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**Studies in the Literary Achievement of Louise Erdrich, Native American Writer: Fifteen Critical Essays.** Edited by Brajesh Sawhney. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellon Press, 2009. 312 pages. $119.95 cloth.

Brajesh Sawhney's collection of critical essays represents the latest of growing scholarship surrounding Louise Erdrich's literary contributions to Native literature. However, as noted in James Ruppert's foreword, this is the first work to include analysis of Erdrich's more recent and less-discussed works *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*, *Four Souls*, *The Painted Drum*, and *The Birchbark House*. Other book-length analyses of Erdrich's works include Allan Chavkin's edited collection *The Chippewa Landscape of Louise Erdrich* (1999), Loren Laura Stookey's *Louise Erdrich: A Critical Companion* (1999), Hertha D. Sweet Wong's *Louise Erdrich's Love Medicine: A Casebook* (1999), and, most recently, Peter G. Beidler and Gay Barton's *A Reader's Guide to the Novels of Louise Erdrich* (revised and expanded 2006). The diversity of attention in this collection provided by known and emerging Native literature scholars makes it a valuable addition to any Erdrich study. More importantly, this collection participates in the ongoing discussion regarding the approach and value in studying Native American literature.

What these essays have in common, besides a focus on Erdrich's texts, is their perhaps inadvertent contribution to and application of contemporary approaches to Native literature as outlined in Alan R. Velie's chapter, "Louise Erdrich and American Indian Literary Nationalism." The guiding question to this chapter and the larger debate is whether Native American literature should be considered and studied as a component to a larger "American" literature or whether Native literature as a whole or the literatures from certain tribal nations comprise their own unique category. In respecting both sides, including Erdrich's own assertion that she is an American writer, Velie shows how her novels can be seen as culturally and aesthetically Ojibwe and stylistically Western rather than merely either one or the other.

The essays in this collection illustrate the various theoretical lenses through which we can read Native-authored texts. While Beidler explores Erdrich's humorous application of Western medical terms in *Four Souls*, Harry J. Brown explores the importance of names and the act of naming as a narrative method and derivative of Ojibwe culture. Deborah Madsen and Barbara Hiles Mesle both explore the impact of historical trauma on Erdrich's narratives in terms of the use of trickster narratives in response to historical trauma and the healing power of ritual and drumming, respectively. Holly Messitt and Gretchen Papazian provide comparative analyses of Erdrich's work in relation to other American literature. Messitt compares the captivity narrative genre, and Papazian compares young children's fiction, particularly *The Little House on the Prairie* series. Papazian provides a particularly interesting discussion of houses and the concept of home or "homing in" as representative of society and culture in Erdrich's *The Birchbark House* and *The Game of Silence*. Erdrich's literary use of houses, she concludes, "re-figure[s] and mute[s] a dominant narrative tradition—namely that of the American myth." Her argument reveals the value of comparing different cultural understandings of the same symbol in

order to affect a multicultural society positively by "promot[ing] tolerance and epistemological elasticity" (208). What I infer from her argument is that Native authors like Erdrich are "American" writers in that they contribute to evolving national myths but also "Native American" writers in that these contributions present a unique perspective that differs from that of Euro-American writers.

Papazian's reading illuminates not only our reading of Erdrich's work but also a theoretical approach that captures a fundamental value of reading Native American or any ethnic American literature as ethnically or culturally derived: the promotion of tolerance and epistemological elasticity. The assumption behind reading ethnic literature is that the literature captures unique perspectives regarding the history, ideology, and epistemology of that ethnic group. Such a theoretical approach inherently allows for diversity within and between ethnic groups while maintaining mutual respect and balance as well as flexibility, qualities that this collection exhibits. Together these essays comprise a vast spectrum of approaches that add to, complicate, and trouble the fabric of our understanding of Erdrich's novels and ethnic literature as a whole.

The majority of these essays consistently sets up a comparison between Western and Native texts and theories in order to assert a Native or Ojibwe literary distinction and difference. Few, if any, discuss Erdrich's texts in isolation from Western theories or traditions. For instance, Melaine A. Hanson's "'To Sew Is to Pray': Disgorging the Speech of the Creator" relies entirely on French feminist theory and terminology to free Erdrich's texts from the limitations of labeling them as Native American or from adhering to an either/or binary. However, rather than incorporate a variety of theories including indigenous feminism, Hanson's singular use of French feminist theory in order to understand Erdrich's texts forcibly places, and therefore limits, those texts within a theoretical context. Hanson removes Erdrich's work from one box only to place it into another. Yet such an employment of a singular theory allows us to self-reflectively see this myopic use more clearly while adding a thread to our ever-expanding literary-theory "quilt." Although we may agree with Hanson's conclusion regarding the act of sewing in Erdrich's novels, we must carefully assess the practice of reaching such a conclusion.

The differences in such uses or practice of theory can best be understood through Dee Horne's distinction between the colonial mimic and the subversive mimic in her essay "'I Meant to Have But Modest Needs': Louise Erdrich's *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*." In her analysis of characters Father Damien and Pauline, Horne explains that Pauline's colonial mimicry "replicates the colonizer but is disavowed whereas the subversive mimic [Father Damien] is self-aware and actively claims agency by interrogating their own cultural appropriation." Furthermore, the subversive mimic must also "reject the colonial power imbalance because to operate within or in response to it without critical awareness results in perpetuating unequal power relations" (277–78). Subversive mimicry must ensure that actions and words, practice and theory, remain parallel and in balance. In her analysis, Horne carefully and critically incorporates a variety of theoretical approaches and terminology in the creation of her own; her practice mirrors her theory.

Keeping in practice with this theory of weaving in diverse elements, Sahwney includes Beidler and Connie Jacobs's collection of memorable character analyses. In attempting to determine "a combined single assessment of what makes Erdrich's characters so memorable," we, along with the editors, discover a diverse range of perspectives and therefore gain deeper insight into and understanding of these characters through somebody else's eyes (243). In doing so, these character sketches and the collection as a whole reveal the value of diverse perspectives by promoting tolerance for differences and honoring epistemological elasticity: we all bring something new to our communal understanding. The collection provides timely and valuable discussion about Erdrich's newest and least-discussed works balanced with appropriate attention to her most well-known work. The essays add to an ongoing discussion regarding Erdrich's literature specifically and the study of Native American literature more generally.

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**This Is What They Say: Stories by François Mandeville.** Translated from Chipewyan by Ron Scollon. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009. 288 pages. $25.00 paper.

One can say with justification that the collection of narratives, *This Is What They Say: Stories by François Mandeville*, was eighty years in the making. Then too, with an appreciation for the interest and cooperation by Mandeville as the original teller of its contents, the period of gestation is pushed back more than a century, revealing an enigmatic series of relationships and orthographic renditions presented in this publication. The book represents the evolution of a narrative ethnography told by François Mandeville, born the son of a Métis interpreter in the Northwest Territories (1878–1952), and two non-Native scholars, Li Fang-kuei (1902–87), who interviewed Mandeville in 1928, and Ron Scollon (1939–2009), Li's student and collaborator for *Chipewyan Texts*, published in China in 1976. Li handed the torch to Scollon for this linguistic concentration, and Scollon "reanalyzed the Chipewyan stories from the point of view of narrative structure as developed by [Melville] Jacobs" (15). The Chinese-born Li, the brilliant student of University of Chicago linguist Edward Sapir (who would forge his own reputation in Na-Dené as well as in the language families of Chinese and southeastern Asia's Tai), came to the United States able to read and write English better than speak it, became the renowned figure in Chipewyan linguistics, and shares with Mandeville a central place in a truly remarkable legacy.

These three men whose lives overlapped brought considerable care to these Chipewyan narratives, with Robert Bringhurst in his foreword and, especially, the preface and commentary by Scollon describing the detailed methodological process that produced this ethnopoetics. *This Is What They Say* has three parts. In part 1, "The Stories," are sixteen of Mandeville's narratives