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**Author**

Smelcer, John E.

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*Monthly*, and the *New York Times*, and Mann has done all of this. Thus Mann's writing in general and this book in particular have immense sociopolitical value. Mann has synthesized many lines of research that point in similar directions, and he has done so in an unusually elegant, persuasive manner suitable for a large audience. This book is well worth reading because of his on-the-scenes descriptions and rich style, as well as his facility with scientific subjects (such as genetics and the effects of climate change on ancient societies), which he ably integrates with archaeology and history.

*Bruce E. Johansen*

University of Nebraska, Omaha

**American Indian Themes in Young Adult Literature.** By Paulette F. Molin. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2005. 200 pages. \$40.00 cloth.

Arlene Hirschfelder's foreword to Paulette Molin's *American Indian Themes in Young Adult Literature* states that teachers, librarians, and publishers are not sufficiently familiar with American Indian literature to distinguish usefully authentic work from damagingly bad writing. Thus, many of the books selected for school curricula are full of stereotypes and outright misinformation. They misrepresent and trivialize American Indians and often are written by non-Natives who create characters who want to be Indian—and truly believe that they can be by the power of mere proximity. Such books only serve to perpetuate enduring and false myths about Native Americans. School curricula also rarely include ethnic literature at times other than Multicultural Awareness Week. Molin's book addresses these issues faced by teachers and librarians and by parents of young students as well. Her effort is a brave and necessary one by an acclaimed scholar in the field, but this book's usefulness is hindered by several shortcomings.

For instance, the first chapter, aptly titled "Wildest Imaginings about Indians: Contemporary Young Adult Fiction by Non-Indian Authors," fails to discuss several of the most popular books taught in American secondary schools. Molin makes no mention whatsoever of Forrest Carter's autobiography, *The Education of Little Tree*, which has sold more than 1.5 million copies and which some consider the prototype of young adult American Indian literature. It was later learned that Forrest Carter was a fraud. He was in fact Asa Carter, a former Klu Klux Klan leader and the ghostwriter of George Wallace's infamous "Segregation forever!" speech. *The Education of Little Tree* was not remotely autobiographical. Carter was not Cherokee, had no Cherokee grandparents, and had never attended an Indian boarding school (he was sent, rather, to an all-white orphanage). The book is full of stereotypes, yet it is still widely read in schools simply because many teachers and librarians are unaware of the controversy—indeed, just the other day, I had a discussion with an eighth-grade English teacher who was about to order *Little Tree* for his class. If Molin had addressed this important issue, perhaps authentic young-adult novels written by American Indians eventually would supplant

those written by non-Indians who have neither the cultural knowledge nor the concern required to write well of these matters.

But Molin's failure to mention Carter is not the only oversight in her first chapter. She also neglects discussion of other popular non-Native writers, such as Gary Paulsen, Jean Craighead George, Margaret Craven, and, to a degree, Jack London, whose portrayal of Indians is the most stereotypic of all. Taken together, these four authors outsell just about all other young-adult American Indian-themed fiction books combined. *American Indian Themes in Young Adult Literature* also does not examine several important books by American Indians. Perhaps the most well known of these is Velma Wallis's myth-based novel *Two Old Women*, which has been published in seventeen languages around the world and is widely read in schools.

Molin spends the entirety of chapter 5 assassinating Ann Rinaldi's *My Heart Is on the Ground* (1999), a diary-driven novel set at Carlisle Indian School in 1879. Whether that novel deserves the amount of critical attention Molin supplies is debatable, but Molin's motives must be questioned given that she ignores *Little Tree*. What is it about Rinaldi's work that raises it so far above Carter's in the pantheon of bad fiction? The main point of this chapter is the mandate that books containing American Indian themes should only be written by American Indians, as only African Americans should write about black themes—so much for Mark Twain and Harper Lee! This, of course, raises two questions that Molin does not address: (1) Are Indians and black people and any other ethnic group incapable of bad fiction when writing of their own culture? (2) And who, then, is Indian? Are the authors Molin admires most even Indian? As a tribally and federally enrolled American Indian, I can testify that the answer to that question is confusing at best. Such a discussion, even a cursory one, would help educators.

In the last chapter, "American Indian Life Stories," Molin examines nonfiction by American Indian writers, including biographies. Yet again she fails to mention key works in the field. Almost every major living American Indian author Molin mentions in her text appears in either Brian Swann's *I Tell You Now* (1987) or in his later collection, *Here First* (2000). Both anthologies, which I highly recommend, include discussions by the various authors concerning how their Native identity influences their writing.

Molin, herself of Chippewa descent, first began to evaluate materials written about and by Native Americans in the 1970s. Over the past three decades she has established herself as an authority in the field. *American Indian Themes in Young Adult Literature* is a useful reference work, especially for the readers she targets—teachers, librarians, and even publishers and editors of young adult literature—and it provides the most complete bibliography of the genre in print. Nevertheless, this work is an uneven treatise, ignoring some of the most essential issues.

*John E. Smelcer*

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University