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to Euro-American worldviews. Euro-American peoples remain in a dynamic, complex contact with indigenous cultures and need to construct mutual exchanges of meaning. Morrison's work is helpful in rebuilding western views of indigenous culture, and confronting the problems of cultural otherness and religious/cultural change in ways that can benefit students and scholars in these related disciplines.

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The Vengeful Wife and Other Blackfoot Stories. By Hugh A. Dempsey. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 2003. 282 pages. \$34.95 cloth.

Hugh A. Dempsey has been aware of some of the problems with writing about the West for some time. For as long as the Blackfoot have endured uninvited incursions into their Blackfoot homelands and indigenous practices, there have been "observers" who wrote about these experiences. Some of the records were collected by, among others, missionaries, traders, bootleggers, voyagers, officers, policemen, Indian agents and commissioners, reporters, and academics. From the beginning, the images created, inspired, or purposefully falsified in a variety reports and letters were produced with a non-Native audience in mind. They were often created in the authors' mind, and were dotted with just enough "factual" information (e.g., from official documents and reports) to be presented as some form of "truth" about the Blackfoot. In 1972 Dempsey wrote about some of the problems with determining "truth" from "fiction" in turn-of-the-century western writing ("Fact, Fiction, or Folklore," *Alberta Historical Review* 20, 2 [Spring 1972]: 1-2), especially as this concerned issues of accuracy about Native Americans. According to Dempsey:

If a thorough study was made of newspapers, magazines, and church publications during the last three decades of the Nineteenth Century, Western Canada would probably find a new literary heritage. Enriching our sadly limited knowledge of western fiction would be an impressive list of short stories written by western Canadian authors on western Canadian themes. Such a study would be fraught [*sic*] with frustration, for the researcher would find many articles unsigned and others written by literary unknowns. He would also be faced with another problem: how can one differentiate between fiction, folklore, and fact? (1)

More than thirty years after making this statement, *The Vengeful Wife* reflects the truth of Dempsey's prior assessment of the literature. It seems contradictory when Dempsey states: "I found that the oral history from the elders blended easily and smoothly with government reports, newspapers, and other sources if one could view it all from a Native standpoint" (xii) and "I was pleased to find that in many instances where Blackfoot stories could be

checked against newspaper or government document reports of the day, there was a high degree of consensus, the differences often arising from the interpretation of events from the recorder's own background or culture" (xiii). Given the cultural and historical context of the forced removal of the Blackfoot from the ancestral homeland, by the United States and Canadian government officials, the stories that Dempsey chooses to highlight in this collection, are of interest to those who want to know about the history of the West, and of the Blackfoot in particular.

For this book, Dempsey draws upon his decades of studying a vast array of documents about the Blackfoot and the surrounding Northern Plains and Plateau peoples (the Sarcees, Crees, Assiniboines, Crows, Flathead, Kootenay, Gros Ventres, etc.). He includes unpublished manuscripts, interviews with the Blackfoot, and correspondence among fur company employees, missionaries, and Indian agents and commissioners. Dempsey conducted some of the interviews, while others come from unpublished materials collected by Esther S. Goldfrank, Lucien and Jane Hanks, Oscar Lewis, Claude Schaeffer, and James Willard Schultz. Dempsey also includes government documents, books, pamphlets, and articles taken from newspapers and journals.

Dempsey begins the introduction to his book by describing his interest in the differences among his sources between the written and the lived opinions of the Blackfoot. His transformation from a young reporter in the early 1950s to one who would become interested in hearing the elders and their stories began because he "had read everything available on the Blackfoot" and yet remained puzzled as to how divergent views existed simultaneously (about Chief Crowfoot, in this case). He realized that even though he had read a lot, the members of the Blackfoot community had an entirely different perception of the chief's character and goals than that portrayed in the written reports. Thus, Dempsey's "voyage of discovery" and "foray into pure research" (xii) began as an interest in reconciling these versions that, decades later, has produced his second collection of Blackfoot stories.

