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nently in the second section's analyses of Indian literatures. There is a nice variety here with pieces on McNickle, Silko, Welch, King, Alexie, Erdrich, and Indian sleuths. One of the strongest is Jeri Zulli's "Perception in D'Arcy McNickle's *The Surrounded: A Postcolonial Reading*." What the piece lacks in postcolonial theory it makes up with its cogent reading of the novel's "tropes of seeing and vision" to conclude how "the novel debunks the myth of unity of perception that colonialist readings have forced upon this text and, hence, colonized culture" (p. 72). In its brevity, Zulli points to a number of important moments in the book that emphasize her ideas. She reaches many of the same conclusions regarding binary readings that others in the collection make noting how "In order to understand more fully the dynamics at work both within the colonized culture and within that of the colonizers—as well as cross-culturally—we as readers need to avoid binary polarization and move toward less essentialized interpretations of Native American texts" (p. 79).

Such a cross-cultural reading strategy de-emphasizing binary oppositions plays a similar role in the well-presented essay by Carrie Etter, "Dialectic to Dialogic: Negotiating Bicultural Heritage in Sherman Alexie's Sonnets." Etter's piece moves into new ground in the emerging body of Alexie criticism. She demonstrates soundly how in the sonnets of *The Business of Fancydancing*, *Old Shirts & New Skins*, and *First Indian on the Moon*, "Alexie negotiates between his cultural inheritances" (p. 143). These sonnets, Etter points out, often avoid the typical resolution found in traditional sonnets to create a "disrupting" and ironic effect (p. 146). Even in Alexie's more traditional sonnets with ending couplets found in *First Indian on the Moon*, "Alexie retains the irresolution" (p. 147). Etter concludes, "Through his sonnets, Alexie 'countersocializes' his reader to accept the irresolution inherent in American Indian experience" (p. 149). Such disruptive strategies and their effects are ones that readers should also find applicable to Alexie's novels.

At the end of *Telling the Stories*, what becomes clear in moving away from binary readings are the more complex and nuanced cultural negotiations these primary authors explore in their novels, poems, and tribal lives. The us-versus-them dichotomy, perhaps most prevalent in the criticisms of the 1980s and early '90s, seems to have moved in a new direction that may better account for linguistic confusion, mixed-cultural backgrounds, texts that disrupt conventional expectations, and the actualities of people's lives affected by such multivalent experiences. The Nelsons' collection has created new possibilities and new directions yet to explore. Furthermore, Elizabeth Hoffman Nelson's work in organizing the annual American Culture Association panels on American Indian Studies that bring together scholars, students, and writers of interdisciplinary and mixed cultural heritage should be aptly applauded. Such meetings represent an opportunity for those in fields that often remain estranged from one another to come together to share just as they have done interestingly and informatively in the best pieces of *Telling the Stories*.

Philip Heldrich

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Travels among the Dena: Exploring Alaska's Yukon Valley. By Frederica De

Laguna. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001. 369 pages. \$50.00 cloth.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, when we anthropologists think nothing of catching a plane to Borneo or Madagascar to fill last-minute gaps in our research, Frederica De Laguna's *Travels among the Dena*, an account of her 1935 expedition down the Yukon River, furnishes us with a welcome and much-needed reminder of the trials and tribulations that routinely confronted our intellectual forbears.

Based on fieldnotes, journals, and letters home from the trip and supplemented with a gloss updating the people and the research of the intervening decades, the book is intended to provide the context for De Laguna's 1995 *Tales from the Dena*, a collection recorded during the same trip, but which concentrated on the stories and included only minimal amounts of ethnographic detail. Thus *Travels among the Dena* furnishes a companion piece for the earlier publication and serves as an excellent introduction to a little-known area of Alaska, to the villages and people of the area, and, most of all, to what Alaskans affectionately know as The River.

Twelve chapters organized sequentially by date and location cover the journey in minute detail from its beginning in Seattle by way of Fairbanks and Nenana, to its conclusion some three months later at the remote lower Yukon village of Holy Cross. De Laguna provides historical depth for the account by summarizing at the start of each chapter accounts of earlier explorers such as Lt. L. A. Zagoskin and Frederick Whymper, who cover the same distance in 1942–1944 and 1869, respectively. In some cases she also includes research from the same area that has been published in the intervening decades. This moving backward and forward in time enables us to access a grand sweep of time on the river, one in which the rate of acculturation ratcheted up from slow to full throttle on the Yukon, changes to its course, to the demographics of the Athabascan Indian villages that have sometimes been inhabited, abandoned, and reinhabited since the nineteenth century. She includes an appendix of photographs of material culture collected on the trip and now deposited at the University of Pennsylvania Museum, enabling us to consider the rate of change at a more tangible level.

