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When Brer Rabbit Meets Coyote. Edited by Jonathan Brennan. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003. 307 pp. \$39.95

For scholars of African American literature and Native American literature, *When Brer Rabbit Meets Coyote* provides valuable insights into the interactions between Native Americans and African Americans. Each of the essays in this collection challenges the notion of rigid lines of demarcation between Native American and African American identity. In editing the anthology, Jonathan Brennan seeks to develop interest in the tradition of African-Native American literature. Each contributor describes the existential ambiguities that African-Native Americans face while unraveling the tangled threads of their history.

Purportedly, *When Brer Rabbit Meets Coyote* is the first book to theorize an African-Native American literary tradition. However, numerous books have been written about African-Native interaction, including: Jack D. Forbes, *Africans and Native Americans: The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red Black Peoples* (1993); William Katz, *Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage* (1997); Daniel Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles: From Removal to Emancipation* (2001); Michael Peter Smith and Alan Governor, *Mardi Gras Indians* (1994); James Brooks, *Confounding the Color Line: The Indian Black Experience in North America* (2002); and Arthur Burton, *Black, Red, and Deadly: Black and Indian Gunfighters of the Indian Territory, 1870–1907* (1994). Furthermore, books such as Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall's *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* (2002) discuss how the U.S. government threatened African American and Native American liberation movements in the 1960s. The central contribution of *When Brer Rabbit Meets Coyote* to the field of African American and Native American studies lies in its description of the ambiguous and contradictory nature of African-Native American identity. Although this groundbreaking lays the foundation for the development of an African-Native American tradition of literature, one would hope that it would soon be accompanied by an anthology of literary masterpieces from the African-Native literary tradition. Such an anthology would help scholars understand the distinct contribution of African-Native American writers to American literature.

When Brer Rabbit Meets Coyote begins with a detailed discussion of Southeastern Rabbit tales as part of African-Native American folklore. Both David Elton Gay and Sandra K. Baringer assert that scholars of African American studies and Native American studies have failed to analyze how Native Americans and African Americans influenced one another's mythology and folklore in the Southeast. Both Gay and Baringer reject the notion that the rabbit archetype in African American literature has nothing to do with Native American mythology. In the following section, John Sekora describes the relationship between the slave narrative and the Indian captivity narrative. Sekora argues that there is a connection between their narrative structures; he claims that the depiction of violence and of the quest for redemption in the captivity narrative formed the framework for slave narratives. Other chapters by Montgomery and Brennan reveal the complexities of African-Native autobiography. In the third section, "Mardi Gras Indian performance," George Lipsitz,

Jason Berry, Jonathan Foose, and Tad Jones describe the elaborate costumes of Mardi Gras Indians—few of whom have any Indian blood. The Mardi Gras Indians impersonate Native American tribes by donning Indian clothing and creating Indian beadwork for celebration. These tribes have created a distinctive African-American, Native American, and Cajun identity through their performances. Lipsitz uses contemporary postmodern theory to address how the performative aspects of the Mardi Gras Indian tradition can be linked to such postmodern cultural phenomena as the collapse of linear narratives and the relationship between illusion and reality.

In the fourth section, Riley, Holland, and Pasqueretta deal with contemporary African-Native subjectivity. Of particular interest is Alice Walker's work, which often deals with her mixed Cherokee-African American heritage. Some scholars of African American studies have scolded Walker for celebrating her Indian-African heritage because they felt that she emphasized her Indian heritage as a means of critiquing and/or condemning her African roots. Pasqueretta's chapter emphasizes how the blues play a dominant role in Toni Morrison's writing, as well as in Sherman Alexie's work. Alexie, a Native writer who likes to describe the world the way it is rather than the way it should be, often refers to realism and the blues in his own writing. Morrison, on the other hand, refers to Native-African interaction in her writing. In particular, the main character of *Song of Solomon* undertakes a vision quest that brings him to realize his mixed Indian-African American heritage.

While the interaction between Native American and African American cultures often resulted in an exchange of myths and cultural motifs, antagonism between African Americans and Europeans and between Native Americans and Europeans often led to a widening cultural rift between African Americans and Native Americans. A perfect example is in the Seminole story in which the cleanest man to come out of a pool of water is white, the second dirtiest the Indian, and the least clean the African American. This story reproduces the racial hierarchies created by European explorers. While Brennan asserts that it is difficult to speculate about the "context" of such a myth, it is fairly clear that this myth emerged while Native Americans were under the influence of colonial ideology.

Specialists in African American literature often ignore the interactions between African Americans and Native Americans. This attitude only serves to create a dysfunctional relationship between African Americans and Native Americans. It is important to add that African Americans and Native Americans constructed false images of one another because of Eurocentric stereotypes forced upon them. Brennan, the editor of this collection, insightfully argues that "most existing scholarship fails to discuss these writers' mixed heritage or concurrent literary traditions, instead portraying them strictly as one or the other of their dual heritages, while other writers have been almost entirely ignored" (p. 40). One of the significant difficulties facing scholars of African-Native American literature is the lack of previous theoretical speculation on the nature of African-Native identity. Furthermore, scholars do not have access to larger anthologies that would collect some of the disparate works by African-Native authors.

Both Native American and African American identities have been created through colonialism and imperialism—before the Middle Passage, most of the ancestors of African Americans often had conflicting tribal allegiances. In addition, numerous Native American tribes, each with different languages and customs, existed before the reductive term *Native American* was created. By referring to the cultural specificity of each African-Native subject's experience, Brennan and the other contributors to this collection avoid making such facile generalizations. Lastly, it is difficult to describe the African-Native experience without romanticizing the condition of the oppressed (in many cases, Native Americans and African Americans possessed prejudiced attitudes towards one another, probably as a result of colonialism). William G. McLoughlin in "Red Indians, Black Slavery, and White Racism: America's Slaveholding Indians," *American Quarterly* 26 (1974) points out that the Cherokee were proud that there was "little intermixture of Cherokee and African blood" (p. 382) and that the Cherokee often owned slaves (p. 383). The African-Native subject often had trouble articulating any identity whatever because many African Americans considered Native Americans to be savages. Also, Native Americans often treated African American slaves with abuse—according to McLoughlin, "the Cherokees gradually adopted all the worst features of Southern black slave codes" (p. 381). In addition, the African-Native subject was the target of white supremacists who disdained both Native Americans and African Americans. For this reason, Brennan claims that "it has . . . been difficult for African-Native Americans themselves to acknowledge and celebrate their mixed heritage" (p. 40).

This book makes an excellent contribution to the study of American literature. It will also make scholars in African American studies and Native American studies more aware of the urgent need to regard history as more than one long struggle between the colonizer and the colonized.

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Yuchi Ceremonial Life: Performance, Meaning, and Tradition in a Contemporary American Indian Community. By Jason Baird Jackson. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003. 345 pages. \$75.00 cloth.

The greatest strength of this book is in its straightforward documentation of beliefs and practices associated with Yuchi ceremonial grounds in the 1990s. Jackson expertly introduces his ceremonial material with informative overviews of Yuchi history, culture, and society, past and present. Likewise, before a chapter-by-chapter description of the events of the Yuchi ceremonial cycle—running roughly from late March to September—Jackson provides important general background material on contemporary Yuchi ritual organization, practice, belief, and oratory.

For the most part, Jackson's ceremonial cycle chapters are solid narratives of each type of event, mercifully free of currently stylish theoretical posturing