrational evil highlights Jimmy's own failings. It is the difference of their failings—one political, the other personal—that activates a sort of liberal Orientalism in which Islam underlies Abbad's failings whereas Jimmy's failings are resolutely personal. Jimmy's anguish is twofold: he has done his wife wrong and has therefore lost her trust; simultaneously he has been too trusting by teaching a would-be terrorist how to fly. He embodies the complexities of American life after 9/11.

This nexus of social issues reinforces Alexie's seminal role in modern American literature as somebody who complicates simple prescriptions of national identity. Yet Alexie's fiction is tacitly reliant on the normative categories he challenges in terms of aesthetics, politics, and marketing. He may have little in common aesthetically with Gerald Vizenor (though they are similar in ways that Alexie ignores), but they share something important in common: both writers, purposefully or not, have played a central role in comprising a tradition of Native American literature. In so doing, both of them, but Alexie especially, highlight issues of ethnicity in America. One of Alexie's greatest strengths as a fiction writer, in fact, is his ability to satirize racial commonplaces while illuminating the many ways that adherence to cultural traditions is an integral part of human experience.

Alexie is not immune to the recapitulation of commonplaces, however, an ailment that perhaps affects all writers (and, alas, critics). His post-9/11 fiction renders Natives customary to American national identity by evoking the specter of Islamic terrorism as a standard marker of inalterable difference. Alexie complicates this simplistic formula by retaining a type of Indigenous autonomy through nominal comparison of Indians with brown-skinned Muslims, but those comparisons never allow Muslims into the same philosophical or national polity, and so he ultimately leaves that formula fundamentally intact. Nor is his tacit reliance on a liberal Orientalist imaginary limited to Muslims. The cover of *Flight* illustrates one way that an adherence to ethnic marketing reproduces fixed representational dialectics. It shows an image of a multicol-

ored target with a silhouette of presumably the main character, Zits, wearing baggy pants and holding up two of the automatic weapons representing the violence he ultimately rejects in the novel. The silhouette looks like a portrait of an archetypal young man engaged in thuggery. Yet a solitary feather protrudes from his head.

This seemingly innocuous image tells us interesting things about the marketing of the novel. First of all, it identifies the book as a “Native American” novel, which provides it a particular appeal to its largely middle- to upper-class and liberal target audience (from the standpoint of its publisher, at least)—an appeal that satisfies a set of multicultural imperatives that underline the mores of American modernity. A feather may not actually portend Native identity, but in the corporate literary marketplace it clearly identifies a Native taxonomy. The feather therefore implicates the novel in the same kind of paradigmatic ethnic signification that Alexie’s literary themes so effectively contest. It is an image similar to the satirical lone feather adorning David Treuer’s vividly anti-essentialist polemic, *Native American Literature: A User’s Manual*, a book that offers stinging criticism of Alexie, claiming that “Alexie isn’t interested in portraying a movement or change as much as he is interested in recreating or illuminating a condition” (166). This condition subsists in a particular discourse of American multiculturalism in which diversity and tolerance are highly valued by readers and critics, but primarily as ingress to the nationalistic sympathies celebrations of Americana impel us to uphold.

E. San Juan Jr.’s identification of national values and priorities as essential to the creation of a “sanitized space” is relevant to Treuer’s argument and to the issue of Alexie’s liberal Orientalism more broadly. I do not raise this point to claim that Alexie’s fiction creates or enters into a sanitized space; rather, I would like to point out that, by constantly naming ethnicity in order to initiate textual conflict, Alexie supplements and sometimes emphasizes a mythos of cultural interplay that sanitizes multiculturalism as a national characteristic rather than employing it to destabilize nationalism. Such a move is particularly noteworthy vis-à-vis Alexie’s Muslim characters, who exist mainly to contextualize moral debates about topical American

phenomena like terrorism and racism. Alexie's exploration of multiethnicity, then, relies on Muslims without really including them. This literary feature does not contravene Alexie's deployment of Indian symbology, which looks drastically different than his Muslim thematic, but is in fact similar philosophically: both Indians and Muslims in Alexie's fiction question sociopolitical orthodoxies, but both rely on orthodox assumptions about the limits of intercultural engagement—those assumptions finally concede the existence of inalterable difference among humans.

That concession is one of the hallmarks of liberal Orientalism, an attitude that extols difference but only in a limited context of deference to nationalist sensibilities. (These nationalist sensibilities are not the same as military nationalism or ethnonationalism; rather, it is a nationalism of liberal American exuberance, a celebration of exceptionalism, a panegyric of secular modernity.) Alexie certainly is not the only novelist today who utilizes liberal Orientalism (John Updike, David Grossman, V. S. Naipaul, and Jonathan Safran Foer come to mind), but he is probably its most talented and complicated purveyor. Alexie's special talent is his ability to poke fun at the ideological commonplaces about race and ethnicity that he simultaneously relies on and with which readers can identify. Alexie's characters are rarely exotic, with one exception: the Muslims who assume a caricatured existence in order to catalyze moral conversations about violence in America's past and present.

In *Flight*, one of the most interesting things about Abbad is his sudden and ahistorical presence. Abbad is all-too-human in mundane ways, which promises an ideology of cultural transcendence: he teases his friends, sometimes harshly; he seeks the company of others; he smiles perpetually; he annoys his spouse by forgetting to run simple errands. But Abbad is a terrorist, a cold, sociopathic killer whose inner barbarism defies his external ordinariness. He can never truly be part of sustainable human kinship, which is why he merely occupies an evanescent dreamscape. Abbad, unlike Jimmy, is a man with no past, an actor whose politics are expressed in bromides, a happy person whose hatred supersedes any propensity for benevolence. His apparent contradictions actually foreground a

character that was already invented by nationalistic fantasies well before Alexie deployed him. In this singular character, the scope of Alexie's liberal Orientalism is lucidly available: Abbad is like we are, but ultimately he is not one of us. He is afflicted with something unimaginably beyond our national character.

Alexie's representations of race, articulated through characters with highly divergent personalities and worldviews, make his fiction difficult to harness into a specific critical framework. It would be dubious, then, to attempt to limit him to what I deem liberal Orientalism. It is wiser instead to highlight how liberal Orientalism affects his fiction. Alexie sometimes deploys characters who illuminate and in some way challenge liberal Orientalism, and at other times he appears to reproduce it himself, though it is impossible (and unnecessary) to try to figure out when and why such a reproduction is intentional. Ultimately, liberal Orientalism is a matter of representation, of approaching Arabs and Muslims—or, more broadly, a perplexing East—as humans or barbarians, in either case with the consequence of interpellating into plot and theme a distinctly American moral or existential struggle through their presence. Instances of liberal Orientalism in literature need not be judged as favorable or damning to Arabs and Muslims, for to identify it is to enter into a spectacle of representation, wherein the Arab and Muslim assume an allegorical or antagonistic existence for the sake of American self-reflection. The uses of liberal Orientalism, however, tell us much more about American perceptions of Islam than they do about the presence of actual Muslims who also happen to be American.

WORKS CITED

- Alexie, Sherman. *Flight*. New York: Grove, 2007. Print.
- . *Ten Little Indians*. New York: Grove, 2003. Print.
- Arendt, Hannah. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York: Penguin, 2006. Print.
- Bhattacharyya, Gargi. *Dangerous Brown Men*. London: Zed, 2008. Print.
- Churchill, Ward. "Some People Push Back": On the Justice of Roosting Chickens." *Pockets of Resistance*, Sept. 12, 2001. Print.

- Dimock, Wai Chee. "Introduction: Planet and America, Set and Subset." *Shades of the Planet*. Ed. Wai Chee Dimock and Lawrence Buell. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2007. 1–16. Print.
- Giese, Rachel. "Sherman Alexie's Soul-Searching New Novel." *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation* June 19, 2007. Mar. 6, 2008. <http://www.cbc.ca/arts/books/alexie.html>. Web.
- Justice, Daniel Heath. *Our Fires Survive the Storm*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2006. Print.
- Mamdani, Mahmood. *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*. New York: Pantheon, 2002. Print.
- McFarland, Ron. "Sherman Alexie's Polemical Stories." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 9.4 (1997): 27–38. Print.
- Nygren, Asa. "A World of Story-Smoke: A Conversation with Sherman Alexie." *MELUS* 30.4 (2005): 149–69. Print.
- San Juan, E., Jr. *Racism and Cultural Studies*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2002. Print.
- Smith, Rod. "The Metamorphosis." *Time Out New York* Mar. 29–Apr. 4, 2007. Mar. 6, 2008. <http://www.timeout.com/newyork/articles/books/1773/the-metamorphoses>. Web.
- Treuer, David. *Native American Literature: A User's Manual*. Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf, 2006. Print.
- Weaver, Jace, Craig Womack, and Robert Warrior. *American Indian Literary Nationalism*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2006. Print.

Publishing Sámi Literature—from Christian Translations to Sámi Publishing Houses

KIRSTI PALTTO

Edited and translated by Rauna Kuokkanen

Publishing in the Sámi languages has always been difficult. The Sámi are currently spread across four countries, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. There are nine different Sámi languages, some of them with only a few speakers. The Sámi publishing industry is entirely dependent on government funding as we do not have our own funds nor is there a system of independent foundations as is the case, for example, in North America. Although the Sámi language has been a language of instruction at some schools in the Sámi area for a couple of decades, the number of Sámi readers remains very small. Due to the various Nordic assimilation policies that were particularly harsh in the early twentieth century, many Sámi have lost their mother tongue, and many of those who retained the language did not learn to read Sámi at school. One would expect national governments to amend the situation by arranging Sámi literacy courses for adults during their workdays. These courses would also offer much-needed spaces for learning to read Sámi literature. However, this has not proved to be the case.

For every Sámi word I have published, I have been forced to beg for money from the representatives of the government. Today, with the establishment of the Sámi parliaments, much of the funding for the Sámi people is now funneled through these bodies.¹ However, especially in Finland, the annual allocation of funds is way below what is required to adequately run Sámi affairs and advance “Sámi cultural autonomy.” Despite the Sámi Cultural Autonomy Act, the

amount allocated annually to various projects and initiatives related to Sámi culture, including Sámi literature, is a fraction of the total amount of the received applications.² As a result, the situation of the Sámi language and culture continues to worsen. Establishing strong foundations with adequate resources is next to impossible because of a consistent lack of funds. Moreover, the Sámi area is sparsely populated, and the distances between communities are long. Communicating with one another is not as easy as it is in urban areas. The distance from urban centers also means that everything is more expensive in the North, which also increases the need for additional funds. Demands for adequate, systematic funding are easily justifiable if one recalls how the nation-states have been exploiting natural resources on Sámi territory for decades, if not centuries. This exploitation has also reduced our cultural, linguistic, and spiritual strength and capacity to the situation in which we find ourselves today.

THE FOUNDATION OF SÁMI LITERATURE

Yoiking, storytelling, and oral tradition in general form the roots of written Sámi literature. Yoiking, a Sámi way of expressing oneself and communicating by means of chanting and singing, has traditionally been important among the Sámi. Yoiking contains Sámi views of themselves: who they are, where they are from, and why Sámiland belongs to the Sámi. Christian missionaries were against yoiking especially when it was associated with Sámi spirituality and *noaidit* or shamans who were the healers and spiritual leaders of the Sámi. When missionaries attacked the Sámi worldview and social order and sought to outlaw them, the Sámi invented ways to maintain their spirituality. For instance, they created yoiks that mocked and criticized *noaidit* while continuing the practice in secret. The representatives of the church accepted these kind of yoiks but did not understand their double meaning (see Gaski). Yoiking remained hidden after being banned by the church as sinning and the language of the devil. The yoik tradition prevailed particularly where the presence of church representatives was lower, such as in the forest. Men yoiked, for example, while working with the reindeer up

in the mountains (Skaltje). Yoiking continues to be a way of communication even though it may not always contain many words. In addition to words, communication takes place with voice and body language. The use of voice is a very important way in which one can describe and present almost anything.

Like yoiking, Sámi oral tradition is linked with the Sámi perception of the world as being replete with various spirits and guardian figures. Stories and reminiscing have been ways of presenting Sámi history, but they have also had the function of building the future. As with many other Indigenous peoples, the Sámi have also had specifically chosen storytellers (or “historians”) whose role was to know and remember the stories of their and previous generations. In this way, knowledge was transmitted not only about traditions and bygone life but also about the land and interaction with the land, including an understanding of human responsibilities and rights. Sámi oral tradition also contained knowledge that remained invisible or incomprehensible to outsiders. An example of this is a yoik titled “The Unknown Inhabitants of the Sámi” recorded by Jacob Fellman in 1906.

FROM ORAL TRADITION TO WRITTEN LANGUAGE

The Sámi language as a written language is young compared to the so-called world languages. The Sámi are a small northern people who have not had equal opportunities to promote a global awareness of their lives, cultures, and languages. As we have never had our own state but have been spread across four countries—Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia—we have been forced to live at the mercy of these states. This has meant various stages and forms of oppression, neglect, ridicule, and theft, depending on each state’s national and economic intentions. But even in small nations there are always people and groups of people who continue to resist the outside pressures and subjugation. The Sámi have oral histories telling about events where they have used the same methods as their oppressors to resist and fight back. The most well-known story is about a young Sámi man called Lávrrakas who leads the murderers of his family

astray while crossing a mountain top. There are numerous versions of this story from different regions, and the Oscar-nominated feature film *Ofelaš* (Pathfinder [1987]) was based on this story.

The church recognized the importance of the Sámi language and its centrality in conveying deeper meanings to the people. That recognition resulted in a decision to use the Sámi language as a means of converting the Sámi to Christianity. Bringing Christianity to Sámiland was linked to the usurpation of the Sámi territory and its natural resources. The governor of Österbotten, Johan Graan, is quoted of saying about Gabriel Tuderus, a Christian minister serving a southern Sámi area (Kemi) in the mid-seventeenth century: “If we want to have God’s permission for our acts and for mining the Sámi gold and other precious metals, we have to give the Sámi the gift of the word of God which is even more valuable than gold. It is the King’s wish and this work is carried out with great force by Tuderus” (Itkonen 219). The church and the states understood that the word of God was most effective in the Sámi mother tongue. This resulted, in the seventeenth century, in the first translations of basic religious material in the Sámi language, such as a book of psalms as well as an ABC book. It took another hundred years for the New Testament to be translated. The number of religious translations increased at the end of the nineteenth century, when texts such as the Bible were translated. Many of these texts were translated by Lars J. Haetta, a Sámi man who was convicted and imprisoned in Oslo for the 1852 Guovdageaidnu uprising.³ He and another Sámi convict, Anders Baer, also wrote stories and psalms, but they were not published in the Sámi language until in 1956.

