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Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories: T h e Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females, 1852-1949. By Amanda J. Cobb.

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give her one last night of sexual pleasure. In a chapter entitled "Nector," some Ojibwe boys go for a joy ride in a stolen car and then, with Nanapush's help, get themselves out of the predicament they find themselves in. These chapters are tonal anomalies that break the seriousness of the novel, but little in this novel does not share in the trickster qualities of those episodes. Louise Erdrich is finally a storyteller, not a historical novelist, and we have come not to expect strict realism from her fiction. Indeed, she is recreating contemporary fiction by breaking all the rules of realism. Just as no one told Agnes that she could not rewrite the rules of the priesthood and forgive virtually all sinners virtually all sins, so no one told Erdrich that she could not rewrite the rules of modern fiction and tell stories that keep breaking out of their own molds. We all know that dogs don't talk, but Erdrich has us believing—well, almost—that a black dog steps in Father Damien's soup and speaks diabolically to her, and that Damien much later gets her revenge by squeezing the dog's testicles between her knees.

The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse is brilliant. It is perhaps less brilliant in itself than in the maze of connections it makes to her previous fiction. This new novel can be read in isolation, of course. Those for whom it is the introduction to Erdrich's fictional world will surely want to pick up some of her previous fiction to find out more about these characters. But this new venture into Little-No-Horse country will give special pleasure to readers who have already read Erdrich's previous novels. These readers will be pleasurablely stunned to see characters they thought they knew pretty well grow in bold new directions. They will want to reread the earlier novels to see if they can determine, for example, whether Father Damien was a woman all along rather than a man, or whether this female priest represents a fictional sex-change for a character who was previously really a man (see *Tracks*, p. 174, where he has a "sparse" beard). Taken together, these novels give us an amazing fictional glimpse into a century of Ojibwe-white relations, a century of trickster humor, a century of love and growth, a century of forgiveness for all sorts of sins.

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Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories: The Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females, 1852–1949. By Amanda J. Cobb. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000. 162 pages. \$27.50 cloth.

Amanda J. Cobb's *Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories* is an important contribution to the fields of Native American studies and education. Winner of the North American Indian Prose Award in 1998, Cobb examines the role that Bloomfield Academy (renamed Carter Seminary in 1932) played in the Chickasaw's cultural preservation. The author more than fulfills her modest goal of "adding a thread to the history of women's literacy education, to the type of literacy instruction American Indians received, and to the special

issues of language and identity they face, particularly mixed bloods” (p. 9). There were four other secondary schools that boarded children at different locations in the Chickasaw nation: Rock Academy (or Wapanucka Institute), the Orphans’ Home, Collins Institute, and Harley Institute. Only Bloomfield Academy (1852–1949) remained in operation after Oklahoma statehood.

Cobb’s main contribution in this book is to chart the transformation of the school’s educational philosophy as it passed from missionary to tribal and, finally, to federal control. Using letters, reports, school programs, and interviews with alumni, Cobb analyzes how the shifting agendas of Bloomfield’s administrators shaped the school’s literacy curriculum and the students’ identities.

The Five Tribes’ national academies depart from the familiar tale of education for cultural extinction (see David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875–1928* [1995] and K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School* [1994]). From 1865 to 1907, Bloomfield Academy was tribally managed and controlled. Since Bloomfield students were all Chickasaws until 1929, and because it was situated in a Chickasaw community, “the old ways, though evolving, were still all around them” (p. 64). Outside the classroom and beyond the teachers’ supervision, many girls spoke to each other in Chickasaw, sang in Chickasaw, and played games foreign to non-Chickasaw children. Although Bloomfield Academy’s curriculum emphasized acculturation, its students integrated American customs into their own culture. Bloomfield molded its pupils into Republican mothers, patriotic Chickasaw citizens, and devoted teachers.

During its Golden Age of tribal control, Bloomfield groomed its mixed-blood students for elevated social circumstances. The girls’ education would help them marry well and transcend social boundaries. The Bloomfield Blossoms, as the girls proudly called themselves, received lessons in the arts and sciences, religion, and manners. They were not expected to do menial labor and little emphasis was placed on cooking or housekeeping. Bloomfield’s high academic standards made it known as the “Bryn Mawr of the West” (p. 96). Hundreds of parents and all the important Chickasaw officials traveled long distances to attend the students’ commencement and take in their poetry, drama, and musical performances. Politicians and school administrators addressed the crowd and leveraged off the people’s pride in the students’ achievements.

With the passage of the Curtis Act in 1898, the United States government took over Chickasaw schools. Bloomfield Academy “remained in operation, but out of [Chickasaw] control” (p. 65). Whereas Chickasaw administrators engendered tribal nationalism, federal administrators sought to mold the students into American citizens. Budget constraints and concern for the girls’ future circumstances led the new administrators to impose the burdens of school maintenance and domestic responsibilities on its students. Attendance declined because Chickasaws resented losing control of their institution. From 1917 to 1929 the school admitted only Chickasaw girls, but its doors officially opened to girls of all Indian nations after this date. It did not become an arena

for pan-Indianism as other boarding schools did because its population remained primarily Chickasaw and Choctaw. Cobb's interviews reveal that the selection criteria no longer rested on ability but on economic need. Federal administrators sought out students of higher Indian blood quantum and orphans, children they assumed to be at an educational disadvantage.

Cobb might have gone even further in tackling the racial and class issues raised by Devon Mihesuah's *Cultivating the Rosebuds* (1993), for Cobb maintains that the curriculum at the Cherokee Seminary and Bloomfield Academy were similar and followed the same trajectory. Although not as divided in sentiment as the Cherokees, at least a few tribal members wished to see the school closed and tribal monies distributed as per capita payments. Other Chickasaw disliked the Christian orientation of the school. Like Mihesuah, Cobb might have addressed the ambivalence full-blood Chickasaws had toward a school that catered mainly to a select, light-complexioned group. She might have examined how Chickasaw attitudes toward the school changed when both its administration and its student body changed.

At the book's end, Cobb includes an appendix of seventeen short biographies of Bloomfield alumni. She might have turned these biographies into another chapter that summarized how the school shaped their values and influenced the choices and opportunities they met after graduation. A book still needs to be written on the influence of Indian schools on students' later careers.

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Messages from Frank's Landing: A Story of Salmon, Treaties, and the Indian Way. By Charles Wilkinson. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000. 118 pages. \$22.50 cloth.

Thirty years ago the American Friends Service Committee published *Uncommon Controversy*, the first comprehensive study of the long-standing controversy over Indian fishing rights in Washington State. Then came the critical Boldt Decision of 1974 that guaranteed federally recognized tribes the right to half the harvestable salmon destined for traditional fishing sites. The Supreme Court upheld that decision in 1979. The complex negotiations surrounding Indian fishing rights and salmon management are discussed in another landmark study, *Treaties on Trial*, by Fay G. Cohen, published in 1986. Now Charles Wilkinson, a professor of law and author of numerous books on Indian rights, has given us a valuable new resource on the topic. *Messages from Frank's Landing* intertwines the history of various legal battles surrounding fishing rights with the life history of Billy Frank Jr., a veteran of those battles and respected spokesman for the Nisqually and other Indian groups.

The first issue that the author discusses is the place Frank's Landing and how it became the focal point of fishing rights. Billy Frank Sr., born in 1879, grew up in a village at the southern edge of Muck Creek prairie. After the