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can Indian ways of thought or do not make sense in the context of American Indian culture.

If it resembles anything, the society presented in the book seems to represent a vaguely pre-industrial social organization with some extremely muted hints of revolutionary thinking. The concept and difficulties of making a living, child labor and attitudes towards work, class, caste, family and clan relationships—the whole “infrastructure” of a civilization, insofar as it is represented—is recognizably western European and can be seen to have little to do with indigenous North American cultures presented in ethnographic or historical documents. Some items are vague or contradictory; for instance, is this a patrilineal culture where a bride moves in with husband’s family or a matrilineal society where a woman divorces her husband by putting out his shoes? Other items, like the recurrent discussion of the evils of child labor, seem simply anachronistic. My own reading in social history indicates that concepts of child labor, as of childhood itself, are mainly the creation of industrial and post-industrial society. Finally, some things, like the carrying of nursing babies into sweat lodges, are simply not credible in any context.

Quite a few novels have been written that supposedly tell about life on this continent before the European invasion. Most of them are not very good. This book, unfortunately, is no exception.

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Interpreting the Indian: Twentieth-Century Poets and the Native American. By Michael Castro. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983. 224 pp. \$22.50 Cloth.

At the Summer Seminar on Native American Literature, Michael Castro mentions in his “Acknowledgments,” that Terry Wilson described his concept of the 150% American Indian—a person who has the capacity to learn deeply from his or her own tribal culture(s) and from non-Indian cultures and the ability to create a “new” identity enriched by these diverse perspectives. One of the implicit questions asked by Castro’s *Interpreting the Indian*

suggests the mirror image of Wilson's concept: Is it possible to be 150% White? Or to put the question in Castro's words: Is it possible for non-Indians to achieve a "creative synthesis of the best and most usable features of Native American and Euro-Christian consciousness" (163)?

Certainly Castro is not the first to pose this question. Montaigne and Rousseau asked a similar question centuries ago; book-length scholarly surveys such as Albert Keiser's *The Indian in American Literature* (1933) date back at least to the 1930s, and the question continues to attract attention today in writings by American Indian and non-Indian authors such as Vine Deloria, Jr., Geary Hobson, Leslie Marmon Silko and several of the contributors to Paula Gunn Allen's *Studies in American Indian Literature* (Modern Language Association, 1983), especially Larry Evers, James Ruppert and Joseph M. Backus. Castro's particular and important contributions are his focus and his temperament. He concentrates on twentieth century non-Indian poets. This focus includes both the poetry and prose of the selected poets; indeed some of the best parts of the book are about the poets' prose. Castro's topic allows him to examine a variety of different attempts to synthesize American Indian and non-Indian ideas and forms, ranging from the clichés of Vachel Lindsay, based on very little contact with Native Americans, to the individualized co-creations of John G. Neihardt, based on decades of friendships with American Indians. Despite this diversity the concentration on poets allows Castro to unify his survey with questions about how American Indian ideas and literary forms can appropriately merge with Anglo-American and European concepts and forms, and how these syntheses relate to "mainstream" American poetry. Castro's temperament is outlined explicitly in his Preface. He is a scholar/poet/editor who was strongly influenced by the social and literary movements of the 1960s and 1970s that sought alternatives to the mentalities that lead us to Vietnam and the celebration of materialism and the formation of criteria that encouraged several generations of scholars to praise the carefully crafted poems lauded by the New Critics.

In a scholarly survey there are disadvantages to Castro's particular temperament; it is difficult, for example, for him to be as "objective" in his discussions of Olson, Rothenberg and Snyder (all heroes of poetry movements of the sixties and seventies) as

he is in his excellent discussions of Mary Austin and Neihardt. But there are also important advantages to Castro's perspective. Most notably it charges his writing with senses of vitality, empathy and necessity often lacking in author-by-author surveys. Instead of merely "covering" his "material," Castro's commitment to specific poetic concepts frequently turns his survey into the narration of a drama that touches upon some of the most creative attempts to discover what it is to be an American poet.

The diversity of this drama is impressive. Castro begins with late nineteenth and early twentieth century "translators" of two kinds: those, like Matthews, Mooney, La Flesche and Densmore, who translated tribal oral literatures to preserve Indian cultures; and those, like Mary Austin, who used English translations as inspirations for new types of poems written in English and new theories of American poetry rooted in a sense of place. Castro argues convincingly that four events helped to bring both approaches to the public's attention: Natalie Curtis's collection *The Indians' Book* (1907), the February 1917 issue of *Poetry*, *A Magazine of Verse*, George W. Cronyn's anthology *Path on the Rainbow* (1918), and Austin's *The American Rhythm* (1923), a gathering of her "reexpressions" of American Indian songs and a long introductory essay. Castro's discussions are concise and balanced. He praises the insight and courage of poets and editors who went against current notions of poetry by presenting American Indian songs and chants as serious literature—serious enough to be models for a new American poetry. He reminds us, however, that "translations" and "reexpressions" in written English can never capture the "singer's body and voice," the sounds of the original language and the networks of performance and cultural connotations of an oral literature (23–24).