Some of the representatives of the church recorded Sámi oral tradition and yoiks starting in the seventeenth century. Perhaps the most well-known church representative is Olaus Sirma, a Sámi man who was studying to become a minister in Uppsala and recorded Sámi yoiks. Two of these yoiks, “Moarsi fávrrot” and “Guldnašaš,” were translated into Latin and published in Johan Sheffer’s *Laponia*, the first ever monograph on the Sámi people, in 1673. One of the two translated yoiks, “Guldnašaš,” later inspired writers such as J. G. Herder. In the eighteenth century, another Sámi minister, Anders Fjellner, recorded Sámi oral tradition with the intention

to create a Sámi national epic similar to Finnish *Kalevala*. The epic was never completed, but many of the yoiks and stories collected by Fjellner remain.

EARLY SÁMI AUTHORS

At the turn of the nineteenth century the Sámi language was still strong and rich compared to its present-day status. However, various practices and policies of assimilation meant that the use of Sámi was restricted and often banned. One of the policies was to prevent Sámi teachers from returning home to work at local schools. This restriction resulted in a resistance among some Sámi teachers, and in the Leavdnja (Lakselv) region, a handful of Sámi teachers established a Sámi newspaper *Ságai Muitaleaggji* (The Messenger [1904–1911]) that immediately became a platform for an intense debate about the preferred language of instruction at Sámi schools and whether the Sámi language should be taught in school. In the early 1900s there were also a couple of other Sámi newspapers, but they were even shorter lived than *Ságai Muitaleaggji*. Anders Larsen was the editor of *Ságai Muitaleaggji*, and he also wrote stories and poems for the newspaper. In 1914 he published a book, *Beaivvi álgu* (Dawn), which is a story about the Norwegian assimilation policies and their consequences on a young Sámi man. At the end of the book, however, the protagonist gains a new faith in his Sámi roots and language, which represents a new dawn for the Sámi people. This spirit of the “new dawn” is also apparent in a poem written by Larsen’s contemporary Isak Saba that later became the Sámi national anthem.

The beginning of published Sámi literature is often considered to be Sámithe’s 1910 book *Muitalus sámiiid birra* (A Story about the Sámi). The book was a collaboration between Johan Turi, a Sámi reindeer herder, and Emilie Demant Hatt, a Danish ethnographer who helped Turi to write and publish the book in Sámi and Danish. The book is a collection of brief accounts about the Sámi origins, traditions, worldview and belief system, and traditional practices of healing, and it also documents the changes the Sámi were experiencing as the result of the encroachment of the nation-states.

RACE RESEARCH AND PUBLISHING SÁMI LITERATURE

The publishing of Sámi literature in Finland has somewhat peculiar roots. In 1932 an organization called Lapin Sivistysseura (the Civilizing Association of Lapland) was established in the Department of Anatomy at the University of Helsinki. According to one of the faculty members, Finnish race research scholar Väinö Lassila, Finland did not adequately look after the civilizing of the Sámi. Together with others, Lassila established the association to create better possibilities for the development of the Sámi “from their own premises.” At that period, this implied that the Sámi were allowed to learn to read and write but otherwise needed to remain “a pure race.” Lassila himself was critical of race research and craniology, also common among the Sámi in the early twentieth century (Isaksson).

In 1932 Lapin Sivistysseura established a magazine in the Sámi language, *Sápmelaš* (The Sámi). In the beginning, the magazine was a mere four-page publication, but it was distributed to all Sámi households in Finland for free. The magazine used a different orthography than the one used on the Norwegian side of Sámi land in religious books and other publications, but many Sámi were able to learn the new orthography. In the 1940s the magazine moved to the Sámi region Anár, and it joined the forces with a Sámi association, Sámi Litto, that was established during the evacuation of the Sámi at the end of the Second World War. This is also when the magazine gained its first Sámi editors, such as Hans-Aslak Guttorm, Pekka Lukkari, and many others, who were often both teachers and writers and saw the importance of maintaining the Sámi language.

In the 1960s another Sámi magazine, *Deanubákti* (Dea the Cliff), was published by a local Sámi organization for a short period. *Deanubákti* consisted mostly of pieces by young Sámi attending the teacher-training college and aspiring writers for whom the magazine offered a platform for publishing their stories and poems.

Lapin Sivistysseura was also involved in publishing Sámi literature. As early as in 1940, the organization published Hans-Aslak Guttorm’s poetry collection *Gohccan Spálli* (Awakened Gust of Wind). My first book, *Soagju* (Marriage Proposal), was published

by Lapin Sivistysseura in 1971 (they published two other titles by me in the 1980s). The association also published the late Nils-Aslak Valkeapää's first poetry collection, *Lávlljo vizar biellocizáš* (Sing Warbler, Bluethroat), in 1975. Previously, the association had already published *Sámigiell Abis* (Sámi ABC Book, 1935) and *Nuottasálbmagirji* (Book of Psalms, 1941), which were delivered to Sámi schools after the Second World War. However, the ABC book was used only by some Sámi teachers who cared enough about education in the Sámi language and were not fearful of criticism by colleagues or parents. Teaching in the Sámi language was not on the agenda, and the authorities in general did not appreciate the teaching of the language in schools. In my school in Vuovdaguoika (a small community in Utsjoki, the northernmost municipality in Finland), the local and long-time Sámi teacher Hans-Aslak Guttorm occasionally taught Sámi in secret.

Lapin Sivistysseura also published a handful of other religious booklets and a monograph on the difficult situation of the Skolt Sámi, who, after the Second World War, were relocated from the Soviet Union to Finland and who had to live in dire socioeconomic circumstances (poverty, poor housing, and unemployment). The association also sought to improve the living conditions of the Skolt Sámi living conditions through fundraising campaigns. One of the individuals involved in fundraising was Robert Crottet, a man of French, Russian, and Swiss background who collected Skolt Sámi oral tradition and later published a book that has been translated into Finnish, *Kuun metsä* (Moon Forest [1954]). Finnish scholar Karl Nickul was also actively involved in these activities and edited a book of photographs *Suenjel* (1933) about the Skolt Sámi lives and land. All in all, in its seventy-five-year existence, the association has done important work to support Sámi language and culture (such as arranging cultural events and handicraft exhibitions and publishing books and other materials in Sámi), even though it was established upon anthropological premises and even though it sometimes issued statements involving the Sámi without consulting the Sámi (a practice that was almost standard at the time).

The first Sámi books were published outside Sámiiland, and they

did not always reach their Sámi readership. Another reason for this inadequate distribution was the lack of a single orthography. The Sámi in Norway and Sweden had adopted so-called Bergsland-Ruong orthography in 1950–51, whereas the Sámi in Finland used the so-called Lapin Sivistysseura orthography. These were quite different from one another and were a barrier to Sámi publishing. For example, the *Čállagat* (Writings) series, fifteen booklets published in mid-1970s by the Sámi Committee for Sámi Literature in Kárásjohka (in Sámiiland), was written according to Bergsland-Ruong orthography, which prevented the books from being used in Finnish schools although they would have filled a serious need for material in Sámi. The Sámi, however, wanted to communicate in writing with one another across the nation-state borders and to facilitate the production of textbooks. After years of negotiations, a common orthography was accepted in 1979.

THE SÁMI WRITERS' ASSOCIATION

The Sámi Writers' Association was established in 1979, and it was meant to become a professional organization for all Sámi writers in the Nordic countries. The mandate of the organization is to promote and support Sámi writers and Sámi literature by establishing scholarships, seeking support for funding for publishing, offering professional mentoring, and organizing seminars and writing workshops. It was also important to have a forum to communicate with other Sámi writers. I chaired the organization for five years from 1980–85. During this period the organization established its roots in Sámi society. We organized writing courses for both writers and young people and worked on encouraging people to write in the Sámi language. Many individuals took up this challenge and have since published novels, children's books, and other literature. In its early years the organization also published a magazine, *Dollagáddi* (Bonfire), which also served as a platform for emerging writers but did not survive for long due to funding difficulties and a lack of human resources. We also published an anthology of Sámi literature, *Savvon* (Stream Pool), in 1983. In 1989 the Sámi Writers' Asso-

ciation held a campaign titled “Strengthen the Sámi Language,” the objective of which was to raise awareness of the Sámi language and the importance of Sámi literature. Among other things, the campaign organized a writing competition for youth, and two years later the association published the results as an anthology. The campaign also published *Čálli giehta ollá guhkás* (A Writing Hand Reaches Far [1989]), a book by Harald Gaski and Nils Øivind Helander on Sámi literature.

The position of the organization as a representative of the Sámi writers has been often dependent on the capacity and work of each chair. The biggest disagreements have been about whether the organization should nominate Sámi literature not written in the Sámi language to the Nordic Literary Prize. Sámi writers who either cannot or have chosen not to write in Sámi remain a minority within the organization, as most Sámi literature continues to be written in the Sámi languages.⁴ Sometimes such writers have felt excluded from the organization and its goals, but the organization has argued that Sámi literature published in Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, or even German is eligible for support and candidacy through mainstream structures that are not available for literature written in Sámi. Some Sámi writers have indeed won literary prizes for their books published in Nordic languages. Aagot Vinterbo-Horn won the Tarjei Vesaas literary prize in 1987 in Norway, and my novel translated into Finnish, *Vojjaa minun poroni* (Graze in Peace My Reindeer), was nominated for the Finlandia literary prize in 1987. Neither of these nominations came through the thinly stretched nomination board of the Sámi Writers’ Association.

THE EMERGENCE OF SÁMI PUBLISHING HOUSES

Around the same time as they adopted a common orthography, the Sámi were also starting their own publishing activities with the establishment of a small Sámi publishing house Jorgaleaddji (Translator) in the small Sámi town of Fanasgieddi, Norway. Jorgaleaddji published several Sámi authors, such as Hans-Aslak Guttorm, Eino Guttorm, Inger Halvari, Marry A. Somy, and me. Jorgaleaddji also

published textbooks and other educational material. From the publisher's inception, its funding was dependent on a single source—the Norwegian government, a fragile foundation upon which to build a publishing house. Jorgaleaddji also published Sámi authors in Finland, and for a short period, the publishing house collaborated with another small Sámi business, Girjegiisá (A Book Chest), which was both a local bookshop in Ohcejohka/Utsjoki, Finland, and a book publisher. The intention was to strengthen Sámi publishing with cross-border collaboration, but it did not work out as intended as the Finnish government did not allocate the funding necessary for running the enterprise. Jorgaleaddji went bankrupt in the mid-1980s—even the Norwegian government funding to publish *Donald Duck* in the Sámi language (which appeared for a couple of years) did not manage to rescue the first Sámi publishing house. It is unclear what exactly caused the bankruptcy, but some books were produced so cheaply that they did not last long in use.

After a short period of silence, another Sámi publishing house was established, this time in the Sámi town of Kárásjohka, Norway. Davvi Media (Northern Media) was established by some of the same people who founded Jorgaleaddji, but again it did not survive too long. However, in a way it had a successor, as Davvi Girji (Northern Book) was established in 1990. Davvi Girji is a locally and Sámi-owned publishing house that has published Sámi literature, textbooks, dictionaries, scholarly publications, and literature translated from other languages into Sámi. It continues publishing to this day.

In Sweden a local Sámi organization, Vuovjjus, had published a newsletter of the same name in the 1970s. In the 1980s Vuovjjus published a couple of books, and gradually it gave birth to a Sámi publishing house, Dat. Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, a writer himself, became the director of Dat. Like Davvi Girji, Dat publishes Sámi books independent of national borders, but since the unexpected death of Valkeapää in 2001, Dat has been going through a quieter period.

The Sámi Council has been working to publish books in the Sámi language and has published, for example, Eino Lukkari's 1979 novel *Bas Galle* (Little Carl).⁵ Since 1994 the Sámi Council has granted an annual literature prize that has encouraged Sámi authors to write.

For several years it also had a Sámi literature purchasing policy through which the Sámi Council annually purchased 450 copies of each title of Sámi literature published in that year to distribute them to Sámi institutions such as schools, daycares, elders' homes, and hospitals. In 2000, however, this practice was terminated because the Nordic Council of Ministers discontinued its funding of the project. The book purchasing policy was in many ways critical to Sámi publishers and writers because it guaranteed sales. Putting an end to this practice also limited readers' access to Sámi literature. In a longer term, it resulted in financial difficulties in publishing Sámi literature and decreased the number of books published annually (which were already low). The Sámi Council and the Sámi Writers' Association have been working to reestablish the policy, but thus far they have had no luck in persuading the Nordic Council of Ministers to resume its support of the project. The general annual meeting of the Sámi Writers' Association in 2007 issued a statement to the Sámi Parliamentary Council and requested that the council increase its efforts to support Sámi literature and place the reinstatement of the literature purchasing policy on its agenda.⁶ Largely, Sámi political bodies have been paying lip service toward the importance of the Sámi language and its maintenance through Sámi literature, but they have done relatively little to increase funding for publishing Sámi literature and supporting Sámi writers who cannot make a living from writing but depend on short-term scholarships and other jobs. The statement notes:

In 2006, the Sámi Writers' Association has requested the establishment of a book purchasing policy of Sámi literature to the Norwegian Sámi Parliament which forwarded the request to the Sámi Parliamentary Council. The Sámi Writers' Association has not heard anything back from the Parliamentary Council. This is why the Association's annual general meeting of 2007 is forced to remind the Parliamentary Council about the request. We the Sámi have the right to advance our language and it is our wish that our elected body, the Parliamentary Council, prioritizes the work that is required to maintain

and develop a living Sámi language. The Association's annual general meeting considers the book purchasing policy a central mechanism in supporting the Sámi language. Further, the Association's annual general meeting reminds the role of Sámi literature in promoting and advancing the Sámi language. Books, audiotapes and other material also showcase our society and Sámi life. A book suits people of all ages.

ESTABLISHING A PRIVATE PUBLISHING ORGANIZATION

When I started writing in the mid-1960s, the faith in the survival of the Sámi language was minimal. Many people did not consider it possible to actually write books in Sámi. Not many Sámi were able to read or write in Sámi, although the older generation managed to read the old orthography that was used in Norway in order to have access to religious texts. For example, my father's generation used to read sermons in Sámi. Sámi literacy was killed by the governments' assimilation policies. After the Second World War, all children were required to attend school. If they did not live in the town or village where the school was located, as was the case with many Sámi children, they were required to stay at the school's residence. The schools were mixed (i.e., Sámi and non-Sámi), which meant that non-Sámi children and teachers generally looked down upon Sámi culture and language, thus stigmatizing Sámi identity for many children. Sámi children also had to learn the language of the majority (many did not speak it until they started to attend school). Some children were able to go home for the weekends, but many went home only for longer holidays. Before the war, Sámi children only attended school for a couple of months a year, which meant that their connection to home as well as to Sámi culture and language was not disrupted. After the war, however, Finland passed a law requiring a mandatory seven-year school attendance.

