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**THE HEURISTIC POWERS OF INDIAN LITERATURES:
WHAT NATIVE AUTHORSHIP DOES TO MAINSTREAM TEXTS**

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I

Teachers begin the 1990s with greater access to Indian literatures than ever before. A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff's *American Studies International Bibliography of Indian Literatures* (32-52) and her new MLA book, *American Indian Literatures: An Introduction, Bibliographic Review, and Selected Bibliography*, list videotapes, numerous collections of narratives, songs, ceremonies, and speeches, as well as hundreds of works by individual poets, novelists, playwrights, essayists, autobiographers, and historians. Influential publishing houses like McGraw Hill, St. Martins, and Norton include Native American works in their American literature anthologies. The editors of *The American Experience*, a high school anthology (Prentice Hall 1989), *The Harper American Literature* (Harper 1987), *American Literature: A Prentice Hall Anthology, 2* (Prentice Hall, 1991; which includes all of *The Way to Rainy Mountain*), and especially *The Heath Anthology of American Literature* (Heath 1990) have made strong efforts to offer Indian oral and written texts to students. But availability doesn't solve an essential (and essentially disturbing) problem for teachers who want to include examples of Indian literatures in American or World literature courses. These instructors must strive to achieve two apparently contradictory goals: the articulation of fundamental differences between Native and mainstream texts; and the delineation of significant ways that Indian and non-Indian texts can speak to one another.

Teachers and scholars who ignore the cultural, historical, aesthetic, linguistic, and, in the cases of oral literatures, the performance contexts of Native texts risk making ludicrous or even sacrilegious mistakes. And their students will unwittingly be participating in a form of racism that permits the entrance of "different" perspectives only if they are reformulated into familiar images and concepts. Indian texts become red apples with conveniently thin veneers of the exotic that, once pierced, reveal familiar white (and often male) themes of Man vs. Nature, Man vs. Society, Alienation, etc., rendered accessible by established New Critical or other commonly used interpretive strategies.

A consistent emphasis in the separateness--the different-ness--of Indian literatures can lead to equally serious academic and ethical problems: forms of literary ghettoization and tokenism, or, to borrow Peter Carafiol's phrase, transformations of tokens into totems (632). In the latter case, teachers present Indian texts as being so different that they become incomparable to mainstream works and inaccessible to criteria routinely applied to non-Indian {9} literatures. Students may leave such classes perceiving Native American texts as curious objects on the American literary landscape--exotic anomalies to "get through" and then "forget" because they don't "fit." Colleagues who are aware of this process can, furthermore, ridicule the teacher (and by implication the Indian literatures) for not having the courage to let the Native texts "stand next to" familiar classics and "stand up to" established literary standards.¹

Elsewhere, I have suggested several ways to negotiate the frustrating demands of fostering students' awareness of fundamental differences, while still creating opportunities for Indian texts

to become part of dynamic intertextual and cross-cultural dialogues.² In this essay, I will focus on an approach that deserves more attention: the provocative, heuristic potential of teaching Indian literatures in surveys of American or World literatures.

Pretend that Native American literatures are not ignored or peripherally situated on the margins of the American literary canon, but instead are placed right at the center of literary surveys and critical debates. What types of questions would the Native texts generate? How could the "Otherness" or "differentness" of Indian literatures sensitize scholars, teachers, and students to important issues that they should be asking about all texts but may not have been, or if they asked they were content with familiar or superficial answers?

For example, who really is the author? Or on more fundamental levels, who "speaks" a text and what are the "origins" of texts? Despite attempts of some New Critics to teach texts in a vacuum and some post-structuralists to transform radically standard concepts of authorship, most English teachers and students still perceive the "validity and value" of literature in terms of texts and [individual] authors" (Hegeman 271; for a provocative critique of selected post-structuralist concepts of authorship, see Vitanza 15-23). Unfortunately, in lower-level survey courses, these teachers (myself included) typically answer the question of authorship by drawing attention to a brief headnote or by offering a few "biographical facts" in a lecture. These minimal efforts can reinforce simplistic notions of individual acts of creation--images of isolated and inspired authors dashing off clusters of brilliant phrases that become our Classics.

