

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Lushootseed Texts: An Introduction to Puget Salish Narrative Aesthetics.
Edited by Crisca Bierwert

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9dg7s02h>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 22(2)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Denham, Kristin

Publication Date

1998-03-01

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

rule. For instance, McNickle persuaded N.B. Johnson, the president of the National Congress of American Indians, to appoint Jim Curry, a socialist attorney from Chicago, to assist Native groups who wanted to prepare cases before the Indian Claims Commission. Much to McNickle's dismay, Curry soon became involved in a debilitating controversy with senators over the solicitation of claims contracts. McNickle also tried without success to persuade the tribal council on the Flathead Reservation to accept complete responsibility to manage their own affairs. Furthermore, he testified before the Presidential Commission on Civil Rights that White House officials had failed to protect the possessory claims of Alaska's Natives to salmon fisheries and valuable timber in the Tongass National Forest.

McNickle left the Indian Bureau in 1952 to work on Navajo community development. His departure from the nation's capitol symbolized profound disillusionment with the Truman administration and Commissioner Dillon S. Myer for taking an all-or-nothing approach toward self-determination that focused on the relocation of impoverished Native Americans to cities and a staged withdrawal of the federal government from tribal affairs.

The Legacy of D'Arcy McNickle will be of interest to literary critics, cultural anthropologists, and historians. This excellent collection of essays gives fresh insights into how different scholars in the academy interpret the written work of McNickle. There also is valuable information about cross-cultural communication, McNickle's disenchantment with the Indian Reorganization Act, and persuasive commentary about how McNickle balanced his accommodation to change with a reaffirmation of traditional values.

Kenneth R. Philp
The University of Texas at Arlington

Lushootseed Texts: An Introduction to Puget Salish Narrative Aesthetics. Edited by Crisca Bierwert. Translated by Crisca Bierwert, Vi Hilbert, Thomas M. Hess. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996. 325 pages. \$40 cloth.

This ambitious new book will be of interest to students of literature, linguistics, and anthropology, as well as to the Lushootseed people and others interested in Native culture, literature, and

oral tradition. It should serve as a model for other collections of Native American language texts. The volume consists of ten introductory sections and seven texts. The texts are in English and Lushootseed. The book's wide appeal owes to its multiple editors and their areas of expertise. Each contributor provides one or more introductions to the volume.

Crisca Bierwert, the primary editor and translator, presents an introduction to the entire book, and introduces each of the other contributors. She also provides a "Translator's Introduction," where she discusses the style of presentation of the English translation, and an introduction to "Writing and Reading Lushootseed," which covers the Lushootseed orthography and conventions used in the transcription.

Vi Hilbert, an Upper Skagit elder, Native speaker, scholar, and teacher of Lushootseed, as well as a motivating force behind this work, offers a brief guide to thinking about the texts.

Thomas M. Hess, a linguist and longtime scholar of Lushootseed, presents two introductions: "The Documentation of Lushootseed Language and Literature" and "Lushootseed Grammar in an Annotated Text." In the first, he provides some background information on Lushootseed—where it is spoken, the language family it belongs to—and he details some of the other works that have been written on Lushootseed. He discusses his own fieldwork on Lushootseed and the speakers with whom he has worked. In the grammar section, he describes and illustrates the complex syntax and morphology of the language. The first sixteen lines of the first story in the volume are given with literal English translations and explanations of each of the words and morphemes.

In the section "Remembering the Storytellers," both Vi Hilbert and Thom Hess discuss how they came to know each of the storytellers featured in the volume. And in the "Annotator's Introduction," T.C.S. Langen explains how she will provide an annotated discussion of the "literary" qualities of the first text. She introduces terms used to describe the narrative style of Lushootseed. Many excellent references are also mentioned in this introduction.

Though these different introductions could make the work seem confused, they do not have this effect. The contributors all apply their expertise in a comprehensive way which reveals the complexity of the language, the literary artistry, and the style of presentation. Some of these introductory pieces are quite detailed, but the reader should not be overwhelmed by such

detailed discussions. The coverage of the complicated syntax and morphology, for example, or the wealth of new terminology describing the narrative conventions, will serve readers well who have specific interests in these areas. Others may find themselves returning to review one or more of these introductions as they read through the texts.

The style of translation used in this volume is unique and important. As Bierwert says in her introduction, the artistry of Native American oral literature has been obscured for decades, as translators have replaced the rhetorical and poetic devices of the Native languages with those used in English and American literary traditions. The translation and accompanying explanation used here exhibit and emphasize the inherent artistry of the texts. The translations may be striking at first to non-Lushootseed eyes and ears, appearing stark and repetitive, but after reading the explanation of the presentation, the skill and elegance of the original emerges.

The unique presentation on the page not only is appealing, but guides the narrative. A Salish basketry motif marks changes in scene, shifts in focus, or narrative repetitions. A blank line signals a subtler change. The Lushootseed is on the right-facing page and the English translation on the left. The English mirrors the Lushootseed line for line, making it very easy to compare the two languages as you read. The translator also strives to match the complexity of the syntax in the two languages. When the Lushootseed syntax is more complex, the English is as well. For instance, when the storyteller uses an unusual word order, an unusual word order is used in the English translation. The translator faces many challenges, however. Lushootseed is a polysynthetic language with many morphemes within a single word, which can change subtle aspects of the meaning. Translating each part of a Lushootseed word could result in a very long English sentence, which would lose the effect of the succinct Lushootseed. The translator does an excellent job of dealing with this very complex task, while maintaining the spirit of the Lushootseed.

The first five lines of the first text, "Martha Lamont's Changer Story," illustrate the flavor of the translation technique:

There was Mink.	ʔácəc tiʔil bəščəb
Mink was there.	bəščəb t[ə ʔ]a; <tul...,>
He was walking.	tuləʔibəš.
Yes, Mink was walking.	ʔi, tuləʔibəš tiʔil bəščəb.
Mink was walking.	leʔibəš tiʔil bəščəb.

At least one of the texts has appeared elsewhere (Vi Hilbert's *Haboo: Native American Stories from Puget Sound*, 1985), though in free English translation only, providing an excellent opportunity for comparing the translation styles. The bilingual presentation and the unique translation style offered in this volume offer a new perspective on the literary style of Lushootseed.

Each of the seven texts has a helpful introduction which provides background on the type of story, the reason for the story, the style of presentation (why repetition is used, for example), and the characters and their history. The introductions also refer to further readings on related topics.

The notes for each text are many and variable. The style of translation leaves all cultural explanations out of the narrative, requiring extensive notes by Langen. These notes include important cultural, historical, and literary information. The editor's introduction explains that lack of space required that the notes of each text contain different kinds of commentary. Thus, Langen's comments are cumulative and assume knowledge of the previous notes, meaning the stories must be read in order. Also, the notes are necessary and there are a lot of them, so it's unfortunate that they are endnotes rather than footnotes. Footnotes would interfere with the presentation on the page, though they would greatly aid in the reading of each story. Another problem with the notes is that there are no note numbers, so the reader does not know when to look to the notes. I kept a finger on the note page and checked every few lines to see if there was a note. Numbers would also interfere with the presentation on the page, but in this case, would be worth it.

There are seven texts in the volume, representing several distinct genres. "Martha Lamont's Changer Story" and "The Marriage of Crow" are Changer stories or syəyəhub, found in much Northwest Coast literature. Changer stories took place long ago when there was no distinction between people and animals. All of the creatures seemed to be both animal and human, but to possess human sensibilities. "The Legend of the Boy Who Could Not Walk" is a legend in which the protagonist is human, but it takes place "long ago." In this story and others of its type, the narrator sets the location within her own territory, and there is a fuzzy line between what is legend and what is history. "Shaman Cure" is a story from "the time that can be remembered." Quite simply, it is a memoir. And finally, "The All-Year-Around Story" is neither myth, legend, nor memoir, but seems to be simply for entertainment. Some of the stories do not fit

neatly into one genre or another, but seem to be a combination of one or more genres. Each genre is discussed in the introduction to each story.

Tape recordings of all of the Lushootseed texts in the volume are available through the Language Learning Center at the University of Washington. It would be beneficial if the tapes were sold with the book, and I highly recommend to anyone who buys the book to buy the tapes also. They include only the Lushootseed, not the English translations, but by hearing the vocal inflections as you follow along, it is, of course, much easier to understand where there is humor, urgency, or other emotions. And because these are traditionally oral stories, it seems only right to hear them spoken aloud.

In sum, *Lushootseed Texts* is an extremely important addition to the body of work on Lushootseed and Native American literature in general. The style of translation and bilingual presentation will no doubt prove invaluable in the continued study and appreciation of the Lushootseed language, literature, and culture.

Kristin Denham
Western Washington University

Men Down West. By Kenneth Lincoln. Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1997. 250 pages. \$15.95 paper.

American character forged itself on the belief that the West represented new opportunity and, for some, the possibility for renewal. In America, so the myth goes, a man could go at it alone. With hard work and the favor of God, he could create a self-sufficient new life for himself and for his family. As the frontier took shape, this spirit of the West became a national myth. In his fourth book, Native American scholar Kenneth Lincoln effectively examines this Western mythos by questioning its blatantly patriarchal individualism from an autobiographical perspective. More specifically, he explores the American cult of masculinity by taking measure of his own life. According to Lincoln, the American male raised to believe in the frontier myth has become misdirected. As Lincoln strongly argues, the only way for American men to save themselves is to learn from women and Native Americans the art of communicating, mothering, and the benefits of tribal cooperation.

In critiquing the American frontier spirit, Lincoln uses the