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**Son of Two Bloods.** By Vincent L. Mendoza. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Nebraska Press, 1996. 164 pages. \$25.00 cloth.

Vincent Mendoza's story is beautifully written and wonderfully realized. The charm of his writing comes from its basic nature, using language that is vivid. Understandably, the author won the North American Indian Prose Award. Mendoza was born September 5, 1947, in Tulsa, Oklahoma. His mother, Martha, was Creek, his father, Consepacion, Mexican. Mendoza, then, is of two bloods. His story moves from the innocence and simplicity of youth to the experience and complexity of maturity.

Four themes interconnect throughout Mendoza's life. Two of the themes, death and racial identity, force him to reflect on the meaning of life and his place within society. The other two, music and sports, allow him a joyful refuge from those reflections. In addition, there are four basic periods to his life: his early youth in public education, his tour in Vietnam, his role in raising a family, and his maturation into older age.

Mendoza's story begins when he is four years old, with a connection to a long ancestry. His great-grandmother, Sissy Kernels, a full-blood Creek who spoke no English, dies of old age. One generation ends but begins anew with his. Mendoza's formative years are in a predominately Mexican neighborhood in North Tulsa. He attends public and Catholic schools. Eventually, the family moves to a better house in a new neighborhood in West Tulsa. Mendoza is the only student of color in the third grade. His peers, in confused ignorance, call him a "Jap," a "black," and a "dirty injun." But Mendoza gains their respect through sports, particularly basketball. Mendoza's father, an impatient and argumentative perfectionist, wants his son to excel in basketball and saxophone playing. Now eleven years old, Mendoza sees the first of many spirits that he would experience throughout his life: the ghost of a friend, an old man named Joseph Smoke.

During the 1960s when a teenager in high school, Mendoza envies his Indian and Mexican cousins because they are of one race without the confusion he feels because of his two bloods. His Indian cousins speak no Creek but live the Indian life. Mendoza, feeling cursed and burdened, laments living life as a white. Although Mendoza is bored by high school mathematics, history, and English, he enjoys dating, going to parties, playing music, and singing. He also loves the competition of football and basketball. He wants to be the first Mexican-Indian to play at the University of Oklahoma, but vertebrae trouble curtails his activities as an athlete.

His sister, Linda, marries Ronnie Dellinger in 1961, and the following year they have a baby: Diana Lyn Dellinger. As this new generation begins, Mendoza's grandfather, Newman McIntosh, dies of old age. What Mendoza realizes is that life and death are part of a great circle, a never-ending cycle.

Mendoza feels he has no identity, but his father tells him that he is Mexican-Indian, not white. When Mendoza is attracted to a white girl, her family and his want them apart. Mendoza curses himself for being Mexican-Indian. The war in Vietnam, however, overshadows youthful romance. When his high school friend, Wayne, is killed in Vietnam, Mendoza enlists in the Marines to avenge his death. Mendoza senses a spirit for the second time in his life: that of his friend, Wayne.

While in Vietnam at age eighteen, Mendoza works as a postal clerk. Like his comrades, he experiences the killing and maiming of the battlefield. However, he emphasizes that he does not need drugs to fight in the jungles because his Indian heritage, the "warrior within," requires none. But there is bad news from the States. His Uncle Claude dies. Cindy, a woman Marine he had met and fallen in love with before leaving for Vietnam, is killed in a California car crash. More than ever, Mendoza dwells on thoughts of death. He feels useless and no longer cares for anything. Nevertheless, he feels that spirits are benignly watching over him.

After returning home in 1970 from his tour of duty, he marries Debbi, a former high school friend. But the road for them is both rosy and rocky. He soon learns that his wife is cheating on him, which justifies him to cheat on her. But they put their troubles behind them. Once again, when new generations begin, others end. In 1971, Felicia Ann Mendoza is born, and in 1974 Micaela Mendoza is born. In 1976 his father-in-law, Oscar, dies. In 1980 his grandmother, Annie McIntosh, dies from complications caused by diabetes. Later that same year, his cousin, Danny, Danny's wife, and his cousin Butch's wife are killed in a car accident. Mexican music, ever joyful for Mendoza, consoles him.

