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phies. The publisher should consider a paperback edition so that the book can be made available for various instructional applications and affordable to students.

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The Voice in the Margin: Native American Literature and the Canon. By Arnold Krupat. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990. 259 pages. \$30.00 cloth. \$9.95 paper.

Krupat's title is inadvertently self-referential, since he never quite reaches the core problems posed by Native American literatures. My plural "literatures" suggests why: a consistently reductive universalizing. But nowadays, isn't it true that even those of us who distinguish among Native American cultures feel difficulty in defining the center of our subject and how best to study it? If this intelligent book, strewn with good intentions, seems a little out of date, like driving a Volare, the chief cause is perhaps less the author than the condition of the field.

After a generalized discussion of the concept of canonicity, Krupat suggests relating Native American literature to American literature by adopting Roy Harvey Pearce's idea of "savagism." He then discusses Native American autobiographies, returning in his last full, if rather rambling chapter to plead that Native American material should, somehow, be included in the canon.

In addressing the problem of secular canonization, Krupat consistently conflates Native American literature with Black literature under the rubric of "other." But American Indians were not dragged here from another continent with their languages razed. A number of Indian cultures survived, and continue to survive, along with their languages. Many contemporary Indian writers have no need to search for their roots; but, contrarily, for writers only marginally competent in their native language or culture, such a resource can become a burden. What is worse than having to consult an ethnologist to learn of one's own culture? Another aspect of the issue is the absence of a significant tradition of the "Noble Black Man" equivalent to the "Noble Red Savage." Dominant culture stereotypes both minorities but not in

identical ways. Krupat's focus on abstract "otherness" obscures the unique ways Native Americans are marginalized (one of Vizenor's main subjects). But is Krupat worse than the rest of us? Nobody comments on professional football's Redskins, though surely the parallel would be intolerable: the Washington Jigaboos.

Different others are other in different ways. *Marginality* is ill-defined when the peculiar integrity of what is marginal is unspecified except as *not* mainstream. The central fact about Native Americans is the multiplicity of their distinctive cultures. Krupat takes a nobly moderate position on the canon, rejecting the rigid exclusivists equally with those who would have no canon at all. But how in practice we are to achieve this ideal compromise, particularly with the variety of Indian literatures and no space in the curriculum, he leaves vague. So do many other generalizers about canonicity.

Nearly a century ago the philosopher Whitehead pointed out that western European literature alone was too vast to be mastered by any individual in a lifetime, so that all teachers faced the task of selecting texts to be studied. Choices, he felt, should be grounded not merely in the nature of the texts themselves but also in the length and purpose of the educational program and the age and aims of the students. Ignoring such specific, historical factors leaves canon debate hopelessly abstract, as does failure to address *how* texts are taught. Works taught through the common system of large lectures followed by a brief discussion session often appear so differently as not to seem the same texts when presented in a seminar. And unless one defines the value of literary study within the purpose of a whole curriculum, through, for example, its relation to mastery of scientific methodologies and mathematics, then comments on "mainstream" and "marginal" must remain educationally trivial.

Native American literatures pose the special problem of their own canon. They are fascinating but frustrating, because there are so many of them bound into so many radically divergent languages. I, at least, always struggle awkwardly with the question of what native literatures to teach undergraduates in a course devoted exclusively to native works. To assume, like Krupat, that there is one Native American literature equivalent to American literature is to flinch from that devilish problematic: the relation of contemporary writings in English by Native Americans to traditional tribal literatures.

Krupat leans heavily on Roy Harvey Pearce's concept of "savagism," the idea that American "civilization" defined itself in opposition to native "savagism." The merits of Pearce's idea have long been recognized, though it has been subtilized since Pearce's book appeared in the 1950s, before the Native American Renaissance. It is puzzling that Pearce never developed his approach, and surprising that Krupat does little more than cite Pearce approvingly, without carrying his work forward by applying it to, say, the work of Native Americans such as Vizenor, Erdrich, Welch. And perhaps because he seems more comfortable with "Indianizers" like Rothenberg and Snyder, Krupat also ignores D'Arcy McNickle, the Indian whose work provides the best test for the relevance of Pearce's thought to the context from which it emerged.

To show how margins modify mainstream, as well as the reverse, abstract theorizing is no substitute for particularized history. It is a pity, for example, that Krupat does not pick up the pioneering work of Jarold Ramsey on Native American uses of Western texts (such as the Bible) as well as Western themes and motifs—a rich vein that has been mined almost exclusively from the other side of the mountain. Peter Seymour's marvelous *The Golden Woman* is a retelling of a European fairytale. I have argued that Seymour thus inserted back into Western tradition a Colville view of how Western culture destroyed Colville culture. Whether or not I am right, useful evaluations of *The Golden Woman*, and any placing of it in relation to the canon of American literature, must begin with attention to the historical specificity of its coming into being—the performance Mattina preserved was possible, for example, only because tape recorders existed.