Powerful alternative images of the origins of literature, capable of transforming, replacing, or at least complementing romantic notions of authorship, can be discovered by students introduced to several examples of Indian literature in a survey course. The *variety* of the concepts of textual origins is so great and the nature of those concepts often so *different* that teachers and students are practically forced to consider basic questions about authors and origins that they may have ignored previously. Once this questioning has begun, it should be easy to carry the process of discovery over to discussions of non-Indian texts.

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To suggest how this process can work, I will offer several examples that I have found particularly useful for raising questions about authorship in survey courses. Anthology tables of contents and course book adoptions suggest that most teachers who include Indian texts in surveys tend to select works by twentieth-century Native American poets and novelists who publish in English (Wiget, "Identity" 4), selections that reflect their training. I will, therefore, focus on modern, written texts. I will, however, conclude by examining a well-known as-told-to autobiography and a famous ceremony. Even though these forms of literature may be unfamiliar and even threatening to survey teachers and students, they represent the most profound challenges to simplistic notions of authorship.

I hope my brief examples will encourage teachers and scholars to reverse or at least modify an understandable but limiting process: approaching Indian literatures by consistently imposing themes from non-Indian literatures on to the Native texts or by routinely using non-Indian theoretical orientations to interpret Native texts. Both approaches can be useful, but, when practiced exclusively, they can also lead to confusion and to literary colonialism. Using Indian texts as central paradigms and as sources of important questions can, on the other hand, enhance the study of Native American literatures while also transforming our views of non-Indian literatures in stimulating ways.

II

Love Medicine (1984), *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969), *Storyteller* (1981)--titles on book covers that ride above the names Erdrich, Momaday, and Silko that seem to answer the authorship question. Yet, as most specialists in contemporary Indian fiction would agree, each of these works and names raises intricate questions about authorship in general and specifically about "Indian" or "Native American" authorship.

In several interviews, but especially in one conducted by Kay Bonetti for American Audio Prose Library in 1986, Louise Erdrich has explained authorship as partnership. Before and during drafting stages she and her husband, educator and author Michael Dorris, discuss potential characters, narrative strategies, and themes. Like method actors and actresses, they even act out characters. In restaurants, for instance, they might try to imagine what and how a Nector Kashpaw or Lulu Nanapush would order, wear, or act. The actual drafting is more of a solitary business. "Michael works in one room and I work in the other"; "[w]e're collaborators, but we're also individual writers" (Bruchac interview 83, 85). The initial drafter gets his or her name on the cover. Thus, Erdrich's name is on *Love Medicine*, *The Beet Queen* (1986), and *Tracks* (1988), and will be on the forthcoming *American Horse*, even though it was Dorris's idea to make a four-book series out of their twentieth-century narrative of the Plains. After the first drafting, the non-drafter goes over every page, paragraph, and word alone and in {11} consultation with the drafter. Possibly the most concise and most moving expression of their authorship appears in the dedication of *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water* (1987), which Dorris drafted:

FOR LOUISE
Companion through every page
Through every day
Compeer

The Erdrich-Dorris collaboration raises fascinating questions about co-authorships. To what degree do the texts gain or lose "authority" as feminine, masculine, or androgynous texts because of the collaboration? Do early stressful situations mold long-lasting composition processes? In this case, did the trying circumstances under which "The World's Greatest Fisherman" was written (see Bonetti interview) and the quick and striking success of that story (including a \$5,000 prize) establish a psychological/creative pattern--a paradigm fashioned under fire and then set by a glow of recognition? After all, that story played a key role in generating *Love Medicine*, and that book began the four-book series. Or to what degree was their writing relationship influenced by family habits and tribal traditions of consultation?

