

NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN'S WRITING 1800-1924

AN ANTHOLOGY



EDITED BY KAREN L. KILCUP



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BLACKWELL ANTHOLOGIES

Native American Women's Writing, c.1800-1924

An Anthology

Edited by Karen L. Kilcup



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*This volume is dedicated to anthropologist Phyllis Rogers
(Cherokee), whose work has inspired me and whose friendship
sustained me through difficult times*

Preface

Completing this anthology has helped transform my view of nineteenth-century American literature as a whole – its shape, its voices, its ambitions, and its aesthetics. I hope that it will have a similar effect on readers. Although the volume is envisioned in part as a text for courses on Native American women's writing, Native American literatures, nineteenth-century American literature, Women's Studies, and American Studies, I also seek to provide scholars with the resources for further conversation in the field and to engage general readers. The basic principles of selection for this collection are analogous to those for my earlier collection, *Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers: An Anthology*: to include as diverse a group of writing and genres as possible, and to offer complete texts, or, where selections are included, internally coherent and independent pieces. Because of the Cherokees' early education in English, writers from this group occupy an especially prominent space. Some writers, like Pauline Johnson, Sarah Winnemucca, Ora Eddleman Reed, and Zitkala-Ša, were particularly prolific; hence, they represent a significantly larger portion of the collection than those like Jane Johnston Schoolcraft and Annette Leevier.

Because of space limitations and because many of the writers included here retell versions of traditional oral narratives, I have opted to deemphasize those collected by white ethnographers, offering only a small selection from the most strongly represented tribes in the anthology in the hopes that these examples will provide a framework for understanding the individuals' work and inspire readers to seek additional sources. I have also deemphasized songs for these reasons, as well as because their performative contexts are erased by placing them in print. In including oral and as-told-to work, I am obviously construing the terms "writer" and "writing" broadly.

The choices of selections were often dependent on context and the interrelationships between writers. For Mary Jemison, I have included those selections that have been identified as principally her own. For Narcissa Owen and Buffalo Bird Woman, I have chosen chapters that I thought would be most accessible to contemporary readers and that also provide interesting and productive connections with other writers in the collection (all the selections, in fact, have been chosen with an eye toward such connections). Buffalo Bird Woman's autobiography is taken not from Gilbert Wilson's published text, *Waheenee*, but from his field notes, which represent her voice in a much less mediated form. For writers whose work is extensive, such as Johnson, I have attempted to indicate their diversity and range. Seeking to aid readers in approaching the materials, I have divided the well-represented writers' work into the very broad generic categories of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction prose. Although genre is itself a Western concept, it can provide a useful conceptual tool for understanding the literatures, revealing, for example,

that these writers' works are impressively diverse, including short fiction, novel, poetry, political writing, autobiography, humor, oratory, children's writing, and many others.

Because of their strong publishing history, Zitkala-Ša and Pauline Johnson presented the question of which text to select among multiple versions. I have chosen to work from their collections, and readers unfamiliar with these materials should be aware that many of the pieces were published earlier – sometimes, as in the case of the former's "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," originally published in the prestigious *Atlantic Monthly* in 1900, much earlier than the collection in which it ultimately appeared. This choice means that writers are represented in some cases by revised work; while often both interesting and informative, these revisions cannot be traced here.

In addition to providing brief headnotes that attempt to outline the writers' lives and to offer some connections between and among the writers, I have supplied brief bibliographies of primary and secondary materials for each writer; these are intended to be indicative rather than complete. Although I have attempted to be as accurate as possible with biographical details, for some writers such details have been difficult to confirm; for others, the existing biographies are contradictory. In the latter cases, I have relied on what I believe to be the most reliable sources. Footnotes, as in all anthologies in the Blackwell series, are offered only where necessary to explain terms or references not readily available. In some instances I have been unable to locate references after considerable investigation and have simply omitted them. Because of space considerations, and because this volume is conceived principally as a literary text rather than a collection of historical documents, I have not attempted in every case to confirm the accuracy of individual facts in writers' accounts of tribal history, choosing instead only to remark briefly, where appropriate, on their apparent reliability. For the purposes of literary study, it is more appropriate to ask why a writer has altered her "facts" and to consider what those alterations may reveal about her perspective than it is to catalog them.

In terms of the texts themselves, I have retained the original spelling and punctuation except in those cases where errors clearly represented mistakes in proofreading or typesetting. The exceptions to this rule are the early Cherokee women's texts, where I have made some slight alterations for readability. As with all Blackwell anthologies, the emphasis here is on complete texts; for the purposes of presenting a relatively complete picture of the field, writers of longer texts are represented by excerpts that can stand alone. Thus the anthology offers the resources for a complete course in shorter writing as well as providing a core text around which instructors can build by adding such works as *Wynema*, *Life Among the Piutes*, and *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison*.

