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Author

Meredith, Howard

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I am absolutely certain that the publication of *Vortex of Indian Fevers* marks the full emergence of a major figure in contemporary American Indian writing. That in itself makes it an important event. But Adrian Louis should not be relegated to a "Native American" literary ghetto. Anyone who wishes to make sense of the meager wheat and abundant chaff in the contemporary American poetry scene should read what he has written and monitor with care what we must hope will be a long career.

Robert L. Berner
Oshkosh, Wisconsin

When Indians Became Cowboys: Native Peoples and Cattle Ranching in the American West. By Peter Iverson. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994. 255 pages. \$24.95 cloth.

In *When Indians Became Cowboys*, Peter Iverson writes about ideas and roles of continuing significance to Anglo-American and Native American understanding of themselves and their place in the universe around them. In so doing, he has provided readers with a multivalent sense of the structure of modern existence in the American West. Since this discourse makes use of ideas to grasp the reality of change, it is as if reality manifests itself in contradictory ways, at times masking the concepts the author expresses.

Both Iverson and Henrietta Whiteman have dealt with the various levels of historical discourse concerning American Indians and Anglo-American interpretations of history. It is important to remember the words of Whiteman, a Cheyenne from the Southern Plains who teaches Native American studies at Montana State University ("White Buffalo Woman," *The American Indian and the Problem of History*, edited by Calvin Martin, 1987):

Cheyenne history, and by extension Indian history, in all probability will never be incorporated into American history, because it is holistic, human, personal, and sacred.

.....

The collective stream of American Indian tribal experiences has become a spiritual history with the sacred mission of keeping the Earth Grandmother alive. American Indian history has 25,000–to 40,000-year-old roots in this sacred land. It cannot suddenly be assimilated into American history.

In that same collection of essays, Iverson wrote about a corrective to possibly bridge different frames of reference in terms of assimilation and accommodation, noting, “[W]e need to travel to the land where the people lived. If the people still live there, then we must listen to them and think about what they have to say. We must be able to think about different ways of seeing a historical event or person” (“I May Connect Time,” *The American Indian and the Problem of History*, edited by Calvin Martin, 1987). He carries through with this methodology in *When Indians Became Cowboys*, extending his conceptual model beyond the limits of the written record and the printed word in spatial and oral contexts.

Iverson not only takes into account the significant thought processes of the American West but involves the reader in the measure of assimilation and accommodation of Native American people with traditional Latino and Celtic frames of reference associated with cattle herding. Amidst changing perspectives, cattle ranching remains a measure of growth and progress, while in other frames of reference the presence of cattle represents the degradation of the environment, the loss of native habitat.

When Indians Became Cowboys emerges as a book from Iverson’s personal experiences as much as objective research—imaginative and perceptive—in large part overcoming the remoteness of earlier subject treatments. In this sense, this is a work of scholarship but one intended to reach a much broader audience. It is a thoughtful work, providing a sense of feeling for intracultural and cross-cultural perceptions in its construction. Iverson’s experiences in Wyoming and Arizona bring to life the records of the past, as people in ranching affected him.

Iverson puts forth the thesis that “Indian cattle ranching fully emerged as a strategy to confront changing times. It became part of the tradition of many western Indian communities” (p. 14; also see pp. 53, 84). He tests this hypothesis in several regions in the late nineteenth century and during the Great Depression and the period of Termination of the 1950s and 1960s, including the Northern Plains, Oklahoma, and the Southwest. For example, the Comanche, the Kiowa, and the Plains Apache were burdened with hands-on bureaucrats hired to teach them to cultivate wheat and to herd cattle and sheep. By 1905, Anglo-Americans controlled the range cattle industry and commercial agriculture on the Southern Plains. The Anglo population had come to dominate the markets to the exclusion of the native populations. All of these changes took place in the name of humanity, at the expense of the

"Earth Grandmother"; they brought the Dust Bowl of the 1930s and further degradation of the environment in the continuing drought of the 1950s. The dominant Anglo-American worldview did not comprehend the significance of ritual service to the earth.

The concluding pages of the book move into more and more eclectic ventures and personal reflection involving diverse subjects such as ranching as ecological imperialism, regional transformation leading to the creation of a "buffalo commons," cattle grazing fee issues in the Clinton administration, and the extraordinary writing of novelists N. Scott Momaday and Wallace Stegner. Where the horse has gained a place in Native American mythology, song, and dance, cattle have yet to move among the mythic images so important to Native American cultures.

The references to the "buffalo commons" and the writing of Momaday bring forth the continuing place of the bison in the mythology and the reality of many American Indian tribes, particularly those on the Great Plains. In ever-increasing numbers, bison are raised naturally, with no growth hormones or stimulants. Bison meat is higher in protein and lower in fat, cholesterol, and calories than beef. It is high in B vitamins and in iron, while being a nutrient-dense food. The United States Department of Agriculture inspects and approves buffalo meat products for sale throughout the West. Most critically, the buffalo or bison are environmentally friendly in their habitat on the Great Plains. Perhaps ranching and herding will emerge in new patterns on the Plains with the growing number of American bison.

There is no growing mythic vision of cattle among American Indian peoples in the Great Plains. The colonial political and economic ideas that continue to spread cattle raising over the globe, on the plains, and in the rainforests sustain its place in the Americas. But it is being said that the Kiowa people are singing the old Sun Dance songs, with the buffalo as a central image, and will reintroduce this dance for the renewal of life and maintenance of health after more than one hundred years. Buffalo still capture the imagination of the Kiowa and other American Indian peoples.

There is no contemporary synthesis in Iverson's estimation of the place of the range cattle industry in American Indian efforts to retain their sense of harmony nor in their roles as cattle ranchers. The author does delve into many rich and varied perspectives. Perhaps there is no cognitive overriding definition for what is happening in the cattle industry and ranching operations among Native American peoples. But the book reflects the idea that the

range cattle industry and the maintenance of increasing numbers of bison are not just matters of the past. Iverson denies the idea that existing perceptions, concepts, models, and paradigms about ranching are frozen in time. It seems that his objective in this book is to shift the emphasis from the concept of a vanishing ranching industry to the design of a flexible, sustainable development in the present and into the future. *When Indians Became Cowboys* is an interesting thrust into concerns about reservation Indian life and sustainable development in this context, as well as the place of the range cattle industry in continuing patterns of existence in the western United States.

Howard Meredith
University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma