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of their students. This book would be helpful in their search for solutions.

Dorothy W. Hewes
San Diego State University

Winged Words: American Indian Writers Speak. By Laura Coltelli. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1990. 211 pages. \$22.50 cloth.

This volume is a collection of interviews with Paula Gunn Allen, Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris, Joy Harjo, Linda Hogan, N. Scott Momaday, Simon Ortiz, Wendy Rose, Leslie Silko, Gerald Vizenor, and James Welch. In an exhilarating trip around the country, which also surely must have been a travel agent's worst nightmare, Coltelli conducted all ten interviews during the month of September 1985, rushing between venues as distant as New Hampshire and Berkeley, Minneapolis and Tucson.

The interviews have a remarkable coherence, not only because of their having been conducted within this one particular period. Coltelli developed two sets of questions, a common set for all writers and an individual set tailored to each writer. The common set of questions addressed issues Coltelli felt to be of wide interest among scholars and general readers of Native American literature, including the writers' relationships to their tribal heritage and to the oral tradition, the role of anthropologists and critics, influential non-Indian writers and so on. Frankly, these questions elicited for me the least interesting responses, perhaps because I had heard the answers so frequently already, perhaps because the writers had been asked them so often that their answers seemed almost rehearsed. A noteworthy exception to this judgment, however, was Coltelli's request to the writers to describe the creative process at the heart of their work (Simon Ortiz: "No, I can't. I mean, I could tell you a few things . . ." [p. 117]. Paula Allen: "I sit down at the word processor and off we go. It's really a different process since I got this thing" [p. 33]).

In addition, Coltelli developed questions that were particular to the interests of each interviewee: the collaborative process between Erdrich and Dorris; Vizenor, the trickster figure, and post-modernism; Momaday's sense of place. A common thread running through the interviews with women writers had to do

with the different ways in which cultural loadings on gender defined a horizon of possibilities for women of color who write ("a double-whammy, or maybe even a triple-whammy"—Linda Hogan [p. 80]). When asked, "Considering the importance of women in many Indian societies, is feminism synonymous with heritage for American Indian women," Wendy Rose answers negatively: "There are a lot of Indian women, myself included, who consider themselves to be feminist, but we're not feminist like non-Indian women are. We come from a different base; we have a different history. If I'm on the Hopi reservation, I am not a feminist; if I'm in Fresno, California, I'm a feminist" (p. 127).

Coltelli candidly reprints her faux pas in these interviews. (Welch reminds her, "Blackfeet, always Blackfeet. The old anthropologists say Blackfoot" [p. 189, emphasis mine].) These are more than touchstones of her goodwill. It is clear that Coltelli developed a genuine rapport with the writers she engaged. Moreover, in the interviews, she asked brief, open-ended questions which she allowed the writers to answer as fully as they wished. In short, she stayed out of the way, bringing their voices forward in a warm, encouraging environment.

This book undoubtedly will be compared to Joe Bruchac's *Survival This Way: Interviews with American Indian Poets* (1987) and to Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat's *I Tell You Now: Autobiographical Essays by Native American Writers* (1987), but for me Coltelli's work is fundamentally different. Bruchac focuses intently on the vision, craft, and situation of each writer, to produce a series of narrow but immensely productive interviews. When given a chance to write about themselves, the writers often seem unclear about their task and their audience, so the Swann and Krupat volume is very uneven. By comparison, what I valued most in Coltelli's collection was her skill in letting the writers speak for themselves, her ability not only to get to the topics that interested the writers but also to create a comfortable situation in which their most characteristic speech was welcomed. As the few quotations I have included suggest, these transcripts are the closest thing to audio in print. Coltelli has given us honest, personal interviews—conversations between people who care about the world they write. For that sense of presence, of the familiar voices of the company we keep, I am grateful.

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