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A suggested beginning toward "fleshing out" the image of Lakota women and that of the urban pilgrim of Indian ancestry would include reading *Cante Ohitika Win (Brave-hearted Women): Images of Lakota Women from the Pine Ridge Reservation South Dakota* by Carolyn Reyer, with additional writings by Beatrice Medicine and Debra Lynn White Plume (University of South Dakota Press, 1991) and *Sisters in the Blood: The Education of Women in Native America* by Ardy Bowker (WEEA Publishing Center, 1993).

Steeped in compromise and controversy, *Ohitika Woman* represents surreptitious entrepreneurial motivation. Because it is an Indian autobiography by collaborative authorship in the 1990s, it is anyone's guess how the work will fare in the traditional realm of academic research, of which Indians continue to be subjects. The results of such efforts are grants, tenure, and literary recognition by predominantly non-Indian scholars.

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Peril at Thunder Ridge. By Anthony Dorame. Santa Fe, New Mexico: Red Crane Books, 1993. 120 pages. \$9.95 paper.

Peril at Thunder Ridge, a book written for young adults, attempts to present ecological data within the framework of an adventure story. Many publishers frown on such attempts, so we are fortunate that this press was willing to take a chance with Dorame's idea. However, as a result of this combination of fact and fiction, the plot movement is very slow in the beginning, which could hinder the book's ability to capture a reader's interest. The pace picks up toward the end, however, involving the reader in the drama of the story.

The book's protagonist is a young man named Carl who, along with other teenagers, is attending a summer camp to learn more about ecology. The plot develops around Carl's pursuit of an award for a photograph of a rare animal—a black-footed ferret. While searching for this rare creature, Carl and his multiethnic, multigendered friends stumble onto an illegal operation involving questionable logging practices and the hunting and killing of endangered species. Through their own misjudgments, these young people manage to get into some

fairly serious scrapes, eventually emerging as both heroes and friends.

In order to approach this reading with a proper perspective, I went back and reread some adventure books of my youth. I found the plot development and the language to be comparable, but none of those authors had to deal with the issue of multiethnicity. Still, there was a believability in Nancy Drew and the Hardy boys that appears to be lacking in this book's characters. Additionally, I felt somewhat cheated, because I was not drawn into the story until about halfway through and because I could not identify with any of the characters as they were presented.

The first chapter opens with three teenaged campers—Hector, Carl, and Samantha—caught in a thunderstorm after sneaking away from camp to hunt for the rare ferret. Carl, the main character, has motivated the others with promises of splitting the reward money for finding and photographing the animal. He is an Anglo boy from an unspecified city and dreams of becoming famous and rich by finding a black-footed ferret. The author describes him as "persistent" and "not shy" (p. 5). I almost laughed at this point, because these are the opposites of the two traits I have often heard ascribed to Indians. Unfortunately, Myron, presented later as the only Native American in the group, is equally stereotypical. He is shy. He does not talk much. And even more disturbing to me is the statement that "most Native American youths didn't even dream about camps" (p. 20). Ouch! Perhaps *many* would have been a better choice of modifiers.

Hector, described as coming from a traditional Hispanic family, is probably the least developed of the characters. Outside of this description of his ethnicity, nothing about him indicates the richness implied by "traditional Hispanic." In fact, his language sounds like typical teenage slang with generous sprinklings of *dude*, a term that is certainly not specific to any ethnic group. *Loco* is the only word that might belie his Hispanic origins. However, in the Southwest, that term has become part of many people's English. Although the two female characters receive equal treatment during the plot development, they, too, remain fairly anonymous.

The supporting characters, such as Buck, the counselor associated with an unnamed university campus, are not developed at all. On the other hand, the villains—Aldophus, Slash, and Punk—are almost comical in their caricatures. Slash and Punk are depicted the way "Okies" and "Arkies" were stereotyped until the

1960s—they are dirty and ignorant. “This time I ain’t a missing,” Slash retorts at one point (p. 46). Aldophus, the main villain and the brains behind the operation, looks and acts a bit like Bluto, Popeye’s adversary. In many ways, they seem more comical than vicious, with the exception of one scene involving the imprisonment of the two girls. There is nothing funny about their meanness there.

The setting, too, suffers from a kind of vagueness. In what mountains, I have to ask, does this story take place? From an environmental viewpoint, this is critical. Certainly, the forests of the dry Southwest differ from those of the moist, fertile Northwest Coast. If one of the purposes of the story is to convey information regarding the environment, then knowing the specific location is important. Generally, this story suffers from its generic over-sights. One of the values of literature has always been the way in which a specific illustration represented by an author is made relevant to our own situation. This book does not allow such reflections.

Moreover, the flatness of the characters denies the reader meaningful insights into the diverse ways of thinking that the book is billed to represent. For example, having the shyest and quietest person in the group emerge in the end as the hero is a fairly common contrivance in mainstream literature. In *Peril at Thunder Ridge*, however, the character happens to be Native American. Even so, the writer, also Native American, is perhaps a little shy himself about expressing some of the ideas that may motivate Myron’s actions.

I longed for more dialogue in the story, because language is so expressive of personality. I am reminded of the richness and fullness brought to two other well-known American adventure stories—*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*—through the use of dialogue. However, one part of this story, on page 43, approaches brilliance in the use of dialogue as well as humor. In this scene, Carl, the Anglo city boy, wants to become blood brothers with Myron. Carl’s tone is described as “serious.”

“Come on, Myron, we now become blood brothers. I have to draw blood from both of us so our blood can flow together.”

“Are you crazy, dude?” You’ve been watching too many movies,” said Myron . . .

Having worked a long time with many different kinds of people, including “traditional Hispanic”—both New Mexican and Mexican-American—and many kinds of native peoples, I longed to hear the richness of some of their expressions, for example the high-pitched “eee-h” so often heard in northern New Mexico as a multi-use expression of general frustration among people of Spanish-speaking descent. I also missed the use of joking and teasing among and between these two particular groups to demonstrate their friendship, the sort of thing that I see between Pueblo people and their Hispanic neighbors, for example. “Your grandfathers smelled so bad,” I once overheard a Pueblo man tease a Hispanic man, “that we almost fainted from the smell.” I would have expected more of this at the end to show solidarity and understanding.

Another humorous episode involves a tiny creature that Carl believes to be the rare black-footed ferret but turns out to be a weasel. In this scene, Adolphus has run into the mountains to escape justice—the very mountains he has tried to destroy through various greed-motivated activities. Adolphus is hiding from Myron, who has followed him into the wilderness. In order to get a better view from his hiding place, Adolphus thoughtlessly places his hand on a ledge, which also happens to be the entrance to a small opening. Out pops the weasel and latches its teeth onto Adolphus’s fat hand as if it were a tasty pork chop. This unexpected ferocity and the resulting intense pain send Adolphus ultimately tumbling into a ravine, where he is easy to capture.

All in all, *Peril at Thunder Ridge* is not a bad book. Written at a fifth- to sixth-grade reading level, it should have appeal through mid-school level students. It could be used as part of an integrated environmental studies curriculum, where literature augments the teaching of scientific information. In fact, I recently recommended this book to a group of secondary science teachers in northern New Mexico. Despite its literary shortcomings, I hope *Peril at Thunder Ridge* becomes widely read and used in classrooms, particularly in the Southwest.

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