Paula Gunn Allen

Off the Reservation

Reflections
on Boundary-Busting,

Border-Crossing

Loose Canons

Beacon Press
25 Beacon Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02108-2892
www.beacon.org

Beacon Press books are published under the auspices of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations.

Printed in the United States of America

03 02 01 00 99 98 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

This book is printed on recycled acid-free paper that contains at least 20 percent postconsumer waste and meets the uncoated paper ANSI/NISO specifications for permanence as revised in 1992.

Text design by Lucinda Hitchcock
Composition by Wilsted & Taylor Publishing Services

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA
Allen, Paula Gunn.
Off the reservation : reflections on boundary-busting, border-crossing loose canons / Paula Gunn Allen.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 0-8070-4640-x (cloth)
I. Title.
PS3551.L397038 1998
814'.54—DC21 98-21247

ETHEL HAINES FRANCIS

1916–1991

Thanks, Ma.

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"Don't Fence Me In"

BORDER CROSSINGS

According to my people on the Laguna Pueblo side of the family, we emerged from the third world (*sipapu*, or "underworld") into the fourth world. That was long ago, so far, and when the people came out they had to wait until their mother, Iyatik[u], instructed them that the earth was ripe. Naiya Iyatik[u], our dear mother Beautiful Corn Woman, explained that the sun would rise four times but the people would emerge at the fourth, when it rose in the east. On that day, she herself would appear riding atop the sun, and Kokopelli, the humpback flute player, would lead the way, playing his flute from which multitudes of butterflies tumbled. Kokopelli is the Hopi Pueblo name for Humpback Flute Player and the most familiar form of his name. According to the petroglyphs as well as ethnological experts, Kokopelli is only depicted when the icon possesses three distinguishing characteristics: a humpback, a flute, and a rampant outsize penis. But poor Kokopelli! It seems that he ran afoul of Old Man Missionary and lost his joie de vivre, for he capers sadly about on wall hangings, tea towels, pot holders, tote bags, t-shirts, and pricey bronze cutouts sans his joyful manhood. Perhaps this sorry loss is symptomatic of all that is wrong with colonization, and indicative of all that fills Native hearts with rage.

Much of the sacred lore of the Keres Pueblo people circles around three major themes: creation, emergence, and migration. After creation and emergence into the fourth world, the great migrations began. This tradition, migration, is the strand I belong to; it is the dominant strand in the legacy of my gene pool's other parts. Like the old migration cycle, my line's tradition encompasses three major migration strands, most easily referenced

as Laguna Pueblo, Maronite Lebanese, and Celtic Scots. All three are, I might add, Goddess-centered strands; whether this is through serendipity, cultural diffusion, or means we cannot yet identify, is not yet clear.

My pueblo, Laguna Pueblo, is itself a living artifact/expression of the migration cycle: Located on a major crossroads of cultural exchange from the early period of contact with Spanish explorers and colonials, Laguna emerged from the dislocations that Spanish arrival occasioned. When the Pueblos revolted against Spanish incursions and abuses, they drove the invaders hundreds of miles south of their lands. Then, a few decades later they invited them back, because when it's time, it's time, and all the wishings and revolts cannot change it. Or so they say. With the return of the Spaniards, their horses, and their garrisons came the founding of Old Laguna. Composed of a variety of mavericks – Pueblos, for the most part Keres, who had fled Spanish depredations, bacteriological plagues they brought with them, and, I should guess, the ravages of the Pueblo War against the invaders – the founders of Laguna Pueblo included Tewa, Tanno, Tiwa, and Navajos. It is rumored that my great-great-grandfather, Atseye, was himself Navajo. If so, his name would have actually been Atsitte, which, I'm told, means "silversmith." Laguna has from its inception been a mixed blood place, and to that distinguishing characteristic it owes not only its prospering survival, but its active and vital participation in many phases of American life. It was from Laguna lands that the uranium to build the world-changing bombs of the 1940s was taken.

According to my people's history from the Maronite-Lebanese side of the family, our origins are lost in the mists of Anatolia, from whence the proto-Celtic people migrated long, long ago to what would become Phoenicia, the red land. These were the people of the goddess Ishtar, sister of Egyptian goddess Isis. It is told that Isis consulted Ishtar and with her help located the remains of the beloved Osiris. They were stashed in his sarcophagus embedded in an oak tree in the Phoenician city of Byblos. Isis, sorceress, goddess, sister, mother, and lover of Osiris, resurrected him through her magic and impregnated herself. But his enemy Seth later found the body and hacked it into fourteen pieces; Seth tossed Osiris's penis to a crocodile for lunch; the other parts he scattered about the Nile valley. Isis found the pieces and reconstituted the god, sans penis. It seems Seth was an ancient form of Old Man Missionary, operating in the Mediterranean several thousand years before he found the homelands of the Keres. Maybe the other branch of my proto-Celtic ancestors, the one that would become Scots-Irish, chose to migrate northwest in a doomed attempt to avoid his life-destroying, goddess-hating clutches.

There's an interesting confluence in these tales, hints of the braiding of the three strands that define me. Isis, sorceress, goddess of corn, goddess of sexual love, is reminiscent of Iyatik". According to Barbara G. Walker in *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, ". . . 'In the beginning there was Isis, Oldest of the Old. She was the Goddess from whom all becoming arose.' As the creatress, she gave birth to the sun 'when he rose upon this earth for the first time.'" It is true that the apparent braiding has particular interest for me, stemming as I do from each strand. But the junctures of the traditions are not my doing: they are suggestive of something; – perhaps a global civilization that long predated what we think of as the ancient world; perhaps a paranormal link in which sorcerer talked to shaman, and they each talked to priestesses/priests over a spiritual "ethernet." Or perhaps the bumper sticker that announces "My Other Car Is a Broom" refers not to fanciful stories from a long-discredited body of thought as much as to an ancient mode of transportation. Maybe some rode brooms, some carpets, and some magic arrows powered by Spider Grandmother's magic pollen. Or maybe stories, like human beings, just get around.

