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Blue Dawn, Red Earth: New Native American Storytellers. Edited and with an introduction by Clifford E. Trafzer. New York: Anchor Books, 1996. 431 pages. \$14.95 paper.

The recent increase in the number of anthologies of writings by Native American authors has been welcomed by both readers and teachers of American Indian literature who have experienced a limited variety and availability of texts. *Blue Dawn, Red Earth* is the second collection of stories by contemporary Native American writers to be edited by Clifford Trafzer and published by Anchor Books in the last three years. Unlike the earlier collection, *Earth Song, Sky Spirit: Stories of the Contemporary Native American Experience* (Anchor, 1993), all of the stories in *Blue Dawn, Red Earth* are original to the volume. *Earth Song, Sky Spirit* included works by the most established contemporary Native writers including Michael Dorris, Louise Erdrich, James Welch, Leslie Marmon Silko, N. Scott Momaday, and Paula Gunn Allen, while *Blue Dawn, Red Earth* is billed as emphasizing "new Native American storytellers." Few of the authors are particularly well known; however, all have published before, and a total of thirteen of the thirty authors appear in both Anchor collections. So, while the stories are new, the storytellers are more experienced than the subtitle would lead one to believe.

Clifford Trafzer introduces the collection by means of a fictional story about Agnes Yellowknee, a tribal librarian who "knew the remembered history of the People, traditions and stories that unlocked secrets about ourselves" (p. 4). In her discussion about the "one book in particular [which] had greater value to her than all the rest," *Blue Dawn, Red Earth* (p. 9), Agnes offers brief descriptions of all thirty of the stories and authors included in the collection. This disingenuous device is both obtrusive and self-serving and detracts significantly from both the story that surrounds it and the message of Trafzer's introduction which is a reminder that, at their best, Native American stories are transformative. They are "something good and magical ... that might be given to others" (p. 18).

Also within the introduction, Trafzer offers a bow in the direction of Gerald Vizenor's theories of contemporary Native American writers as "postindian warriors of survivance" with the obvious implication being that the selected authors and their texts fulfill Vizenor's vision. Trafzer has clearly been influenced by Vizenor's proposition that "the shadows and language of tribal poets and novelists could be the new ghost dance litera-

ture, the shadow literature of liberation that enlivens tribal survivance" in *Manifest Manners* (p. 106). Trafzer wishes the readers of this anthology to view the stories in this way.

Significantly, Vizenor's story, "Oshkiwiinag: Heartlines on the Trickster Express," occupies the symbolic center of the collection. This contemporary trickster tale offers another incarnation of the fabulous Browne clan, this time in the persons of Gesture Browne, the acudenturist, and his niece Cozie who comes to be in charge of the Oshkiwiinag, an ancient crystal statue of the trickster capable of causing parthenogenesis. Once again, Vizenor both teases and entertains his readers with a reminder of the liberating quality of the trickster who resists the expectations and denies the power of the culture of dominance.

Blue Dawn, Red Earth includes stories of witches, tricksters and spirits; ancient as well as modern rituals; childhood; mother and fatherhood; love and loss; creativity and destruction; tribal history; and cultural politics. Trafzer has selected an effective mix of subject matter and story styles, which range from the realistic to the mythic to the gothic, with variations indicative of contemporary Native American writers' efforts to redefine Western genres in relation to Indian cultural forms.

Among the most powerful stories included in the collection is E. K. Caldwell's "Cooking Woman," which centers on an old Plains Indian tale framed by a contemporary story of love and estrangement. Here the skillful blending of the present and the mythic past serves to remind the reader that the oral tradition is at the heart of Native American life and writing. The use of a male narrator to offer a gynocentric message is both unusual and effective.

Two stories which explore the significance of familial and tribal continuity, Patricia Riley's "Wisteria" and Lee Francis' "The Atsye Parallel," are successful because they skillfully recreate the nature and emphasize the importance of close bonds within Native families especially in times of loss. "Wisteria" describes the efforts of Eddie T. to introduce her granddaughter Justine to the *Yunwi Tsundi*, the little people, against the wishes of her Christian-convert daughter who sees her mother's beliefs as heathen and rejects the spirits as imaginary. Eddie T. is a masterfully wrought character whose death at the close of the story is poignant without being overly sentimental. Perhaps the single most effective character in any story in the collection is Atsye or Like-a-Rock in "The Atsye Parallel." The story is a beautifully written account of Atsye's ascent, upon the death of her mother, to the position of Mother of the Rock Clan. The depiction of her

profound grief at the loss of her mother and her fear of the responsibilities of her new position, which set her apart from even her closest family relations, is powerfully rendered.

