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Indian cowboys. For example, what kind of gear did Charlie Ponchetti use? Quanah Parker?

While the book contains a substantial number of black-and-white photographs and illustrations, they do not necessarily support the text. In addition, color illustrations would have increased the book's appeal to children significantly. No maps are included.

*American Indians as Cowboys* therefore is a disappointment. A children's book addressing the topic of Indians as cowboys is badly needed. In most children's books about cowboys, Indians are presented as the enemy—they stole cattle; they taxed cowboys crossing their lands. Children deserve not only the truth but also well-written texts with supporting illustrations. This reviewer hopes a revised and improved version of *American Indians as Cowboys* will appear in the near future.

George Ann Gregory  
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**Anasazi Places, The Photographic Vision of William Current.**  
By Jeffery Cook. University of Texas Press, 1993. 152 pages. \$45.00 cloth.

*Anasazi Places* is a photographic work documenting the ancient ruins of the prehistoric Anasazi people of the Southwest, as seen through the camera lens of William Current. The preface states that photographer William Current began his unique studies of Anasazi ruins in the 1960s. Based on this original work, the Amon Carter Museum, together with the University of Texas Press, published Current's studies in *Pueblo Architecture of the Southwest*, 1971, which is currently out of print. *Anasazi Places*, 1993, contains Current's original studies, with additional photographs from his extensive portfolio.

In the foreword, Karen Current Sinsheimer writes a brief biography that portrays the passionate character of her late husband, William. Crippled in war, his foot nearly amputated, Current faced the painful ordeal of learning to walk again. Loaded down with camera equipment, he managed fifteen-mile hikes to document his beloved subjects. This tenacious love shows in all aspects of his work and is especially evident in the unique composition arrangements and in the printing of landscape scenes. There are

no cropped photos in this collection. Current composed each square image side-by-side to create a perfect whole. His photographic composition, artistic intensity, and professional integrity collectively render photographs that give the reader a full experience view.

William Current left few statements about his work, but what he did believe about the art of rendering Southwestern imagery in black-and-white photography is faithfully related in his book. "My photographs of the natural world seek to establish relationships with the Universe. When I am in the presence for the world's oldest living beings, the Bristle Cone Pine in the High Sierras, or when I stand where the earth and sea come together, I feel myself in touch with the staff of creation. Those moments of connecting with life in all its forms are what my photographic quest in the landscape is all about" (p. xiii).

The text for *Anasazi Places* is written by Jeffery Cook, who states in the preface, "Our joint effort is neither an album of photographs nor a history of the Anasazi architecture, neither a scientific documentation of facts nor a fiction of romance. Rather, it is a collaboration of informed environmental notes by two twentieth-century explorers, in concert with our prehistoric kindred spirits" (p. viii). Cook's masterful writing techniques address the black-and-white landscapes, generating a rich tapestry in the minds of the reader. Indeed, one can hear the thunderstorms rolling in . . . feel a quickening wind from across a distant plateau . . . envision a mesa shrouded in dark strands of rain.

Current's careful and artistic choice of images caused me to lose myself in the landscape and yet, simultaneously, to be grounded in the subtle, intriguing architecture of this ancient people. He once made the comment, "When I photograph a rock I want to portray and to preserve its identity as rock—the qualities such as hardness, strata, form by which we name it and know it. In the same photograph, I seek to reveal and to discover the essence of the rock as the embodiment of forces that created it: buffeting winds, abrading rain, beating sun" (p. xiii).

While Current takes the reader on a photographic journey through Chaco Canyon, Jeffery Cook carefully details the ecology of Chaco Canyon, giving special information, for example, about how many trees were used for the buildings. In fact, 100,000 were used in the eleventh century alone, which means more than one thousand trees per year, or three every day, were cut.

William Current's closeup photographs of the walls at Chaco show the patterns that resemble basketweavers' designs. While studying the photographs, I found they spoke to me of the techniques that native women traditionally use in their basketweaving; thick strands for width and height, thin for tightening and strengthening, all coming together in balance. Looking deeply into the photos, I noticed that fat and thin stones leapfrog each other up the walls, to keep them level: fat for strength and power, length and height; thin and flat for correcting, leveling, and balancing. From stone to stone, this is a sea of faces, yet each is an individual; the large stones in rows, bordered by smaller stones in lines, create symbols of water, terraced mountains, and grid-patterned fields. Cook gives his interpretation: "Each part of every wall tell[s] of both the time and the personality of its builder" (p. 30). His words bring me in accord with both the photographer and the author.

Cook's superbly choreographed text is pleasurable reading, in perfect step with the photographic images. Cook's caption—"Textures of hand placed stones and layers of deliberate walls confront the raw cliff face . . ." (p. 23)—well describes Current's ability to contrast the busy stonework with the smooth-faced cliff rising behind. The book reads not as a factual report on a civilization and their archaeological remains, dates, age, categories, but as a picture described by a master poet-writer, doing justice to the photos and causing one to pause and consider the photo composition.