My branch of the human family has been given to migration on every side. Migration, it seems, was in our blood from earliest times, for some of the people migrated across the trans-Alpine ridge into western Europe, thence to the British Isles, to eventually become the Celt-Scottish, Welsh, Cornish, Somerset, and Irish. Some found themselves on the Iberian peninsula, to eventually become the Spanish. And some would interrupt Odysseus and Aeneas on their journeys as goddesses bent on keeping the heroes from home and empire.

As time went on, some of the descendants of those first migrators made their way to the Americas. One of them was my mother's ancestor, John M. Gunn, and another his bride, Isabella Sutherland. They met in Canada and migrated south into Ohio Territory, where they set up farming in Hardin County. Family legend holds that Isabella named one lovely spot Belle Fontaine, because of its lake. It bears that name even now. Their descendants, all boys, migrated to New Mexico Territory where three of them married Laguna women; one continued on to the Coast and married an Anglo-American Valley girl.

Another ancestor possessed of the migrator gene was my father's grandfather, Elias buHassen (a.k.a. Elias Francis; "Don Francisco"). Grandpa

Francis came to the United States in the late nineteenth century, fleeing an avaricious uncle back in the home village, Rumé, located on the western slope of the Lebanon. He spent two or three years traveling as a peddler of rosaries, dry goods, and trinkets. After a time he returned to Lebanon, packed up his wife, Philomena, and young son Nacif, and migrated to New Mexico Territory, settling first in Albuquerque, then in the mountain village of Seboyeta, a Spanish land grant village not far from the Pueblo of Laguna. I guess they couldn't keep him up in the hills of Lebanon after he'd seen US.

I emerged from within my mother when I was "ripe," or "cooked," and the forces that move us opened her gateway, allowing me to emerge. Among the Keres and other Pueblos, "cooked," or "ripe," is a way of indicating maturity, or full human status. The people were able to enter the fourth world when the earth was "cooked," or "ripe." I was born in the closing years of that fourth world, just as the German Army entered Poland and the Second World War commenced. That was a few years before, and a few miles from the site in west central New Mexico, where, in a stunning and stunned nanosecond, about 4:45 A.M. Mountain War Time, July 15, 1945, the fifth world began. The day the sun rose twice, I was nearly six years old, and, true to my geno-history, I've been migrating ever since. As for the people, it seems we were all "cooked" that day.

I was born a mixed-blood Laguna girl on the border of the mixed-blood Laguna Reservation and the Cubero Land Grant, to a mixed-blood Laguna mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and perhaps great-great-grandfather to Oak clan, to the Sunrise/Summer people; and to a Maronite-American father born and raised around the mountain to the east of Cubero, north of Laguna's mother village. Like his father and grandfather, he spoke many languages, told many stories, crossed many borders, busted many boundaries, loosened many canons – sometimes in spite of himself, because that was his heritage. My parents were both many-tongued and engaged in multiplicities of multilingual puns, their everyday common form of preserving their matrimony and their patrimony. As yet unknown, unnamed in the formalist world of the United States, deconstruction as cross-cultural jokes, ironies, puns, postures, gestures, and expressions fashioned our family life, sheltered as it was within the hollow of a sandstone mesa bounded by the main arroyo and the road to everywhere.

Being on the road to everywhere, at the crossroads of the modern, the early modern, the ancient, and the wilderness, Laguna Pueblo has from its inception been a way station for everything that goes on in the universe, sacred or otherwise.

Like my parents, I was born beneath the broad sheltering slopes of Tse'-pina/Kaweshtima, the Woman Veiled in Clouds/the Woman Who Comes from the North, a.k.a. Mt. Taylor. She, the Woman Mountain, soared seven or eight thousand feet above our village, fourteen thousand feet above the distant sea. She changed endlessly in the forever moving light of day, the forever changing times of year, and history changed her from woman to man, with a century or two of ambiguity between: from Pueblo feminine Tse'-pina to Spanish, mostly neutral, Cerro Pelones (loosely, "Old Baldy") to American masculine Mt. Taylor; anyone with eyes can see the womanly power-shape of that great entity. Anyone with ears can hear the woman-mountain song she sings.

I was born in a Spanish-speaking village of about sixty families, bounded on every side by Pueblo nations, Laguna and Acoma, and by wilderness, the Cibola National Forest. According to local rumor, the village, like others in the area, was founded by a mixed-racial couple: the husband, I think, was Spanish-American, and the wife, Laguna. Unable to live comfortably at either one's home village, they struck out on their own. Soon enough others came to build houses nearby, and thus Cubero, named for a Spanish army officer, was born. There in the shadow of the woman with very short hair, far away from the grind of Anglo-American civilization, nevertheless we were part of it all: among my relatives and close family friends were Spanish-Americans, Mexican-Americans and Anglos, German Jews and German Christians, Lebanese Maronites and Spaniards, Italian-Americans and Greek Americans, Basque immigrants, and Japanese-Americans fleeing the camps to the west. And as the years roll by, we take more and more of the human strains into the family lines: African-American, Chinese-American, Mexican immigrant, Salvadoreño immigrant – for all I know, there's even an Arab or two married in! We are global by blood, by law, and by injection. American through and through.

LOOSE(NING) CANONS

This re/collection of contemporary coyote Pueblo American thought is titled *Off the Reservation: Reflections on Boundary-Busting,*

Border-Crossing Loose Canons. I chose the name because if anything defines the American Indian peoples' post-Columbian situation, it is the freedom to leave and return to the reservation or local communities. Off reservation we are indeed a motley crew: carrying every variety of blood that has found its way to our ancient continent, faced with not only duality – that would be easy! – but with a multitude of complexities that are perhaps aptly summed up by our mixed blood, mixed-culture status. Yet however mixed in ancestry, heritage, and culture, we are all, all of us Indians, and have been "off the reservation" at all times.

