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ated in giving human beings the necessities of life" (p. 275). The rest—in all its beauty and radiating brilliance—is really up to us.

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**Firesticks.** By Diane Glancy. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993. 142 pages. \$19.95 cloth.

The story of *Firesticks* is simple. A middle-aged woman with some Native American blood (one-fourth, from a grandmother) begins a relationship with a middle-aged man, whose one-eighth Indian heritage has been diluted beyond recognition. To his surprise and dismay, she gravitates increasingly toward this part of her background. Although she has maintained a close dependency on her personal, non-Indian space, the death of her father prompts her to move beyond these confines. As she travels with the man, first to arrange her father's burial and then, a bit later, to bury his pipe and belt buckle in the mountains where he had hoped to be laid to rest, her view of her own Indian past and of the Native American presence in the vast sweep of Oklahoma becomes dominant and informative, rather than just vaguely suggestive, as before.

This story is quite familiar in theme, as it should be: It is a contemporary Native American tale of discovery and coming to terms with a people's past and their own informed role in the present. In telling it, however, Diane Glancy has realized that a simple statement of the action is not enough. Stating what happens in discursive terms is gratifying, but the import of the story is anthropological and not literary—which is a shame, for her woman's experience is more aesthetic than simply social. Most crucially, to tell the story in conventional fictive form would miss the point, for the protagonist's visions and her experience in reckoning them are in themselves unconventional (by contemporary Anglo-American standards).

Therefore, in *Firesticks*, Diane Glancy has written not a novel, novella, or collection of short stories, but rather a work that incorporates elements of all three in order to produce much more. The closest comparison would be to a story cycle, itself a form only vaguely recalled in English language mainstream

culture but one that in postmodern times has been increasingly revived to measure new forms of experience and expression. Yet there are more than just integrated short stories here; indeed, the stories themselves are allowed greater divergence than in a conventional cycle, because a cycle-within-the-cycle holds them together: six sequential narratives, each titled "Firesticks," that guide the reader through the thirteen more diverse short stories that come variously before, between, and after. As in the culture Glancy's protagonist seeks to understand, these half-dozen narratives are the firesticks themselves, elements that carry the incendiary light from the communal holy fire to the individual cabins. "I always felt I had nothing," she recalls in the last of these firestick tales, but she now realizes that "[m]aybe it's myself speaking something into existence. Maybe words are not always separators. If I speak light I have light. My words are firesticks" (p. 126).

Comparatively speaking, the "Firesticks" narratives venture outward across time and space, while the thirteen other stories look inward to other, less apparent dimensions. The book opens with "The First Indian Pilot." In it, a child named Louis cooks popcorn with his grandmother and contemplates the night sky. It is a sky into which he would like to venture as a flyer, but, because his older brothers laugh that such high-tech professions are closed to his people, he rests, at least for the time being, with transforming his world by imagining aural dimensions for colors. Through the stories of *Firesticks*, there are other, more subtle transformations, such as when the narrator of "A Family to Which Nothing Happened" finds a telling grammar for her life of restricted possibilities: "It was a stifling nothing that happened. My mother always seemed angry. I think it was because nothing happened. I don't remember her visit to my campfire girls or Sunday school. She took care of the house and that was that" (p. 34).

In the ongoing "Firesticks" narrative of mixed-blood Turle Heppner and her sometime lover Navorn, a similar situation has evolved, though not seen quite as critically until near the end: Turle so values the independence of her waitress job at the diner and her small apartment above a store that she accedes willingly to a similar life of nothingness. Into this life comes Navorn, who, in conventional terms, gets her moving, literally and suggestively. But, at the same time, stories from the more diverse cycle keep intruding, tales whose repetitive and accumulative features speak of mood and nuance more than of action. Consider the old

woman of "Polar Breath," content to live a diminished life in an underheated house because at least it is all hers now. Her late husband can no longer dictate her actions; even stasis is preferable to movement at the direction of another. Yet others do intrude: spirits from the frozen woods who walk on raccoons' feet and gather about her chimney and brush against her windows, coming to carry her off to join her husband. It is, in fact, the cold that is taking her, but note the language of her dying vision: "She reached for the finger she saw at the glass. But the ice-hole burped like her old husband in her chair and the frigid water closed her up" (p. 105).

Just as visions ease the old woman's way from this life to the next, Turle's insights grow with her increasingly intense contemplations of her father. At first, he is just a subject to complain about to Navorn, how the old man and his Indian ways remained estranged from her all her life and even now as he approaches death. Throughout, she has been intent on remaining in her own world, circumscribed in its possibilities but also virtually airtight against influences from the past. But with her father's death she has to get out, if only for the business of burying him. Shortly after this, the curious visions she has been having take clearer shape, as, from nuances of contemporary light and sound, she is able to reconstruct the lost life her Native American ancestors once shared on these Oklahoma Plains. Her father wanted to be buried in the mountains above them, something she has scoffed at but now wishes to do, if only in symbolic form. When she buries his belongings, the way is opened to the volume's most adventure-some stories, such as the concluding "Animal (trans)Formations," where events as contemporary as the invasion of Kuwait and the Gulf War can be interpreted (quite sensibly and conclusively) through the visions of Native America.

Glancy's narrative words are themselves the firesticks that bridge the gap between signifier and signified, helping to resolve the postmodern struggle embodied in the often great divergences between communication and act. In considering the story of Turle Heppner, some will object that, in securing this vision, she is forfeiting her independence in favor of submission to a man; it is the drifter Navorn, after all, who gets her out of town, up to the mountains, and into the realm of vision. Yet such movement has not really been Navorn's initiative. Indeed, he has resisted it, never comprehending what Turle is about. It is she who has seized upon his presence as an opening to the other,

whether it is an accommodation to the long-resisted influence of her father (and his people) or to relating with another human being today. The beauty of *Firesticks* is that Diane Glancy provides resolutions on both planes: the visionary past and life in the present.

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**A Long and Terrible Shadow: White Values, Native Rights in the Americas, 1492-1992.** By Thomas R. Berger. Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 1991. 183 pages. \$12.95 paper.

Given its subtitle, one is tempted to view this book as an effort to capitalize on the hoopla associated with the quincentenary. Avoid such temptation. This book is not your standard overview of Native American-European relations over the centuries. Instead, it is an effort to show how the questions confronting these relations in 1492 are the same questions being confronted today. The result is an interesting journey into comparative history. Still, having finished the book, one is left with a question: Who is Berger's intended audience? If it is for specialists, they will know most of the information already; if it is for the interested layperson, the book moves so quickly that much of the information will be lost in this whirlwind trip spanning five hundred years of history.

What type of pace are we talking about in this book? How about five hundred years of history in eleven chapters, one hundred and sixty-two pages of text? Within this framework, Berger takes his reader from sixteenth-century Spain to twentieth-century Canada, with stops along the way in the United States, Mexico, Guatemala, Brazil, Argentina, and Chile. The author claims that three issues are central to understanding native-nonnative relations: First, what gave the Europeans the right to acquire territory in the New World? Second, what gave the conquerors the right to subjugate the Indian peoples who already resided on the land in question? And finally, what justification was there for requiring Native Americans to repudiate their way of life? These questions occur whether one is talking about Bartolomé de Las Casas's debates with Juan Gines de Sepulveda or the current legal battles taking place in British Columbia concerning native rights.