Our generation, the baby boomers, was exposed to the harsh pressures of Finnish cultural policies that did not have much room for the Sámi language. I did not, however, want to believe in these policies but started writing stories to the *Sápmelaš* magazine and

soon wrote *Soagŋu*. In its introduction, I wrote that “I see myself as somebody who carefully goes out on the autumn ice where nobody has yet traveled. Or if they have, they have crossed it in a way that their tracks are invisible and I have to find myself a strongest way” (Paltto 5). I wrote about the beauty and complexity of the Sámi language and how easy it is to describe anything with it. *Soagŋu* is a collection of accounts and stories based on those I had heard in my youth at the River Deatnu, from ice break-ups to figures of Sámi oral tradition, from traditional marriage proposal practices to accounts of magic.

In 1989 another Sámi writer, Inger-Haldis Halvari, and I established a Sámi publishing association, Gielas (Keel). Soon after, Eino Kuokkanen, who has translated three of my novels into Finnish, joined us to do the layouts. When the publisher Jorgaleaddji went bankrupt, we realized that the only way to get books published was to do it ourselves. Halvari, however, resigned from the association soon after its establishment and did not publish any of her books through Gielas. She was replaced by Ingrid Tapio, also a Sámi writer. We applied for funding from the Norwegian and Finnish governments and were able to publish six titles altogether, five of my books and one translation, a novel by Kyrgyz writer Chinghiz Aitmatov.

Initially, publishing our own books was exciting: we could choose the style, layout, and cover ourselves. Soon, however, applying for funding for every single title separately became rather burdensome—something of which I was in charge of doing. It was a lot of work first to write the book and then to seek funding for publishing it. Further, the printer we used was Finnish and had no staff with any knowledge of Sámi. This resulted in several typos and mistakes, especially in the first title Gielas published, *Guovtteoaivat nisu* (Two-Headed Woman [1989]). In addition, the printing was always delayed, and the books did not come out when planned. After eight years, with only two other people working with me, I no longer felt able to continue with Gielas. The last title Gielas published was in 1997, my collection of poetry *Beštoriin* (With a Wagtail). After we decided to discontinue the publishing business, I was relieved although I knew that getting my work published would again be

more difficult. Following Gielas, I did not get anything published until 2001, when Davvi Girji published the collection of short stories *Suoláduvvan* (Stolen), nominated for the Nordic Literary Prize and awarded the Sámi Council Literary Prize in 2002.

Since the publishing of *Suoláduvvan*, I had to wait for six years until my subsequent manuscripts received the required funding for publishing. The final installment of my trilogy was finally published in 2007, as was a collection of short stories for youth *Ája* (A Spring). It seems that fiction is largely forgotten and ignored in Sámiland, as it is in other parts of the world. The states do not seem to care to fund a Sámi literature whose sales are minimal.

THE CHALLENGES OF PUBLISHING SÁMI LITERATURE

The publishing of Sámi books by the Sámi themselves has been unorganized and usually dependent on a handful of active individuals. There have been short-lived literary magazines and small publishing houses that have not been able to survive because they lacked the necessary financial or human resources. The dream has always been to have a secure foundation to publish literature first and foremost in the Sámi language and later expand to the rest of the world. Currently, however, there is no sign this dream will come true in the foreseeable future. There was some hope after the Alta River case in the early 1980s, when Norwegian authorities were more responsive to Sámi demands than before and, among other things, started a process of mapping the needs of Sámi society.⁷ The Norwegian government was also more willing to fund Sámi initiatives than before. Since then, Norway has been at the vanguard of funding Sámi literature—one can argue that it is the Norwegian government that has maintained and upheld the fragile foundation of Sámi literature and helped it to continue to exist.

Although publishing Sámi literature has not been easy, one can say that, starting in the 1960s, there has been established a strong foundation for it. Currently we have several Sámi publishing houses (all of them very small except Davvi Girji and Dat), all on the Norwegian side of Sámiland since the Norwegian government has been

most supportive of funding it. Despite the chronic lack of funding and despite the several years' wait that Sámi authors have to endure to see their work published, it is inspiring to see that the Sámi continue writing in their own language. The older generation has started to learn to write their mother tongue so that they can record their lives for future generations—they see it as a crucial tool for transmitting Sámi knowledge and values to younger people. Young writers continue to emerge, some of whom start with yoik lyrics and later move to the written form. The board of the Sámi Writers' Association currently includes two young male writers—also a new development. The younger generation is actively writing and insists on writing in the Sámi language. I saw this clearly in Kárášjohka at the end of 2006, when I held a writing course at the local high school. Students who have taken classes in writing Sámi since primary school have quite a different foundation than we who, when we started writing, did not even know how to transcribe the Sámi language on paper or how the letters should look.

It is my hope that Sámi literature will become better known throughout the rest of the world. There is a need for more translations into majority languages and for stronger information and marketing campaigns. Sámi texts have their own specific rhythm. We also live in a very multicultural environment with various views and thoughts. The Sámi are, if you will, on the top of the world where they look at life and the world, learn from it, and live closely with the land. This is what the rest of the world needs to hear and listen to.

NOTES

1. The Sámi parliaments are elected bodies (by registered Sámi individuals) who represent the Sámi interests especially at the national level.

2. The Sámi Cultural Autonomy Act was passed in 1995 in Finland and it stipulates the Sámi have the right to maintain and advance their language and culture. That same year, the Finnish Constitution was amended to recognize the Sámi as an Indigenous people.

3. Guovdageaidnu is a reindeer-herding Sámi community and the birthplace of a Christian revivalist movement, “Cuorvvut” (Shouters), in the

eighteenth century. The movement, characterized by powerful sermons and ecstatic stages, got its name from travelling lay Sámi preachers who preached doomsday and penance and were particularly against alcohol. The reasons leading to the uprising are too complex to elaborate here in detail, but in short, the uprising, linked to the revivalist movement, wanted to purge their community from sin and bad influence. In the uprising, the local non-Sámi shopkeeper and police superintendent were killed, and the minister almost was beaten to death by local Sámi. The two leaders of the uprising were executed in 1854. Lars J. Haetta was one of the participants in the uprising and was sentenced to prison.

4. The North Sámi is, by far, the biggest language group, and most Sámi literature has been published in the North Sámi. It is also the operating language of the Sámi Writers' Association. In this article, "the Sámi language" refers to the North Sámi unless indicated otherwise.

5. Previously, the council was the Nordic Sámi Council, until 1989, when the Russian Sámi joined the nongovernmental organization (NGO). The Sámi Council, established in 1956, is an NGO representing Sámi organizations.

6. The Sámi Parliamentary Council is a collaboration body for the three Sámi parliaments in Norway, Sweden, and Finland.

7. The Alta River conflict is considered a watershed in Sámi-Nordic relations. It involved a plan by the Norwegian government to build a hydroelectric dam in northern Norway (see, e.g., Brantenberg; Paine; Parmann; Sanders). In its original form, the dam would have submerged the Sámi village of Máze (Masi) and a considerable portion of important reindeer grazing and calving areas in the heart of the reindeer-herding region. The government plans were met with unexpected resistance by the Sámi as well as by environmentalists and fishers who wanted to protect the salmon that inhabit the river.

WORKS CITED

- Brantenberg, Terje. "The Alta-Kautokeino Conflict: Saami Reindeer Herding and Ethnopolitics." *Native Power: The Quest for Autonomy and Nationhood of Indigenous Peoples*. Ed. J. Brosted, J. Dahl, A. Grayet, et al. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1985. 23–48. Print.
- Fellman, Jacob. *Anteckningar under min vistelse i Lappmarken*. Helsinki: Helsingfors, 1906. Print.

- Gaski, Harald. *Nu gárvvvis girdilit. Sámi girjjálaavuoŋa oahppogirji.* Kárášjohka: Davvi Girji, 1991. Print.
- Gaup, Nils. *Ofelaš* (Pathfinder). Sápmi/Norway, Carolco Pictures. 86 min. 1987. Film.
- Isaksson, Pekka. *Kumma Kuvajainen. Rasismi rotututkimuksessa, rotuteorioiden saamelaiset ja suomalainen fyysinen antropologia.* Inari: Kustannus Puntsi, 2001. Print.
- Itkonen, Tuomo. *Tuderus, tuo herran pappi.* Helsinki: Otava, 1953. Print.
- Larsen, Anders. “Beaive-Álgu.” *Sátneáidu.* 1912. Ed. Harald Gaski. Kárášjohka: Davvi Girji, 1992. 48–110. Print.
- Paine, Robert. *Dam a River, Damn a People?* Copenhagen: International Working Group on Indigenous Affairs, 1982. Print.
- Paltto, Kirsti. *Soakŋu.* Pieksämäki: Sámi čuvgehussearvi, 1971. Print.
- Parmann, Georg. *Kampen om Alta—en trusel mot vårt demokrati?* Oslo: Dreyer, 1980. Print.
- Sámi Writers’ Association. *Statement to the Sámi Parliamentary Council.* N. p.: Sámi Writers’ Association, 2006.
- Sanders, Ed. “Urbefolkningens rettigheter og Alta-Kautokeino-utbygningen.” *Samene-urbefolkning og minoritet.* Ed. T. Thuen. Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget, 1980. 175–86. Print.
- Skaltje, Maj-Lis. *Luondu juoiggaha.* Guovdageaidnu: Dat, 2005. Print.

Apelles's War

Transcending Stereotypes of American Indigenous Peoples in David Treuer's *The Translation of Dr. Apelles*

DAVID YOST

With the possible exception of Dr. Apelles's full-page sigh, no sentence in Anishinaabe author David Treuer's *The Translation of Dr. Apelles* calls more attention to itself than that which ends the "Translator's Note"—"It was a time of" (2)—and continues in the prologue in bold-faced type—"war" (3). Yet despite the emphasis of this claim, warfare is surprisingly absent from the story of Bimaadiz and Eta. The narrator explains from the beginning that this "war" is not, as the reader might think, "between the people and their enemies across the river" (3); though a "small band to the north" later raids the protagonists' village (104), the attack forms only a single incident among many. In the Apelles and Campaspe sections, this absence is even more pronounced. While Treuer's previous novels, *Little* and *The Hiawatha*, each contain at least one brutal murder, Dr. Apelles lives a placid life in his solitary apartment and a variety of libraries; his happiness is threatened not by violence but rather by extreme isolation.

The war that gives *The Translation of Dr. Apelles* its shape, then, does not appear to be a war of nations or tribes. Rather, it is a war of texts. Like Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*, *The Translation of Dr. Apelles* emphasizes the importance of "translating" one's own story for a lover to "read." However, *Apelles* also complicates this process by showing the text that Euroamerican culture has already created for its Indian characters: an idyllic pastoral romance modeled on *Daphnis and Chloe*, whose protagonists are here disguised under the names Bimaadiz and Eta.¹ These sections repre-

sent the simulation of Indigenous life into which Apelles, an Anishinaabe scholar, fears disappearing, and only by writing his life story in explicit counterpoint can he “translate” his life for others as well as for himself.

Despite David Treuer’s rising profile in the national media—including interviews in *The New York Times* (Smith) and *The Washington Post* (Charles) and several articles on the popular Web site *Slate* (Treuer, “Going Native” and “His Home”)—his novels have received surprisingly little academic criticism, and *The Translation of Dr. Apelles* has yet to receive any scholarly attention beyond its initial reviews. The few articles that exist on Treuer’s other novels, however, provide a useful starting point in approaching *Apelles*.

In the only full-length academic article on *Little* yet published, David Stirrup notes Treuer’s now well-known skepticism of “cultural” readings—defined by Stirrup as scholarship that reads texts purely as products of their cultures, without regard to their individual characteristics or “artistry”—and responds by constructing a “double-stranded reading” of *Little*, examining how it might be read through both “culture-specific” and “literary” lenses (652). Stirrup explores Little’s death in some detail, comparing it to the “resurrective cycle” of both Christian and Anishinaabe mythologies (662), but he also examines how *Little* situates itself against essentializing “cultural” readings of contemporary Indigenous literatures. Through juxtaposed scenes such as Stan’s and Donovan’s deer hunting and Paul’s slaughtering of a cow, Stirrup argues, the novel works to “teasingly encourage the assumption of stereotypes that deny the personal, local issues these sequences engage with” (656). By luring the reader into these essentialist readings, but then showing the limitations of these readings, *Little* ultimately “both tempts and resists the cultural reading” (667).

In Pádraig Kirwan’s “Remapping Place and Narrative in Native American Literature: David Treuer’s *The Hiawatha*”—like Stirrup’s, the only article on its subject to date—the author takes a similar approach. He argues that *The Hiawatha* consciously inverts a common plot of the “Native American novels” that preceded it: the “homing pattern” by which Indigenous characters must return to

their “tribal and individual roots” (2). Listing three “critical preconceptions” for Native American fiction (“that the tribal novel must always tell the story of ‘dispossession’ rather than one of sovereignty; the Indian protagonist must journey home to find his/her ‘inborn Indian consciousness’; and Native writers are ‘recovering’ Indians”), Kirwan demonstrates how “Treuer adopts the realistic style of writing found in *The Hiawatha* as a means to overturn such preconceptions” (6). Most notably, the troubled protagonist Simon attempts a return to his home reservation, only to find it “a foreign country,” so artificial to him that it is “as if he had stepped onto the shore of a novel” (Treuer, *Hiawatha* 189); the experience gives him “no revelation, no recognition” (189). Simon’s return to nature is similarly disastrous. After being lost in the woods for days, he finally staggers out filthy, dehydrated, and incontinent (221), with a broken leg (209) and a bird’s nest for a hat (223), looking, in the memorable phrase of the trucker who rescues him, “like a bag full of assholes” (222).

The Hiawatha also resists a commonplace of Native American literatures, Kirwan argues, by subverting “the notion that the Native American novel is inherently tragic” (8). Though the novel does contain tragic elements, such as the death of Simon’s nephew, Lincoln, *The Hiawatha* makes it clear that these tragedies did not befall the characters “because they are Indian” (Kirwan 11). Rather, the events stem from a specific “single fatal deed” in Simon’s past—his murder of his brother, Lester (11). In conversation, Kirwan reports, Treuer described these subversions as a form of “guerrilla-type warfare” that he is waging against the restrictive expectations for Indigenous novels (8).

