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Of course this general argument is a familiar element in the critique and reevaluation of ethnography that has raged in anthropology since at least the 1980s. This critique is essentially referenced in Lavender's title: Most anthropologists now agree that ethnography, whether feminist or not, is both scientific description and storytelling and that the identity of the ethnographer is a key element in the final narrative. Early male ethnographers produced accounts that were no less filtered through their own identity as privileged males with particular agendas. Lavender is not as clear as she might be on this point; the impression left is that somehow feminist ethnographers were especially prone to let their agenda shape their narratives.

Furthermore, Lavender's assertions of a significant difference between these ethnographic stories and the actual lived experience of Southwest women may be true, but she does not offer compelling evidence. More recent anthropologists, including Native American ethnographers such as Beatrice Medicine, have also painted pictures of cultures that offer great variations in gender roles and aspirations; the critique of patriarchy implied in such accounts seems valid. This is not to say that Lavender is wrong in arguing that early feminists may have been blinded to realities that were less palatable to their agenda.

The central message of this book is not a negative critique of these feminist pioneers. It is clear that Lavender admires and values their work, while at the same time arguing that they saw the Southwest through a particular prism that established a story about gender that is probably less nuanced than the reality of women's experiences. In the end, Lavender tells us relatively little about Native American women—but that was not her intent. Rather, she deftly and engagingly helps fill out the grand narrative of anthropology and anthropologists, especially the group of women who defied convention, listened to other women, and helped show the world that the ways of the West were not inevitable.

S. Elizabeth Bird

University of South Florida

The Secret Powers of Naming. By Sara Littlecrow-Russell. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2006. 79 pages. \$16.95 paper.

My review copy of Sara Littlecrow-Russell's first collection of poems, *The Secret Powers of Naming*, arrived with considerable supporting matter. Accompanying the book was a letter from the publicity manager at The University of Arizona Press, a publicity rap sheet with a color photo of the author, a kind of publication *curriculum vitae*, and a press release leading with an endorsement from Joy Harjo, who also pens the book's introduction. So before I could even get to the poems, I had a fair amount of prose to confront, all of which tries to position Littlecrow-Russell as honest, gritty, and Alexie-esque. Harjo warns the reader that these "are not poems constructed of beautiful images, nor are they poems of redemption. There is scarce mystical panache. What you will find is hard-hitting, wise witness" (ix). Not surprisingly, the press release claims the

poems bear “stark and honest witness” that counters prevailing assumptions about Indians. Such buildup, such backstory creates, perhaps without intent, an overwhelming rhetorical pressure to read the poems through a particular lens, but even more than that, there is a kind of plea for the reader to consider the poems as more than poems. I felt as though the book was being pitched as an unusually sacred tome, both visionary and documentary, that carries, as the title suggests, some secret power.

I mention the review materials and the introduction (by the way, I must also call attention to the blurbs, the glossary, and the author afterword) because they clearly affected how I read the book, though, I suspect, not in the intended way. Rather than helping to usher me into the world of the poems, they led me to the following premise: so much schwag either means the publishers love this book, and they want to herald its publication with a rhetoric commensurate with its power, or they are petrified that people will hate the book, and they want to launch a preemptive strike to explain why the book is the way it is. Either way, I figured I was in for an entertaining read.

For me, the book was more interesting than pleasurable, though, as warned, pleasure was not a scheduled dish on Littlecrow-Russell’s menu. Some more conservative readers might wonder how certain texts in the book qualify as poems, aside from being short and containing line breaks. Few of the poems possess identifiably lyrical elements that distinguish poetry from prose, but Littlecrow-Russell doesn’t seem interested in crafting a well-wrought urn. She’s more interested in the sharp shards that fly at the reader when she cracks that urn.

To wit, even a seasoned, relatively unsentimental reader like this reviewer pauses a moment at Littlecrow-Russell’s poem entitled “I Know You Raped Her.” Granted, part of the pause comes from the fact that the poem next to “I Know You Raped Her” is “Poem for a Beautiful Texan White Boy” that playfully begins, “I know that you / Would kiss like a lizard / Quick flickering of tongue / In my mouth” (52). So, to move from that to the following opening stanza is a tonal (and psychic) shift: “I know you raped her / But I won’t tell because / You are Indian, / She is white, / And no one would believe / The words of someone in-between” (53). But, as dramatic as that leap is, even more startling is the turn that happens within the poem, when the current shifts from rape to racially motivated murder: “I know you raped her / But I won’t tell / Because I know / The coroner won’t ask the police / How you tied a noose / With two broken arms / And stood on two broken legs / To hang yourself” (54).

I read this poem several times, trying to decide if I liked it or not. Ultimately, I decided that was a stupid process—I’m just not going to *like* a poem about rape and murder. However, I did find this particular poem about rape and murder compelling (not simply disturbing), and it held my interest on subsequent readings, becoming more poignant each time. I could say the same for poems entitled “Shit Work,” “These Days My Prayers Come Twenty to a Pack,” “A Mask of Razorblades and the Voice of Rain,” and “Russian Roulette, Indian Style.” The latter is a good example of the hybrid nature of these texts—part poem, part protest tract, part twelve-step recovery poster:

Russian Roulette
 Indian style
 Is the spinning cylinder
 Of a 500-year-old gun
 With 5 out of 6 chambers loaded.

