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Spider Woman Walks This Land: Traditional Cultural Properties and the Navajo Nation. By Kelli Carmean.

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themselves intellectuals of the postcolonial period. By giving the example of Water Jar Boy from Cajete's *Look to the Mountain* (1993), Garroutte skillfully disarticulates what nonindigenous academics such as Arnold Krupat have called "absurdly racist" and "essentialist ideas" regarding the concept of memory in the blood or identity being something that one simply feels and is because it runs through them (120–21). The greatest contribution of this new work is that it dispels the myth that tradition is always already essentialist and socially constructed in the same way that Western scholars have labeled tradition in the "post" colonial period. Water Jar Boy, born of the Tewa-speaking Pueblos of New Mexico, discovers who his father is and on coming across a man sitting near a spring, Water Jar Boy is immediately recognized by the father and goes to live with him and his other paternal relatives who dwell in the spring. This story is symbolic according to Garroutte because it represents a bond of common ancestry that may be inexplicable to nonindigenous people or to any people who do not come from a similar spiritual or intellectual tradition.

"The existence of essentialist themes in tribal sacred stories suggests that their academic dismissal as racist incitements or as colonial artifacts must be inspected carefully. Do the versions of essentialism that Native communities may discover in their traditional stories differ from the essentialist claims that arise in academic contexts and have been so roundly criticized there? Do all essentialist definitions of identity come from the same intellectual space? Do they all function in the same way?" (122). Much in the same way that Patricia Hill Collins argues in *Black Feminist Thought* (2000) for the importance of strategic essentialism in the survival of African American female intellectual thought, as well as the survival of social definitions of black female selfhood, Eva Marie Garroutte builds a convincing argument that not all forms of essentialism are the same and that in order to preserve, maintain, and move the American Indian community forward, it will continue to be important to embrace and understand the fluidity and *essential* essence and cultural groundings that protect the uniqueness of Native identity in North America.

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Spider Woman Walks This Land: Traditional Cultural Properties and the Navajo Nation. By Kelli Carmean. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2002. 173 pages. \$24.95 cloth.

Reviewing a book of this sort is a sentimental endeavor, as one is reminded of a surviving Native culture within the boundaries of the United States. The progression through the gallery of thoughts in this volume leaves the reader with abstract images of the Navajo reality. For many the decades-old classical writings of the Navajo are outdated, and little has replaced them.

Unfortunately, this book does not come up to the level of Clyde Kluckhohn and Dorothea Leighton's *The Navaho* (1946). However, it is a good, simple introduction for those with no knowledge of the Navajo people

or with a limited knowledge of archaeology. To its credit, the book is not written in a manner that constantly expresses images of the Navajo as a broken people. Navajos have long shunned this imagery of sympathy, while other tribes have worn it like a badge of honor. Today there are usually three essentials for writing a book about the Navajo people: (1) visit the vast reservation, (2) talk to at least one Navajo person, and (3) eat some mutton stew and fry-bread. Certainly, the author has met these requirements.

The volume begins with a smart historical narrative that follows its own logic in partnership with personal journal entries. Drawing tactfully from Navajo folks she has recorded in her personal journal, Kelli Carmean weaves a functional personification of Navajo experiences into text. For the reader these personal eye-openers prove to enhance the text. The blending of personalities into the web of the topic is ideal, for it reminds the reader that the volume deals with living beings. However, personal entries are missing in chapters 3, 4, and 5.

Carmean argues in her preface that literature should maintain an equilibrium between its overarching theme and its details. When an author sets such a standard, readers will use it as a judgment tool throughout the volume. Equilibrium, overshadowing, and oversimplification become issues of achievement or failure. However, the relative knowledge of the reader becomes the focus, and it is the reader who judges these issues. For this reader, Carmean's volume too often falls short of the standard its author sets.

The book begins with a description of religion and cultural order among the Navajo. Then, suddenly, chapter 4, "The National Historic Preservation Act," leaps in front of us. From the end of chapter 3, "Guides for Proper Conduct," we are faced with the National Historic Preservation Act, which has its own scary nature. If we assume an attempt at blending cultural, historical, and contemporary issues (an ethnography of the Navajo) that revolve around the National Historic Preservation Act as the central theme of the volume, we become disoriented. Unless one is an archaeology student or the Navajo tribal archaeologist, a word-for-word copy of the NHPA legislation is not critical. What is missing from the discussion is that the Navajo tribal government has had several negative views of the NHPA, especially when archaeological concerns conflicted with the tribe's attempts to develop the Antelope Point Marina for the past few decades.

Hidden within this chapter is the claim that among Native tribes, the Navajo were one of the first to create a historic preservation office. For the typical reader the question "Why would the Navajos be one of the first to create such an office?" would seem an important issue. Knowing the traditional fear of the dead among the Navajo, why would they create a tribal operation that would deal in some manner with the remains of Anasazi, Navajo, and others? Perhaps the reason was economic in that federal funds would be available for archaeological activities and for the employment of many. Or was the United States government asserting its colonial power over the Navajo?

With chapter 5 we are off to a discussion of natural resources, economic development, and Navajo land. Expansion of the discussion of social and legal concerns of the Navajo would have outlined for the reader the tremendous

impact of these issues. But discussion is cursory, and the reader is left to draw his or her own conclusions on these issues or to head to the library to research the topic further.

Then, for some reason, in chapter 6 we are back to an archaeological discussion of cultural resource management and the Navajo Nation. And as we slip into the final chapter of the book, there is a discussion of traditional cultural properties with an introduction of the author's scale of cultural properties: community, regional, and tribal. Devoting only a few pages to this subject, Carmean leaves the reader with a confusing array of archaeological definitions and ways these relate to what precedes them. Further, in this final chapter, sadly, it is not reported that the American Indian Religious Freedom Act is useless in litigation that attempts to protect tribal religions or archaeological remains. Its only purpose has been to pacify Indian tribes.

However, as Carmean attempts to write on several themes without an adequate blending into a central message, the reader can easily become lost without a guide. Also, since Spider Woman was used as a template of the title of the text, it is a major omission not to have a complete review of Spider Woman and Spider Man's mythological saga. Many years ago, as I played a flute at the base of Spider Rock, I realized that Spider Woman brings the uniformity of order and structure to the Navajo mental template. The cultural flavor of this fact enhances the survival of traditional Navajo culture. In this light, how the NHPA and other archaeological concerns enhance the survivability of the Navajo is not clearly defined. The reader could assume that by their practice of cultural activities, Navajos are creating and maintaining cultural properties. Is this the message of the text?

Carmean concludes by emphasizing the balance that Navajos must find in dealing with the different demands and expectations of the modern world. Without a reference to the concept of marginal culture and related theory, however, her observation is incomplete. A discussion of marginality would have been useful.

Journeying beyond the shortfalls, for those planning a short visit to the Navajo Southwest, the book will provide insights on the Navajo. All in all, readers should be impressed by an interesting short text that offers a chronicle of thoughts conveying an updated view of the Navajo. At times the book is intelligent and charming, with an enormous amount of information packed into a small amount of text. For those who have never had the pleasure of visiting the Navajos on their vast reservation, the book will inspire curiosity to learn more of this long-surviving desert culture. More so, as a companion book with others, a successful blend can be created of the central theme of the world of the Navajo and its struggle with archaeology.

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