While *Little* and *The Hiawatha* subvert genre expectations implicitly, *The Translation of Dr. Apelles* makes this warfare far more explicit by including a text-within-a-text, a pastoral romance of noble savages that embodies Euroamerican stereotypes and stands in stark contrast to the more realistic story of Apelles. In the pastoral sections, heroes Bimaadiz and Eta are suckled independently by wild animals, allowing the pair to gain, respectively, the moose’s “power” and “the wolf’s characteristics” (43, 44); the narrative suggests that the pair also inherit an animalistic ability for hunting and

trapping, as well as a preternatural closeness to nature. Their story is filled with preposterous coincidences—such as when the two are reunited simultaneously with both sets of long-lost parents—as well as prose that could be lifted from a drugstore romance novel: falling in love with Eta, for example, Bimaadiz becomes a “captive of her beauty” and a “slave of desire” (185, 112).

More significantly, Bimaadiz and Eta speak in the formal, epic register that Euroamerican culture has often associated with Indians. Treuer has suggested in interviews that his *Native American Fiction: A User's Manual* can be read as a sort of “companion piece” to *Apelles* (Kennedy 58), and his description there of *Fools Crow*, by Blackfoot/Gros Ventre author James Welch, applies equally well to the story of Bimaadiz and Eta: “Each character speaks in sentences that are, for the most part, complete, discrete, thoughts. . . . In every speech moment—regardless of class, age, gender, or even species—the characters speak the same way” (89). Treuer sees these elements of Welch’s book as originating in “the nineteenth century literary landscape,” particularly in “Cooper’s Indians” (102, 100). In Bimaadiz and Eta’s tale, this trait often assumes comic proportions. Even while Maanendamookwe is giving Bimaadiz a hands-on lesson in sex, for example, her sentences remain remarkably formal and coherent: “‘Just as when you hunt,’ she moaned, ‘you have to see your target to make sure your shot will go where you want it to’” (234).

In the same critique, Treuer also notes the artificiality of *Fools Crow*’s “‘culturally derived’ expressions such as ‘moon of falling leaves’ and ‘Cold Maker,’” suggesting that Welch uses this “Indian-English” inconsistently and with the final effect of creating a sense of “otherness” around his Pikuni characters (79–80). Once again, Bimaadiz and Eta’s story employs nearly identical expressions to those Treuer describes in *Fools Crow*. When the child Bimaadiz cannot open an icy door flap, for example, he is described as “too weak to break the grip the *winter-maker* had laid on his lodge” (8; emphasis mine), a phrase that directly recalls Welch’s “Cold Maker.” Bimaadiz is kidnapped in the “month known as the Stingy Moon” (103) but heals by “the Moon of the Returning Eagles” (112), phrases that closely parallel Welch’s “moon of falling leaves” in their formu-

lation. Though “the Moon of Returning Eagles,” for example, corresponds to a lunar cycle of the Anishinaabe calendar, the text refers to this cycle not by its Anishinaabemowin name, *migizi-giizis*, but in *Fools Crow*—like, deliberately othered “Indian-English.”

Though instances of Anishinaabemowin do appear in the Bimaadiz and Eta sections, particularly in character names and songs, the narrator quickly translates most of these moments into English. For example, when Bimaadiz—whose name translates as “he lives”—receives his name, the narrative helpfully explains that it was because he “was alive, against all odds” (12). When Eta (“only”) is named, the narrative again echoes the origin of her name in English (22); Gitim (“he is lazy”) is noted following his introduction as being “lazy and habitually averse to risk” (88). Even when Eta sings her brief song about the large beaver she trapped (100), the narrative provides context clues that border on outright translation: “Sure enough, she had a large beaver sliding along behind her” (101). Like the instantly translated, “textually irrelevant” Anishinaabemowin phrases of *Love Medicine* that Treuer criticizes in *Native American Fiction*, arguing that Louise Erdrich employs them only as “ornament” rather than a “working part” of the novel (61), the Anishinaabemowin names and songs of these sections serve as little more than decoration, containing scant information not already made available to an English-speaking reader.

When Dr. Apelles narrates his memories of his childhood in Anishinaabe territory, in contrast, he leaves the Anishinaabemowin dialogue of his father and uncle untranslated, with far fewer context clues to its content. For example, when Apelles’s uncle curses the white hunter who committed suicide in a tree stand, he declares, “Mii geget igo giwanaadiziwaad chimookomaanag. Gaawiin wiikaa giwii-niisaabiiginaasiinaan,” or “For sure those white people are crazy. You’ll never get him down” (190).² However, the non-Anishinaabemowin-speaking reader is left as ignorant of his words as the other white hunters, for whom the uncle falsely translates, “I say it’s a long way up” (190). Similarly, when the uncle observes “Dibishkoo go gaag. Ishpagoojing ishpiming ishkwa nibod”—meaning “Just like a porcupine. When they die up high they cling on and

get stuck there”—he translates his words to his white interrogator as “The boy’ll have to climb it” (190). Even such simple moments as the advice of Apelles’s father when Apelles lies sick in bed as a child remain untranslated, and the words are difficult or impossible to decipher from the English-language context (29).³ Just as Treuer describes Betty’s use of Anishinaabemowin in *The Hiawatha* as representing a memory that she does not want to “violate” (Kennedy 54), this use of Anishinaabemowin by Apelles conceals meaning that resists penetration by the nonfluent. Such moments “must be earned by the reader” (54), a move that resists the ornamentalization of Anishinaabemowin that the Bimaadiz and Eta sections display.

Apelles’s tale-within-a-tale mimics not only the stiff dialogue of Cooper’s Indians but also their hijinks. When Gitim wants to ambush and rape Eta, he disguises himself as a bear, a costume so good it fools even Eta’s dogs, who set upon him (100). This scene directly recalls the bear disguise shared by Hawkeye and Uncas in *The Last of the Mohicans* (266, 288); in one of the most improbable moments from an author notorious for them, this costume works so well that its wearer can walk unrevealed through a hostile band of Hurons. (Presumably not wishing to be left out, Chingachgook later disguises himself as a beaver with similar success [302]). As John D. Kalb writes in one of *Apelles’s* harshest reviews, the Anishinaabe characters of these sections are consistently “Disneyesque and Cooperesque figures,” “preposterous” and “fanciful” (116). To lambaste Treuer for this as Kalb does, however, is to miss the satire suggested by the novel’s inter- and intratextual play. By putting this Cooperesque story—and implicitly, the destructive stereotypes authors like Cooper helped to shape—in conversation with the more realistic narrative of Dr. Apelles, the novel again suggests that these stories have nothing to do with the lived experiences of Anishinaabe individuals and everything to do with Euroamerican fantasies of Indians.⁴

The Bimaadiz and Eta story further invites intertextual reading by using the classic Greek pastoral of *Daphnis and Chloe* as the basis of its plot. *Apelles’s* tale follows the Greek original incident for incident, from the abandonment of the children to their salvation by animal

mothers, from the attempted rape of the maiden to the hero's sexual tutelage by an older woman. Though he infuses the story with fresh language and detail, Treuer has done little else beyond changing Greek names to Anishinaabemowin ones and adjusting the setting accordingly. Lamon and Myrtalé, for example, become Jiigibiig and Zhookaagiizhigookwe (12), while the oxen that save Daphnis from a collapsing pirate ship become the moose that save Eta from a floating brothel (180–81). Where nymphs lead Daphnis to a sunken purse of drachmas so he can afford Chloe's hand in marriage, Bimaadiz is instead guided by the narrator to a sunken fleet of trading canoes to fund his pursuit of Eta (239). And just as Daphnis and Chloe are improbably reunited with their long-lost biological parents in Longus's climactic scene, so, too, are Bimaadiz and Eta improbably restored to their parents in the climactic council scene of their narrative (296–300).

Treuer has argued elsewhere that the pastoral caricatures of *Daphnis and Chloe* adumbrate many myths about Indigenous peoples, such as “the myth of an educationally available Indian woman,” prepared to tutor the male hero in sex—a myth that Treuer finds perpetuated in both Laguna Pueblo author Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* and Ernest Hemingway's Nick Adams stories (*Native American Fiction* 139–40). The famous innocence of Daphnis and Chloe—who, despite their careers in animal husbandry, manage to lack the slightest knowledge of sex—also suggests the Rousseauan noble savage, a patronizing stereotype long used to portray the “Indian” as “safely dead and historically past” (Berkhofer 67). By demonstrating how easily this classic Western text can be passed off as a story of “Indian life,” *Apelles* again suggests the way that Euroamerican simulations of Indigenous peoples can efface their traditions and lived experiences.

Interestingly, *Daphnis and Chloe* is itself a highly metafictional text. Longus emphasizes in his foreword that his story is not original but an ekphrastic work based on an interpreter's explanation of a “painted icon” (23). Longus insists that his work is only a “translation” (23)—in fact, a translation of a translation, as “the original ‘work’ was a living, human drama composed and directed by the

god Eros" (Collins 6). *Daphnis and Chloe* returns to the image of the god of love as a narrator several times; for example, Eros refers to the children's budding love as his "pastoral opus" (62), while Pan warns a pirate captain that he has "dragged from sanctuary a girl whom Eros needs as a character in a story he is now creating" (81).

This metaphor—love as narration—also resonates throughout *Apelles*. In fact, Dr. Apelles openly declares it: "He can sense that there is a connection between translation and love" (24). Love, Apelles suggests, means "translating" oneself "into a language that someone, somewhere, will want to read" (39); in other words, to be understood by another, Apelles must first craft a self—a text—to present to others. As Apelles considers his isolation, he comes to fear dying "with no one in this world left to speak him" (52). When he does find a lover, Campaspe, she also sees him explicitly as a text, "a pleasant torture because she longed to lift his cover and read him, to bring him home and read him immediately and completely, and, ultimately, to shelve him in her most private and intimate stacks" (144).

As William Gillard observes, the name "Apelles" here recalls the fourth-century BCE Greek painter Apelles, asked by Alexander the Great to paint the ruler's favorite concubine, named—like the heroine of Treuer's novel—Campaspe (Gillard 153). In Pliny the Elder's recounting of the story in his *Natural History*, Apelles falls in love with Campaspe in the course of creating her portrait; realizing this, Alexander presents her to the artist, retaining only the painting (Pliny 35.36). Though Gillard reads Apelles as having "summoned into existence by his own creative energy the object of his desire" (153), the classical parallel does not quite suggest creation. Had Apelles been creating a loved one from nothing, as Gillard suggests, a better referent for Treuer's novel would have been the Pygmalion myth. Whereas Pygmalion creates a statue that he finds superior to all mortal women, Apelles creates a painting that helps him better see the flesh-and-blood woman who is *already there*; the actual painting he gives, as promised, to Alexander. Apelles's art thus operates not as an end in itself but as a means to achieve greater understanding of another human.

This idea features prominently in another acknowledged influ-

ence on *Apelles*, Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*. As Treuer's novel progresses, Apelles describes not only love but also sex in textual terms:

And even then, while she is on top of him, right before his closed eyes, and her pubic hair is brushing against his own almost hairless groin, and right then after so long, after waiting so long for this or something like it, he sees the translation, the meaning available only to him, vulnerable to him, in a language belonging only to him. The pages flutter. . . . The pages flip and fan and flutter. And it seems to him that her breasts, as they part and rise, are like the pages of a mysterious and delicate book. *I've been waiting to read you*, he whispers. . . . And what a story it is to read. What a pleasure. Page after page after page. (149)

This metaphor of sex as an act of reading closely echoes the imagery of *If on a Winter's Night*, a book Treuer once called one of the "books one cannot do without, books one must read to get into heaven" ("Blog"). Like Apelles, Calvino's second-person protagonist, the Reader, becomes "an object of reading" for his lover (the "Other Reader"), who constructs her own translation of him as she "reads" his body:

the Other Reader is reviewing your body as if skimming the index, and at some moments she consults it as if gripped by sudden and specific curiosities, then she lingers, questions it and waiting till a silent answer reaches her. . . . she is not reading you, single and whole as you are, but using you, using fragments of you detached from the context to construct for herself a ghostly partner, known to her alone, in the penumbra of her semiconsciousness, and what she is deciphering is this apocryphal visitor, not you. (155–56)

By alluding to a text as metafictional as Calvino's, *Apelles* reminds the reader once more of the interplay between stories and lived experience, particularly the ability of the former to shape our understanding and perceptions of the latter. More specifically, how-

ever, the connection again emphasizes the need for lovers to engage one another's "constructed" or "translated" selves as a step toward knowing one another.

Yet, in translating himself, Apelles faces an obstacle that Calvino's Reader does not: he is Anishinaabe, and therefore he must first break free of the text that Euroamerican culture has already written for him. As Gerald Vizenor (an Anishinaabe critic himself) observes in his book *Manifest Manners*, the histories of American Indigenous peoples have too often been overwritten by the "manifest manners in literature," the Euroamerican narratives that overwrite their individual existences with stereotypes and simulation (4). Treuer echoes these concerns in his *Native American Fiction*: "Native Americans, more so than any other group, are experienced through image and text and story more so than through shared, lived experience" (4). Borrowing a phrase from Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark*, he describes how "Indians" become "a playground for the imagination" (113; Morrison 38), "ghosts" over which American culture writes a variety of romantic and demeaning stories (73). Dr. Apelles embodies these concerns of an individual identity being lost to Euroamerican simulations: "he, and all those like him, were measured against the stories that were told about Indians by those who did not know Indians" (*Apelles* 133). In the face of these stories, Apelles feels like "a little ghost in living colors," robbed of his own reality (205).

Rather than profit by romantic stereotypes, Apelles finds it easier to avoid discussion of his culture and his reservation past:

He was not one of those professional Indians who were willing to dispense platitudes disguised as cultural treasure. He was not one of those for whom the past, because of how exotic it seemed to most people, could be used as social credit among the credulous or liberal. He was a private man, with private sorrows. (133)

Even when his lover presses him about his past, Apelles fears that he cannot tell his life story without performing a stereotypical Indian identity, like the light-skinned "Indian" author who dutifully trots out his "rez" stories on a book tour (212). To do so would be to "give

up that sovereign part of himself," to cease to be Apelles and only be another "Indian" (204):

his life was real to him, and if he told it in the wrong way or for the wrong reasons it would cease to be real, it would no longer be his life because it would become a story like all the other stories about his people, and if he told it he would only become a character in that story and would be only the Indian they knew and the Indian they told their friends about. (203)

This fear of being "overwritten" cripples Apelles's life to the degree that he avoids even casual conversation with the hostess at his favorite restaurant: "Dr. Apelles never said anything to Zola except good evening or hello or thank you because to say more would lead to a discussion of these other things that he could not say, and the long string of his life would unravel" (201).