Despite his stay at Taos, I doubt that D. H. Lawrence's concept of authorship was radically altered by tribal traditions. Nonetheless, in comparative literature courses, the Erdrich-Dorris relationship could be used to sensitize students to the influence of Frieda on D. H.'s writing. In an American literature course, an Erdrich-Dorris book could encourage questions about the Zelda-F. Scott Fitzgerald relationship or about the literary, gender, and cultural implications of the many times, in their correspondence, Twain and Howells noted the roles of their wives as editors and censors. Of course, these investigations need not be limited to husband-and-wife

teams. The Erdrich-Dorris instance could stimulate discussions of the Eliot-Pound collaboration on *The Waste Land* (1922) or of many other collaborations that examine the origins and results of two relatives or close friends co-creating a written text.

The case of Momaday's authorship of *The Way to Rainy Mountain* includes and goes beyond relatives, friends, and writing. Momaday's "The Man Made of Words," chapters and articles written by Matthias Schubnell (140-66), Kenneth Lincoln, Hertha D. Wong ("Contemporary"), David H. Brumble (165-80), and me (e.g., "Survey"), and several parts of *Approaches to Teaching Momaday's "The Way to Rainy Mountain"* (e.g., 24-46) have outlined the communal acts of authorship that created the three voices of the book. The tribal and family storytelling voices grew out of childhood memories of hearing many family members, especially his father, tell him Kiowa stories as timeless as when the Kiowa emerged from a hollow log and as recent as events in his grandparents' lives. These remembered tellings were reinforced during the mid-1960s when Momaday retraced the migration route of his {12} people, visited his grandmother's grave, and, with the help of his father, collected stories and history from the tribal elders honored in his acknowledgements. In an interview conducted by Charles L. Woodard, Momaday notes that only in a very limited sense can he be considered the author of the stories: "I can take credit for setting down those Kiowa stories in English . . . , but I didn't invent them. The imagination that informs those stories is really not mine, though it exists, I think, in my blood. It's an ancestral imagination" (57). In collaboration with D. E. Carlsen and Bruce S. McCurdy, 33 lyric versions of these stories appeared in the privately printed *The Journey of Taimé* (1967). (See also Momaday, "Kiowa Legends.")

The historical and personal voices on the recto pages are closer to being Momaday's own creative acts, but they are still communally authored in several senses. The historical voices often draw upon Kiowa elders' memories and written sources; Momaday especially acknowledges the use of James Mooney's *Calendar History* (1898).³ Yvor Winters, Momaday's mentor and friend at Stanford, encouraged him to experiment with multiple-voices or, as he wrote in a letter to Momaday, "controlled associations" (Schubnell 143-44). Although to my knowledge it has never been noted in print, the personal voice is also collaborative. Natachee Scott Momaday, Momaday's mother, took an active role in helping him to remember many of the childhood experiences that he used in *Rainy Mountain* and *The Names* (Momaday, "Response"). Even the visual impact of the book had collaborative origins. As the title page announces, Momaday's father, Al, illustrated the book. Hidden on the back of the last page, we find an equally important announcement: "Designed by Bruce Gentry." This talented University of New Mexico designer selected the three type styles, placed the story voices on the verso and the two commentary voices on the recto pages, and sent the words "RAINY MOUNTAIN THE WAY T/O RAINY MOUNTAIN THE WAY" on their journey across the bottoms of facing pages. (In some paper copies, the "T/O" disappears into the gutter of the book.)

Does all this collaboration mean that we should strip Momaday's name from the cover and replace it with "A Host of Thousands Stretching Back to the Time Dogs Could Talk"? Of course not. If for nothing else, Momaday deserves the title author for the inventive genius it took to conceive of and execute the multi-voiced structure. (We might also allow him a bit of credit for crafting almost a hundred pages of lyric prose with framing poems!) But the "author" of *Rainy Mountain* clearly can not be defined by the isolated, individual writer model. Authorship in *Rainy Mountain* more closely resembles post-structuralist concepts of authors who speak "by virtues of conventions of discourse situations, contexts, interpretive communities" (Vitanza 19) or models of authorship that can be associated with tribal storytelling traditions (Brumble 168-

80). Gary Kodaseet, an important contemporary Kiowa leader, recently defined {13} such a storytelling model as he articulated his response to *Rainy Mountain*. He noted that the structure reminded him of the familiar storytelling sessions of his childhood. Someone might tell an ancient story about "our beginning, [or] the stories of the ten bundles." But people also "told family histories" and personal memories (Roemer, *Approaches* 148-49). (It's interesting to note that one of the early reviews of Erdrich's *Love Medicine* compared the narrative structure of that book to a "family reunion in a crowded kitchen" [Sanders 7].)