"Off the reservation" is an expression current in military and political circles. It designates someone who doesn't conform to the limits and boundaries of officialdom, who is unpredictable and thus uncontrollable. Such individuals are seen as threats to the power structure. They are anomalies: mavericks, renegades, queers. Seen in its historical context, designating someone "off the reservation" is particularly apt. Originally the term meant a particular kind of "outlaw," a Native person who crossed the territorial border, called a reserve or reservation, set by the United States or a state government. In those days "the reservation" signified a limited space, a camp, to which Native people of various nations were confined. Those who crossed the set borders were deemed renegades. They were usually hunted down, and most often, summarily shot.

One of the major issues facing twenty-first-century Native Americans is how we, multicultural by definition – either as Native American or American Indian – will retain our "indianness" while participating in global society. It is the subtext of this volume. That we do not fit easily into pre-existing officially recognized categories is the correlative of our culture of origin. As Native Americans of the Five Hundred Nations never have fit the descriptions other Americans imposed and impose, neither does our thought fit the categories that have been devised to organize Western intellectual enterprise. In the ways that suit Native philosophical sets and subsets, each work in this re/collection seems, from a Western perspective, to be mixed in content and form. Each is a mixture of myth, history, literary studies, philosophy, and personal narrative. Each makes unspoken assumptions about the nature of human experience and the greater reality (or great mysteriousness) that surrounds and informs it, which suit a Native turn of mind rather than a Western inclination. Yet each is equally a product of Western thought, necessarily so.

Orthographic composition, whether poetry, essay, fiction, or renderings from the oral tradition, has its own laws and assumptions. Any orthographic text must partake of these. So, like the half-breed, hybrid, mixed-blood woman who has composed them, these essays resemble the oral tradition of the Laguna world and the essayist tradition of the orthographic academy by turns. They cross borders between and within paragraphs; bust boundaries of style, image, argument, and point of view; and at the best of times careen wildly about the ship of utterance. Given their divergent and complementary sources, they can hardly do otherwise.

While many of the essays in the volume are clearly categorical, others could as well be placed in one category as in another – a peculiarity of contemporary Native American life and thought characteristic of its post-reservation and both pre- and post-Columbian nature. For while we have until recently been confined by other Americans' economic, philosophical, and cultural reservations, neither our thought nor our practice has been readily reconstructed into western modes. With the growing influence of Gambler on reservations, Old Man Coyote and the grand seducer Kokopelli riding freely the waves of popular consciousness, and Old Man Missionary finding himself fenced in by his own barbed-wire conventions, boundaries have grown permeable, wide open spaces abound. Gee, it's almost like old times!

Native civilizations have their boundaries drawn along lines that differ markedly from those that characterize other civilizations. Probably the tendency of my migration-conscious Pueblo mind to see borders as both liminal and transformational led me early on to choose "Don't Fence Me In" as one of my favorite songs.

I didn't know the word for "resistance" then, but I was raised in a family that assumed resistance to be the bedrock of its reality. The *fact* of it was so firmly integrated into my every moment that even in dreams I engaged in the pursuit of freedom. The pieces in this collection are my later articulations of that unspoken but fundamental way of being. Spanning thirty years, from the late sixties to the late nineties, each essay is, in its own way, an assertion that Indians are everywhere. On reservation and off, cross-border, boundary un-bound. Sort of like earth. Like the goddesses and gods. Neither fences nor reservations can confine us, for we are, as N. Scott Momaday has suggested, "an idea" as much as a deeply defining, living aspect of American life. Ideas can't be fenced. Or, for that matter, corralled.

POCAHONTAS LOOMS AT HER LOOM

It is the nature of orthographic writing to require some sort of linear organization. To that end, this collection is divided into three somewhat loose categories. The first section, "Haggles," might be understood to mean "*Gynosophies*" (gyne = woman; sophia = wisdom, and it's feminine). The essays here either focus on the feminine or arise out of a female-centered perspective. In the words of the famed anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, the Keres (my own Pueblo, Laguna, being one of the several Keresan communities in New Mexico) are "the last mother-right people" on earth. My mother's grandfather suggested naming my mother "Susan B. Anthony," I don't know why, other than that it was some sort of Scots-at-Laguna joke, but I like to think that Grandpa Gunn recognized the renegade boundary-buster in her; it was probably her most marked characteristic and most precious *heiress*-loom.

The work contained in "Haggles" is political, spiritual, and ecological in direction. The first three pieces, "Notes Toward a Human Revolution," "The Savages in the Mirror," and "All the Good Indians," were written in the sixties. In keeping with the tone of those turbulent times, they are political, devised as questions about the nature and foundations of Western civilization and its relationship to human life and history, specifically in regard to a western/American Indian interface. The next, "American Indian Mysticism," was written at the request of a colleague, Donald H. Bishop (*Mysticism and the Mystical Experience East and West*), and is in many respects a political study. This is because the way the world and life of Native peoples are viewed from the perspective of Western American culture needs correction so that discussions about our life and our vision of reality can be discussed with as little distortion as possible. While this task is all but impossible for a variety of reasons, it is one that is necessary. It becomes increasingly imperative that we realize that there are as many varieties of human social consciousness, of community in its largest sense, as there are varieties of life in the universe. And that in that recognition we grope for means of articulating each view, in and of itself, as truthfully as we can. For our future good depends as much on our recognizing our vast differences as on recognizing our powerful similarities.