In light of these passages, the story of Bimaadiz and Eta is not, as some reviewers have suggested, a simple parallel to the story of Apelles and Campaspe, mirroring a twenty-first-century love with a fantasy of the nineteenth. Rather, the pastoral romance acts as an *obstacle* to the love of Apelles and Campaspe, its stereotypes threatening Apelles's ability for self-definition. For all the charms of its story—or perhaps because of them—this fairy-tale simulation of Indian life becomes the true villain of the novel, a "valentine that seeks to trap [Apelles]" and from which he must "spring clear" by creating his own, oppositional story (Treuer, "Blog").

In fashioning this story, however, Apelles must first work through a variety of Euroamerican models. As the narrator, Apelles consistently struggles to find a "language" or style for himself, as Campaspe herself notes at the book's close: "I was wondering why each section sounded so different" (312). ("That's so good of you to notice that," Apelles replies [312]). Apelles's sections are, appropriately, a *mélange* of styles, as he combines various influences to create a personal voice. These chapters are also richly intertextual, alluding to works ranging from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* ("it is a truth universally acknowledged that . . ." [Apelles 49; cf. Austen 5]) to Nabokov's *Lolita* ("a little ghost in living colors" [Apelles

205; cf. Nabokov 14, qtd. in Blumenkranz]). Apelles quotes Flaubert (80), names the hostess of his restaurant “Zola” (36), and, as Douglas Robinson observes, even hides a reference to the contemporary Pakistani author Moshin Hamid (*Apelles* 135).

In reviewing his own work, Apelles notes his variety of styles, reflecting that “the dream and everything leading up to it felt dusty and starched, English, the scenes of his early affair with the girl at the round dance hall had something French, something simple-hearted about it, while his boyhood had the hard cast of Hemingway” (79). An ironic English tone runs throughout one of the novel’s early chapters, which are laced with sentences like “we mention it with no small amount of apprehension given the typically high standards of the reading public” (70). Two chapters later, Apelles turns to the lengthy compound sentences of Ernest Hemingway:

He saw his boots standing at attention at the foot of the bed and saw the front steps littered with wood chips and smelling like fresh-split jackpine, and he saw the narrow trail down to the milkshed, and he saw very clearly the pine slab of the shed itself, scored with teeth marks by the cows during the winter, and then he saw the cows themselves who looked at him reproachfully, and the bucket with a rind of dried milk at the rim. (197)

When Robinson criticizes the novel for being “Sternean-cute” for its three-page sigh, then, he is in large part missing the point. If Apelles is too “cute” at one moment and at the next “puckish . . . like the narrator of a Victorian novel” (Robinson), it is because Apelles is at first overwhelmed by the three archetypal Western styles—English, French, and Hemingway-esque—that he attempts to master. Following a nightmare of whirling books that literalizes this anxiety, Apelles realizes that he has “no control over the text, texture, or images through which he was being pushed. It seemed very important that he find a way to control those styles” (80).

Yet Apelles appears to achieve self-realization not by adopting these styles but by transcending them. In his final chapters, the imitative voice disappears, breaking into a fragmentary style that

Apelles seems to consider a more accurate self-reflection: "All his habits and thoughts and styles, the ponderous words that were so heavy in his mind, have dropped away. He can see them. They are spent and cracked and tumble away in space behind him. The rules are different here" (268).

By learning to position himself relative to the styles of these canonical authors, Apelles has by implication learned to position himself vis-à-vis the racist underpinnings of their texts—the imperialism of *Mansfield Park* (Said 80–96), for example, or the "primitivization" of Hemingway's tribeless Indians (Meyers). The scene with the dead hunter, for example, can be read as an inversion—and subversion—of Hemingway's "Indian Camp"; rather than Nick Adams's father taking him to encounter death in the form of a frightening and exoticized "Indian" suicide, Apelles's father takes him to encounter death in the form of a frightening and exoticized white suicide (Treuer, "E-mail").

Apelles used these styles, he tells Campaspe, only because "I did not yet know who I was. I had no language for myself" (312). However, like Vizenor's "postindian warrior" who finds her survivance by fashioning resistant, performative simulations of her own (5), Apelles overcomes the "manifest manners" of his literary antecedents through "narrative recreation" of his own identity. By reshaping these influences and ultimately transcending them, Apelles is at last prepared to tell his own story and, therefore, prepared to love.

"It was a time of war but that is over now," Apelles declares in his final chapter (314); the "battle inside him" (268), the war of stories, stereotypes, and styles, has—for now—been resolved. While at the beginning of the novel the word "love" has "lost its meaning" (1), distorted by dehumanizing portrayals of the Anishinaabe, at the novel's end, Apelles can turn to his reflection and whisper "I love you" (315). The "love story" that gives *Apelles* its subtitle, then, is every bit as much the story of Apelles learning to love himself as learning to love Campaspe. Rather than parroting Flaubert or Hemingway, Apelles's language is finally "his own," leaving him in a space where "he needs no other readers" (315). Escaping what he calls the "mere fairy tale" of Bimaadiz and Eta, Apelles has learned to trans-

late himself and found a “much better,” more genuine love (315), winning his most important victory.

NOTES

I am greatly indebted to Michael Wilson for his feedback and encouragement on multiple drafts of this manuscript, to David Treuer for his helpfulness and alacrity in answering my translation questions, and, as always, to my wife Angela for her constant support.

1. For purposes of this article, I will be using *Indian* in Gerald Vizenor’s sense, referring to the genericized, “unreal construct of white colonialism, a stereotype that blocks authentic native survivance” (Kroeber 27), rather than to Indigenous peoples themselves.

2. The loose translations of this paragraph were provided by Treuer via e-mail.

3. “Gego babaamamaazikaaken. Bizaan dana gosha,” which translates roughly to “Don’t move around. Be still for crying out loud.”

4. For further discussion of Cooper’s role in shaping Euroamerican simulations of Indigenous peoples, see, for example, Vizenor (8), Davis, and Edgerton.

WORKS CITED

- Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. New York: Vintage, 2007. Print.
- Berkhofer, Robert. *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*. New York: Random House, 1978. Print.
- Blumenkranz, Carla. “On Native Grounds.” *Village Voice*. July 25, 2006. Apr. 14, 2008. http://www.villagevoice.com/arts/0631,blumenkranz,74034_12.html. Web.
- Calvino, Italo. *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler*. Trans. William Weaver. San Diego: Harcourt, 1981. Print.
- Charles, Ron. “David Treuer: Burning Wooden Indians.” *Washington Post*, Sept. 17, 2006: BW04. Print.
- Collins, Christopher. Introduction. *Daphnis and Chloe*. By Longus. Barre, MA: Imprint Society, 1972. Print.
- Cooper, James Fenimore. *The Last of the Mohicans*. New York: Bantam, 1989. Print.
- Davis, Randall. “Fire-Water in the Frontier Romance: James Fenimore Co-

- per and 'Indian Nature.'" *Studies in American Fiction* 22 (1994): 215–31. Print.
- Edgerton, Gary. "A Breed Apart': Hollywood, Racial Stereotyping, and the Promise of Revisionism in *The Last of the Mohicans*." *Journal of American Culture* 17.2 (1994): 1–20. Print.
- Gillard, William. "Editor's Choice." *The Literary Review* 50.3 (2007): 152–56. Print.
- Hemingway, Ernest. *The Nick Adams Stories*. New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1976. Print.
- Kalb, John D. Rev. of *Native American Fiction* and *The Translation of Dr. Apelles*, by David Treuer. *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 20.2 (2008): 113–16. Print.
- Kennedy, Virginia. "A Conversation with David Treuer." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 20.2 (2008): 47–63. Print.
- Kirwan, Pdraig. "Remapping Place and Narrative in Native American Literature: David Treuer's *The Hiawatha*." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 31.2 (2007): 1–24. Print.
- Kroeber, Karl. "Why It's a Good Thing Gerald Vizenor is Not an Indian." *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*. Ed. Gerald Vizenor. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2008. 25–38. Print.
- Longus. *Daphnis and Chloe*. Trans. Christopher Collins. Barre, MA: Imprint Society, 1972. Print.
- Meyers, Jeffrey. "Hemingway's Primitivism and 'Indian Camp.'" *Twentieth Century Literature* 34.2 (1988): 211–22. Print.
- Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1992. Print.
- Nabokov, Vladimir. *Lolita*. New York: Berkeley, 1981. Print.
- Pliny. *The Natural History: Bks. 33–35*. Vol. 9. Trans. H. Rackham. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1952. Print.
- Robinson, Douglas. "The Translator as Lover." *California Literary Review*. Apr. 24, 2007. Apr. 14, 2008. <http://calitreview.com/topics/native-american/174/>. Web.
- Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage, 1994. Print.
- Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Ceremony*. New York: Penguin, 1977. Print.
- Smith, Dinitia. "American Indian Writing, Seen Through a New Lens." *New York Times*. Aug. 19, 2006. Apr. 14, 2008. http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/19/books/19indi.html?_r=1&oref=slogin#. Web.
- Stirrup, David. "Life after Death in Poverty." *American Indian Quarterly* 29.3–4 (2005): 651–72. Print.

- Treuer, David. "Blog." davidtreuer.com. May 2008. Apr. 4, 2010. <http://www.davidtreuer.com/wordpress/index.php>. Web.
- . E-mail to the author. Mar. 25, 2008.
- . "Going Native." *Slate*. Mar. 7, 2008. May 8, 2008. <http://www.slate.com/id/2185856/>. Web.
- . *The Hiawatha: A Novel*. New York: Picador, 2000. Print.
- . "His Home and His Native Land." *Slate*. Mar. 25, 2005. May 8, 2008. <http://www.slate.com/id/2115289/>. Web.
- . *Little*. New York: Picador, 1996. Print.
- . *Native American Fiction: A User's Manual*. Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf, 2006. Print.
- . *The Translation of Dr. Apelles*. Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf, 2006. Print.
- Vizenor, Gerald. *Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan UP, 1994. Print.
- Welch, James. *Fools Crow*. New York: Penguin, 1986. Print.

REVIEW ESSAY

Another Indian Looking Back

A Review Essay on Recent American Indian Poetry

ROBERT DALE PARKER

In a poem late in Sara Littlecrow-Russell's *The Secret Powers of Naming*, the speaker (implicitly the poet), dressed up for work, takes a lunch break. She sees a homeless man and gives him her Diet Coke money, but she doesn't "want to look at him." And "He doesn't want to look at me either." Or at least, so she supposes. Then she explains, in the poem's closing words, that "Neither of us wants to see another Indian looking back" (68). What can or dare an Indian or an Indian poet see, or want to see, or fear to see in the mirroring gaze of another Indian or of another Indian poet? Littlecrow-Russell, an Ojibwe and, as a young lawyer, a self-confessed new admittee to what she calls the "Sue Tribe" (61), fears seeing "Indian ruins" (5), "Americanus Worthless" (6). She also fears not seeing Indian ruins. She has something to lose, and she supposes that the homeless man, no matter how worthless in the eyes of others and even, to a degree, in her own shamed eyes, still has enough pride to feel his failure lit up by her lawyerly, lipsticked, and "starched white" (68) reflection. But even as she denies looking and spoofs her fear of looking, she must have looked, or she wouldn't see what she writes about. And she must have wanted to look.

Especially when, like Littlecrow-Russell, you are away from home and stumble on an unexpected reflection, then wanting to look and not wanting to look describe poles of possibility for Indian thinking, Indian vision, Indian poetry. Some poets, like Sherman Alexie and Adrian C. Louis, gaze steadily at the degradations of Indian life, mediating degradation with affection and humor. Others, such as

Simon Ortiz or Joy Harjo, gaze at the degradations but build on them to point their gaze at Indian people in other ways. Still others, like Jim Barnes, Carter Revard, and Louise Erdrich, gaze at Indians but gaze as variously in less specifically Indian directions. Yet more Indian poets, such as Luci Tapahonso and Kimberly Blaeser, fasten their eyes on Indians but without staring at suffering and degradation so much as they look lyrically, in calmly celebratory ways, at family and emotional connections and continuities.

In *National Monuments*, Heid E. Erdrich (Ojibwe), the most conspicuously literary and allusive of the poets considered here, ricochets many of her poems off other texts, whether articles from the daily news or earlier poets (national monuments, of a sort) from Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, Walt Whitman, Robert Frost, T. S. Eliot, and Wallace Stevens to William Carlos Williams. In one series of poems, she spins variations on Williams's "To Elsie," the poem that famously begins "The pure products of America / go crazy" and then settles on Elsie, Williams's fifteen-year-old servant:

marriage
perhaps
with a dash of Indian blood

will throw up a girl so desolate
.....
that she'll be ...
.....
sent out at fifteen to work (53–54)

Unlike Williams, Erdrich has her Elsie reflect on her own desolation: "Like most girls, Elsie avoided the mirror." But then, in a restroom mirror, she catches her reflection reflecting itself in another mirror in an endless series and sees herself "Connected in all directions," not a pure product but "a walking picture of infinity" (25). Amid so many recursive possibilities, the doubleness of reflection, the double bind of looking and being looked at, dissipates into what, in the title of her poem, Erdrich calls "Infinite Progression." No longer constrained to her role as Williams's servant, Erdrich's Elsie eventually

imitates her boss. She finds one of Williams's prescription pads and, having seen Williams write poetry on them, in a moment of improvisation she too starts writing poetry on the prescription pad. Soon she has to buy more paper—a Big Chief tablet, of course, for Erdrich keeps an eye on popular culture as well as on elite literary culture—and she “writes, and writes, straddles a canon, makes a name” (37).

For Erdrich, then, in these and other poems, Indians have long since tired of playing barbarian to Euroamericans' desperate craving to define themselves as mirror images of a threatening Other. Indians do not need to be the solution to Euroamerican doubt. Indians “know what has become of you, who needed us. . . / But what was it we once solved?” and “Who asked the question?” (17). Erdrich wants to ask the questions, not just observe the likes of Robert Frost and his cohort asking and answering their own questions. She rewrites Frost's celebrated “The Gift Outright,” a classic of what many readers suppose to be American self-definition, especially since Frost recited his poem at John F. Kennedy's presidential inauguration. Frost's poem begins “The land was ours before we were the land's” and then goes on to proclaim how “we” became the land's:

Such as we were we gave ourselves outright
 (The deed of gift was many deeds of war)
 To the land vaguely realizing westward,
 But still unstoried, artless, unenhanced,
 Such as she was, such as she would become. (316)

In her own poem, called “The Theft Outright,” Erdrich responds to Frost and to the dominant ways of thinking that Frost's poem so suggestively represents. Her “we,” it turns out, is not Frost's “we”:

We were the land's before we were.

 Such as we were we gave most things outright
 (the deed of theft was many deeds and leases and claim stakes . . .)

