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Black Elk and Flaming Rainbow: Personal Memories of the Lakota Holy Man and John Neihardt. By Hilda Neihardt. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995. 136 pages. $22.00 cloth.

This book, written by Hilda Neihardt, second daughter of Missouri poet and biographer John Neihardt, is primarily a retrospective re-creation of the Black Elk interviews of 1931. Ms. Neihardt, now in her late 70s, tells most of the story from the perspective of her experience at the interviews as a fifteen-year-old high school sophomore having her first real contact with reservation Lakota. As one might expect, the young Hilda dashes off to ride with Leo Looks Twice, searching for wild mustang or just enjoying the day, making forays to town for supplies, and spending time at the cook fire or walking in the surrounding hills. Her portrayal of the interviews is constantly interwoven with these asides and with a rather romanticized view of both native people and the beauty of the environment. In fact, the whole book is charged with a certain kind of youthful innocence (such as her constant referral to John Neihardt as " Daddy" throughout the narrative) and is perhaps an excellent record of how native culture has impacted so many young people in an impressionistic fashion. Significantly, her memories and comments on the 1944 interviews (when she was twenty-eight) are minimal, since she was obviously distracted by her own more adult concerns. So it is through the eyes of the fifteen-year-old Hilda and the reconstructed memories of the elder adult, highly influenced by life-long attitudes toward native people, that we see the 1931 interviews. This creates an interesting double perspective.

It is easy to sense the sixty-three-year distance between 1931 and 1994. Ms. Neihardt writes on meeting Black Elk's family: "As if in a dream, we stepped out and went in to meet our hosts" (p. 32). Her memories of the interviews are strongly bracketed to what seems to be another age or era in American history, a kind of pre-world war ideal past of perfect family relationships, positive Anglo-Indian communication, and the remarkable genius of John Neihardt in writing the first really "authentic" book on American Indians. This is certainly a high contrast to another recent book on Black Elk and John Neihardt (Julian Rice, *Black Elk's Story: Distinguishing Its Lakota Purpose,* University of New Mexico Press, 1991). In that work, Rice describes John Neihardt an "Aryan racist" and a Christian anti-Indianist who completely

failed to grasp the ethnographic reality of Lakota culture and created a "noble savage" ideal that fit with Neihardt's own beliefs in the inevitable, if tragic, termination of Indian culture and religion after Wounded Knee.

Hilda Neihardt's book gives us the other end of the spectrum—a tranquil portrait of an obviously well-loved father set in a period of youthful excitement and a tangential romance with all things Lakota. Nevertheless, the style is easy to read and informative and does add new dimensions to the Black Elk interviews. After their first meeting, Black Elk gave John Neihardt his daybreak star necklace, an image of one of the symbols of his great vision, and this symbol is given simple but poignant interpretation. The gift obviously affected Neihardt deeply and created a symbolic bond between him and "the old man," as Black Elk is called frequently in the narrative. Neihardt then became inspired to write "a book truly *Indian* from the inside out" (p. 18). This claim is a bit overblown; writers like Mary Eastman, Edward Goodbird, George Bird Grinnell, Walter McClintock, Frank Linderman, James Schultz, and Stanley Vestal (and many others) had already published works giving perhaps even more accurate portrayals of the native perspectives and biographies.

Not surprisingly, Ms. Neihardt does not remember the then sixty-eight-year-old Nicholas Black Elk very well, other than for his "roundish, more Oriental face" (p. 30). It was the younger Lakota men, including Ben Black Elk, who made the deeper impressions. Reflecting on her experience—supplemented with the dairies written by her older sister Enid, the transcribed letters of John Neihardt, and her own notes taken in the 1944 interviews—Ms. Neihardt proceeds to give us a series of snapshots of the interview process laid out sequentially and interspersed with her own adventurous forays. We meet Black Elk's family: his second wife Anna Brings White; his oldest son Ben and Ben's Hispanic wife, Ellen; and his daughter Lucy, Ben's half-sister. Lucy's perspective on Black Elk has also been published recently (Michael F. Steltenkamp, *Black Elk: Holy Man of the Oglala*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1993) and gives additional insights into the period between the 1931 and 1944 interviews. Interestingly, the presentation in Steltenkamp of the deep Catholicism of Lucy Black Elk Looks Twice (and Black Elk) is contradicted by Ms. Neihardt. She states (p. 117–18) that, during a talk at Stephens College, Lucy said that her Catholic faith did not help her after the death of her husband and, after reading *Black Elk Speaks* (for the

first time), she became a pipe carrier and embraced Lakota spirituality.

During the interviews, we follow Black Elk and Neihardt (along with Hilda and Enid) from Black Elk's home outside of Manderson, where he narrated the more historical aspects of his life with other elder Lakota men, to the home of Luther Standing Bear, where he narrated the sacred vision to the exclusion of other Lakota. Black Elk's telling of the great vision required smudging with sage and sweetgrass, lighting his pipe, and giving pipe prayers. For Black Elk, it is clear that the telling of the great vision was the heart of the story he wished to tell. Here Black Elk told about his early, unusual experiences with animals and, at nine, his sudden illness and vision. Ms. Neihardt recalls that many drum songs were sung during this recitation; these, unfortunately, were not recorded or translated.

Apparently, many aspects of the great vision came with sacred songs, which Black Elk still remembered after almost sixty years. The editing out of these songs by Neihardt certainly shows a cultural predisposition toward things non-Indian, since the songs were, for Black Elk himself, obviously crucial to the experience.

Both John Neihardt and Ben Black Elk were deeply impressed with Black Elk's experiences. And Enid recorded in her diary, "Black Elk is not very good at telling history, but he is very good at telling his vision" (p. 53). It is significant that the record of the vision in *Black Elk Speaks* is severely edited by Neihardt (and was originally rejected by the publisher), whereas the complete vision text was, for Black Elk, the "real story" that he wanted recorded. Happily, the complete text of the interviews is available in Ray DeMallie's *The Sixth Grandfather: Black Elk's Teachings Given to John G. Neihardt* (University of Nebraska Press, 1984); a comparison of the two shows clearly that Neihardt shaped his work according to his own values far more than those of Black Elk.

Hilda rides out with Leo Looks Twice, cooks dinners, works around camp, and comes and goes during the interviews. She recalls Black Elk's admonitions about the sacred hoop: a hoop large enough to embrace the world and all beings in it, the red road of spiritual understanding and the black road of worldly difficulties that all two-leggeds must walk. She remembers the symbols and colors of the four directions and that the point where the roads join is holy; she gives it an interesting twist as that which "represents the triumph of the highest and best that is in us over the worldly or materialistic" (p. 61)—an interpretation far more

Christian than traditional Lakota. The many songs of the telling were subsequently synthesized "from the bits and pieces Black Elk sang at various times" into a song composed by Neihardt and memorized by the family (p. 60).

We learn about Black Elk's views on Lakota games, big battles, the horse dance (also performed in 1967 by the Bancroft Saddle Club in Nebraska under the guidance of Evelyn Vogt, founder of the John G. Neihardt Foundation), the Wild West shows, and, finally, Wounded Knee. Black Elk told the story of Wounded Knee by walking around the site with the Neihardts and pointing out various places where events happened. The relationship between Black Elk and John Neihardt grew increasingly more intimate until, as recorded in Neihardt's letters, "there was very often an uncanny merging of consciousness between the old fellow and myself" (p. 77). At Cuny Table in the Badlands, Black Elk prayed for the success of Neihardt's book and a return of the land (Black Hills) taken from the Lakota people. Hilda was given the Lakota name Day Break Star Woman by Black Elk during a naming ceremony where John became Flaming Rainbow and Enid, She Who Walks With Her Holy Red Staff. Finally, Black Elk gave John Neihardt all the symbols from his vision as well as his pipe and stated that he had now given him his power and that he was "left a poor old man" (p. 85). This is a stark, cautionary image of how easily native voice and power are lost when appropriated in the memories and stories of nonnative peoples. Hilda Neihardt's book is sincere but requires cautious and careful reading.

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The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents. Edited and with an introduction by Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1995. 185 pages. $35.00 cloth; $8.65 paper.

The "Trail of Tears," or the forced removal of the Cherokee Indians from their ancestral homelands to Oklahoma in the 1830s, is one of the best known episodes in Cherokee history. The editors of this volume, Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green, both knowledgeable and well-respected historians of Native Americans in the Southeast, use this complex event to illustrate for the general,