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The Sacred White Turkey. By Frances Washburn. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010. 208 pages. $15.95 paper.

A coming-of-age tale that also reflects on the past, *The Sacred White Turkey* is recounted by a Lakota medicine woman, Hazel, and her thirteen-year-old granddaughter, Stella, who share the story of what happened after a mystical white turkey appeared on their doorstep in 1963. Faced with a corrupt local BIA office and a corrupt medicine man, George Wanbli, Hazel and Stella find strength in both the turkey and their community. Without turning Native culture into a mere backdrop, *The Sacred White Turkey* paints a picture of reservation life that is neither sensationalized nor romanticized. It tells an exciting story in which the plot is driven not by uncontrollable forces wreaking havoc on the Lakota, but by the agency of the people themselves.

The novel draws on Lakota culture and community, for instance, when Stella says that "some of our people say that word [*wakan*] means holy, and some say, no, it just means something unexplainable, and a lot of things can be unexplainable without being holy" (1). This complicated definition, one that allows space for multiple meanings, indicates Washburn's approach in the novel as a whole. Lakota culture is never reduced to a single interpretation; different members of the community have different beliefs, and, while the novel certainly favors the views expressed by Stella and Hazel, it also includes a variety of dissenting opinions. Even when respected members of the community become the villains, Washburn doesn't place blame on the Lakota people, instead portraying individuals as a combination of their histories, personalities, and good and bad decisions, but most importantly, as people with their own agency.

Washburn approaches several other issues from multiple perspectives, defining shades of gray beyond mere black and white. In one example, Hazel carefully differentiates between gossip as "a form of entertainment" and gossip that "dredged even deeper into speculations about the subjects of such gossip, enlarging upon the situations and those persons' characters" (92). While the first kind of gossip is acceptable, a pastime that she participates in, Hazel firmly critiques the second. She also addresses the uneasy racial tension of border towns, the complicated relationship between Christianity and Lakota spirituality, and the problematic experience of boarding schools. Hazel acknowledges that she gained nothing from the Christian doctrine taught in those schools, but she understands that other members of her community, including close family friends, must have gotten something useful out of the teachings. Because Hazel's practical character narrates so much of the story, readers get a complicated, though clear, understanding of life on a Lakota reservation.

Being a medicine person in Lakota culture is explored in depth, especially the politics of being a medicine woman in the 1960s. These politics are introduced through Hazel's rivalry with George Wanbli, a medicine man whose approach relies more on intimidation and endurance than on a meaningful spiritual experience. From Hazel's point of view, we learn about George's history and his reasons for becoming a medicine man, while from Stella's perspective we learn about the subtle factors that can influence a medicine person's financial success. Washburn uses this double structure to acknowledge both the sacred and practical aspects of the role, rather than present a medicine person as stereotypically mysterious and inscrutable. From one viewpoint, we distinguish appropriate and inappropriate behavior by comparing Hazel's and George's treatment of Sun Dance acolytes; from the other, Stella tells us about the gifts that people bring to Hazel, gifts that stock the pantry and supplement her meager income from the farming and lease of her land allotment. In instances like this one, where they offer complementary perspectives and thus a more complete picture of the world in which the novel takes place, the two narrators' voices combine most effectively.

Rather than excluding readers unfamiliar with Lakota culture, Washburn brings them into the story and helps them find their footing. Ideally, this approach may widen the readership of Native novels and alter preconceived notions that many readers have about "Indians." Additionally, Washburn's style allows readers to see Hazel and Stella primarily as people, to understand their beliefs and traditions without gawking at them from a detached, scientific perspective or becoming defensive about problematic Native/non-Native relations.

But this approach also has its pitfalls. The importance of Lakota culture to the novel is a strength, but becomes a stylistic weakness in that it often reads like young adult fiction, despite the broad appeal of its themes. While stemming partially from Stella's narration, which dominates the first few chapters, it is Washburn's didactic approach to Lakota culture that cements this impression. Her explanations are often helpful, but sometimes feel heavy-handed or superfluous, especially for those already familiar with Native American or Lakota culture. When the narrators are most comfortable in their own heads, readers will get caught up in the story, but when the narrators pause to explain directly to the audience what the Sun Dance is, and when and why and where it is celebrated, such explanations not only weigh the novel down, but draw unnecessary attention to cultural difference, rather than simply letting readers learn through observation of characters and events.

The central question is one of audience: the novel might be most useful in the classroom, as an introduction to Native literature and Native peoples. Since the novel is part of the Flyover Fiction series, whose aim, according to

its website, is to "actively engage . . . with what it means to inhabit" the Great Plains, perhaps this approach is most appropriate. After all, if Washburn's goal is to engage readers in what it means to live on a Lakota reservation in a part of the country that is most often "flown over" rather than experienced firsthand, this novel could go a long way toward dispelling stereotypes. Overall, *The Sacred White Turkey* tells an enjoyable story through sympathetic narrators, and it offers a respectful and informative representation of Lakota culture while doing so.

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Spirits of Our Whaling Ancestors: Revitalizing Makah & Nuu-chah-nulth Traditions. By Charlotte Coté. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010. 288 pages. $25.95 paper.

This well-written book successfully integrates two related whaling histories. The author first summarizes Makah and Nuu-chah-nulth aboriginal whaling practices, associated belief systems, and whaling's cultural importance, and then documents the 1999 revitalization of whaling in the Washington State community of Neah Bay. Charlotte Coté, a member of the Tseshaht community of Vancouver Island's West Coast (Nuu-chah-Nulth) nation, has done a superb job in summarizing and contextualizing the extensive body of knowledge surrounding the social, subsistence, and religious aspects of aboriginal (and contemporary) whaling practices, and in particular the Makah's contemporary struggle to reestablish the practice.

The first half of the book includes an introduction and three chapters summarizing Nuu-chah-nulth and Makah whaling through the ages. Major topics include how whaling permeated the culture prior to European contact; how local societies adjusted and somehow adapted to colonial policies and commercial overharvesting of whales during the post-contact era; and how a "whaling identity" evolved through time and persisted into the twentieth century despite the fact that the whales had been nearly wiped out and subsistence hunting had to cease temporarily.

The second half of the book is Coté's personal account of how local cultural revitalization in the 1960s and 1970s, combined with the resurgent gray whale population, resulted in the decision of the Makah people to re-implement a subsistence hunt in the 1990s. The serious implications of that decision included opposition from animal rights groups and other organizations that, at times, took on a nasty, sometimes racist tone. Coté reviews the process