In Canyon de Chelly, Current captures the rich texture of a glistening stream, the smooth, polished and rounded cliff bases reaching up to the roughly talused slopes. This merging reveals the enormous depth and height of the canyon. Cook says it much better: "a luminous ribbon of life-giving water meanders through bottom sands of Canyon de Chelly from which rise the eroded stumps of almost immutable cliffs" (p. 40). Here again, the text supplements the photographs with information about the ecology of the canyon floors, the people's subsistence diet from their agriculture and from hunting and gathering. They ate corn, beans, squash, game, wild fruit, roots, nuts, seeds, and cactus pads, all found in this lovely, lush, dynamic canyon.

Canyon de Chelly contains records of human settlement for three thousand years, including the most recent Navajo inhabitants. Various periods of prehistoric art are found side-by-side in the canyon. For the Navajo, it is taboo to visit the ancient ruins or

discuss the petroglyphs; they avoid the ruins out of respect for those they call the "ancient ones," who left their pictographic stories and built these rooms and towers.

The color variation in the two-hundred-million-year-old sandstone cliffs comes from an iron oxide, hematite, in the mineral cement that binds together the grains of sand. The shiny black "desert varnish" that dramatically streaks the canyon walls is made from manganese oxide, created by enzymes secreted by a bacterium called metallogenium. This microscopic life form is activated by rain water, and its secretions join with manganese in the air, forming the dark, oxidized varnish.

Current has captured the contrasting mineral content of the rocks that gives it age and color. The dark stains contrast with the tiny Whitehouse the Navajo call *Kini na akai*. Cook puts it poetically: "Striated blackened streaks of desert varnish underline the cliff-nested serenity of White House" (p. 45).

As I look into the photograph of Three Turkey Ruin, I see only rough cliffs, scrubby vegetation in a dark, busy photograph. But Cook has found more: "The photographer's lens has reached into the gnarled violence of geologic formations to find a human habitation almost invisible in the frozen motions of stone" (p. 51).

Cook writes that Mesa Verde is important because the archaeological record is nearly complete, from early pithouses through the small pueblos of pole and adobe of Pueblo I, up to the Pueblo II period of A.D. 900–1125 that had two to three stories of double-coursed stone masonry. Around A.D. 1200, the native population shifted off the mesa tops to the cliffs, where they build six hundred dwellings, but they were occupied for only fifty years, some for only twenty to thirty years. They were completely abandoned by A.D. 1300. The move back to the canyon walls may have reflected hostile pressures from warring tribes to move to a more defensible location.

Current portrays the bold dominance of Mesa Verde, with continuous house blocks, complemented by towers and sprinkled throughout with round kivas in the plazas. In contrast to the previous photo essays of monolithic cliffs highlighted by sparse outcroppings of human constructions, Current here focuses on details of roof beams, balconies, bare walls, and open doorways. Kiva ladder poles stick up out of abandoned entrance holes. Looking out from the walls are empty-eyed windows and doorways.

The scene is eerily bare; where are the human trappings that would have hung over this skeleton frame? Current dynamically

portrays the pregnant emptiness of a bare-bones stage set for a people returning from their migration—dogs yapping, turkeys gobbling; noisy inhabitants covering their doorways with skins and filling the rooms with baskets of seeds, blankets, and mats; the halls resonating with laughter and playing children.

At Kayenta, I have spent many hours photographing Betatakin's cave. I chose the smooth-walled cliff face interrupted with an easy rhythm of different planes, contrasted with a bottom shelf of complicated stonework of human effort. I was curious to see Current's choice of composition for that location. He chose to frame all the stone buildings, leaving out the smooth-faced cliff (p. 82). But, with a different part of the ruin shown on the next page (p. 83), he did a marvelous job with the smooth cliff adjoining the rough stonework buildings, highlighted with light only on the top course of stone. They seem to zigzag back and forth up the cliff face. As Cook puts it, "Crude masonry walls step up from toe-holds chipped into the live rock of Betatakin—a delicate human insertion into a dynamic natural system" (p. 83).

In the Rio Grande valley, Current is not interested in photographing the typical aerial views of carefully laid out room blocks and kivas. Instead, he seeks out the cliff face at Puye and Tyuonyi, the black-eyed doorways that lead to inner rooms, all carved out of the soft tufa. Here, Current has found the obscured petroglyphs etched into the soft sandstone and tufa. Petroglyphs of the Pajarito Plateau area are often very difficult to photograph due to the lack of desert varnish that would differentiate the surface from the base rock and make an engraving visible. Current was able to capture the petroglyphs as the sun shone directly across the rock face at an angle, creating highlights on the ridges and darkening the recesses of the engraving. Engraved spirals, animals, and human forms stand out from the cliff face, giving life to the stories that have been silent so long and have remained nearly invisible to passersby.

