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and the French in greater detail would have served as an interesting contrast to other Euro-American alliances that the Delawares sought.

Also, the question of how race affected Delaware groups is only lightly explored. As Merritt and Shoemaker have argued, the increasingly racialized early American frontier made alliances with Euro-Americans nearly impossible to maintain over time. Schutt agrees with these scholars, but she does not really examine how, if at all, this growing racial climate influenced the Indian-Indian alliances at the core of her study. She discusses how some Delawares adopted African-Americans into their kin networks despite white protests, which strongly suggests that Delawares had not fully internalized white racial constructs (152). However, when Schutt looks into the witchcraft accusations and the battles between Christians and non-Christian that divided certain Delaware communities, the question is implicitly raised whether or not race/ethnicity played a significant part in those divisions (154). Were “full-bloods” ever racially motivated to target Delawares of mixed descent? The fact that many Native prophets endorsed the idea of “separate creation,” and that witchcraft accusations and battles over Christianity focused heavily on eliminating white influences, suggests that race affected some Indian-Indian relationships. Again, Schutt approaches this topic in the book, yet she does not pursue it to its furthest extent.

Despite those minor criticisms, I believe that *Peoples of the River Valleys* provides a valuable contribution to the scholarship of the Delawares, as well as the history of the Early America. By focusing on alliance building, Schutt casts a renewed look at one of the most important tools in the survival of Native peoples.

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**The Singing Bird: A Cherokee Novel.** By John Milton Oskison. Edited by Timothy B. Powell and Melinda Smith Mullikin with a foreword by Jace Weaver. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007. 240 pages. \$19.95 paper.

Largely neglected Cherokee author John Milton Oskison (1874–1947) expressed a youthful ambition to “let the world know about Indian Territory” (xix). Although he would leave that homeland permanently to attend Stanford University and pursue a lifelong career in letters, his previously unpublished and newly edited novel *The Singing Bird* achieves his aspiration to the degree that it opens a window on a crucial time and place in Cherokee history previously obscured not only by the passage of time but also by generations of assimilationist pressures. The effectiveness of Oskison’s narrative in illuminating the period directly before and after Cherokee removal to Indian Territory is also crucially enhanced by an indispensable introduction of contextualizing historical information and literary analysis provided by editors Timothy B. Powell and Melinda Smith Mullikin. The editors further serve Oskison’s—and his readers’—interests by making a persuasive case that,

even though some of the author's narrative strategies are ambiguous in their effectiveness, the novel does not ultimately serve an assimilationist agenda, but instead "offers a hopeful depiction of a culturally diverse alliance . . . working toward a political future based not on the American myth of the melting pot but on traditional Cherokee values" (xxx1).

Like an earlier, and to some degree more politically radical, Indian Territory storyteller, S. Alice Callahan (Muscogee) in her 1891 novel *Wynema, A Child of the Forest* (1997), Oskison interweaves fiction with genuine historical events and persons. The time frame of the novel, which follows the interactions of a group of missionary protagonists with post-Removal Cherokee communities, spans the years from about 1820 to the end of the civil war. Oskison's focus on these charged and tumultuous decades allows him to create a coherent account that links multiple episodes of Cherokee history: the hard-won resettlement of a first wave of southeastern Cherokees to alien but contested territory in Arkansas; the second phase of brutal removal of that initial group and thousands of other Cherokees forced onto the Trail of Tears to Indian Territory in what would eventually become northeastern Oklahoma; and, finally, subsequent years of violent factionalism, exacerbated by the lethal divisions of Union and Confederate sympathizers. Diane Glancy's fine novel *Pushing the Bear* (1998) has dramatized the tragic suffering and survivance of Trail of Tears refugees. But Oskison's novel works from a wider lens and brings into view the causes and effects, the personalities and politics, that add up to an imaginative recovery of what has essentially been the lost meaning of forty-plus years of cultural memory.

If *The Singing Bird* is strengthened by the novel's span of action, Oskison is arguably less effective in two other stylistic choices: the narration from the point of view of its non-Native missionaries and the melodramatic plot to which he is committed by the trope of his title. Even these strategies, however, may be generously read as shrewd if subtle affirmations of Cherokee, rather than non-Native, interests.