 The land, not the least vaguely, realizing in all four directions,
 still storied, art-filled, fully enhanced.
 Such as she is, such as she wills us to become. (31–32)

For Erdrich, as for Frost, the land is feminine. But for Erdrich the land is not the passive object of Euroamerican manipulation, not feminine in that colonialist sense. Instead, like Erdrich's Elsie, it has agency, and it has its agency not in Frost's past or future ("was" or "would") but instead in the ongoing present ("is," "wills").

Most of the poets considered in this essay take for granted the agency that Erdrich reinvents. As they look to the past or the present, they look without the fear of shamed recognition that haunts Littlecrow-Russell, or they look in denial of it. These are not poets who dwell on the failures of Indian people, as some readers have suggested that Alexie and Adrian Louis do. But their celebrations of heritage suggest their awareness of the demons that haunt writers like Alexie, Louis, and Littlecrow-Russell. They often find their antidote to those demons in critiques of popular touchstones, like Erdrich's spoof of the Land O'Lakes butter maiden, or in family, like Cheryl Savageau's and Kimberly Blaeser's anchoring of their poems in family objects and recollections. Or they center their thinking in the continuities and histories of ongoing Native languages, like the many Indian writers who reinflect their English writing with the familiar vocabulary of their Native language or who actually write in their Native language, like Philip Carroll Morgan and, especially, like Ofelia Zepeda, a Tohono O'odham linguist, who, with Ray Young Bear, stand out by integrating Native-language poetry with English-language poetry.

Such connections and continuities can also come in the *form* of the language and poetry, as when Blaeser turns to documentary. In a long poem called "Housing Conditions of One Hundred Fifty Chippewa Families" in *Apprenticed to Justice*, Blaeser, an Ojibwe from White Earth, draws on Sister M. Inez Hilger's *Chippewa Families: A Social Study of White Earth Reservation, 1938*. Blaeser begins with the concrete empiricism of a list of nouns—"wigwam / peaked lodge / bark house / tipi / log house / tar-paper shack / frame house / u.s. rehabilitation house"—documenting the dwellings that Hilger counted at White Earth but also documenting, staring back at and staring down, Hilger's version of a documentary gaze. Blaeser uses italics to signal Hilger's exact words:

you graphed
 photographed
 measured dimensions
 calculated cubic air space
 enumerated every construction detail—
23 with broken windows;
99 without foundations, buildings
resting on the ground;
98 with stove pipes for chimneys.
 house, dwelling, place, structure—
 home. Endaayaang.
 June to November
 the year my mother turned five,
 Mary Inez you walked these lands
 the fervor of your order tucked
 under one billowing black-sleeved arm,
 amassing details of crowded quarters,
 common-law marriages, miscegenation,
 illegitimate children, limited education,
 economic independence on the WPA and CCCs (79–80)

Blaeser does not oppose documentary. Instead, she proposes a competing model or epistemology of documentary. It is not about whether you notice empirical details. It is about how you notice them and which details you notice. The well-intentioned but naïve social scientist quantifies what she sees as loss or failure without seeing how a house looks to people who see it as home, as *endaayaang*. For Blaeser, then, the impersonal 1938 of Hilger's would-be empiricist title begs for translation into another, more personal empiricist vocabulary: it is the year Blaeser's mother turned five while living in what Hilger sees as a junkyard of "*SOCIAL PROBLEMS*." Hilger puzzles over the way the people actually like their homes and "*were quite unwilling to leave them*" (81), thus recording and making interpretable—as a good empiricist should—what she does not know how to interpret, what the light cast by her style of empiricism will not let her see.

In “What They Did by Lamplight,” Blaeser musters the understated, documentary lyricism of a verbal catalog. The poem consists of a list of what women did by lamplight in the homes that Hilger quantified—and as if to intensify the lyrical reification, the concreteness, Blaeser breaks the lines into the visual pattern of a lamp. Inside their homes, the women “Clean rice, hand stitch / make pies, roll jingles [for jingle skirts] / patch jeans, shake dice / clean fish, roll cigarettes / read from *The Farmer*. / Braid rugs, mend nets, tell stories / write letters, bead, cut quilt squares,” and so on through “laugh,” “depill sweaters,” “make soap,” “Change diapers, shuck corn,” “crochet doilies,” “dance together / nurse their babies,” and “remember their dead” (95). Blaeser takes up none of Littlecrow-Russell’s dance of should she or shouldn’t she look at other Indians or at Indians’ actual or potential reflections of each other. Writing about home, about what she knows, and not, like Littlecrow-Russell, about the cognitive ambush of an unexpected encounter, Blaeser cannot imagine not looking and cannot imagine fearing to look. For Blaeser, home is home, with a directness that her documentary form crafts as if it were self-evident. But if it were self-evident, then well-intentioned social scientists would never miscast the homes of the colonized—troubled though they might sometimes be—as the detritus of conquest.

Phillip Carroll Morgan’s *The Fork-in-the-Road Indian Poetry Store* has the general-store jumble of poems that its title suggests, but it also has an understated consistency, as many of the poems stand out for their readiness to experiment with poetic form. In “The Story of the Seeds,” Morgan begins with a two-column prologue. The left column sets the scene in primordial chaos when (in the opening words) “the earth was a muddy quagmire.” Meanwhile, the right column lifts the curtain to expose the poet’s nervous self-doubt: “*will my audience / scoff a woman / saying hmphh*” (82). The rest of the poem mirrors the prologue’s multiplicity by braiding three stories. The first story tells of a sixteenth-century southeastern Indian running in terror from the brutal onslaught of Hernando de Soto. At one point, he finds a moment of reassurance by drinking

water from the dipper gourd he carries tied to his sash. As he and his cousin flee, they carry the seeds of their heritage and their future, seeds of the dipper gourd, vine beans, squash, pumpkin, and corn. One night, he tells the second story, an ancient tale of the great flood and the prophet who survives it. In the third story, the poet (or his likeness) drives his pickup in the Oklahoma Choctaw present and listens to a coyote wail with jealousy over a dog that “took up the territory / around” the poet’s cabin (92). The poet, like the seed carrier, is a node of past, present, and future. “[M]y neighbor the wheat farmer,” he tells us,

*asked me why i grow gourds
which I cannot eat
raising an eyebrow i did not answer
why do you go to church i asked him?
to worship god he replied
that's why i grow gourds i said (94)*

Framed by the self-doubt in the prologue’s echo chamber, Morgan’s braiding of the present with the ancient past and the historical past passes the tire-kicking test that makes it, like his pickup or his dog, part of ordinary life.

Morgan’s play with form takes many forms. Sometimes he comments on his own poem in poetic footnotes. Suddenly, in the midst of a plainspoken poem called “Fried Rabbit,” a footnote interrupts the poem and itself takes a dramatically different form, still poetic but this time in rhymed and roughly metered lines (at first even in iambic pentameter) that themselves address form:

*if romance could be bought in packaged form
what would the price tag be on an approaching storm
that mellows the sky over a rabbit feast
after a solitary day of work and peace*

Whatever the price, he concludes, “i’ll pay i’ll go” (118).

Morgan has a way of finding the lyrical in the ordinary and transforming its form:

ochre hole of urine two
 feet deep in snowshoe
 rabbit tracks a pause
 to pee in winter's claws
 and hear a breeze cause
 laden trees to crack

then chase a grouse who
 flapped and fluttered flew
 the silence snapped raw
 drought of freezing air paws
 the frightened quarry through
 bright narcotic slack (31)

Part of the lyricism, sifted through the delicate rhyme stretched across the stanzas, comes in the parallel stretching of speculation. The poet does not know what happened. He may reasonably enough surmise, and perceptively, that the hole comes from rabbit urine—a wonderfully unlikely and mundane topic—but he does not know that the snowshoe hare listened to the breeze crack the trees (as the internal rhyme runs with the end-line rhyme and with the assonance of *deep* and *pee*), still less that the hare stopped purposefully to listen. He does not know that the rabbit chased a grouse, still less how the grouse responded—unless, unmentioned but in tune with the understatement of the poem and such nearly rhyming repetition as *pause* and *paws*, he sees those tracks too. Here documentary drops away and the description, ostensibly of the past, paints the poet's own imagination in the present.

As Morgan braids the past with the present and the quotidian or earthy with the lyrical, each reflecting the other, so Cheryl Savageau (Abenaki) ponders the call of the old ways and the easy appeal of the new in a poem called, simply enough, "Tradition." She remembers how her mother taught her a precise pattern for making apple pies. Now, twenty years later, they are making pies together again, and her mother is astonished at Savageau's careful deliberation. Impatiently, her mother gives up waiting for Savageau to finish

and, oblivious to the remembered pattern and “without ceremony,” she abruptly “dumps,” “spreads,” “mixes,” “and pours” everything “in a heap” and puts an end to it, an end to what Savageau had taken almost as sacred ceremony and tradition. “That’s the thing with tradition,” Savageau decides. “Even now, peeling apples for pie, / I’m looking over my own / shoulder, wondering” (61). Left to sort out the fate of tradition in a world that at once belittles, underestimates, and romanticizes Indians’ connection with the past, she finds no easy solution. She cannot gaze at tradition with any more assurance than Littlecrow-Russell can gaze at the unexpected fellow but fallen Indian. Her glance might yield recognition, but it might just as well reveal that she sees what she looks for or that she keeps herself from seeing her own reflection or her own future.

In another poem, “Side Pass,” Savageau goes to her father’s wake and sees again the boy she had a crush on when she was fifteen and he played basketball under her father’s coaching. She is amazed at how utterly unattractive she finds the once curly-haired heart-throb. And yet she inexplicably feels the aching tug of what her old boyfriend was so long ago and what she has now lost. She remembers her father teaching the boys how to look in one direction and pass in another. “I would fall in love again,” she concludes, “if it would save me from this grief” (96). She cannot look one way and pass the other way, but just to hazard the idea, even momentarily, is a means of working through and living on with the multiplicity of directions that tug at us across time and memory. Similarly, in “Heart,” she watches a bird fly through a cottage “from window to window / never staying in / never staying out” (136). The heart that is a home pumps in and out, over and over, like tradition and change, worth romanticizing, if at all, perhaps only in its impermeability to the romanticizing that Indians are pressured to impose on it.

In *Where Clouds Are Formed*, Ofelia Zepeda’s poetry somehow seems to escape the questions that haunt the other poets under discussion here. She writes of the desert, clouds, water, fog, rain. She writes of weather. In “The Place Where Clouds Are Formed,”

Every day it is the same.
 He comes home.
 He tells her about it.
 As he speaks, his breath condenses in front of his face.
 She goes about her business;
 every now and then she looks over.
 She doesn't hear his voice.
 She sees the soft fog that continues to form a halo. (3)

Subject verb, subject verb. Every day it is the same. Almost every line it is the same, at least for awhile: It is. He comes. He tells. He speaks. His breath condenses. She goes. He looks. Then, for a moment, she doesn't hear, but then again she sees. Zepeda's poems seem to have little use for the agonies of subject versus object that agitate or energize so many other Native American poets and, in other ways, so many poets in general. Her poems do not typically fear looking or even being looked at or worry over the oscillation between opposites. They do not worry over how the present sifts through tradition and the past. They watch the weather, the mist, the clouds. The children at the end of "The Place Where Clouds Are Formed" sit with their father in the warm cab of his truck surrounded by the cold as they wait for their school bus. We never see the school bus arrive and take them to the land of oscillating opposites. Instead, we see their breath condense on the cold windshield as they sit in the cocoon, the air pocket, of family closeness. And yet, much as clouds form, clouds also change. They change constantly. Many readers take Zepeda's poems as paeans to a lyrically lost past. But Zepeda is a linguist whose study of her Tohono O'odham language not only records the language's past but also tries to help shape its future. Her poems may seem to separate their slow, thoughtful rhythms from the chaos of contemporaneity, but the remarkable patience in their evocations of evanescent space and place are themselves an index of, a mirage against, the conflicts that Zepeda's colleague-poets record more directly.

In "Pain of Speaking," a character voiced by Zepeda laments that she does not know her grandmother's language. When she hears her grandmother's people talking, she thinks:

Sometimes just by the rhythm
 I know they are talking about me.
 Right in front of me!
 Having no voice in this language
 makes me invisible.
 It hurts.
 I scream!
 They look at me.
 Guilty. (63)

It seems that this speaker is—or thinks she is—guilty, but the fog of guilt settles on “them” as well as on “me.” When they look, the sense of panicky vulnerability, of each gaze exposed by its own gaze reflected back, echoes the panicky gaze that Littlecrow-Russell describes in her far different voice. Zepeda’s poetry links opposites through likeness as well as through difference. In that way it offers not only a metaphor for the continuities with an earlier era that readers often associate with her poems of the outdoors, the desert, the clouds, and the rain but also a metaphor for the shared questioning that ties together much of the vast range of contemporary American Indian poetry.

WORKS CITED

- Blaeser, Kimberly. *Apprenticed to Justice*. Cambridge: Salt, 2007. Print.
- Erdrich, Heid E. *National Monuments*. East Lansing: Michigan State UP, 2008. Print.
- Frost, Robert. *Collected Poems, Prose, and Plays*. New York: Library of America, 1995. Print.
- Littlecrow-Russell, Sara. *The Secret Powers of Naming*. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 2006. Print.
- Morgan, Phillip Carroll. *The Fork-in-the-Road Indian Poetry Store*. Cambridge: Salt, 2006. Print.
- Savageau, Cheryl. *Mother/Land*. Cambridge: Salt, 2006. Print.
- Williams, William Carlos. *Selected Poems*. Ed. Charles Tomlinson. New York: New Directions, 1985. Print.
- Zepeda, Ofelia. *Where Clouds Are Formed*. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 2008. Print.

Book Reviews

Titu Cusi Yupanqui. *An Inca Account of the Conquest of Peru*. Trans. Ralph Bauer. Boulder: UP of Colorado, 2005. ISBN 087081821X. 166 pp.

Jonathan D. Steigman, *United States Military Academy*

With the first English translation of the account of Titu Cusi Yupanqui, English professor Ralph Bauer gives us a view of the Spanish conquest of Peru from a Native perspective. Bauer provides an excellent introduction that situates the work within its historical and cultural context. Through the introduction and copious explanatory endnotes, the reader gains a real understanding of the hybrid nature of the text, a result of the process of its composition.

