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appears in Allen's other anthology *Spider Woman's Granddaughters.*

Additionally, the absence of poetry, particularly the works of Ortiz and Momaday, is startling. Although Allen effectively explains the fluidity between oral traditional narrative and contemporary fiction as a confluence of "events, symbols, and imagery" of native life, she does not address poetry or its absence. When compared to Hobson's 1979 anthology, which includes works of the same general period along with more genres and varied selections, *Voice of the Turtle* may appear narrow in scope. Also, *Native American Literature: A Brief Introduction and Anthology,* edited by Gerald Vizenor (HarperCollins College Division, 1995), has more selections and genres, including previously inaccessible Native American drama. Both Vizenor and Hobson, however, present single-volume anthologies with greater emphasis on contemporary literature, as will the forthcoming *Norton Anthology of Native American Literature.*

Allen's specific time focus and thematic approach, along with her commentary on and her awareness of tribal sovereignty, offer students and readers a distinctive literary range and option. With the plethora of Native American contemporary fiction anthologies, *Voice of the Turtle* is a substantial alternative for detailed study of American Indian literature from the early part of this century through 1970. One hopes Allen's second volume will sustain thoughtful commentary and astute choices of representative literary works.

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Vortex of Indian Fevers. By Adrian C. Louis. Evanston, Illinois: Triquarterly Books, 1995. 62 pages. $11.95 paper.

An eighteenth-century meaning of *vortex*—"a situation into which persons or things are steadily drawn, or from which they cannot escape"—resonates in Adrian Louis's title. This definition is appropriate for a collection of poems that deal so often with social disintegration and the betrayal of traditional tribal values.

Over the last two decades Louis has produced, in addition to poems in chapbooks and various anthologies, several remarkable collections, including *Fire Water World* (1989), *Among the Dog Eaters* (1992), and *Blood Thirsty Savages* (1994), as well as his

powerful first novel *Skins* (1995). Although *Vortex of Indian Fevers* is a rather slim volume and about half of it reprints poems already published in a recent anthology *(Days of Obsidian, Days of Grace*, Poetry Harbor, 1994), its appearance marks an appropriate moment to assess Louis's career to date.

In an "afterword" to *Among the Dog Eaters*, Tim Giago, who possesses clear credentials as an enrolled member of the Oglala Sioux tribe and the editor and publisher of the newspaper *Lakota Times*, accepted Louis as an Oglala spokesman and contrasted him with "so-called 'Native American' writers [who] would be hard pressed to prove any tribal affiliations. . . ." Giago's reaction is doubly ironic. For one thing, Louis is not an Oglala at all but a Paiute who was born and grew up in Nevada, took two degrees from Brown University, and has lived on the Pine Ridge Reservation only since 1984, when he began teaching English at the reservation's Oglala Lakota College. His experience, in other words, makes a Paiute-Oglala connection, reminding us of significant events in 1890: the visit by the Oglala to the Paiute mystic Wovoka; the "ghost dancing" they undertook based on their understanding of his vision; the resulting anxiety of government officials; the journalistic exploitation of white fear; the military intervention; and, finally, in December 1890 the massacre of Big Foot's band at Wounded Knee. Louis, in other words, is another kind of Wovoka, bringing his Paiute experience to Pine Ridge to explain its present condition to the rest of us.

Furthermore, we might consider Louis's career and Giago's praise of it as a kind of case study of the tangled complexities in contemporary American Indian literary culture. Giago accepts the Paiute Louis as an Oglala poet only in the context of a sneer at the many poets of the last two or three decades who have been identified as Indians even though, both racially and tribally, they may be less Indian than "Euro-American." Giago is willing to consider Louis an Oglala not because he has become one culturally but because he is more Indian than the "mixed-bloods" Giago patronizes. "[H]is style," Giago says, "is pure Indian, through and through. . . ." In other words, Louis is Oglala enough to speak for the Oglala people because he is more Indian than mixed-bloods who claim to be Indians. And yet the writers Giago condemns for not being Indian enough happen to include some of the most important poets of our time, and Louis himself, according to a biographical note on the last page of *Blood Thirsty Savages*, also happens to be of mixed blood. It is very confusing.

This whole question, of course, is much too complex to resolve in this small space; anyway, our concern is with Louis's poetry rather than its subject. Its language is loose and colloquial, frank and often obscene but also frequently eloquent, and its combination of contemporary sophistication and traditional wisdom is perfectly suited to a poet whose awareness of traditional tribal values is offset by the sad knowledge that those values have been forgotten by so many. Louis's poetry also is a fine medium for representing with great exactitude the quality of Pine Ridge experience. His gritty images of that often admirable but too frequently shameful life provide the rich texture of his poems, and when we read them—and this is even more the case with the novel *Skins*—we suspect that if for some reason anyone in the far future wanted to recreate the town of Pine Ridge and the life lived there, all that would be needed in the way of a blueprint would be the collected writings of Adrian Louis.