Dempsey is keenly aware that there are serious issues involved when trying to determine the "truth" of a story, especially when forced to rely on written sources and even "scholarship" that often reflect the cultural, racial, or religious biases of the scholar, rather than those of the Native peoples being studied. He has had extensive contact with members of the Blackfoot community for decades. For these reasons, the collection of stories he presents in *The Vengeful Wife and Other Blackfoot Stories*, given the premise that the book hopes to "view it all from a Native standpoint" (xii), makes it a difficult task to reconcile the divergent views that make up the history of the Blackfoot at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. The stories are taken from a combination of sources, adding a dimension of the Native standpoint that is often absent from works on Native peoples. In this respect, there is much to gain from reading the work. On the other hand, the forced settlement into reserves of the Blackfoot and other Native peoples in frontier Canada and Montana during the end of the buffalo era—so that "settlement" could be less troublesome for the newcomers—created a context that one must consider as a cultural, economic, religious, territorial, and political war.

Those who collected, exchanged, or created writing at the time on the topic of the Blackfoot were a part of this context. This is as true of Walter McClintock's, George Bird Grinnell's, and James Willard Schultz's collections of stories about the Blackfoot descriptions of their homeland that would later be taken to be made into a national park, as it was of the many missionaries who toiled to discover the Blackfoot creation stories so that they could use this knowledge to refute their validity in an attempt to win converts. It is difficult to be sure how to interpret Dempsey's acceptance of a "high degree of consensus, the differences often arising from the interpretation of events from the recorder's own background or culture," about the telling of events, since this point seems essential. Dempsey's book is an important historical document in itself because it uses archival materials that are rarely published. Furthermore, the reader can see the connections and coherence that Dempsey strives to demonstrate in the choice of language and depictions, and in the connections across communities, cultures, and time frames during which interviews and observations take place. Evident also is the way in which Dempsey wants to tell stories that are drawn from a diverse set of observations, Native and non-Native, but he does not always provide sufficient context. Consequently, the stories remain without a context for those whose knowledge of Western history is less extensive than that of Dempsey.

The stories, loosely arranged in a chronological order, seem to be somewhat randomly organized; they blend levels of the sacred and the secular, the verifiable (i.e., documented by non-Native sources) history with the "heroic tales, star myths, legends" (x), such as when Dempsey states that "Seen From Afar was considered to have been the greatest chief that the Blackfoot nation ever had. He was greater than the legendary Scar Face who brought the Sun Dance religion to the people" (92). In the Blackfoot tradition, there is room for each of these two, and they do not have to compete for who was/is more "great." In Blackfoot, because they belong to different genres of stories, they are ineligible for such a comparison.

If his goal is to present the stories "from the Native standpoint" (xii), then why, for example, does Dempsey base the core of the first chapter ("The Vengeful Wife") on an "anonymous manuscript, written in an old Indian Department ledger book"? Also in this chapter he relies on the work of George Bird Grinnell, which is highly problematic because Grinnell heavily edited stories he collected to increase their appeal to his predominantly non-Native audience, to the point that some of them are almost completely unrecognizable. Dempsey mentions that several Native peoples, including the Crow and Shoshoni, have versions and variations of the Woman's Revenge story. The rendition finally presented in his telling, culled from such problematic sources, obscures the identity of the teller and confuses it with an anonymous, and possibly non-Native version. As with other stories in the book, such a presentation introduces a story without clear tribal affiliations, identities, and responsibilities (for its proper telling)—in short, it has no integrity as a Blackfoot story.

Throughout the book, Dempsey's language places the reader back into nineteenth-century ways of describing the relationship between non-Indians

and Native people: emphasis is on the military aspects, on expressions that recall Schultz's sensationalized style, projecting a stereotypical image of angry, bloodthirsty vengeance. A few representative examples of such references include the following: "the Bloods were the ones who were still thirsting for war" (229); "was intent on preserving the free and warlike nature for which his tribe had become famous" (230); "he was simply a relic of the past, a reminder of the warring days of the Blood tribe" (235); and "mourns the loss of the martial days" (234).