Titu Cusi Yupanqui was the next-to-last Native ruler of the Inca Empire. Considered by the Spanish authorities to be in a state of rebellion against the colonial government after inheriting the throne from his father, the rebellious native leader Manco Inca, Titu Cusi composes his work, a letter to the Spanish sovereign Philip II enumerating Spanish atrocities in Peru, from the jungle refuge of Vilcabamba in 1570. He tells his story in his native Quechua to the Augustinian missionary, fray Marcos García, who translated it into Spanish. It was then transcribed by Martín de Pando, Titu Cusi's mestizo secretary, thus contributing to the hybrid nature of the work. As Bauer points out, both Andean and Spanish influences are present in the text. He notes that García exerted some influence over the composition process because "the Spanish missionary 'ordered' and translated it into Spanish" (12).

Bauer notes that the document is more than just an appeal to Philip II to take control of the situation in Peru and to put an end to Spanish abuses; it is also a subtle form of Native resistance against Spanish rule:

Aware that their clubs, pikes, and slingshots were largely ineffective against the armored and mounted Spanish conquistadors, Native leaders soon learned to appropriate not only the foreigners' use of swords, firearms, and horses but also the most powerful weapon that the invaders had brought: the written word. The text presented here tells an early chapter in the long history of Native appropriations of this European medium. (18)

Titu Cusi not only appropriates the written word generally but also chooses a specific format for his appeal to the crown: the “relación” (account). Bauer tells us that this is a form of legal discourse with origins in notarial rhetoric. It is intended to present an eyewitness account within the context of a legal dispute, and it relies upon firsthand experience for its authority. The rhetorical style of the “relación” also becomes a historiographic text, in addition to a legal deposition designed to influence official policy and legislation. Titu Cusi’s approach demonstrates a profound understanding on his part of the modes of European discourse that he appropriates to pursue his goals of more a humane colonial system, providing a means by which he might return from internal exile. Bauer shows that Cusi’s work is typical of sixteenth century scholastic political philosophy, similar in style to the rhetorical contributions of Indigenous rights advocates Francisco de Vitoria y Bartolomé de las Casas. Titu Cusi’s account lends specificity to the work of las Casas, pointing out that burdens imposed by the neofeudal rulers of Peru were responsible for the decline of the Native population. Having converted to Catholicism, Titu Cusi portrays himself in a way that is similar to the rhetorical style of las Casas, as a Christian prince, the “natural” ruler of the land who is voluntarily placing himself under the authority of Philip II, according to Bauer.

We also learn from Bauer’s introduction that the account is a

political document as well as a literary work. It is a petition from Titu Cusi to Philip II intended to initiate a negotiation process designed to end the Inca rebellion against Spanish authority. Titu Cusi's goal is to end hostilities and gain an estate and pension for himself. His mission was ultimately unsuccessful, but his attempt at reaching accommodation with the Spanish government has left us with a document that provides an excellent resource for anyone interested in early transatlantic cultural contact and the early Spanish-American colonial period. Cast in the style of the two categories of Incan oral history, the "life history" and "genealogical narrative" (35), the text contains three sections. Part 1 is a letter addressed to the governor of Peru, Lope García de Castro. In this "instrucción," Titu Cusi requests that the governor take the account to Spain and present it to Philip II. In this section, the author attempts to justify his position as rightful ruler of the Inca civilization by providing a "genealogical narrative" of his family in the Incan oral tradition (35). Part 2, his account of the conquest, is the "life history" part of the narrative because he recounts the events from the perspective of his father's family. The emphasis is on the actions of Manco Inca, particularly in regard to his interactions with the Spanish conquerors. Through the use of these two Andean rhetorical styles, Titu Cusi hopes to gain the recognition from the Spanish authorities that he seeks. One important aspect of this section of the text is that it provides details about Manco Inca's life in exile in Vilcabamba that are not available anywhere else. Another important point in this section is Titu Cusi's description of his conversion to Christianity, a means by which he hopes to bring more legitimacy to his status. Part 3 is a legal document granting García de Castro the authority to negotiate Titu Cusi's return from exile.

Although Spanish versions of the text have been available to researchers for a number of years, this is the first English translation of the full text. Bauer's extensive knowledge of the work is evident in the introduction and explanatory endnotes he provides. He succeeds in contextualizing the text within the framework of recent scholarship on Spanish-language texts written from an Andean perspective: "In particular, the chronicles written by Juan de Betanzos

. . . Pedro Cieza de León, Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, and . . . the mestizo Inca Garcilaso de la Vega contain valuable comments about Inca historiographic practices that help us to reconstruct the traditions on which Titu Cusi would have drawn when telling his history of the conquest” (26). The quality of the translation is excellent and accessible to scholars and nonscholars alike. Bauer’s introduction, his notes, his explanation of the hybrid nature of the document, the glossary of Quechua and Spanish words he provides, and the detailed index all combine to make this text an excellent resource for archaeologists, historians, Latin Americanists, and scholars of Latin American literature, as well as the general reader with an interest in the history of the Andean region.

Louise Erdrich. *Shadow Tag*. New York: Harper Collins, 2010. ISBN 978-0-06-196293-6. 255 pp.

Margaret Noori, *University of Michigan at Ann Arbor*

Pii zhinoomooiyangid ezhi-agawaatesidaendamodiwaad gekinomagaazibimaadiziyaang. When she shows us how they cast shadows of sadness on one another, we become students of life. If only one line was an acceptable review of Louise Erdrich’s new novel, *Shadow Tag*. Her latest contribution to American literature is best described by the compound, transitive, reflexive verbs of the Ojibwe language. It deserves a phrase laden with wide-open vowels tumbling over one another barely held together by consonants. It needs a description that erases the specific and focuses on acts exchanged between subjects and the audience. But this is America, and you are reading a literary journal, and so more must be said.

These days it has become important to pause and determine in what ways some novels, by some authors, are Native, American, Indian, or perhaps even stem from tribally specific roots. *Shadow Tag* is undeniably contemporary American literature. It is the story of a postindustrial nuclear family disassembling despite attempts to give up alcohol and seek psychological advice. It is a tale broadly influenced by its time. With characters named for continents, quo-

tations from iconic American author F. Scott Fitzgerald, and a tie to the same Lead Belly blues, it is wrought in close connection to the literature of these United States. Any reader native to America will recognize the technological society activist, poet, and songwriter John Trudell describes as one comprised of “nihilistic desires, civil lies gone insane” (54).

Shadow Tag is also an Indian novel, in the best sense of that word recently reclaimed by many, including the main characters, Irene and Gil, who listened to “dot-Indian” sitar music sometimes and their own “feather-Indian” music too (175). They are modern mixed-blood characters who publicly argue about their status as enrollees, and privately mourn their inability to “be Indian enough.” Gil is the son of a Vietnam veteran. Irene is the daughter of AIM activists. They are representations and re-presenters of American Indian culture. They are both bound by ethnicity and directly benefit from its misunderstanding. Gil is an Indian artist, and Irene is an Indian maid. Their trades are icons for consumption in a world in which being Indian is no longer as easy as it once was.

The novel is also clearly connected to the Ojibwe/Anishinaabe world of the Great Lakes and woodlands. Ojibwe literature takes many forms. There are the old-time oral tales told entirely in the language, something like Tommy Stillday’s “Bajaaganish miinawaa Makizinish.” These of course have direct descendants, their English translations. Modern updates to these stories might be the step-children of blended narratives. The rangy mixed-blood children of the present, an accurate description of many of Erdrich’s novels, are Ojibwe tales of the present told first and only in English without apology, because that is the way of the world today. Last of all, some dare to whisper of a future where the stories circle back to the language and are told again first in Ojibwe, with more pronouns than possible in English and complete disregard for the noun. *Shadow Tag* is one of the mixed-bloods—a novel straddling two worldviews, not written in the tightly packed, alternate syntax of a verb-based language, but clearly dancing capably around themes that are Ojibwe.

If a son in love with hockey does not scream “Ojibwe novel” to every reader, the mention of wiindigos and the unfolding of events

during the harshest months should be a clue. Wiindigos are selfish, cannibalistic, wicked creatures who are considered sometimes intentionally murderous, sometimes criminally insane, sometimes masochistic and suicidal. Stories of them vary, and the wise do not mention them often. They are not unique to the stories of Erdrich. Basil Johnston, Anne Dunn, Gerald Vizenor, Tomson Highway, Alanis King, Joseph Boyden, and many others who write from an Ojibwe/Anishinaabe perspective have included them in their cautionary tales. They are classic characters of the Anishinaabe. Most importantly, for those paying attention, they teach lessons. Irene recalls the stories told by elders about the winter demons, but the very title of the book brings the wiindigo into the present. As Irene, Gil, and the children chase one another's shadows, they act out the crime of extinction, playing wiindigo in the shadows of one another's souls.

The other subtle signal that this is a novel based near vast inland seas and the continent's most powerful river (the Mchiziibi/Mississippi) is the sinister role played by water. Water should be a source of life, a beloved acknowledgment of renewal. However, from the East, one can see the West, and for all the maternal notions of sustenance and vitality, there are dark pools of excess and loss of control. Consider the quiet reflections of Gil, who thinks of his sleeping wife, "her unconsciousness was sweet" as "he let himself drift on the tide of her breathing." Later, as a fight winds to a close, Gil is sweaty and his mind "swims." Irene, whose name invokes a song about drowning, is asked by her daughter during a skating outing, "could you save me if I fell in?" "I could save anyone," Irene replies (102). As the reader, you'll have to wait until the end to decide whether or not you believe her. Several of Erdrich's novels echo this theme of dangerous waters. It is one that connects the new stories to the old, the Oshki-Anishinaabeg to the Gete-Anishinaabeg. It is one of the ways we recognize stories of this place. They speak of life in a particular place and explain how best to live and how not to die.

Less tribally specific are the references to images and alternate identities. Mothers who stand motionless until the school bus disappears can be found on every weekday corner. The artist George Cat-

lin roamed the West looking for subjects, and as this novel unfolds, so does the tale of portraits and souls. In a universe that parallels the one in which Irene is placed repeatedly on canvas, readers are reminded of stories of silence and submission that occurred during the era of the “vanishing American.” Like the game of shadow tag, Indian identity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries became something to chase and guard. Erdrich includes as one example an old word for mirror, “waabaamoojichaagwan,” a thing in which a soul can be seen. What might it mean to see in a flat place of icy glass something that should not be visible? This conflict between what we see, what we know, and what portion of the two we acknowledge is the central tangle of the novel.

Shadow Tag takes its place in the family of Erdrich stories, and like the others, it is a complex narrative and philosophy with polished agates of prose lying nearly hidden upon a beach of shocking raw humanity. In this case the primary characters are a marriage and a family, and reader beware, the two are not one and the same. The supporting cast consists of a woman, a man, and three children alternately arching toward adulthood and clinging to innocence. The moral of the story is found not in the ending, but back at the beginning, after the ending has been made clear. It is a story about boundaries and identity and how one cannot exist without the other. Peripherally, it is also about how these issues, of boundaries and identity, are peculiarly complicated in American Indian communities. These are not new themes for Erdrich, but they are approached with a new focus.

The biographies of Irene America and her husband Gil are webs of identity woven over patches of loss. Both were raised by their mother alone. Irene’s mother, Winnie Jane, is Ojibwe and lost her original name when someone long ago married a voyageur named Sourcier. Irene’s own surname, considered more “Indian” by many, but really not Ojibwe at all, was given to her by her father, Calvin American Horse, a mixed-blood Dakota AIM activist who moved on when she was young. Irene is comfortable in her urban Indian identity, but the cultural past occasionally haunts her and the task of being a contemporary American Indian wife becomes too much

to bear. Her only connection to the Ojibwe language are random phrases including “g’debwe” and “geget igo,” which she uses with ease although she confesses that she actually remembers almost none of the Ojibwe she had been taught. She knows this is not her fault and is willing to gather words as they come to her, hoping one day they may coalesce into knowing. In contrast to Irene’s mother, Gil’s mother was white and his father, Gilbert Florian LaRose, was likely a member of the Crow Tribe, living on the Apsaalooke Nation. Gil was raised in Billings, but he recalls the funeral of his father and the eagle feather he was handed without explanation. Irene and Gil are of the pantribal generation whose parents somehow survived reorganization and termination. Empowered by the American Indian Movement, and both with access to college, they represent postcolonial urban Indians of today. Gil has become famous painting Irene as an ever-changing series of Native womanhood. Irene is a busy mother of three still balancing a need to read and research, attempting to weave her own academic dreams into a world of posing for Gil and running household errands.

The novel is Erdrich’s typical equation of subplots and relationships colliding across time and space. Siblings are discovered, souls are searched, much wine is consumed and then forsworn. Some are born and some die. Amid this usual swirl of storytelling, a man and a woman attempt to move forward but clearly lose their way. Early in the book the husband and wife exchange a phrase she has written that he later reads, “I think I’m going to lose my mind over what I am doing” (6–7, 12). Although the exact line is later let go, the question of what it means to lose, and specifically to lose one’s mind, echoes throughout the book. What they never come to realize is the need to find their individual identities in order to survive. What they spend the novel chasing instead is a combined identity as husband and wife. Gil admits, “He was pretty sure she had married him for his art and then slowly found that his art was no fun to live with” (13). He paints her in both precious and pornographic poses. He arranges her with no thought of anything other than the portrait, his portrayal of her life. He never asks, “How would you like to be painted?” He asks her to hold her breath. The extremes to

which he will go embarrass her. Gradually she grows distant from the images of herself, and they take on a life of their own, a life that, like the marriage, is at times unrecognizable to her. Eventually she is ashamed when her son discovers the early images on-line. Together Gil and Irene allow something to grow that satisfies others yet renders the very fabric of their lives unlivable. To admit that she is the woman in the paintings is to be a woman she cannot reconcile with the woman, the mother, perhaps even the wife she once wanted to be. To let her go, for Gil, is not an option he can survive.

So, Irene writes, not in just one, but two journals. Like a cracked riverbed, her personality begins to wander in two directions. At first, writing might seem like a cathartic, healing, personal habit. There are lines in her private journal that imply writing is magic when shared with an intended confidant and can be a source of life and connection. But when read by a voyeur, as an artifact, as evidence in a trial unannounced, writing becomes a twisted act. While she should be finishing her dissertation on Catlin or tracing any of the many bits of history she enjoys, Irene writes to manipulate her audience of one. She considers the world she trusted before the game began as one in which she recognizes “a failure of imagination on my part” (17). As she plays the part of Malanchine, translating their marriage on the page, Irene America is “discovered.” And worse yet, she is cast as the same lustful savage featured in the history books—this time not by a stranger arriving, but by the stranger who had been living beside her all along. In many ways, she writes her own captivity narrative.