At Salado and Sinagua, Current plays with the setting of the Citadel of Wupatki National Monument and Tuzigootas, which command large vistas (p. 112). Cook fills in the information about the people moving up the Salt River into the Tonto basin around A.D. 500–900 and settling there. In A.D. 1300, during the great migrations of the Anasazi, the Salado people built stone, T-shaped doorways but no kivas. By 1450, these people had disappeared. Current's picture of a fourteenth-century urban pueblo of Tuzigoot, Apache for "crooked water," struck me as a giant spider

perched on her web high on a hill in the sky. Cook writes, "The web of stone walls extends the profile of a commanding hill near the river in the spacious Verde Valley" (p. 118).

Exactly what was William Current trying to accomplish? In comparing several other books of similar substance on the market, I discovered what was unique about William Current's "eye" that was not found in comparable works by Marcia Keegan (*Mother Earth, Father Sky, Pueblo and Navaho Indians of the Southwest*, 1974) or David Muench (*Anasazi, Ancient People of the Rock*, 1974) or Elliott Porter (*Elliott Porter's Southwest*, 1985).

With Whitehouse ruin in Canyon de Chelly, for example, Marcia Keegan renders a color closeup with no scale of the cliff to the house. It is flat and rather boring, with little contrast. David Muench's attempt of Whitehouse ruin is similar in every respect, with little contrast and no indication of the drama engaged by the enormous cliff face that intimidates this tiny ruin. Current's only rival was found in *Elliott Porter's Southwest*, where the test of rendering Whitehouse ruin in black-and-white was slightly surpassed. Porter caught the light dancing off the tiny ledges and crevice variations in the cliff face, contrasted sharply by the deep, dark streaks of mineral oxide racing down the incline. A tiny white artificial structure pokes out of a recess, giving further contrast with its famous whitewashed walls. But the picture does not stop there. Farther down, the vegetation picks up a bright tinkling in the leaves that group the cottonwood trees on the canyon bottom. Current's version of Whitehouse ruin is nearly identical, with only a slight variation in the highlights.

Comparison of other site examples resulted in the same conclusions: Muench in *Anasazi*, 1974, covers the same territory, site-by-site, as William Current. I compared Batatakin and found Muench had again produced a flat, no-contrast illustration, where Current had picked up on the dark streaks of the cliff face and had given the cave a giant scale to humble the prehistoric dwellings. At the Sinagua site of Tuzigoot, Muench captures a full moon over the ruin but, unlike Current, does not render the perspective of the hill-top overlook that this ruin embraces, overlooking the valley below.

Muench portrays Tonto tucked neatly inside a cave amidst large saguaro cactus, but Current makes the viewer hunt through a large format of rocky cliff and hillside crowded with cactus and saguaros, where it is difficult to pick out the tiny ruins within a cave. The ruins are camouflaged well into the landscape, probably the intent of the Anasazi people.

The same is true with Chaco Canyon, where Meunch follows traditional formats of ruin layouts and late afternoon light, long shadows, and rich orange-red color; Current, on the other hand, focuses on details of the stonework, taking interest in texture, lightplays, and dynamic composition that comes with a very skilled use of black-and-white media. Although some shots seem dark at first, my eye picks out the faintest line of light that traces a far wall, giving the forefront depth. Suddenly, what first appeared as a flat wall with a dark curve behind it becomes a rounded wall by a tiny rim of stones catching the light.

Aside from Porter's two published photos of Anasazi architecture, Current far outdistanced the other photographers in his class. His work is well complemented by the masterful poetic writing of Jeffery Cook, whose words I found akin to my own interpretation and experience of these places. This book is a loyal representation of the Anasazi, their dwellings, and their landscape, and a sensitive portrayal of their relationship to their environment. William Current's photographic vision successfully captures the lure, the mystery, and the austere qualities of the Anasazi.

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**Baptism of Desire.** By Louise Erdrich. New York: HarperCollins Pubs., Inc., 1991. 96 pages. \$16.95 cloth; \$8.95 paper.

When classifying American Indian literature, literary critics seek to define just what is distinctly Indian about these writers. Most of the writers today come from varied tribal and nontribal backgrounds, so it is difficult to categorize Indian writers under that simple heading: Indian. Male writers tend to explore themes of ritualistic death and rebirth through a communion within the community; female writers tend to look outward in terms of the whole community, centering on female cyclical rituals of rebirth/death/regeneration and survival of their future generations. Broad themes of anger and isolation are common threads in the work of both male and female writers. But these questions arise: Is there a division between writers of nontribal background and those of tribal background? Does the idea of a