Having firmly situated the terms of the discussion in the past and the politics of Indian country in the first four essays, the next group moves to the heart of the matter. From "Haggles" through "The Woman I Love Is a Planet," the ideascape reveals its formally woman-centered, gynosophic

nature. Deep within the borderlands that form the boundary between old and emerging civilizations, opponents are engaged, skirmishes detailed, the lines of battle drawn. The discussion in "Father God and Rape Culture" provides a ripening of ideas that are explored in "Notes Toward a Human Revolution," "The Savage in the Mirror," and "All the Good Indians," indicating that the western world's relation to women powerfully mirrors its relation to Native people; certainly the language used to designate the one is frequently employed to designate the other. Both are close to nature, irrational, intuitive, mystical, culturally focused, domestic, dependent entities, at one with flora and fauna, and best kept silent, dependent, and enclosed – for their own protection.

In "The Anima of the Sacred," "'Indians,' Solipsisms, and Archetypal Holocausts," and "Radiant Beings," the discussion is transposed from the political to the spiritual, wherein it becomes clear that boundaries between Indian Country/Herland and Western Civilization/hisland are more a spiritual site than a geopolitical or gendered one. The profound knowledge of the true nature of earth, the land, and all that exists upon and within it, which once characterized gynosophic societies as it now characterizes American Indian societies, is the true site of conflict. The differing definitions of reality and the accompanying values those definitions imply are what is at stake. And the outcome is the fate of the planet and multitudinous forms of life thereon. Which takes us to the final essay in the first section, "The Woman I Love Is a Planet; The Planet I Love Is a Tree." Thus, the first four essays are reprised in the final five, with "Haggles," in which an older woman speaks at the Gynosophic Gathering in Oakland in the 1980s. Divided into two sections, the essay serves as modulation from one key to the next, exploring the concept of "gynosophy" in its textual ancestry: the sophia of woman.

The second section, "Wyrds/Orthographies," follows on the final paragraphs of the previous essay, beginning where it leaves off: "Our Mother, in her form as Sophia, was long ago said to be a tree, the great tree of life. . . . " The Great Tree is also known as the Tree of Knowledge (gnosis), and since time immemorial, inscribed knowledge has been the text. In "Wyrds/Orthographies," the text is the literature of contemporary times; the essays in this section deal mainly with American Literature, most frequently but not exclusively with that variety of American Literature produced by American Indian writers.

The method of inquiry I employ can be defined as applied gynosophy;

and while a number of the essays in the second section of this volume qualify as such, the most clearly thea-retical is "Thus Spake Pocahontas." The editors of the volume in which it originally appeared (*Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*, The Modern Language Association of America) changed the title of the essay to "Border Studies: The Intersection of Gender and Color" to fit the overall design of the volume. As is the case in "Haggles/Gynosophies," the essays on literature contain much that is classifiable as ecological, spiritual, and political. The opening, "Iyañi: It Goes This Way," which introduces the Southwest writers section of the first and only-of-its-kind collection, *The Remembered Earth* (edited by Geary Hobsen and published in 1979), speaks forthrightly to literary, spiritual, and ecological matters. Its opening statement, "We are the land," can be applied profitably to thousands of novels, plays, short stories, and music written by American Indian authors. It is an assumption, an underlying concept, that informs every Native American text. Similarly, the idea contained in the word *iyañi*, a Keresan (Laguna Pueblo) term for "sacred" – literally, "it goes that way" – points to the dynamic underlying many American Indian texts, traditional and contemporary.

The three main strands of American Indian literature in the modern era, history, politics, and the great traditions of the Native world, inform the texts in the way Simon J. Ortiz describes the rain lying in wait for its time "underneath the fine sand . . . cool / with crystalline moisture . . ."

In my mind, critical essays – indeed, "nonfiction" writing in general – is simply another way of telling a story. Each has a narrative line, a plot if you will, and that line must unfold in accordance with certain familiar patterns, just as any story must. An essay contains all the elements of a good plot: conflict, crisis, resolution. Concepts take the role of character, and, of course, the unities of time, place, and action must be respected. The second section of *Off the Reservation* reads much like a novel: it has chapters, and as they unfold, as the plot thickens, the terms of the discussion, the dialogue, the dialectic are expanded, examined, and explored. From the opening paragraphs of "Iañyi: It Goes This Way," in which the basic situation is set forth, and through the ensuing plot developments, twists, and subplots, a journey through American Literature is detailed. It is a journey whose guide is not exactly American, at least not in the ordinary sense of the idea. A partial outsider, a maverick narrator completes the whole: for who but a maverick on a quest most closely approximates the American, journeying through lands as yet unfamiliar to western society. By the time

the adventurers reach the final chapter, the "borderlands," they can, one hopes, discover that the nature of literature, like the nature of life, is at bottom perplexing. In a word, there are so many discoveries to make, so many strange new lands to explore; questions rather than answers, information and insight rather than "fact" and "authority" become the goal and the source of human experience.

There is something about stories that hooks humans into culture, that make human psyches and human societies all but indistinguishable from texts. The intertwined nature of literature and human beings has not escaped the notice of the old Indian peoples; it has, at last, come to the attention of their younger relatives, writers and critics of the Western world. The old ones' recognition of the intrinsic identity of text and human consciousness informs the structures of the whole of the oral tradition, and critical theory in Indian Country consists of the often subtle junctures of story cycles. Stories, whether narrative or argumentative in nature, tell us not who we are, not who we are supposed to be, but instead describe and define the constraints of the possible. Admittedly, what is possible for human thought is, in the oral tradition, quite a bit larger than it is in the Western rational tradition. The growing interface between the two, indigenous American and contemporary American, is the central narrative of the literary essays in the second section of *Off the Reservation*. This preoccupation culminates in the final essay, "Thus Spake Pocahontas," in which I argue that we, writers on the interface/frontier between modern and timeless, are the void, the place of endless possibility. It is that site – which is a dynamic flux rather than a fixed point – that is identified as Iyañi. It is power-sacred, informed by the great mysterious being known as Thinking Woman, Old Spider Grandmother, the Keresan version of Sophia.