The choice of time period encompassed by this collection ends, appropriately – given the political thrust of much of the writing included here – with a political rather than a literary moment: the granting of United States citizenship to include all of its Native American peoples. While this collection seeks to offer representative selections of individual authors, to say that it (or any other collection) is "representative" is, as my introduction explores, a task for future critical discussions of early Native American women's writing. This anthology does seek, however, to challenge traditional "mainstream" notions of what constitutes "literature," including political and historical writing alongside more familiarly "aesthetic" forms like romantic poetry, and representing in written forms texts that seem like oratory.

I hope that the final brief section, which incorporates selections by various authors, including children, young women from the Cherokee Female Seminary, and adults, will provide readers with a sense of the additional work that remains to be discovered and will inspire some to seek it out, extending further the literary conversation in which this anthology engages.

Acknowledgments

Since I began work on *Native American Women Writers, c.1800-1924: An Anthology* in 1990, the recovery work in the field has expanded the available material dramatically, and the critical perspectives that have developed on earlier Native American women's literatures and cultures by both literary scholars and historians have helped provide me with a greater understanding of the collection's coherence at its completion. Particularly important has been work by Paula Gunn Allen, James Axtell, Gretchen Bataille, David Brumble, Dexter Fisher, Arnold Krupat, Daniel Littlefield, James Parins, Kenneth Roemer, A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff, Kathleen Sands, Cheryl Walker, and Andrew Wiget. Special thanks to Theda Perdue for making available the early Cherokee women's petitions. Without these scholars' groundbreaking work and that of many others in the field this collection would not have been finished without many additional years of effort.

I am grateful to my former home institution, the University of Hull, England, and its School of Arts and Department of American Studies for their support of this project. Various members of the Northeast Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers Study Group, many of whom are now part of the Society for the Study of American Women Writers, as well as the International Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers Research Group in the EC, have been helpful in ways both tangible and intangible. Again I would like to thank Westbrook College in Portland, Maine (now part of the University of New England) for honoring me with the Dorothy M. Healy Visiting Professorship for research; it provided me with the time and resources to advance this and other projects. I extend special thanks to Bobby Gray, the Librarian of the College, and the library staff, for work well above and beyond the call of duty. I would also like to thank the following college and university libraries, and their excellent staff members, for their resources and assistance: Albany, Arkansas, Bates, Brandeis, Colby, Cornell, Dartmouth, Duke, Georgia, Harvard, Hull, Massachusetts at Amherst, Massachusetts at Boston, Mount Holyoke, New Hampshire, North Carolina at Chapel Hill, North Carolina at Greensboro, Northeastern State, Tufts, Vermont, Virginia, Wake Forest, Wellesley, Westbrook, and Yale. The wonderful Interlibrary Loan Staff at the Walter Clinton Jackson Library of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, especially Gaylor Callahan, deserve special mention for their patience and hard work. I am appreciative of the important assistance provided by the American Antiquarian Society, the Oklahoma Historical Society, the Nebraska Historical Society, Phillips Exeter Academy, the British Library, and the United States Library of Congress. Special thanks to the Minnesota Historical Society for permission to print work from the Gilbert L. and Frederick N. Wilson papers, which contain Gilbert L. Wilson's field notes recording the narratives of Buffalo Bird Woman, and to the American Museum of Natural History,

Department of Anthropology Archives, also for Buffalo Bird Woman. My most important resource, however, has been my home institution, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, for providing generous research assistance, including Regular Faculty and Summer Excellence in Research Grants without which this volume would not have been possible; thanks to the staff in the Office of Research Services (especially Nelda French), to my former Department Head, Jim Evans, and to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Walter Beale, for their continuing assistance and support.

Over the years many students have served as a testing ground for these materials, including my 1991 Native American Literature senior and graduate seminar at Tufts University; but the members of my spring 1999 Native American Women Writers graduate seminar at UNCG were particularly helpful in enabling me to finalize the selections. This collection also owes a tremendous debt to my excellent graduate research assistants in the last several years – Mary-Robyn Adams, Greg Tredore, Anna Elkins, Cassie Gainer, Kelly Richardson, Katie Ryan, Joseph Thomas, and Laura Shearer – without whom it would not have been completed within this millennium. Special thanks to Steve Brandon for his meticulous research on Narcissa Owen, for composing the headnote and bibliography for her selection, and for helping with footnotes and cover art. Lydia Howard's ongoing assistance in many areas has been important to the completion of this work.

Finally, I thank my patient editor, Andrew McNeillie, my excellent desk editor, Juanita Bullough, and the editorial staff at Blackwell Publishers, who waited for the immense task of locating, ordering, and reviewing hundreds of texts to be completed.

The editor will donate her profits from the sale of this volume to support Native American educational purposes.

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