Although Laguna and Acoma stories (including stories found in *Ceremony* and the "Estoyeh-muut" narrative that unifies Silko's film *Arrowboy and the Witches*) are important parts of *Storyteller*, the communal tribal voice is not quite as obvious in Silko's book as it is in Momaday's. Nonetheless, in a survey course, *Storyteller* can become a paradigm for a concept of self defined communally and open to a great variety of different voices. The title of the book helps to define Silko as a storyteller. For her, storytelling is a communal role, not only because sharing a tale requires an audience, but also because Silko conceives of storytelling as a group activity: "Traditionally, everyone, from the youngest child to the oldest person, was expected to listen and to be able to tell a portion, if only a small detail, from a narrative account or story. Thus, the remembering and retelling were a communal process" (qtd. in Krupat, *Voice* 163).

Arnold Krupat (*Voice* 161-70) and Hertha Wong ("Orality") have argued convincingly that this process in *Storyteller* encompasses an exciting diversity of forms and voices. The forms include letters, short fictions expressing lyric, mythic, comic, and other tones (e.g., "Lullaby," "Yellow Woman," "Coyote Holds a Full House in His Hand"), poetry, Laguna responses to her work (110), childhood memories often in poetic form, and wonderful photographs taken primarily by her father but also by grandpa Hank and a friend, Denny Carr. The mingling of voices comes from many family storytellers like Aunt Susie but also from and to Indians (the Hopi storyteller Helen Sekaquaptewa) and non-Indians (James Wright) outside the family. And then there are the implied voices of the photographs. In captions (269-79) Silko gives voice to these images; several of the captions are actually stories in their own right (e.g., nos. 11, 271). The overall result is a sense of textual origins built out of a rich network of identifications with relatives, landscapes, and of course, stories.

Introducing students to authorship in *Rainy Mountain* and *Storyteller* can help them to understand several intricate Native American autobiographies written since *Rainy Mountain* appeared (e.g., Elizabeth Cook-Lynn's *Then Badger Said This*) and many of the recent Alaskan autobiographies and contributions to Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat's *I Tell You Now* (1987) (Bumble 178-80). Examining *Rainy Mountain* and *Storyteller* can also encourage students to {14} ponder the fine lines between translator and author in works by Ezra Pound, between teller/collector of stories and writer in novels by Faulkner, Sherwood Anderson, and Zora Neal Hurston, between individual and group voices in communities as small as the Black Mountain Poets and as large as Jewish-American writers. Students should also be more sensitive to the visual dimensions of authorship, whether visuals are a crucial part of the marketing strategy, as was the case with Mark Twain's books sold by subscription, or become more personal statements, as in William Blake's illustrated volumes.

Before we move from contemporary works written in English to as-told-to autobiographies and ceremonial literature, one other general authorship issue deserves emphasis, especially in the cases of Leslie Marmon Silko, Louise Erdrich, and many other poets and novelists with mixed cultural heritages. What constitutes an "Indian" or "Native American" author? The mid-1980s controversy over Jamake Highwater recharged this issue (see Adams and Anderson), but I've

been haunted by the question ever since someone whispered to me in a conference hall that so-and-so didn't have "a drop of Indian blood" and when a professor blurted out at a 1970s MLA session that Momaday was not an Indian--"After all, he has a Ph.D.!"

In his introduction to an excellent collection of contemporary prose and poetry, *The Remembered Earth* (1979, 1980), Geary Hobson offers a variety of ways to define Indian authors but focuses on a sensible construct: "those of Native American blood and background who affirm their heritage in individual ways" (10). He also stresses the importance of the "tribe's, or [Indian] community's, judgment"(8). In many of his writings but especially in "The Man Made of Words" and *The Names*, Momaday adds the importance of how the writer imagines him or herself. One of his primary examples is his mother, a respected teacher and writer. As a sixteen-year-old, she decided to assert her (one-eighth) Cherokee identity over her Southern belle image and went on to Haskell College, marriage to a Kiowa, and teaching on reservations (*Names* 23-25; Brumble 174). As Erdrich has asserted, when you have a mixed heritage, "[y]ou must make choices" (Bruchac interview 83).

Questions about Indian authorship go beyond blood and background to include matters of audience, language, form and topic. A clear-cut response to audience definition comes from Jack Forbes: "Native American literature must consist in works produced by persons of Native identity and/or culture for primary dissemination to other persons of Native identity and/or culture" (19; see also Krupat, *Voice* 203-08). Despite the "and/or" hedging, this definition would eliminate from consideration as types of Indian literatures most of the works of contemporary Indian writers, including full-bloods like James Welch and Simon Ortiz, and many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sermons, histories, poems, and stories.

Form and topic also raise questions. Because they employ repeti-[15](#)tion with variation to examine Indian identity, are Momaday's "Delight Song of Tsoai-talee" and Joy Harjo's "She Had Some Horses" more Indian than Harjo's free verse poem "Anchorage" or Momaday's poems about Russia? Or are all Momaday's and Harjo's poems informed by Indian perspectives? And if they are, is this perspective so broad that it is similar to perspectives used by many non-Indian authors? Along similar lines of query, how much difference is there between the landscape and small-town poems of Carter Revard and Jim Barnes and the poems that Anglo poets write about the Southwest? How do Erdrich's primarily white town of Argus and Momaday's all-white hero Billy the Kid figure into the Native landscape? And where does that landscape begin and end, considering the high percentage of mixed heritages among Indians and the fact that more than half of the Indian population lives in urban areas and speaks English?

Of course, all these questions, at least indirectly, provoke the basic question of the advantages and disadvantages--for writers and readers--of the concept of an Indian author. Writers often gain attention, authority, respect, and distinction because they are perceived as Indians, and readers often use their knowledge of an author's Indianness to allay knotty questions of authenticity (see Hegeman 269-71). Nevertheless, the label "Indian author" can, as suggested above, severely limit authorial freedom and readers' expectations and interpretations. In a performance context, the latter was dramatized at a big Indian arts fair in Arlington, Texas in 1990. A Kiowa "Indian performer," Thomas Ware, dressed traditionally and played ancient flute songs. A large crowd listened politely. Then he put on a hat and shades, plugged in his guitar, and played the blues (better than he had played the flute). The crowd departed. I doubt that type of audience would be interested in hearing Joy Harjo play the tenor sax (which she does well) if she had been announced as an "Indian performer."

Because discussing Indian authorship can be so frustrating and so sensitive, many teachers

may be tempted to avoid the whole issue, and thus miss marvelous opportunities to raise questions about categorizing authors, authorial freedom, and reading conventions. After discussing the controversies over Indian authorship, wouldn't students be more likely to question both typical and currently fashionable characterizations by period, region, literary movement, ethnic background, and gender? How Southern is Faulkner when he uses Joycean techniques or writes about non-Southern locales? How do the labels "local colorist" and "feminist" help to gain literary reputations for Sarah Orne Jewett and Kate Chopin, and how do they freeze those reputations? Is Saul Bellow less of a Jewish writer because he doesn't write in Yiddish? How far would Conrad have gone if he had written only in Polish? Are women authors who focus attention on male protagonists traitors? Reading articles about canon reformation, feminist and post-structuralist theory certainly {16} can sensitize students into asking such questions. But often a direct encounter with a text by a contemporary Indian writer has as much or more of an immediate impact. One of Robert Coles' Harvard Business School students defines this type of impact (in a discussion of William Carlos Williams) in the following way: "Williams' words have become my images and sounds, part of me. You don't do that with theories. . . . You do it with a story, because in a story--oh, like it says in the Bible, *the word becomes flesh*" (qtd. in Flowers 19).

