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**Remember This!: Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives.**

By Waziyatawin Angela Wilson with translations from the Dakota text by Wahpetunwin Carolyn Schommer. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005. 282 pages. \$55.00 cloth; \$29.95 paper.

Waziyatawin Angela Wilson, assistant professor of indigenous history at Arizona State University and a member of the Dakota Nation, provides a multidimensional exploration of topics vital both to indigenous peoples and indigenous studies. *Remember This!* deftly challenges the “academy” with indigenous scholarship that gives an equal voice to Native authority and relies on oral narrative.

Wilson writes from a personal commitment to her people and the process of their decolonization. She works to preserve and develop a Native identity by advocating resistance to colonialism, neocolonialism, and missionary influence. The book’s primary readership is the Dakota people, but Wilson invites non-Natives to recognize the intellectual, linguistic, historical, cultural, and religious contributions that continue to be made to the world by the Dakota people, doing so in a voice that alternates between shattering challenge and opposition, and warm invitation and collaboration.

The book provides a key narrative by the respected Dakota elder Eli Taylor, a Wahpetunwan, a Dakota who lived on the Sioux Valley Reserve in Manitoba and who is Wilson’s adopted grandfather. The first three chapters analyze oral narrative from an indigenous perspective. Writing in the first person plural, Wilson begins by pointing out that oral narrative, while central to indigenous history, is often questioned or devalued in traditional historiography. She challenges scholars to appreciate the authenticity, rigor, and privileged status of oral narrative. Oral history is not an artifact for outsiders to collect; it is how indigenous peoples transmit culture and preserve a sense of unity and identity. Wilson urges scholars who want to understand the depth and nuance of oral narratives to learn indigenous languages. Throughout the book, she argues that the preservation (in some cases the revitalization) of an indigenous language is essential to the intellectual life of the people to whom it belongs. Her own methodology is a testimony to and a model for this approach.

Wilson focuses on the importance of legitimizing research by requesting permissions from Native authorities (such as tribal councils), collaborating with Native peoples as equals, engaging in research that has a value for the peoples themselves, and developing ongoing reciprocal relationships with these communities. She also suggests that indigenous viewpoints are not to be questioned, pointing out that she herself is respectful of other worldviews and other personal viewpoints. Wilson stresses that readers need not agree with her but mutual respect is as essential to the act of research as it is to any collaboration, and such collaboration must serve the Native project of decolonization.

Before presenting Taylor’s narrative, Wilson addresses the importance of language for identity, decolonization, and self-determination. The loss of language diminishes a people’s worldview, culture, and spiritual life. She

demonstrates how translation itself entails a loss of meaning, using kinship terminology as a key example. Boarding schools, pressure from the dominant society, and missionary appropriation of Native language have all contributed to the undoing of cultural coherence. Language reacquisition by Native peoples is essential to the process of decolonization and resistance.

The remainder of the work is a model of the principles Wilson has set forth. Taylor provided these narratives specifically for his adopted granddaughter. Wilson recorded them on both audio- and videotape in 1991 with the intention of preserving knowledge and encouraging Dakota youth to retain their culture. Unfortunately the narratives are reproduced in this work only in text that is transcribed and presented in Dakota with a free English translation by WahpetunwinCarolynn Schommer. In alternate chapters Wilson focuses on crucial elements of the narrative, emphasizing their importance for Dakota identity and survival, as well as their value for all humanity.

Taylor's narratives are rich in historical, philosophical, and religious themes. He discusses his own personal history and that of the Dakota people, stressing the uniqueness of the Dakota, the injustices they suffered, and the necessity for rising generations to continue the Dakota tradition. Taylor sets forth Dakota values, the code of behavior, and the spiritual foundation of the culture. He explains various features of Dakota beliefs and practices, including the Sun Dance, sweat lodge, and sacred stones, and tells stories that teach Dakota values. He discusses his own experience with the white world around him, his ability to learn songs and sing, the intricacies of family history, and the importance of respecting others. Finally, Taylor recommends that the younger generation learn about traditional medicine, warfare, and the importance of respect for one's homeland.