One problem with Dempsey's primary material is his use of anonymous sources. Even if a story has been passed down through generations of Blackfoot elders, one wonders what elements or versions appear in the final texts. The newspaper citations throughout the text refer to rather vague classificatory bibliographic categories that show no clear distinctions (say, between "newspapers" and "articles"), and include numerous vague references such as "according to an observer," "recalled an elder," and "according to the elders." Grinnell's omission of storytellers' names, Schultz's reputation for expansions and elaborations, and versions passed down by members of the clergy who felt it was necessary to "clean up" stories, all influenced their representations, and Dempsey needs to notify the reader of this.

Being in the unique position of "passing on" stories that have circulated among the Blackfoot peoples for more time than we can really know is a challenging task in itself. Doing so in a way that honors the stories' genealogies—their origins, trajectories, variations, and multiple tellers—might even be almost impossible given many of the materials on which Dempsey's work relies. In the case of the stories about horse stealing or war accounts, when the storytellers are speaking for themselves, it is enough to note the speakers' identities. In the case of other stories, especially those of *The Vengeful Wife*, *Seen From Afar*, and *White Calf*, it becomes increasingly important to include information about the sources of the stories, and then note the sources of the sources—a practice that is more consistent with the Blackfoot oral tradition. Even today, when Blackfoot elders tell a story, they often mention who told them the story, and count this generation of storytellers in the present telling. In some cases, their teachers are mentioned for several generations of storytellers, and traditional stories live on in the Blackfoot community precisely because the retelling is explicitly marked and noted. In collecting stories from Native peoples, including the Blackfoot, this type of tracing is even more difficult when the authors' names are erased altogether, as in Grinnell's texts. However, unless authors recognize the significance of this point, they become the last in the line of storytellers, inherit the entire story, and become the last who have a license to tell it. When we do this, it is difficult to see how we can simultaneously claim to be preserving or promoting the oral tradition of storytelling.

Dempsey could more directly specify which stories have been retold, not just by a number of elders from a variety of different traditions, but by non-Natives, especially if he is proposing to offer the reader the Natives' perspective. Dempsey needs to address the use of untitled manuscripts, works that were written by non-Natives who were clearly unsympathetic to Native peoples and who exaggerated and misrepresented their lives and values, or

even distorted or confused their retelling (via translation of written notes). Injustices seem apparent when the material reveals blatant lies and cruel acts committed against the Blackfoot, whether by Indian agents or bigoted newspapermen. Far more subtle and destructive, however, are the presumably more accurate and sympathetic descriptions found in the works of some missionaries and academics.

By mentioning some of these facts, Dempsey could help the reader gain a better understanding of the value of these stories, and of the present-day Blackfoot. Dempsey states that “the problem” with White Calf was that he was born in the wrong generation. In the following chapter, when discussing the “adjustment” problems the Blackfoot were suffering, he gives the impression that subsequent generations of Blackfoot have adapted to this “new way of life” (230) that was difficult for the Blackfoot of the turn of the century. Yet many Blackfoot are currently finding it hard to accept that the Canadian and U.S. governments are not honoring their treaty obligations. Accordingly, their continued struggles to maintain the ancient values within the confines of the present, are not “wishes” (236), but rights and responsibilities guaranteed by treaty. What generation would have been the ideal one to be a Blackfoot?

For better or worse, Dempsey’s presentation is drawn from the nineteenth century. Depending upon your interests in reading the book, the value you place on its sources, and your interest in the perspectives of the time, it may meet your expectations. However, other sources, mainly Blackfoot, some of whose relatives are presented in Dempsey’s work, provide differing portrayals and have a different story to tell.

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