The next two chapters take us through the 1930s. In Chapter 2 Castro examines three well-known poets—Vachel Lindsay, Hart Crane and William Carlos Williams—who lacked knowledge of American Indian oral literatures and who had few contacts with Native Americans. Their interests were similar: they used familiar images of American Indians to identify qualities lacking in the modern American consciousness, especially a lack of awareness of the land. Their means and results were quite dissimilar: Lindsay's American Indian poems expressed a simplistic obsession with establishing American Indian ancestry for White Americans (e.g., his poem "Our Mother Pocahontas").

Crane realized that forging such links was difficult. In "The Bridge" Pocahontas is elusive ("Mythical brows we saw retiring . . .") and ultimately "unknowable" (56). In editorials in *Contact* and *In The American Grain* (1925) Williams presented American Indians as models of Peoples who have ". . . accepted and reacted directly and creatively to the conditions of 'the local'" (61). Castro analyzes different types of literary uses of American Indians in Chapter 3. Lew Sarett and Neihardt had many contacts with American Indians and were usually less interested in using "The Indian" of the past as a model than they were in describing individual contemporary American Indians. Unfortunately Sarett's attempts were marred by his unimaginative use of rigid nineteenth century rhyme schemes and stereotypical images. Neihardt was more fortunate. Castro makes excellent use of his knowledge of Neihardt's life, his poetry, the conditions of the meetings between Black Elk and Neihardt and the original typescript record of those meetings to argue that Neihardt was one of the best poetic transformers of American Indian literature. He argues that many of the additions and deletions Neihardt made (some revealed here for the first time in print) grew out of his deep knowledge of the Sioux, of Black Elk and of Black Elk's belief in "the brotherhood of man and the unity and holiness of all life" (89). The result was a prose poem, *Black Elk Speaks* (1932), that was comprehensible to non-Indians and "true" (in many literal and philosophical ways) to Black Elk's vision.

The fifties, sixties and seventies are the concerns of Chapters 4 through 6. Castro's attempts to "answer" some of the criticisms directed against the uses of material associated with American Indians by Charles Olson, Jerome Rothenberg and Gary Snyder (especially the latter two) is sometimes less convincing than his handling of the criticism of Austin and Neihardt. Specifically, his responses to comments by William Bevis, Geary Hobson and Leslie Marmon Silko seem "uneasy," which is understandable since he is dealing with sensitive issues and, in Silko's case, responding to an important and well-known American Indian poet and fiction writer. We find Castro's best "defenses" not in his "answers" but in his awareness of how each of these influential modern poets linked American Indian literary traditions or images of American Indians to their concepts of the nature and function of poetry: Olson's belief in the importance of breath, not

simply as a practical means of finding where a line should end, but also as the "animating spirit" of good poetry; Rothenberg's desire to lift poetry beyond the written page into the realm of performed events; and Snyder's belief that the traditional Native American sense of place once rightly celebrated as an inspiration for new American poems has now become a message urgently related to the ecological survival of Peoples all over the globe.

Interpreting the Indian makes such a good case for the importance of studying how twentieth century American poets have responded to the realities and mythologies of Native Americans that it leaves me wanting more. I would have liked more quotations from the prose and poetry of the last three decades (reprint fees no doubt restrained Castro); more about the heirs of the early anthologizers (see page 32); more about the literary, historical and psychological reasons for the poetic interest in American Indians (see pages 61 and 101-102). Since in his last chapter Castro includes discussion of some trends in poetry written in English by American Indians, I would have especially liked to read more about this perspective than we find in his brief comments about several poets who perceive "anguish" and/or "restoration" in contemporary American Indian situations. I realize that, given Castro's focus and the pressure towards brevity imposed by most publishers today, it would be impossible to discuss contemporary American Indian poets in detail. In 1983 alone at least three anthologies of contemporary Native American poetry appeared: *Wounds Beneath the Flesh*, *Songs From This Earth on Turtle's Back* and *The Clouds Threw This Light*. Still, a brief examination specifically aimed at studying how a poet such as Silko, Simon J. Ortiz, or N. Scott Momaday has combined American Indian and non-Indian ideas and forms would have been a fitting ending to a significant book. These and other American Indian poets suggest how good poetry can move us even beyond the limits of the 150% American Indian and the 150% White to the 150% Human.

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James Welch. By Peter Wild. Boise, Idaho: Boise State University, 1983. Western Writers Series, No. 57. 49 pp. \$2.00 Paper.