The first of these choices—Oskison's decision to tell his story from the point of view of non-Native missionaries—may be seen as pragmatic. The narrative's first-person voice belongs to novice missionary Paul Wear, the nephew of station supervisor Dan Wear—although it is Dan, presented through Paul's admiring eyes, who is the novel's most authoritative and sympathetic interpreter. Missionaries were, after all, genuinely significant players in these contact-zone interactions, and by employing these non-Native, un-self-interested "observers" Oskison could take advantage of their credibility as persuasive witnesses of complicated and destructive interactions of contact experience to build his readers' empathy. Oskison presents Dan's deepening identification and kinship with Cherokee leaders, especially the visionary teacher Sequoyah, to model the possibility of a similar consciousness-raising in his audience—and, eventually, to introduce the novel's most radical ideas. Even culturally sympathetic non-Native narrators, however, inevitably displace insider voices, and one can only imagine the novel Oskison might have written if his protagonists, rather than his supporting players, had been Cherokee.

Another ambiguity of literary effectiveness resides in the novel's title, which appears to center the story on domestic melodrama rather than on Oskison's

more urgent historical and cultural themes. Again, a generous interpretation may discover instead a privileging of ancient Cherokee cultural knowledge. Ellen, the faithless wife of dedicated missionary Dan, is the novel's "singing bird"—in Cherokee proverbs this is a promiscuous, childless wife whose preening causes sexual jealousy. Very early in the narrative, when the naïve Paul inaccurately compares the saintly Cherokee student-martyr Catherine Swann to a singing bird, his uninformed judgment signifies cultural ignorance. This incident, however, foreshadows and emphasizes the truer meaning of this trope, revealed within the context of Cherokee knowledge and values, which will unfold later. Ellen's genuine love for her husband is grounded in a physical attraction that might be entirely natural in a less repressed world than Oskison imagines. In the novel, however, Ellen's sexuality becomes one among many signals of her unsuitability as a missionary wife, and ultimately her flirtation with Sam Houston and eventual affair with the Cherokee political scoundrel Talley Tassel result in recrimination and melodramatic violence. But, in the Cherokee way of reckoning, singing birds may stop their singing and become good wives. By the novel's conclusion, Ellen, originally presented as the unsympathetic foil to Dan's loyalty to and empathy with his Cherokee friends, is transformed into one who sacrifices her life to defend the culturally diverse community to which she has returned. The singing bird becomes a figure subtly representative of what Oskison's editors identify as a distinctly Cherokee view of history that operates as a "continuum of loss and recovery" (xxxiv).

Ultimately, elements of the novel that might be seen as the signals that cause Oskison to bow to the pressures of assimilation also argue a direction for future research that complicates and refines our view of how these pressures have been—and continue to be—resisted. In *The Singing Bird*, such resistance shows up in Oskison's re-creation of the hardships and injustices of resettlement life. It is present in his explanatory dramatization of factional violence that plagued Cherokee communities for generations before and after their removal from ancient homelands. Resistance is present in his delineation of the ethical dilemma slave holding and its consequences posed for this "civilized tribe" (for a detailed study of black/Cherokee interactions during slavery and afterward, see Tiya Miles, *The Ties That Bind*, 2005). And resistance to assimilation and resulting cultural loss is most radically present in the role Sequoyah plays in this novel, as he argues not only for the power that literacy will bring to his people but also for the potency of the "old stories," the ancient beliefs that even Dan and Paul refuse to discredit or displace. Finally, Oskison imagines that conversion works in both directions, and it is the shared quest undertaken by Sequoyah and Dan to reclaim the sacred symbols of those old stories—the mysterious quest into Mexico that apparently results in their deaths—that is the novel's most radical idea. Embedded within the swirl of the story's more central action, that influential but still mostly underexamined supporting player Sequoyah remains the enigma that contemporary Native people, and most particularly Cherokees, should hope future research will flesh out.

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