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Forever There: Race and Gender in Contemporary Native American Fiction. By Elizabeth I. Hanson. New York: Peter Lang, 1989. 154 pages \$29.95 Cloth.

This book consists of seven chapters discussing works by D'Arcy McNickle, N. Scott Momaday, James Welch, Leslie Marmon Silko, Paula Gunn Allen, Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris. Altogether the author treats a total of eight works of fiction (both *Winter in the Blood* and *The Death of Jim Loney* in the chapter on Welch). Together with a brief introduction and conclusion the author offers us about 27,000 words of actual discussion—about as much text as you would find in three PMLA articles. Is it worth thirty dollars expended to Peter Lang? No. The rest of this review explains why.

The essays themselves are simple-minded exercises in explication, of the sort that well-meaning undergraduates with no background in the subject might turn out to demonstrate that they have in fact done the reading for class. Virtually no attention has been given to Native American traditions (or any other traditions—as, e.g., Momaday's relationship to American Romanticism or Welch's interest in Vittorini). There is no discernible approach, beyond superficial impressionist readings; the implications of gender are ignored in half the chapters, and the problematic subject of "race" receives no discussion at all, being used as if it were interchangeable with "culture" or "ethnicity." The text is replete with grammatical and proofreading errors, not to mention sexist language, and the bibliography (not much of which seems actually to have been consulted) lists a "George" Vizenor.

In searching for something positive to say about this book, I considered its possible utility as an introduction for the general reader to the works discussed, situating them in a context of American literature and thus making them more accessible for further exploration by the interested reader. However, the user would have to proceed with extreme caution in view of the author's Eurocentric bias and lack of basic scholarship. The reading of *House Made of Dawn*, for instance, sees the albino's murder entirely as Abel's response to a homosexual seduction attempt, completely ignoring (or ignorant of) the dimension of witchcraft which has been discussed at some length by a number of scholars, including Momaday himself. Some passages are simply egregiously offensive: in a passage on *Winter in the Blood* we read that "The significance of that loss is not merely that of a suffering,

deracinated, nearly extinguished tribe"—surely one of the most remarkable uses I have seen of "merely."

The Peter Lang series are very uneven, producing much that is inferior along with the occasional important piece. Certainly they are to be commended for taking a chance on work that might not find an outlet in more cautious houses. However, the inclusion of books like this one, which appears not to have been read by an editor, let alone even one expert in the field, can only harm Lang's aspirations to be seen as a reputable scholarly publisher.

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