Careful study of the historical facts of marginalization and counteractive forces has, ironically, been weakened by the popularity of Bakhtin, the principal source of what theory Krupat deploys. Like too many of us, he relies on loose references to "dialogism," rather than noticing how little Bakhtin cared for oral works by native peoples. The "double-voiced" quality by which he distinguishes the novel appears definitionally inapplicable to tribal literatures. Even his use of "heteroglossia" is but dubiously relevant to oral literary genres. Krupat fails to notice where Bakhtin might be most useful: His conception of self (as scholars like Holquist have observed) differs radically from that popular in the West. Krupat's discussion of Native American au-

tobiographies, however, depends on another universalized binary opposition. European autobiographies, he insists, make more of childhood experiences than do Native American ones. An acceptable generalization, I suppose, but for Black Elk, childhood experiences were enormously important. And some Europeans as autobiographical as Silko (Krupat's modern exemplar of a native autobiographer) have little to say about childhood—Montaigne, for one. In this genre, as in others, it would be more profitable for demarginalizing to give up abstractive categorizing and turn to Wittgenstein's concept of family resemblances.

To go beyond the familiar distinction between personal and collective selves, besides looking at Bakhtinian psychology, we need to sharpen our sense of cultural particularizations and recognize that one may distinguish between, say, a Hopi conception of self and a Navajo or Mohawk conception, rather than inventing a generic Indian self. Moreover, as many Indian societies have survived by changing, so too have their fashions of conceiving identity—recognition of which would prevent omission, as here, of Paula Allen and Gerald Vizenor on what the latter calls "cross-breed."

It is probably fair to say with Krupat that Indians have tended to think more genealogically than Westerners—yet is not the protagonist of *The Iliad* introduced by his father's name? The question arises from a tendency of theorizers since Nietzsche to conceive genealogy in terms of the narrowest nuclear family. Many native peoples organized themselves along clan lines, one result being that a leading role model for a young boy might be an uncle rather than his biological father. An interesting illustration of another possible difference is presented in the depiction in *Fools Crow* of tensions within a polygamous family.

We must begin with the difficulty of Native American literatures: There are so damn many of them, and they are so damn diversified. Given the daunting complexities of our field, generalizing universals just will not wash any longer. Krupat twice quotes approvingly from Evers and Molina's introduction to some of their translations: "We work for two goals: for the continuation of deer songs as a vital part of life in Yaqui communities and for their appreciation in all communities beyond." That is what most of us in this field have been working for, even though we are unsure as to how that "appreciation" is to be brought about and of what it might consist. Evers and Molina,

unlike Krupat, are conscious that it is within the intensely localized character of the songs they translate that the most significant literary and cultural issues reside. Thus their Coyote songs are revivals of a genre that was originally sung by Yaquis policing their territory in Mexico, the land being protected by the songs. But the Yaqui have long since moved out of their original territory. So the revived songs, besides making use of contemporary topical issues, must function socially in a new way, though validated by adherence to their old form.

Such interesting complexities can be elucidated only by patient, detailed studies of particularities of texts developed within more carefully articulated historical contexts. This does not entail, as Krupat seems to imply, disdain of theory. But practical demarginalizing of Native American literatures will, in the immediate future, continue to advance principally through painstaking, long-term scholarship. The work of Kay Sands and LaVonne Ruoff with Indian writing in English is a good example. And there is no substitute for the years of conscientious research spent by Hymes and Tedlock on traditional literary forms. Krupat treats Howard Norman's work as equivalent to Tedlock's, apparently unaware that for some time linguists have been unavailingly asking for Norman's originals, since the evidence suggests his *Wishing Bone Cycle* may be a Swampy Cree *Ossian*.

Contemporary literary criticism is devoted to the quick fix. That is why, in the near future, Native American literatures, because they are so complexly rewarding, will probably benefit most from work by anthropologists and historians as well as linguists; these fields have retained more value for highly specific, responsibly factual research. But there is in literary studies a flow back toward historicized criticism, exemplified in the work of young Americanists like Howard Horwitz and Priscilla Wald, who are enhancing understanding of the cultural functions of Boasian anthropology and anthropologists early in this century. So the datedness I feel in Krupat's book is finally heartening. If Native American studies are in a phase when grubby, unspectacular scholarship is most useful, that proves they no longer need the somewhat toxic injections of literary criticism theorizing. That is progress.

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