Pine Ridge, in Louis's definition of it, is a grim place. The surrounding county can "boast" of its standing as perhaps the poorest in the entire country, and many of the reservation's social problems obviously derive from that fact. But Louis, a poet with no apparent illusions about anything in this world, knows that what is wrong at Pine Ridge cannot be explained so simply. For example, the reservation is legally "dry," but the town of Pine Ridge is only a couple of miles north of White Clay, a spot on the road just below the Nebraska state line that survives on liquor sales annually rivaling those of Omaha. All of its customers are Indians who go there to spend their welfare checks on booze, drink themselves silly, and too often kill themselves driving home. (One of Louis's earlier poems—in *Fire Water World*—mentions eighteen deaths in five years for that two-mile stretch of road.)

One of the poems in *Vortex of Indian Fevers*, particularly moving because of its brevity, is "Looking for Judas," which describes an illegally killed deer hanging gutted in the moonlight. The speaker is aware that the deer is somehow worthy of religious awe, and he realizes that he himself is the Judas required for the full recognition of the religious implications of the experience. The last few lines of the poem lead to a sardonic conclusion that exactly defines the tragic break with traditional tribal wisdom:

> They say before the white man
> brought us Jesus, we had honor.
> They say when we killed the Deer People,

we told them their spirits
would live in our flesh.
We used bows of ash, no spotlights, no rifles,
and their holy blood became ours.
Or something like that.

Indian activists and writers are correct in their contention that a reverence for "Mother Earth" is a peculiarly Indian element in American culture. But the truth Louis forces us to face includes something much darker—that the Indianness of that reverence does not mean that every Indian has it, that the racial accident of being born Indian does not necessarily make anyone any saintlier than anyone else, that the wisdom of Wovoka or Black Elk or any other traditional Indian holy man is not inherited in the blood but embraced in the heart, and indeed that some Indians are so brutal toward the environment and toward each other that they hardly can be distinguished from other sociopaths.

Any reader who thinks my language harsh should read Adrian Louis, a writer of extraordinary intellectual and artistic courage, willing not only to confront the burden of his own youthful folly (alcoholism, for example) but to face bravely what he believes to be a certain element of self-victimization among the Oglala—in welfare dependence, in alcoholism, and, most disturbing of all, in the degree of domestic abuse described in some of the most horrific episodes in *Skins*. If much of the power of his writing derives from the great care with which he has achieved, in relation to the social and cultural reality of Pine Ridge, that elusive quality which Henry James called "solidity of specification," we must understand that many of those specifications challenge the preconceptions that sentimentalists prefer.

Vortex of Indian Fevers contains twenty-six representative examples of Louis's latest work. They include social commentary in a variety of forms and confessional pieces from both his life among the Oglala during the last decade and his earlier experiences in Nevada and elsewhere. All of these poems are good, and several of them are very good indeed. "Some of What We Have Forgotten," a catalogue of traditional lore, some of it probably cockeyed but much of it very old, includes as one of the forgotten things in Oglala tradition the lines, "Listen, you can only pray for yourself / by praying for others." Much of the best work in the collection can be understood as prayers for others, addressed to dead friends, to a departed girlfriend, to Crazy Horse, to "Ancestor Spirits," to the "grandfather" of traditional Lakota prayer.

I am absolutely certain that the publication of *Vortex of Indian Fevers* marks the full emergence of a major figure in contemporary American Indian writing. That in itself makes it an important event. But Adrian Louis should not be relegated to a "Native American" literary ghetto. Anyone who wishes to make sense of the meager wheat and abundant chaff in the contemporary American poetry scene should read what he has written and monitor with care what we must hope will be a long career.

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When Indians Became Cowboys: Native Peoples and Cattle Ranching in the American West. By Peter Iverson. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994. 255 pages. $24.95 cloth.

In *When Indians Became Cowboys,* Peter Iverson writes about ideas and roles of continuing significance to Anglo-American and Native American understanding of themselves and their place in the universe around them. In so doing, he has provided readers with a multivalent sense of the structure of modern existence in the American West. Since this discourse makes use of ideas to grasp the reality of change, it is as if reality manifests itself in contradictory ways, at times masking the concepts the author expresses.

Both Iverson and Henrietta Whiteman have dealt with the various levels of historical discourse concerning American Indians and Anglo-American interpretations of history. It is important to remember the words of Whiteman, a Cheyenne from the Southern Plains who teaches Native American studies at Montana State University ("White Buffalo Woman," *The American Indian and the Problem of History,* edited by Calvin Martin, 1987):

> Cheyenne history, and by extension Indian history, in all probability will never be incorporated into American history, because it is holistic, human, personal, and sacred.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The collective stream of American Indian tribal experiences has become a spiritual history with the sacred mission of keeping the Earth Grandmother alive. American Indian history has 25,000–to 40,000-year-old roots in this sacred land. It cannot suddenly be assimilated into American history.