Wilson, in turn, shows how these warm, lively, and engaging narratives function to resist colonialism and recover traditional knowledge. She tells of her efforts in concert with others to revitalize Dakota culture and withstand colonial influences that lead to violence and the use of drugs and alcohol. Taylor's narratives are not quaint ethnographic tales but a living guide for young Dakota that can help them thrive and flourish.

*Remember This!* sometimes incorporates broad generalizations, stereotypes, and a simplistic opposition between the academy and indigenous people, as well as between the *wasicu* (whites) and Dakota, but the work ultimately expresses the need for collaboration and a respect for a diversity of opinions. While Wilson exposes the real victimization of Dakota people and her own scholarly struggles, she also is careful not to present the Dakota as victims but as makers of their own history, with shortcomings and failures of their own. The Dakota must differentiate and reassert themselves in the face of colonialism, and Taylor counsels them to seek commonality and mutual respect. Wilson suggests that spirituality can be the locus of that common ground.

Non-Dakota readers should listen respectfully to the entire work and heed the critiques and suggestions of Wilson and Taylor. Since oral narratives are at the heart of Dakota culture, the Dakota will, the author predicts, use this work in different ways. The reader can imagine a time when the author herself writes primarily in Dakota and when reviews are mainly in Dakota with

English translations that allow linguistic outsiders to appreciate the wealth within. Someday technology will be employed to amplify and transcend text-only presentations of oral narratives like those in *Remember This!*, pairing rich visual and audio representations with the printed text.

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**Silent Snow: The Slow Poisoning of the Arctic.** By Marla Cone. New York: Grove Press, 2005. 246 pages. \$24.00 cloth.

Marla Cone, a veteran environmental writer at the *Los Angeles Times*, describes in *Silent Snow* how, in the space of a few decades, the Arctic has become a chemical garbage dump as prevailing winds and ocean currents convey pollutants from industrialized countries to the once-pristine world of the Inuit in Canada, Alaska, Greenland, and Russia. The contamination by PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) and other chemicals has become so intense that some Inuit mothers have been warned not to breast-feed their babies.

A matrix of geographical and cultural factors has placed the Inuit and other Arctic peoples, writes Cone, “at the very top of the natural world’s dietary hierarchy” (22). In the world of persistent organic pollutants (such as PCBs and dioxins), in which the effects of deadly toxins bio-magnify (multiply several-fold) with each step up the food chain, such a position can be extremely hazardous for a people’s health.

The Inuit, according to Cone, “eat 194 different species of wild animals, most of them inhabiting the sea. Often, on a daily basis, they consume the meat or blubber . . . of fish-eating whales, seals, and walrus four or five links up marine food chains” (22). “Today,” she continues, “about 200 toxic pesticides and industrial chemicals have been detected in the bodies of the Arctic’s indigenous people and animals,” as well as mercury, which is released by coal-burning power plants and chemical factories (23). Thus, the Inuit and other Arctic peoples have become “the industrial world’s lab rats, the involuntary subjects of an accidental human experiment that reveals what happens when a boundless brew of chemicals builds up in an environment” (45).

The Inuit diet is very nutritious, containing an average of forty times the omega-3 fatty acids of typical industrial-world fare. Beluga whale, for example, has ten times the iron of beef, twice the protein, and five times the vitamin A. Omega-3 fatty acids protect against heart disease. A seventy-year-old Inuit in Greenland has coronary arteries as elastic as those of a twenty-year-old Dane eating Western foods. Some Arctic clinics do not even keep heart medications such as nitroglycerin in stock.

Now that toxins are stored in the body fat of many animals, the same diet has become a deathtrap, Cone writes (48). While heart disease and prostate cancer are very rare among the Inuit, toxicity-related maladies have exploded in recent years, especially among the young. On the Faroe Islands, high mercury levels have caused irreversible neurological damage to fetuses,