While the stories are for the most part quite good, the collection is somewhat uneven in quality. The weaker ones suffer from a lack of originality, or perhaps a sense of ordinariness, inauthenticity, or incompleteness that leave them unsatisfying. Vee Browne's "The Mystery of the White Roses," a tale of ghostly love and loss, suffers from an overly romantic sensibility which spills over into the melodramatic. Richard Green's "A Jingle for Silvy" is an exploration of the rift in the friendship between two adolescent girls caused by their differing experiences, one having moved to an urban environment and become a victim of incest while the other having remained in her traditional culture and standing poised on the brink of womanhood. Set against the background of powwow dance competition, the first-person narrative of young Silvy does not successfully capture the voice of a teenage girl, nor does the abrupt and tragic ending of the story seem justified or effective. In comparison, the young girls forced by their unsuccessful but beloved father to hawk vegetables door to door in Tiffany Midge's "Beets" speak in voices and express feelings that ring true in the reader's ears.

An inability to render the meaning and value of ritual effectively mars two of the stories in the collection. In "Bagattaway," Chris Fleet depicts a young lacrosse player who is struck by the contrast between the meaning of the sport as it is played by his white college teammates and the deeper sense of tradition that surrounds it within his tribal culture. While the subject and theme are well worth exploring, the context Fleet provides in which Jack ruminates about his past experiences in the sport after having broken the legs of an opposing player in a fit of pique makes questionable his emphasis on lacrosse as "ceremony, ritual, story and prayer." "The Last Rattlesnake Throw" by Ralph Salisbury recounts the experiences of mixed-blood Indians and white boys on an army base at the close of the Vietnam era who attempt to prove their bravery by whipping the heads off rattlesnakes. Their dangerous game seems less of an attempt to demonstrate courage through a rite of passage than a meaningless gang ritual with its echoes of the senselessness of the Vietnam conflict itself. In either case, despite the denouement set in the Persian Gulf war, the story seems curiously incomplete. "Dreamland," the Jason Edwards story that closes the volume, also deals with the ramifications of the

Vietnam conflict. While the Native American veterans' battle with post-traumatic stress disorder is a well-traveled path, Edwards adds a needed element of originality by setting the story in an abandoned amusement park and peopling it with memorable characters such as Jenny Lake—also known as Marvella Tush—a prostitute saved from her abusive pimp by the narrator. The brief but effective rendering of this cast of dispossessed individuals more than makes up for rather unconvincing dialogue between the narrator and Razor Reggie, the pimp he challenges. His final message that all people are living parts of the universe seems convincing in light of the warmth with which the author treats characters who populate the story.

As the single text to be used to represent the short fiction of contemporary Native American writers in an American Indian literature course, *Earth Song, Sky Spirit* would be more useful than *Blue Dawn, Red Earth*; however, the new collection is well worth purchasing as a course text and for general reading. Although a paperback, the book itself is attractively bound with a fold-over cover designed to operate as a bookmark. The signatures are rough-cut, the typography clear, and the author's biographies and the first pages of each story are illustrated with woodcuts of traditional Native American symbols. The book is designed to feel comfortable and a bit roughhewn as are the stories it includes.

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The Caddos, the Wichitas, and the United States, 1846-1901.

By F. Todd Smith. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996. 190 pages. \$29.95 cloth.

F. Todd Smith, an assistant professor of history at the University of West Florida in Pensacola, continues the story of the confederated tribes known simply as the Caddos and the Wichitas started in his first volume *The Caddo Indians: Tribes at the Convergence of Empires, 1542-1854*. Tracing the history of these two tribes from the pre-Civil War through the Dawes period in the second volume, Smith persuasively shows how the federal government's shifting Indian policies frustrated the Caddos' and Wichitas' abilities to compete equally in mainstream society. In the end, the loss of