BUSTED

The third section of the collection, "*La Frontera*/Na[rra]tivities," centers on my personal journey through my portion of the oral tradition, which, in keeping with Western formulations, I call "my" life. While it is not clear to me whether such articles are recountings of the oral tradition from a personal (read "constructed") perspective that I call "myself" or if they are narratives of the land, the earth herself rendered through the energy/information gestalt I take so personally, it can be seen that the essays possess the characteristics of narrative in the autobiographical sense. That

is, they are stories in which the principal character is "I." The first, "Autobiography of a Confluence," is just that, an autobiographical narrative, but, like all such narratives, it is not so much the actual me as the me I have constructed within the wit and editorial limits given me. The next two, "*Yo Cruzo Siete Mares*," and "My Lebanon," address my life as my father's daughter. They point beyond themselves, within the context of the volume, to a larger issue: What IS "Indian," what is "White," and thus, "What is America/American?" It has perplexed Americans writing since earliest Spanish, French, and English colonial times to find Old World narratives inextricably bound up with the Nativity of the land from which the newcomers took their being and, consequently, their identity.

Life demonstrates that American Indian people remain curiously difficult to categorize outside of museums of natural history where we exist, frozen in time, as nostalgic accompaniments of American flora and fauna. Identifiably distinct in history, culture, style, and thought, Native people are also as American as fried chicken (a Cherokee recipe applied to a Celtic ingredient) and apple pie. Most of us wave the American flag as enthusiastically as any "redneck" (redneck and redskin, more alike than not); most of us are Christian, church-going, and devout; and more of us serve in the armed forces of the United States than, percentage-wise, any other demographic group in the country. We have the shell-shock, post-traumatic stress syndrome, Agent Orange Disease, Gulf-War Syndrome, and other side effects of military enterprise to show for it.

The habits of mind and activity common to the majority of American Indian people are perplexing to other varieties of Americans, most of whom, should they give us any thought, lump us in a box marked buckskin-and-feather-first ecologists-cum-natural phenomena. Despite commonly held notions about the state of the Five Hundred Nations, American Indian boundary lines occur where Old World Americans don't expect them. Most of us, given the opportunity to learn the words, would probably choose "Don't Fence Me In" as our pan-Indian anthem. And perhaps, as our traditions have always been about liminality, about voyages between this world and many other realms of being, perhaps crossing boundaries is the first and foremost basis of our tradition and the key to human freedom and its necessary governmental accomplice, democracy. Certainly, as both our literature and lives attest, that's how it seems to be.

The final essays in the final section are cross-category pieces. While each contains much personal narrative material, they verge into impersonal territories. "The Lay of the Land" is a threnody to *mi país*, "my land," which is, finally, the measure and spirit of who and what I am. Whatever writings center on it must, of necessity, be autobiographical, for in the "Indian" way I see myself a composite of land and myth, the oral tradition and its grounding. As for these two final pieces, each in its way is a candidate for inclusion in the first section of the volume, and both address themes and myths that characterize contemporary American and global literature. As such, they could also be included under the heading of Literature.

The old narrative cycle of the Pueblo peoples is traditionally divided into three sections: creation, emergence, and migration. Each of these portions is applicable to the community, to each clan within it, and to each individual member of the clans. In terms of our story as indigenous people in the contemporary era the story could be told thus: In the beginning was Thought, and she was Grandmother; the people emerged into the fourth world guided and led by our dear mother, Beautiful Corn Woman; under the continued guidance of Thought Grandmother, we migrated from wherever we were to our present homelands. Then there was a reprise of that cycle (one of many, and this one not the first): The people were created as Pueblo by the coming of others from the east; we migrated in Thought and custom from where we had been situated to where we are situated now, and our thought migrated over the globe, sending Grandmother Thought/Consciousness outward upon the web of life (again). The stories, the understandings, the figures, the significances remain as they ever were, even as they morph. Transformation is, after all, the heart of the people, the heart of the tradition, and the heart of the life process of Thought.

There's more than one way to skin a cat, as those of my grandmother's generation used to say, and in their spirit, let's agree: There's more than one way to be an Indian, to categorize an essay, and to organize a book.

A-Ho!

I.

Haggles

gynosophies

1.
Notes Toward a Human Revolution

For several hundred years at least, Europeans have staged a series of foredoomed revolutions on the European and American continents. The 1970s are merely a continuation of the 1770s in America: The revolution is fought and argued over and over, but life goes on as usual in the West. The big fish eat the little fish and the little fish starve. Or, as a four-year-old of my acquaintance put it, the good guys kill the bad guys and the bad guys kill people.

The revolutionary rhetoric of Berkeley in the 1960s sounds depressingly similar to that of Russia in the late 1860s: The critiques, the strategies, and the results are alike. The problems we faced as a human race two hundred years ago remain, and each failure to solve them, to at least set them to rest so we can get on with life itself in human terms, increases their urgency. And yet the means to effect a *human* revolution elude us, century after century, conquest after conquest, war after war. We think and think, argue, debate, struggle, incite, rebel, plunder, issue directives, publish, murder, and die, but what was true in colonial America is true today, and there is no end to it, no way out of the labyrinth of thinking and talking and slaying and murdering on an ever larger, ever widening scale.

THE WHEEL SURVIVES THE MYTH

Perhaps the flaw in the concept of revolution, and thus in its consequences, stems from the flaw in phallocentric thinking. Perhaps the wellsprings of Western civilization are the source of the pollution that strangles our breath and our spirit until there is nothing left but the machinery of death that orders our ever increasingly futile lives. Perhaps the uni-

versal law that requires a peony to grow only from peony seed is a law as applicable to revolutions as to plants.