In 1987 Mendoza is forty years old. He struggles to do everything to make his wife happy, which includes investing in a Mexican restaurant and tamale factory. But he fears that the family might go bankrupt. His wife begins to gamble. His own income from the Shell Oil Company and later as a mechanic for American Airlines is not enough for the bills. He feels the weight of the world is on his shoulders and he flirts with thoughts of suicide. In 1987 Mendoza has surgery for diverticulitis and is off work for six months. While in convalescence, he begins to write

his autobiography so that his children might understand him better. His faith in a living future, however, is tempered by death two years later when his brother, Junior, dies of a heart attack at age forty-seven. A month later, Mendoza's father dies from complications arising from heart surgery.

In 1991 he and Debbi begin the paperwork for divorce because of her infidelity and his emotional depression. In May, Bucky, his seven-year-old "adopted" son, dies of cancer. Two years later, Debbi also dies of cancer. Mendoza, although grief-stricken, becomes filled with peace and calm because he knows that his wife is also at peace. Later that night he and his children feel her spirit in the house.

In April 1994, Mendoza marries Alice, a new friend. The following month, he submits his autobiography to the North American Indian Prose Award competition. He asks a Cherokee medicine man to bless his manuscript. "Two Bloods" moves closer to his Indian heritage. In March 1995, Micaela gives birth to Bryson Taylor Ball, Mendoza's first grandchild and the start of a new generation. In the end, Mendoza is happy and at peace with his large family and the spirits of all those he loved.

Throughout his life, Mendoza attributes his sensitivity to spirits to his Indian heritage. Occasionally he dwells on his race and identity. But although he is an individual of a mixed marriage, he confesses that he does not speak Creek or Spanish. As a teenager, he was confused about his identity (but it is a rare teenager who is *not* confused about his or her identity). Mendoza makes references to television programs that were the mainstay of white society: *Leave It to Beaver*, *The Honeyymooners*, and *I Love Lucy*, to name a few. The son of Two Bloods is not only the product of a mixed marriage, but also of a white culture. But as he evolves into an older man he becomes connected to the Indian side of himself. The theme of music in his life was established early by his father. Mendoza turns to music not only because he enjoyed it (he plays saxophone), but also because it consoles him in time of emotional or mental depression. When Mendoza's athleticism in baseball and football comes to an end because of a back injury, he continues that love as a spectator and coach of a little softball team.

The only villain in this story, according to Mendoza, is his wife, Debbi. Granted, she was unfaithful but Mendoza does not explore why she was. Did the fact that she had cancer make her more depressed than Mendoza explains? Did that somehow make her motives undesirable? Did she want to invest, or as

Mendoza says, gamble, in various businesses not because she was greedy or misdirected but because she wanted, in her own way, to help Vincent? Mendoza, for all his sensitivity, is most insensitive to his first wife despite the fact that she died of cancer.

Aside from this one point, however, Mendoza's story is the story of anyone who is of two bloods. Indeed, those of mixed races want the census bureau to include their mixed heritage in the next survey. They wish for their voice to be heard. Mendoza not only provides one for those of Mexican and Indian descent, he also, paradoxically, includes a third. His autobiography is, to some extent, also that of Everyman's: the youthful love of sports and music gradually moving aside for thoughts of death, suicide, bankruptcy, and finally the joyousness of music, life, and family.

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**The Telling of the World: Native American Stories and Art.**  
Edited by W.S. Penn. New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1996.  
240 pages. \$45.00 cloth.

In part, *The Telling of the World* is an anthology of seventy-one stories, though W.S. Penn says in his preface that there are "eighty stories for this book." He arrives at this total by listing all Osage stories (four) under both Osage and Nez Perce (Penn identifies himself as being Nez Perce, Osage, and Anglo) and all stories indexed under Tanaina (five) also under Dena'ina. And one Clackamas and one Kathlamet are also listed as two Chinook stories.

The anthology is divided into seven sections, each with a short introduction of one or two pages. The first section, entitled "Creation" (pp. 15-39), contains nine stories. The second section, "Adolescence" (pp. 40-74), contains thirteen stories. The third section, "Family" (pp. 75-103), contains nine stories. The fourth section, "Marriage" (pp. 104-33), contains ten stories. The fifth section, "Children and the Community" (pp. 134-67), and the sixth section, "Old Age and Elder Wisdom" (pp. 168-95), each contain nine stories. And the final section, "Death" (pp. 196-234), contains twelve stories.

Nearly a third of the stories have been selected from four collections: Margot Edmonds and Ella Clark's *Voices of the Winds*, 1989 (seven stories); Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz's