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catalogued, transcribed, and translated may not be useful, however, for statistical analysis because they are not exhaustive records of transactions. Despite the legal requirements for keeping public records, the Indians, unlike the white settlers, did not record all land transactions. Moreover, as the authors point out, on Martha's Vineyard deeds describing transactions between Indians and written in Massachusetts are confined to the three major areas of early English settlement on the island, suggesting that the deeds survived because of the need by subsequent non-Indian owners to document the validity of transfers. Nevertheless, this collection, one of the earliest instances of widespread vernacular literacy in native North America, provides a good cross-section of the nature of Indian society in operation.

Native Writings in Massachusetts is valuable source material that deserves careful examination by the scholars of American Indians and Indian-white relations in New England. These Indian-drafted documents, in contrast to the records kept by English clerks, who did not have the natives' comprehension of what they wrote, contribute to our deeper understanding of everyday life among the Massachusetts-speakers when they formed largely self-governing, self-sufficient Christian communities.

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The Last Best Place: A Montana Anthology. Edited by William Kittredge and Annick Smith. Helena: The Montana Historical Society Press, 1988. 856 pages. \$27.95 Cloth.

"The Last Best Place" is a big title, pardner. But then this is a big book, some eleven hundred and sixty pages; and Montana is a big place. The undeniable fact of size makes the title, and the book, appropriate. It takes big thoughts, big words, big effort, just to live there. Or to have lived there. Or to travel through there. Having accomplished any of these things entitles one to be expansive, and most beneficiaries of Montana experience are that.

K. Ross Toole, professor of history at the University of Montana, has pointed out in *Montana, An Uncommon Land*, and *Twentieth Century Montana: A State of Extremes*, how many people and

events have touched Montana in various ways, usually in a pattern of arriving, taking, and leaving. Although much of Montana's material wealth has gone to outsiders, much has remained in Montana; an incredibly rich literature chronicling characters and influences is possibly the best example. In addition, there are significant contemporary Montana writers, native and transplanted, who are contributing new work.

Perhaps the most significant writer on the Montana scene today is James Welch. His unique ability to link a contemporary mainstream style with his Native American background, a background steeped in oral tradition, is part of a new dimension in American literature. The identification of America's own literature has been the subject of much commentary. In 1924 T. S. Eliot said (*Transatlantic Review*, January issue) "there can only be one English literature . . . There cannot be British literature or American literature." In 1953, however, in "American Literature and the American Language" he reversed his position, recognizing "what has never, I think, been found before, two literatures in the same language." Native American literature, once primarily oral, now being written in such works as *Winter In The Blood*, *The Death of Jim Loney*, and especially *Fools Crow*, is primary evidence of a distinctive and new American literature.

It is worth noting further, I think, within the framework of *Fools Crow*, what it is that transforms the method of European-American storytelling into a universal nature. The "naturalness" of a story about the human qualities associated with the loss incurred by a people during their introduction to the foreign disease of smallpox is paradoxical to its universal historical background. That is to say, too-much-is-assumed-without-saying; and that is the quality of myth; and that is important. While the reader is concerned with phenomena apparently most unlike a unique literature (a smallpox epidemic), there is re-occurring contemporary myth in a most unique setting (the Native American).

The literature of Montana also seems exceptionally strong in women's writers. Again, the lot of women can only be compounded in its difficulty in such a rugged setting. What catches my eye in the anthology, however, is the writing of Mary Blew, another contemporary author. Although one senses she is at the beginning of her potential as a writer, in *Forby and the Mayan Maidens*, there is a quality that is Montanan (she is a native Mon-

tan) and interior female as well. For a woman to observe life, it seems she must look at powerlessness; she must, that is, choose to confront events as a passive creature, compared to white males, and try actively to understand what it means. Although her piece in the anthology may lack in terms of strong resolution, she has the sense of acceptance in search of reality. I will comment finally on Richard Ford, a transplanted Montanan, who represents those who have left the coasts of America for a place in the interior. Whether Montana is the last best place for Ford and his ilk to work from I don't know, but it seems at the very least to be a good one, especially for Richard Ford. In *Communist* he shows his mastery of the basics in his recognition of Freudian sexuality and the Marxian world of work. If these two things are basic to human behavior, then Montana is a good place to study them because there are few other distractions. Ford may represent a certain return to cause and effect naturalism, but I don't mind in his case. The stories are good. I recognize and respect Ford's characters from my own Montana upbringing. I cannot give an "outsider" a better recommendation than that.

There is **much more** in this book. Explore it. Spend some time in it. Reading it is like driving from Troy to Bainville on U.S. Highway 2.

Sidner Larson

Native People, Native Lands: Canadian Indians, Inuit and Métis. Edited by Bruce Alden Cox. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1988. Carleton Library Series No. 142. 298 pages. \$16.95 Paper.

This is an unusual, though not uninspired, collection of essays of uneven length, scholarship and significance. Eclectic may best describe its contents, for no unifying themes are evident, much less suggested by compiler Bruce Cox who has contented himself, though likely not all his readers, with a geographical arrangement of papers. In introducing the economic life of indigenous peoples, Cox maintains that the Marxian notion of "relations of production" over time should be stressed. Yet there is little on urban adaptations and considerably more on the "bush mode of