If this is the case, if phenomena necessarily arise out of pre-conditioning or pre-programming of inter-related phenomena, if life really is a circle that lives and breathes in circular, inexorable terms, it becomes imperative that we examine the roots of the civilization we wish to turn, to change, and see what basic pre-conditions in that civilization create our present and seemingly eternal miseries.

If there is to be a meaningful, significant turn in the wheel of the civilized state, it must be semantic, linguistic, and semiotic. Three dimensions of the stance toward reality that characterizes Western civilization are: proprietorship (ownership as a concept), literacy (reading/writing as the power and glory of man), and separatism (the great and only heresy; splintering the biota). A true revolution, a lasting turn and transformation in human institutions and relationships, must begin with a reorganization of these basic values that have characterized Western civilization since the days of the ancient Egyptian pharaonic empire. We must abandon our faith in the myth of property, the superstition of literacy, and the heresy of separatism. We must abandon the essential paradigm of Domination/Submission in all of its forms.

DEFY THE METAPHOR THAT MURDERS METAPHOR

The need to put aside the private ownership of property, at least in capitalistic terms, may seem evident. But I am not suggesting that we do away merely with private ownership per se. I am suggesting that human beings do not naturally think in terms of ownership, but rather in terms of use. The idea that one can own a piece of land or a piece of productive enterprise is actually incomprehensible, except as a concept. It is not really possible (perhaps "executable" would be more appropriate here) in human behavior, because it implies the capacity to stop the automatic, natural flow of living. This is a very hypnotic illusion, but it is nevertheless illusory. I can only relate to land or money as a living thing, because I am living and because relationship is process. I cannot own a relationship. I cannot stop the process of relationship. But I can use land; I can use capital – both as a means toward expressing my aliveness and of maintaining it.

The concept of ownership is what led to the terrible difficulties of the Native Americans in their dealings with the European transplants to this continent. The Native Americans did not understand how a piece of land could belong to someone in some absolute sense by virtue of a piece of paper. They did understand quite clearly that the Earth takes care of us, naturally, and that each person and each people was entitled to such land as they needed to maintain their lives. A number of tribes would share or cooperatively use "hunting grounds," but the cultivated fields belonged to those who cultivated them. If those farmers moved, for whatever reason, that land was up for grabs; the next farmer to use it "possessed" it. But possession was seen as a matter of use, not a matter of eternal right. This event-centered attitude made a class of people such as thieves, grifters, speculators, or capitalists impossible – not because such activities were taboo or prohibited, but because they were impossible, given the climate of the societies. People couldn't steal something that belonged to someone else because only one person can use something at a time. The idea of dynamic, ongoing patterns of relationship were clearly understood and lived by. This basic assumption regarding the nature of time-space-action had the consequence of creating a naturally cooperative society as well as individuals within that society who intuitively thought in terms of the good of the whole – the tribe-earth-universe-self – when they thought of the self or the "part."

The Native Americans knew that the basic law of human universal consciousness was event-ual in nature, and that the event, the use, determined behavior most rationally in terms of human harmony and human development. The Europeans called them savages because they did not bow down to the idea of paper-ownership, or of personal possessiveness, or of ownership of the many by the few, and justified their genocide in these terms. Even as late as 1887, Americans justified the biggest land rip-off since the Mexican War by declaring: The one thing these people (the Cherokee) lack to make them civilized is the virtue of selfishness. So to teach Native Americans to be truly civilized, they gave individual Indians a certain amount of land for nuclear family units and said it was each family's to use or sell (mainly sell) as they chose.

THE BETTER TO EAT YOU WITH, MY DEAR

They claimed that this was in the best interest of the Cherokees, as well as of all other Native Americans affected by the Dawes Act. But forty-seven years later, the Merriam Survey revealed that Native land

holdings had shrunk by two-thirds since the Allotment Act had been in effect.

The existential message of the transaction was this: Civilized people can take our inalienable rights away. It seems fairly obvious from this that a society intent on eradicating theft in all its forms must eradicate "civilization." Cooperativeness, the willingness to share goods and land, is not possible in a basically selfish framework; yet, by the words of the United States Congress, selfishness is a basic virtue of civilization. And self-possessiveness – this is mine/if you use it, you owe me money for it – automatically creates theft-systems. Yet the ability to think in terms of cooperation makes it humanly possible to effectively exert a measure of control over what happens to you. It eliminates the need to be defensive, distrustful, and paranoid, and allows for a greater interplay among humans on terms that human psyches and spirits can comprehend. When the concepts of possessiveness or proprietorship disappear as being meaningful in our lives, the haunting sense of separation from the universe will be lessened because possessiveness requires selfishness, and selfishness is separation.

IT ALMOST SEEMS AS IF THE GOVERNMENT ASSUMED THAT SOME MAGIC IN INDIVIDUAL OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY WOULD IN ITSELF PROVE AN EDUCATIONAL, CIVILIZING FACTOR

LITERACY

Western civilization was erected on twin pillars, so to speak: possessiveness and literacy. The twin facets have allowed the phenomenon known as politics to determine most of our behavior for several thousand years. And yet, on the face of it, the idea that my literacy makes me more powerful than someone who is not literate is ludicrous. In point of fact, the ability to read does little for me, except possibly allow me to earn a living in ways that violate my best instincts and potentialities. Yet it is true that the big fish can read – even though the obverse is not true and never was, that is, that the little fish cannot. But so long as the little fish believe that reading will, in and of itself, transform them or their progeny into big fish, that the magic power of literacy will allow transformation of their relative power-situation, literacy will be a tool for the exploitation and manipulation of human beings – the same kind of tools that land ownership (possession) and domination over others have been.