Indianness doesn't seem to be a problem when discussing as-told-to autobiographies or tribal ceremonies. Who would question Black Elk's Indian identity or the Navajoness of the Night Way? And yet, as compared to the modern fiction and poetry, texts such as *Black Elk Speaks* (1932) and Washington Matthews' translation of the Navajo ceremony, like the Kiowa myths in *Rainy Mountain* and the Laguna and Acoma stories in *Storyteller*, raise even more fundamental questions about authorship.

Raymond DeMallie, Sally McCluskey, Michael Castro, H. David Brumble, Clyde Holler, Arnold Krupat, and other scholars have addressed the complexities of the collaborative, bi-cultural authorship of *Black Elk Speaks*. On the way to becoming printed words in English, Nick Black Elk's spoken words passed from his lips, occasionally joined by the words of friends like Standing Bear, and travelled through his son Ben's ears and mind emerging as spoken English that was quickly transformed into the stenographic notes written by Enid Neihardt. She later transcribed these notes, which her father then reorganized and revised, sometimes barely changing a phrase, other times making paragraph-length deletions and additions. (See Neihardt's Preface xviii-xix. For a sympathetic response to Neihardt's editing, see Castro 83-97. For a negative view, see Krupat, *For Those* 126-34. For one of the most balanced critiques, see Brumble 6, 30, 36, 45.) As in the cases of *Rainy Mountain* and *Storyteller*, *Black Elk Speaks* can be used to examine the possibilities and limitations of collaborative authorship, translation, and the introduction of unfamiliar perspectives and topics (for instance, Cooper's and Longfellow's Indians, Melville's South Sea Islanders, or even Shakespeare's Moor, Othello).

Audience and authorship again become crucial but from different perspectives than we saw in the fiction and poetry. How important is it that Black Elk spoke his words in front of Oglala family and friends and Neihardt and his daughters? In the tradition of a Plains coup-telling audience, his friends clearly acted as "witnesses, to validate what [he] has to say" (Brumble 30). Neihardt and his daughters represented a different type of validation--an immediate proof that outside audiences were interested and would soon hear Black Elk's message. Other important questions relate to Black Elk's self image. For instance, in his performance situation, to what degree did he perceive himself as an individual defining himself or {17} as a communal voice of his people (see Bataille 29)? To put these questions in a comparative light, what are the

differences between the ways word makers invent, narrate, anticipate, and respond when they are speaking before visible faces instead of writing to invisible readers, or differences between communication as a representative of a group instead of as an individual self? At the very least, these questions could stir students to investigate the authorship strategies of people like Jonathan Edwards, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Frederick Douglass, and Martin Luther King, who are recognized as speakers and writers and, especially in the cases of the latter two, known as representatives of their people who reached diversified audiences.

If Black Elk were asked to define the author of *Black Elk Speaks*, he might very well respond, "The Great Vision," a gift that was not his invention but was "given to a man too weak to use it" (2). That childhood vision gave meaning to his life, became his essential means of evaluating himself and his people, and created the exigency that compelled him to tell his life story to a non-Lakota writer of English. As logical as this answer seems from a Lakota viewpoint, it is bound to provoke liberating and troubling questions about authorship for literature students. How can an old man remember the details of a nine-year-old boy's vision? How much did he embellish the vision in anticipation of his audience's expectations? Is the dependency on a white writer to communicate the vision beyond Sioux country as a work of literature a final admission of the decline of Plains Indian cultures or a final triumph of those cultures and of the powers of storytelling and the imagination? In comparative contexts, to what degree can questions generated by *Black Elk Speaks* be applied to Isaiah's prophecies, John's Revelations, or Walt Whitman's visionary flights? And what might the comparisons imply about how different cultures define authorial roles on a spectrum of ideal word makers/senders ranging from the transformer of chaos, inventor of awesome words, and liberator of new perspectives to the ideal as the sensitive receiver, vehicle, conserver, and performer of word gifts? In Whitman's utopia the former would reign; in Black Elk's and the traditional Navajo's, the latter.

The Navajo Night Way (or Night Chant) remains one of the best-known Native American ceremonies. (Translations, excerpts, videotapes, films, and James C. Faris' recent book make it more accessible than many other ceremonies.⁴) Lasting nine days, its primary, though certainly not its only, function is to attract holiness that will restore a serious physical and/or psychological imbalance that is threatening one or more patients and potentially many other people and even the physical environment.

Many of the questions about collaborative authorship raised by *Love Medicine*, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, *Storyteller*, and *Black Elk Speaks* confront readers of Washington Matthews' monumental translation/description, *The Night Chant* (1902). Andrew Natona-[18](#)'s attribution of the origins of Night Way and other Navajo ceremonial songs to the Holy Beings can be compared to Black Elk's emphasis on his vision (see *By This Song I Walk*). And more than any other form of Native American literature, the ceremonial texts reveal the full extent of collaborative and communal concepts of authorship. There is divine-human collaboration. The success of the Night Way depends upon a sacred contract. If the ceremony is performed correctly, the Holy Beings must send the holiness that will restore balance, harmony, and beauty. And human collaboration. The success of the Night Way began with ancient word gifts, generations of teacher-apprentice relationships, and complex interdependencies among the diagnostician, chief singer, his assistants (including dancers), the patient(s), the patient(s)' family and friends, and the audience.

Certainly, an introduction to the origins and continuity of the Night Way can encourage students to ask questions about other great liturgical literatures. Furthermore, in any type of literature course, an acquaintance with the Night Way can undermine simplistic notions of the

individual author's fixed text. This is especially true if the instructor introduces the ceremony early in the semester and continues throughout the semester to raise questions about the importance of community sources of literature, of apprenticeships, of collaborations, and of the co-creative forces that make the success of a literary text dependent upon much more than the performance of an individual author.

By emphasizing concepts of Native American authorship that can provoke questions about the authorship of non-Indian texts, I'm *not* suggesting that Indian literatures should be taught primarily as warm-ups for discussions of mainstream texts. As I indicated in my introduction, I'm asking teachers and scholars to consider placing Indian literatures at the center of the canon and of theoretical debates. Nor am I suggesting that the only way to make students in survey courses reconsider simplistic notions of authorship is to introduce Indian literatures. Reading post-structuralist criticism, comparing selected mainstream texts, and examining composition, publication, and reception processes can also achieve this goal. I do hope, however, that the few examples I've offered at least hint at the rich diversity of Indian concepts of authorship and the degree to which these concepts often differ from survey students' notions about authors. And I do maintain that this variety and these differences offer teachers numerous opportunities to jar students toward an awareness of questions that they should be asking of every assigned text. In my utopian American literature class, the students would leave appreciating the inclusions of Native American literatures because they would have encountered new forms of literary excellence, new perspectives on their country and their identities, and new questions about the authorship that they could carry into all their future reading experiences.⁵

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NOTES

¹For a recent discussion of this dilemma, see Hegeman, especially 268-69, 280.

²See "Reconstructing" 437-38; "The Study" B1-B2; and "Survey Courses" 619-24.

³For other possible historical and anthropological sources, see Roemer, *Approaches* 9-11, Appendix A, 154-55. As indicated in the Appendix A headnote, the passages identified are not all sources. I listed many, especially those published after *Rainy Mountain*, primarily to encourage comparative studies.

⁴See Works Cited: Bierhorst 279-351, *By This Song I Walk*, Faris, Matthews, and *Navajo*.

⁵I delivered earlier versions of parts of this essay during Jan Swearingen's Summer 1989 graduate seminar at the University of Texas at Arlington, at the Conference on the Core and the Canon, Denton, Texas, 28 Oct. 1989, and at the Symposium on Native Writers in American Literature, Orlando, Florida, 30 Mar. 1990. I would like to thank all the respondents, especially Scott Momaday, for their questions and comments. I would also like to thank Professors Larry Abbott and Helen Jaskoski for their revision suggestions.

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