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years later, still in uniform. All aspects of his life and career are worth noting because of their impact on Indian America. Hutton should be congratulated by a wide reading audience for a judicious and balanced treatment of the lengthy interaction between the army's top soldier in the west and his Native American adversaries.

Terry P. Wilson

University of California, Berkeley

Jacklight. By Louis Erdrich. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984. 85 pp. \$6.95 Paper.

In *Jacklight* Louise Erdrich has achieved something unusual in the field of Native American poetry, where all too often the voice of the poet too stridently insists that the reader give attention to the poet's Indian-ness. Not that it is wrong to be read as an Indian poet, but usually the poets of such works contradictorily beg to be read as poets in the mainstream, despite the inevitability that poems written about "bear" and "coyote" in an almost predictable style will be read as "Indian" poetry, whether the writer is Native American or Anglo. Erdrich, on the other hand, is a writer of mainstream poems concerned with real people in real situations, and while she does, of course, explore the "Indian" side of her own experience, she gives equal attention to the German-American side which she inherited as well. This makes her half Indian-ness as incidental as her half German-ness, and the resulting poems become much more American (and realistic) than those of so many other writers; hence they succeed as *poems* rather than becoming merely more "Indian" poems.

The themes of this poetry concern what it means to this writer to be a human being, a woman, a midwestern American, and to be from these two (Native American and German American) backgrounds. The images seem to be fairly well split between the two, for while there are the requisite beer parties and pick-ups on muddy mountains, there are as well thickly braided women, strong butchers and sausages. Thus the poems can be explored in terms of the poet's sense of two-ness in her personal identity. This is especially interesting as one of the unifying themes throughout the book is that of hunting, and this functions on mainly three levels: that of the poet's hunting for personal identity, the way in which the reader becomes a hunter when drawn

into the woods (archetypal symbol of the psyche) of the poems, and perhaps most interestingly in the way in which Erdrich explores what it means to be a human being hunting for love.

This latter point is so important, in fact, for Erdrich, that she sets it continually before the reader in the opening pages of the book. The title of this collection is *Jacklight*, a device used in hunting at night, a bright light that draws game towards it then dazzles them into motionlessness, making them easy prey. That this is a central image for Erdrich is evident from the fact that it is not only the title of the book, but also the title of the first section, which contains only one poem, again by the same title. That she intends to develop a connection between hunting and sexuality is established in the introductory comment of this poem which explains that one Chippewa word means both hunting and flirting, while another can mean either rape or killing a bear with one's bare hands.

The speaker in this first poem uses the plural pronoun "we" when discussing the game who are drawn out of the woods, saying that each responded to the jacklight alone. This plural pronoun could perhaps refer only to women in response to sex, but it might as well apply to men, despite the phallic image implied in the line "we smell the raw steel of their gun barrels" (page 3), for in later poems, "The Lady in the Pink Mustang," "The Woods," and "Night Sky," men are hunted rather than being the hunter. Even so, most of the poems concern women more directly and men only as they relate to the female subjects. There is often a kind of violence that attends that relationship, but there is always a sense of persistence in the search for love that prevails just the same.

After the game in "Jacklight" have been collectively drawn to the light, response becomes individual as the light "searched out, divided us. / Each took the beams like direct blows the heart answers. / Each of us moved forward alone" (page 3). The desire for and interest in sexual love is a collective human experience, but it is something that we must all, finally, approach individually. Yet such love is often painful, "direct blows the heart answers." Light is equated with love in a later poem, "Train": "And always the light / I was born with, driving everything before it. . . . / Here is the light I was born with, love. / Here is the bleak radiance that levels the world" (page 25). The violent light of "Jacklight," like love, begins painlessly enough: "At first the light wavered, glancing over us. / Then it clenched to a fist of

light that pointed, / searched out, divided us" (page 3). It is this fist of light which delivers the "direct blows the heart answers." A fist figures in the second poem of the book, called, in ironic keeping with the theme, "A Love Medicine." In this poem the speaker's sister leaves her boyfriend behind when she goes out into the night and he goes after her. As she walks "she steps into the fistwork of a man" (page 7). Still, despite the pain involved, we continue to respond to the jacklight, that "bleak radiance that levels the world."

Erdrich deals with the quest for personal identity and the sense of a split heritage in an interesting way in the poem "Family Reunion," a poem concerning the Indian side of her family. Here the speaker says "I sink apart / in a corner, start knocking the Blue Ribbons down." A woman, half Chippewa, half German-American is at a party with her Uncle Ray, an unfortunately stereotypical drunken Indian, drinking Blue Ribbon beer—Pabst, a German name, Blue Ribbon beer. So many stereotypes come together at once so successfully in this sequence that the best conclusion is that *this* is America, a country of mixing stereotypes. Here drunken Indians are drinking German-named American beer in the American midwest, and this is perhaps the point, that for whatever separation comes about as the result of the stereotyping, these remain American people, Americans by virtue of their mixed backgrounds.

The poem entitled "Captivity" brings together the matters of sex and the tension between whites and Indians. The poem takes for its subject the account of Mary Rowlandson's captivity in the year 1676. In the beginning of the poem the captive is afraid that her captor has put something into her food to make her love him, but it soon becomes clear that what she really fears is her own desire, to which she eventually gives in: ". . . I followed where he took me. / The night was thick. He cut the cord / that bound me to the tree" (p. 27). The next stanza reads like Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" in its portrayal of the wrath of God; we find the polarities of Puritan and Indian, godliness and evil, and writing in this way places Erdrich squarely in one of the most significant currents in American literature.

The German side of things is seen mainly in the poems of the section called "The Butcher's Wife," in which we find the memories and musings of a German widow who finds herself in a country that is not really her own and yet it is her own since

she has lived the biggest portion of her life there. (The situation of *most* Americans since we *are* natives of America even when we are not "native-Americans.") In "Clouds" she laments to herself "Mary, you do not belong here at all," and yet she *does* belong there when her thoughts remind her that the nation becomes that of those whose kin are buried there: "Our friends, our family, the dead of our wars, / deep in this strange earth / we want to call ours" (page 45). But even when she knows that she belongs there as much as anywhere she dreams of what that land once was: "Let everything be how it could have been, once: / a land that was empty and perfect as clouds" (page 45).

Out of this mixture of backgrounds and experience the poet seems to be successful in her hunt for personal identity when she ends the book with the lines "Hands of earth, of this clay / I'm also made from" (page 85). This is from the poem called "Turtle Mountain Reservation," written for her Indian grandfather. The hands referred to are *his* hands, thus Erdrich says that we are in part the people who have made us, just as she said in the poems concerning the Butcher's wife, but we are also of this earth, *all* of us who occupy this continent, regardless of the mixtures of blood.

When Erdrich ends the poem "Jacklight" with the lines "And now they take the first steps, not knowing / how deep the woods are and lightless. / How deep the woods are." It is an invitation to the reader to go hunting, to try to find what these poems are about. It can be a very elusive game at times, but *Jacklight* is a finely crafted collection of poems that is well worth the effort of hunting for the ideas deep in those psychic woods.

Richard K. Waters

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Native American Literature. By Andrew Wiget. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985. 147 pp. \$15.95 Cloth.

Wiget's book must be considered a pioneering work. Except for fragmentary chapters in out-of-date histories of American literature, we have had no attempts to summarize the achievements of American Indian writers and the vast body of oral materials which must be considered the massive foundation of the subject. Alan Velie has concentrated on *Four American Indian Literary*