The Cherokees were broken on that particular wheel; they believed what their literate teachers said about the power of literacy so they became literate, Sequoyah made public the Cherokee syllabary, and in ten years the overwhelming majority of the people were able to read and write. They printed their own newspaper, *The Phoenix*, which was bilingual; incorporated their nation on paper in a Constitution; wrote letters to each other; wrote down incantations, chants, minutes of meetings; studied the Bible assiduously; and cultivated the companionship of literate and important non-Cherokees. Many married white women, some took black people as slaves, and, by Cherokee Nation law, they divested Cherokee women of political rights. In other words, they took up all the mechanisms of power that they believed would enable them to live as a sovereign nation, a republic on this continent, ally to the United States. They read the laws of the United States, obeyed what they read, and activated all due processes in their fight to retain ownership of their homelands. Imagine their amazement to find themselves walking, destitute, sick and dying, eight hundred miles from their ancient and beloved home, in spite of their literacy and "civilization." They were called "civilized" by whites, but they were powerless to change their fate. When the big fish said, "It's time to eat you little-fish Cherokee," they were duly devoured. And all the literacy in the world was useless to save them.

2.
The Savages in the Mirror
Phantoms and Fantasies in America

I.

THE SAVAGES

As we rowed from our ships and set foot on the shore
In the still coves,
We met our images.

Our brazen images emerged from the mirrors of the world
Like yelling shadows,
So we searched our souls,

And in that hell and pit of everyman
Placed the location of their ruddy shapes.
We must be cruel to ourselves.

The first thing that they did after landing was to steal all the corn they could carry from a nearby Wampanoag village. The natives of that place had seen them coming and, having been previously treated to the visits of white men, had fled into the forest. The next day the Puritans came back; yesterday's haul had been too little, they felt, so they took what was left in the storage bins.

> They had now no friends to welcome them nor inns to entertain or refresh their weather-beaten bodies; no houses or much less towns to repair to, to seek for succor . . . All things stand upon them with a weather-beaten face, and the whole country, full of woods and thickets, represented a wild and savage hue.
>
> —WILLIAM BRADFORD

There was a Wampanoag village that had been emptied by previous contact with the Europeans; the inhabitants had died of some disease the year before. These poor, "weather-beaten bodies" repaired thereto and made themselves at home. The village that succored them was one filled with houses covered by elm-bark of generous size, walled around by a "stockade" fence, which thus nicely separated from home that which they most feared: woods and thickets that, to their minds, represented a wild and savage face.

It is strange that accounts of early American experience overlook the presence of other human communities – a negligible presence, we are led to believe, all but gone right after the first Thanksgiving dinner. Despite American folklore that is all too often offered to children and adults alike as "fact," there were thousands upon thousands of people living in settled, agricultural communities along the Atlantic seaboard. And it was these societies – or, one may fairly say, this civilization – from which the colonials drew the strength, courage, and concepts upon which to base both their revolutions against England and, much later, Spain and to devise a form of nationhood that recognized the equal rights of all adult citizens, male and female, "high born" or "common," to have a voice in their own governance. And though it took them well over a century, from 1776 to 1947, eventually they recognized their founding ideals in law. "The shot heard round the world," as the American Revolution of 1776 was termed by pundits and philosophers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was fired from an Algonquin and Haudenoshonee gun.

Whoever the first Americans were, they weren't the Puritans, whose idea of social organization was to lock all citizens within the palisades, whip and chain people to stockades or to wagons or horses from which they were dragged out of town, or to banish them, alone, to the wilderness for in any way disagreeing with the "town fathers," who were the sole recognized authorities. Thus, it is strangest of all that "our images" were suitable mirrors of being, while we were and still are not allowed to be there at all.

I have sat through more hours of American History and American Literature than I care to contemplate, and seldom is the word "Indian" (even that misshapen idol) mentioned. "With all due respect, ma'am," ever the courtly professorial expert of white supremacy, "Indians never had any effect on America at all." (America's a self-made Marlborough man, ma'am).

Did you know that the Cherokee tipped the balance of Spanish power that gave the south Atlantic coast to the English?

That the Haudenoshonee ("Iroquois") dominated the power struggle among France, England, and Spain for over two hundred years?

That the Chickasaw platoons who ran missions for Andrew Jackson during the War of 1812 were the reason for the victory of the United States over England?

I didn't.

I spent twenty-two years in school, and I didn't know that.

Nor in all those years was I ever given this moving speech to memorize. Delivered by Ta-ha-yu-ta (Logan), the lone survivor of his community and family during the French and Indian War, this bit of eloquence was featured in the McGuffy Reader, used for several generations in American public schools as exemplary oratory.

> I appeal to any white man to say, if he ever entered Logan's cabin hungry, and he gave him not meat; if ever he came cold and naked, and he clothed him not. During the course of the last long and bloody war, Logan remained idle in his cabin, an advocate of peace. Such was my love for the whites, that my countrymen pointed as they passed, and I said, "Logan is the friend of white man." I had even thought to have lived with you but for the injuries of one man. Colonel Cresap, the last spring, in cold blood and unprovoked, murdered all the relations of Logan, not even sparing my women and children. There runs not a drop of my blood in the veins of any living creature. This called on me my revenge. I have sought it; I have killed many; I have fully glutted my vengeance. For my country, I rejoiced at the beams of peace. But do not harbor a thought that this is the joy of *fear.* Logan never felt fear. He will not turn on his heel to save his life. Who is there to mourn for Logan? – Not one!
>
> – TAH-HA-YU-TA [LOGAN], IROQUOIS

The French and Indian War was fought in the mid-1700s, before the founding of the Republic. The Puritans, historically deemed the nation's forefathers, had come ashore not two centuries before. But they were not the first Europeans to colonize what is now the United States. New Mexico was colonized long before Plymouth. Why was Puritan Colony designated the earliest American settlement? Why do chronological history or literature books start with the Puritans? In terms of the present boundaries of the United States, the Southwest was entered first and subdued (more or less). Then Florida. Then New England and New France. Then California, Navajoland/Apache. Then the Plains. But American history marches ever

westward, from the northern Atlantic coast of the United States to California. Let us be ever mindful that that history speaks English. But that it does so is accidental. English was made the national language by one vote over German because a cart carrying two delegates to the Continental Congress meeting on the issue broke down. Those two delegates, who were prepared to cast their votes for the German language missed the meeting. These instances of historians' oversights can be explained, of course: Europeans didn't invade, conquer, and "settle" America; Yale and Harvard – with barely perceptible assists from Andover, William and Mary, Dartmouth, and Princeton – did. There is more than a grain of truth in this explanation, but there is another, more intriguing, one: America has amnesia.

The American myth, for some reason, depends on an "empty" continent for its glory, and for its meaningfulness to Americans. The Adam who names the beasts and the birds, who tends God's garden, wasn't to be beat out of his place, dethroned as "Firstborn of God" by Spaniards, Dutchmen, Frenchmen, or, heaven forbid, savages.

> *President Jackson asked,*
> *What good man would prefer a forested country ranged with savages*
> *To our extensive republic studded with cities*
> *With all the improvements art can devise or industry execute?*

The question that has haunted me for several years now is: What did they see when they saw their images emerge "from the mirrors of the world"? People don't develop amnesia for the love of forgetfulness – or do they? Certainly, there is a passion for memory loss in American thought. Thoreau speaks with indignation of the grip of history on the free growth of the (civilized) soul. "One generation abandons the enterprises of another like stranded vessels." And his construction is not unique to himself nor to Americans. He was aware of the Aztec ceremonial renewal of all possessions every fifty-two years (but probably not of its meaning as renewal). He confused history with bondage, perhaps because the history of Europeans was the history of the bondage of others as well as themselves.

> *Then through the underbrush we cut our hopes*
> *Forest after forest to within*
> *The inner hush where Mississippi flows*

And were in ambush as the very source,
Scalped to the cortex. Yet bought them off
It was an act of love to seek their salvation.

The mind is a curious instrument – that of a culture no less so than that of a person – and its existential messages are more profoundly illuminating than its protestations. This amazing trick of memory-loss is such a case. It might tell us why America is ambivalent at best, schizoid or schizophrenic at worst. For how can one immediately experience the present without regard to the shaping presence of the past? Yet Americans have been, at least in the expressions of their artists and scholars, profoundly present-oriented and idea- or fantasy-centered. Their past has fascinated them, in a made-up form, but the real past is denied as though it is too painful – too opposed to the fantasy, the dream, to be spoken.

Pastor Smiley inquired,
What good man would allow his sins or his neighbors'
To put on human dress and run in the wilds
To leap out on innocent occasions?

Is that what they saw – their ideal of sin personified?

It is fairly clear that the European transplants did not see "Indians." It is possible that they did, as Josephine Miles (whose poem I've been quoting) suggests, see themselves. Certainly, this connection is borne out by the curious scholarly amnesia regarding the tribes who, contrary to popular American opinion, covered this continent as "the waves of a wind-ruffled sea cover its shell-paved floor," to quote Sealth (Seattle). Until recently, American figures have estimated the entire contact population of the tribes to be around 450,000. The numbers now estimated are around ten million, and this figure is rising. Some maverick researchers have put it as high as fifty or sixty million (present in what is now the United States).

I suppose if I saw myself as murdering, one way or another, several million people and hundreds of cultures, I'd long to forget my past, too.

President Jackson asked,
What good man would prefer a forested country ranged with savages
To our extensive republic studded with cities
With all the improvements art can devise or industry execute?

"The only good Indian is dead," they said; now that the Indian is presumed dead, he gets better and better all the time. The "Indian" can be interjected into the American dream, transformed, un-humanized, a sentimentalized sentinel of America's ideal of virtue. Nobody loves a drunk Indian because a drunk Indian is real, alive, and not at all ideal. The "Indian" was one with nature, they say; and who can be more "one with nature" than a corpse?

Miss Benedict proposed,
The partial era of enlightenment in which we live.
Brings Dionysus to the mesa and the cottonwood grove,
And floats Apollo to the barrows of the civic group
To ratify entreaties and to harp on hope.

Americans may be the world champion forgetters. Yet their story has a strange logic of its own, and that logic is solidly based on the unconscious motives that propelled the actions and the rhetoric in the first place. And America has cultural amnesia, at least with regard to the Tribes. He, "American Adam," is born innocent, purer than Christ, having neither mother nor (legitimate) father. Yet all that is born on earth has parents: why is it so important that America pretend to be different in this respect, to reject her commonality with all things? The mother, the land, is forgotten and denied, but the father, Europe, is not forgotten so much as attacked, as in a Freudian Oedipal drama, conquered over and over, a recurrent bad dream.

> The question, whether one generation of men has a right to bind another, seems never to have started on this our side of the water. Yet it is a question of such consequence as not only to merit decision, but place, also, among the fundamental principles of government.
>
> – THOMAS JEFFERSON, 1789

The mother: Indian, earth, and Nature (seen as one thing, according to Brandon in *The Last Americans*) were submerged into "the infinite pool of the unconscious," hopefully never to be recovered. Perhaps this is Oedipal also, Frank Waters tells us in *Pumpkin Seed Point*, that the Indian represents the lost unconscious that Americans must reclaim and redeem.

It was an act of love to seek their salvation.

The eternal Mother is forever forbidden to man, the story goes. The gulf between mother and son is enormous and widening. And this is the schizo-