As with any story of a bad marriage, there is an exploration of outcomes. Irene says, “With every person whom I have left, there has always been a final moment where I have realized I am gone” (49). In *Shadow Tag*, as the marriage unravels, events occur that are singular to the victims but too common in many homes—children are hurt physically and emotionally, parents refuse to get help, one accuses the other of being depressed and dysfunctional, endings begin. One persuades the mutual friends to doubt and question the acts of the other. One decides to follow the other seeking confirmation of suspicions or thin indications of intent. Eventually the

children emerge as characters hiding candy, sneaking wine, beginning to comprehend. Riel, the girl named for the Métis hero, decides to become more than she is, “more than an Indian.” She wants to become “a girl of depth, strength, cunning and truth . . . the kind who could take away the power of another” (62). Young Stoney finally decides “it’s too hard to be a human” (74). Later, when he tries to understand love and commitment through random public acts and habits, Erdrich nearly breaks the reader’s heart, because as all adults know, love is not so easily mapped.

The most-cited lines of this book will likely be Irene’s accusation directed both at herself and Gil. She writes to him via the faux diary: “But here is the most telling thing; you wish to possess me. And here is my mistake: I loved you and let you think you could” (18). Certainly, she is right. Gil wanted to own her body, soul, and image. She was the commodity around which his world revolved. The secret of this book, and of the lives of many Indians today, is that Irene could have taken back her identity. There is a moment when she “discards the truth.” She recognizes history is made up of both occurrence and narrative and without narrative an occurrence can be forgotten. This is something her creator, Louise Erdrich, knows. Erdrich is a writer whom Anishinaabe author Lois Beardslee would include in the Women’s Warrior Society, the Ogitchidaakwewag.

She is a whirlwind. Maybe a wolf. Maybe a bear, a fish, a snake, maybe just an idea floating on a soft breeze, a spider in the woodpile. And that Ogitchidaakwe, she keeps reinventing herself. . . . She studies the leaves in the trees, figures out the most beneficial time to be a persistent wind. . . . She studies her environment, looks for opportunity, and changes at will. They all do that, those women warriors. (Beardslee 19)

Shadow Tag is the story of one more warrior, raised by one more warrior, raising one more herself. These women, amid the men, need to be noticed. The men need to be accountable to their own identities, and unions must be strong or they become dark and dangerous. Although it is not an old-time oral tale, *Shadow Tag* is no less a cautionary lesson for those willing to listen. If only Irene had

thought to read her own narrative, she might have found the truth: “falling in love is also falling into knowledge” (29).

WORK CITED

Beardslee, Lois. *The Women's Warrior Society*. Phoenix: U of Arizona P, 2008. Print.

Lisa Brooks. *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast*. Indigenous Americas Ser. Ser ed. Robert Warrior and Jace Weaver. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008. ISBN 978-0-8166-4784-2. 347 pp.

Margo Lukens, *University of Maine*

In *The Common Pot* Lisa Brooks has begun to do for Native people of the Northeast, particularly Wabanaki people, a task parallel to what Craig Womack is doing for Muscogee and other Native nations of the southeastern United States, what Greg Sarris has been doing for West Coast peoples, and what the late Paula Gunn Allen did for Pueblo and other (mainly) southwestern people. Brooks's consideration of early writings in English by Native people from the Northeast shows a great array of political and intellectual responses to the pressures of colonization, and it makes visible the connection between their writing in English and traditional mnemonic representations, like wampum and maps on birchbark scrolls, used to document social organization, law, treaties, and people's relationship to land. The core of Native being, for Brooks, is “the ongoing relationship and responsibility to land and kin” (xxxii). The act of writing this book proceeds from her sense of responsibility to the Abenaki people from which she comes; while she hopes people from her community will want to read the book, a much wider audience will benefit from the careful research and clear paradigm informing this text.

Citing Womack in her introduction, Brooks declares her purpose to bring stories from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writings

to contemporary northeastern Native people as a tool for ongoing building of the consciousness of the people: “These early writings help us to see how Native nations continued to imagine themselves into being even as they grappled with forces that threatened to annihilate them. Moreover, these stories help us to imagine ourselves here, in relation to those that preceded us” (xxxiii).

Brooks provides a number of *awikhiganak* (maps) of the Northeast, some taking a broad view from the Gaspee to the Great Lakes, and some taking a minute view of *Kwinitekw* (the Connecticut River Valley) or *Shetucket* (the Thames River), for example. These maps reflect and respect Algonkian and Iroquoian historical relationships to and travels over the land, contextualizing European claims of ownership within a different and much longer continuum than that supplied by Euroamerican historical narratives of the last three centuries. Importantly, Brooks uses English names only rarely on the maps, giving the reader the chance to conceive of places, even those covered by Euroamerican infrastructures such as the interstate highways (routes 95, 91, 84, and 395), in Indigenous terms. However, Brooks clearly argues a view of Native writing as a site of ongoing reconfiguration of reality.

The Common Pot concerns itself with the critical thought and political agency of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Mohegan, Mohawk, Mohican, Pequot, and Wabanaki writers. Brooks delineates what their written works tell about how the Native people of the Northeast negotiated, based upon the teachings of their own cultures, the technologies and ideologies brought by foreign colonizers; confluences of language, cultural artifacts, and ideologies of land use (for example) might have resulted in adoption (as English loanwords in Native languages), adaptation (as writing in English), or resistance (to encroachment), but Brooks argues that these confluences always incurred acts of revision informed by the traditions of the Native cultures.

The Common Pot brings a particular focus to the continuity of writing among Wabanaki and other northeastern Indigenous people as a precontact practice. Brooks provides linguistic evidence of this in the Abenaki verb root *awigha*, to draw, write, or map, and the

noun *awikhigan*, the tool resulting from the act of drawing, writing or mapping. She recounts how the *awikhiganak*, birchbark scrolls containing symbolic and mnemonic information, were documented in *The Jesuit Relations* by seventeenth-century French priests at *Kespek* (the Gaspee Peninsula) who discovered their students creating their own versions of Cliff's Notes to help remember Catholic prayers and catechism. Brooks also provides photos of some eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Passamaquoddy and Montagnais examples preserved in museum collections and argues that the step from creating these *awikhiganak* to writing letters and petitions in English was a short and natural one taken by northeastern Native people, who incorporated European writing as a tool of resistance and a way to shape the future for their communities from the eighteenth century forward.

Brooks's chapters move from establishing historical context to demonstrating the literary analysis of texts that is made possible by a delineation of Native space in the Northeast. In her first chapter she defines some of her key terms and documents Native people's use, in an early petition, of the metaphor of "the common pot" as a way to evoke the dependence of communities, even those in conflict, on common resources of land. The second chapter reads some works from the career of Samson Occom in terms of his network of relationships with various Native communities and his political work to retain Native lands within New England. In the third chapter Brooks reads the journals of the Mahican leader Hendrick Aupaumut and the Mohawk leader Joseph Brant as examples of a "dialectical critique" of the emerging United States, with which each leader was attempting to create a peaceful and sovereign relationship. Chapter 4 looks at writing as an instrument of change in William Apess's *Indian Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts Relative to the Mashpee Tribe*. Brooks uses the example of Apess to show Native people's appropriation of the language of revolution and independence in the defense of their rights; in chapter 5 she turns to his *Eulogy on King Philip* as a culmination of development in Native writing of this period. The *Eulogy*, according to Brooks, not only redefines the wars of the past in terms of Native

sovereignty and courageous defense of homeland and community, but it also defines the present by locating the frontier of struggle between white people and people of color, imagining a possible future of peace and freedom for all. The last two chapters reconsider the development of genres—letters, petitions, journals, treaty literature, and communal history—and show how these forms interacted and continue to interact with the oral (particularly Wabanaki) cultures in this region.

Years ago Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, editor of *Wicazo-Sa Review*, told me that most of the Native American studies world knew little about northeastern Native people; scholars had neglected the field, and much of the writing was out of print. This work by Lisa Brooks comes in time to resonate with recent publications in Wabanaki literature and language, notably the *Passamaquoddy-Maliseet Dictionary* (2008) and Joseph Nicolai's *Life and Traditions of the Red Man* (republished in 2007). As a scholar and teacher living in Maine, working with and teaching about Wabanaki writing and storytelling, I welcome the scholarship, commitment, and vision informing *The Common Pot* as an excellent contribution to the field.

Contributor Biographies

MELODY GRAULICH is professor of English and American studies at Utah State University and the editor of the scholarly journal *Western American Literature*. Among many other publications, she co-authored *Trading Gazes: Euro-American Women Photographers and Native North Americans* and edited Leslie Marmon Silko's *Yellow Woman: Texts and Contexts*.

MARGO LUKENS is an associate professor of English at the University of Maine; her research interests include Native American and mixed-blood writers; Wabanaki literary and storytelling history; Native American and First Nations plays and playwrights; innovation and antiracism work. Her work has included producing and directing Native American plays on campus and in the region, as well as mentoring Native students and community members interested in theater. Recently she edited the new UCLA volume *Grandchildren of the Buffalo Soldiers and Other Untold Stories: Five Plays by William S. Yellow Robe, Jr.*

MARGARET NOORI received an MFA in creative writing and a PhD in English and linguistics from the University of Minnesota. She is currently director of the Comprehensive Studies Program and teaches the Anishinaabe language and American Indian literature at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Her work primarily focuses on the recovery and maintenance of Anishinaabe language and literature. Her current research interests include language proficiency and assessment and the study of Indigenous literary aesthetics and rhetoric. For more information or to view current projects, visit www.ojibwe.net, where she and her colleague, Howard Kimewon, have created space for language that is shared by academics and the Native community.

KIRSTI PALTTO is from the Finnish side of Sámiland and is among the first contemporary Sámi writers. She is also the first Sámi female writer. Since the early 1970s, she has written twenty books, of which seventeen have been published thus far. Her repertoire includes poetry, short stories, children's books, and novels. She has also written several plays and has been in charge of a local Sámi theatre in Rávgos.

ROBERT DALE PARKER is the author of *The Invention of Native American Literature* and *How to Interpret Literature: Critical Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies* as well as books on William Faulkner and Elizabeth Bishop. He is also the editor of *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky: The Writings of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft* and *Changing Is Not Vanishing: A Collection of American Indian Poetry to 1930*, to appear in late 2010.

STEVEN SALAITA is associate professor of English at Virginia Tech and the author of four books, most recently of *The Uncultured Wars: Arabs, Muslims, and the Poverty of Liberal Thought*.

JONATHAN D. STEIGMAN is currently assistant professor of Spanish in the Department of Foreign Languages at the United States Military Academy. He has been in his current position since August 2007. Prior to arriving at West Point, he was assistant professor of Spanish at Mississippi State University. He published his first book, *La Florida del Inca and the Struggle for Social Equality in Colonial Spanish America*, through the University of Alabama Press in September 2005. He received a PhD in romance languages from the University of Alabama in August of 2003.

DAVID YOST is a former Peace Corps volunteer and a current PhD student in creative writing at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. His essays have also appeared in *MELUS* and *War, Literature, and the Arts*, while his fiction has appeared in *Witness*, *Pleiades*, *Mid-American Review*, and other publications.

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.

Blackfoot Nation
PO Box 477
East Glacier, Blackfoot Nation 59434-0477
Phone: 406-338-2882
Web site: <http://www.blackfoot.org>

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

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
PO Box 1210
Durant, OK 74702
Phone: 800-522-6170
Web site: <http://www.choctawnation.com>

Coeur d'Alene Tribe
850 A Street
PO Box 408
Plummer, ID 83851
Phone: 208-686-1800
Fax: 208-686-1182
Web site: <http://www.cdatribe-nsn.gov/>

Fort Belknap Indian Community (Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes)
Fort Belknap Agency
RR 1 Box 66
Harlem, MT 59526
Phone: 406-353-2205
Fax: 406-353-2797
Web site: <http://www.ftbelknap-nsn.gov/>

Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
115 Sixth St. NW Ste. E
Cass Lake, MN 56633
Phone: 218-335-8200; 800-442-3909
Fax: 218-335-8309
Web site: <http://www.llojibwe.com>

Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians
101 Industrial Road
Choctaw, MS 39350
Phone: 601-656-5251
Web site: <http://www.choctaw.org>

Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians
PO Box 517
Santa Ynez, CA 93460
Phone: 805-688-7997
Fax: 805-686-9578
Web site: <http://www.santaynezchumash.org>

Spokane Tribe of Indians
PO Box 100
Wellpinit, WA 99040
Phone: 509-458-6500
Fax: 509-458-6597
Web site: <http://www.spokanetribe.com>

Tohono O'odham Nation
PO Box 837
Sells, AZ 85634
Phone: 520-383-2028
Web site: <http://www.tonation.nsn.gov>

Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians
PO Box 900
Highway 5 West
Belcourt, ND 58316
Phone: 701-477-2600
Fax: 701-477-6836
Web site: <http://www.tmbci.net>

White Earth Indian Reservation (Anishinaabe)
PO Box 418
White Earth, MN 56591
Phone: 218-983-3285
Fax: 218-983-4299
Web site: <http://www.whiteearth.com>

Studies in American Naturalism

Edited by Keith Newlin & Stephen C. Brennan

Illuminating the texts and contexts of naturalism across all genres from its nineteenth-century origins to its twentieth- and twenty-first century transformations. Critical essays, documents, notes, bibliographies, and reviews.



To order subscriptions or back issues:
WWW.NEBRAKAPRESS.UNL.EDU
OR 402-472-8536

Studies in American Naturalism is published for the International Theodore Dreiser Society. Members receive subscriptions as a benefit of membership.

UNIVERSITY OF
NEBRASKA PRESS



Available online through your library's subscription to:



Legacy

A Journal of American Women Writers

Edited by Nicole Tonkovich, Jennifer S. Tuttle, and Theresa Strouth Gaul

With a focus on American women's writings from the seventeenth through the midtwentieth century, each issue covers a wide range of topics: examinations of the works of individual authors; genre studies; analyses of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexualities in women's literature; and historical and material cultural issues pertinent to women's lives and literary works.



To order subscriptions or back issues:
WWW.NEBRAKAPRESS.UNL.EDU OR
402-472-8536

Legacy is the official journal of the Society for the Study of American Women Writers. Members receive a discount on their subscriptions. Contact the society for more information.

UNIVERSITY OF
NEBRASKA PRESS



Available online through your library's subscription to:



GREAT PLAINS QUARTERLY



www.unl.edu/plains

EDITOR: Charles A. Braithwaite

Established in 1981, GREAT PLAINS QUARTERLY publishes peer-reviewed articles on the history, literature, and culture of the Great Plains. The journal has a special interest in Native American topics. An annual cash award is given for the best article in a volume year.

Contact: gppq@unl.edu

Center for Great Plains Studies
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Lincoln

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln is an equal opportunity educator and employer with a comprehensive plan for diversity.