One aspect of the trip that De Laguna only discusses briefly is the inevitable stresses and strains to be encountered during any lengthy expedition, especially one on which she was not only the sole woman but also its leader. De Laguna, one of the leading twentieth-century anthropologists who studied the north and is today a revered elder in her nineties, is legendary for her strength of character. That “through trials and blunders, not an angry word [was] exchanged” by the team certainly confirms this (p. 313). For instance, one constant running through the account is the harassment of the dreaded mosquito, scourge of Yukon River travel in the summer. De Laguna and her three colleagues were by no means spared: “[O]n the afternoon of July 31,” she writes, “I counted the bites [on my hands]. . . . [T]here were one hundred on the left, but the right . . . was so swollen with superimposed bites that a count was impossible” (p. 204). Given that she was a gently bred, Ivy

League-educated young woman in her twenties, her resilience is all the more impressive. That she also had raised the funds, gathered the team, led it, and carried out the planning of a complex expedition that required not only the logistical nightmares of unanticipated needs but also the building of two expedition boats, is remarkable to say the least.

The trip down the Yukon focused on collecting ethnographic, archaeological, and geological data as well as material culture. In its entirety the collected data added considerably through later publication and exhibition to the stores of information subsequently available on a little-researched area. More than that, though, De Laguna's account is humanized by its descriptions—some tragic, some hilarious—of the Native and non-Native people the team encountered during their travels.

Another salient aspect of the book is that it bridges past and present. De Laguna not only brings to her project a portrait of herself as a girl but also offers us the chance to reflect on the remarkable contrast between the ethics of museum collecting today and some seventy years ago. The 1935 trip took place in an era when science was king and investigators routinely collected human remains as well as artifacts. As she acknowledges, De Laguna was no exception. A decade after the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA), when the collecting of human remains and associated funerary objects is illegal and unethical, De Laguna was faced with a quandary: Was she to exclude any reference to such activities or include them and risk public censure? To her credit, she faces the issue head on. In her discussion of collecting human remains she is careful to say that the expedition ran across many abandoned grave sites in the course of its excavations and that they left most of them undisturbed. In one case, however, she reports that the team uncovered two burials, bypassing one but collecting the other since their Native guide "made no objection to our careful removal. . ." (p. 201). She further justifies the removal by explaining that according to traditional Athabascan belief, "the ghost leaves the body . . . while nothing of the person itself remains behind" (p. 201). Needless to say, the remains have long since been returned.

But the collecting of objects that transgress today's ethos did not stop with human remains. It also included a collection of Deg Hit'an Athabascan masks. According to De Laguna, during a stop at the village of Holicachuk a Native guide pointed her to a disused refuse pit containing a cache of broken masks disposed of when a ceremonial house had burned and probably been discarded because of the negative association between fire and the power of the masks. Today they might have been considered associated funerary objects or objects of cultural patrimony, and she would have been prevented by federal law, if not ethics, from removing them. Here is a place where the author's fast-forwarding to the present works especially well. In 1999, a group of elders for the village of Holicahuk visited the University of Pennsylvania Museum and viewed the masks as part of a NAGPRA consultation. Not only were they able to view the material, but De Laguna, who is remembered with respect in the communities where I have followed her, was able to meet the descendants of people she had met on the trip, some of whom assisted her in

gathering further documentation on the collection. She discusses the incidents in detail here, and describes the masks, which are extremely rare, in greater detail than was available in her 1936 publication (*American Anthropologist* 1936, number 4: 569–585), the only detailed source on this remarkable and little-known mask type previously in print.

De Laguna is to be commended for working through these difficult issues with tact and candor. To hold her responsible for practices long since abandoned by her and everyone else would risk the far greater sin of presentism. We should be grateful that both laws and attitudes toward museum collecting have changed, and that De Laguna is flexible enough to have changed along with them.

De Laguna's field trip links past and present in other ways. She and her companions ended their three-month journey down the Yukon at Holy Cross, a small village hundreds of miles below Nenana, where it began. Rather than return upriver by the same means, however, they were picked up by Noel Wien, a pioneering Alaskan bush pilot, and flown back to Fairbanks. Thus they covered the hundreds of miles gained during three arduous months in a single afternoon. *Travels among the Dena* allows us to experience the journey from an armchair and marvel at the achievement of De Laguna and her companions. We can only hope that the team of four also appreciated the accomplishment it represented.

Molly Lee

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Understanding Northwest Coast Art: A Guide to Crests, Beings, and Symbols.

By Cheryl Shearar. Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 2000. 192 pages. \$17.95 paper.

The task the author sets before her in writing this book is not an easy one. Does she accomplish what her title suggests? Is it possible after reading this book to understand the art produced along the coast of Alaska, British Columbia, and Washington? It is a worthy endeavor and certainly a welcomed book if it does realize its promise.

The book contains three main parts: the introduction, which addresses the art and culture along the aforementioned states and province; part one, which is an dictionary section of crests, beings, and symbols; and part two, which addresses the basics of Northwest Coast art in three sections. The first two sections discuss design conventions and design elements, respectively, and the final section discusses cultural groupings and art styles.

The book contains a map of the area regarding the tribes Shearar represents, including the Tlingit, Haida, Nisga, Gitksan, Tsimshian, Haisla, Heiltsuk, Nuxalk, Owekeno, Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwakwiltl), Nuu-chah-nulth (Nootka), Coast Salish, Makah, and the Quileute. It is an interesting map in that it provides the context of the tribes she decides to include. In the introduction, the author mentions the area covered is from Alaska to Oregon, but the map stops just south of the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The introduction's brief