Each bullet
 Has a different name—
 Alcohol
 Disease
 Poverty
 Violence
 Assimilation

Survival is finding the name
 Of the empty chamber. (30)

Aesthetically, formally, and linguistically, this poem does almost nothing for me. It is little more than three declarative sentences whose main predicates are “is,” “has,” and “is,” and whose stanza sentence is more or less clichéd. Yet it remains an arresting text. The poem could easily be the first three sentences of a provocative essay, but Littlecrow-Russell’s poems can be starkly effective when rendered in poetic form, in part, because, as Harjo notes, they rely less on hard tropes and more on hard truths. The poetry, then, comes not so much through formal gestures but through informal ones.

Poetry is more than truth telling. Or at least it should be. Somehow, it should alter the language we use in the world, the world outside the window, the window through which we see the world, and the eyes that are always turned toward that window. Littlecrow-Russell’s earnest poems don’t do those things for me. They remind me of what I already know. When reading the more sermonized poems I felt, poked, prodded, even jarred, but I rarely felt transformed.

Her funny poems are the strongest in the book, and they are the poems I remember. My favorite is “FUCK.” Essentially, the poem tells a story about finding a Gary Soto book incorrectly shelved in the children’s section of a bookstore, but at the same time it tells a larger story about marginalization and writers of color. “When I’m an Old Woman, I’ll Be Damned if I Wear Purple” operates on a similar frequency. Like “FUCK,” it splashes around in the shallow waters of humorous irreverence: “I’ll be damned / If I wear anything at all / Because I will be in bed / With my 23-year-old lover” (27). The funniest poem may be “The Worst Frybread.” Here, Littlecrow-Russell continues her pattern of chipping away at Indian stereotypes, but this poem reveals an unexpected image because it plays against the Indian-Woman-Makes-the-Best-Frybread motif. “The only people who ask for my frybread / Are hockey players needing a puck” is funny not simply because it is self-deprecating but also because it plays on the running gag of race and hockey.

Some readers will find *The Secret Power of Naming* refreshing, illuminating, brave, and truthful, and on some levels it is. However, the preachier poems can come off as too much of a jeremiad. Littlecrow-Russell is at her best when she merges these two tendencies. This happens in “Letter to Human Resources” and most effectively in the wonderful “Noble Savagery,” the best poem in the book. This text works on many levels because it blends ironic humor and tell-it-like-it-is anger, at the same time altering our perceptions of both Native and Anglo realities. It also draws on classic poetic techniques of anaphora, epanalepsis, and synoeciosis, converting common discourse into uncommonly startling poetic turns of phrase.

The University of Arizona Press tries to peg Littlecrow-Russell to Alexie, but her work better resembles Esther Belin’s first book, *In the Belly of My Beauty*. Like Belin (Navajo), Littlecrow-Russell addresses the complexities of urban Indianness, gender, poverty, biculturalism, and alcoholism. Though she lacks Belin’s facility with poetic technique, she resembles Belin’s ability to convert the prosaic into the poetic.

Readers who prefer the poetry of Louise Erdrich, Luci Tapahonso, or Linda Hogan may not enjoy *The Secret Power of Naming*, but those who are interested in grizzly snapshots and humorous takes on Indian realities, and how a smart, Indian woman deals with Indian realities, then this just may be the book for you.

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Unlearning the Language of Conquest: Scholars Expose Anti-Indianism in America. Edited by Four Arrows (Don Trent Jacobs). Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006. 300 pages. \$55.00 cloth; \$21.95 paper.

The idea for this text—to allow a space for diverse voices to speak back against “empire” and expose the language of conquest—is estimable. The intent, as articulated by Jacobs is to bring to the fore indigenous knowledge as a means of offering a vital alternative to “the devastating effects of free-market globalization, greed, war, and ecological ignorance” (19). He is particularly interested in presenting a “scholarly challenge” to the anti-Indian rhetoric that often passes as scholarship in the academy. Jacobs specifically sites books such as Robert Whelan’s *Wild in the Woods: The Myth of the Peaceful Eco-Savage*, Christy Turner’s *Man Corn: Cannibalism and Violence in Prehistoric American Southwest*, Steven LeBlanc’s *Constant Battles: The Myth of the Peaceful, Noble Savage*, and Lawrence Keeley’s *War before Civilization: The Myth of the Peaceful Savage* as examples of works that perpetuate negative stereotypes and specious scholarship about Indians. He argues that such scholarship represents a kind of “hegemony that prevents peoples from realizing that . . . the current form of global capitalism is not the only economic system available to humanity; or that living Indigenous cultures possess a measure of wisdom that might be vital for all of our futures” (24).