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River, Neah Bay, Skagit Valley, Oak Bay, Nooksack River, and Lake Duwamish heighten his poetic landscape so that anyone reading the poems will not likely mistake the land he describes. Niatum's knowledge of contemporary and traditional Klallam history and culture comes through the poems as well, and this, along with his closeness to the landscape of the region, intermeshes with his knowledge and familiarity with the other Native communities nearby—Duwamish, Skagit, Nooksack, Lummi, and Swinomish among them.

The published package constituting *The Crooked Beak of Love* is the work of West End Press of Albuquerque, a small press publisher headed by John Crawford. The book is not only superbly and visually arresting, with a cover illustration of four birds of prey in flight by Alfredo Arreguin, but it is also aesthetically satisfying with its choices of typeset and layout that well benefits a serious work of poetry by an important writer. This is not at all surprising, as anyone who knows anything about small press publishing can readily attest, since West End has been considered for now more than a decade as one of the finest such entities in the United States. The publisher, the press, the cover artist, and certainly the poet, are to be congratulated on having produced such an excellent work of art.

*Geary Hobson*

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**Desert Indian Woman: Stories and Dreams.** By Frances Manuel and Deborah Neff. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001. 227 pages. \$39.95 cloth; \$17.95 paper.

*Desert Indian Woman* is a life history that emerged from a long-standing relationship between two women, one a Tohono O'Odham (previously known as Papago) culture bearer, the other a *milgan*, or white academic. The life history is of Francis Manuel, as-told-to Deborah Neff, who recorded her words between 1981 and 1996. The stories proceed largely in a chronological order although at times the historical narrative is blended with myth fragments. According to Neff, she recorded, minimally edited, and arranged the tellings into this book (with Manuel's approval) (p. xvii). The book is divided into five parts with a total of twenty chapters plus two appendices. The biography was recorded almost entirely in English except for a brief introduction that is in O'Odham with an English gloss (p. xvii). Frances Manuel is an interesting person. Her life so far has been a full one, packed with hard work and hard knocks as well as love, kindness, and joy grounded in her family and her desert home. And while the book is at its best when one reads her life's adventures, the book fails to address the many potent issues raised in the life history genre in general and in Manuel's life in particular. The text offers a series of interesting stories that go flat because they are not situated in political, economic, racial, and gendered contexts. In my opinion, life history is at its best when the individual teller of stories is linked to wider social milieus. The reader is then left to ponder

what all of the interesting stories ultimately mean, not only for Manuel, but also, importantly, for her reader, whether Indian or non-Indian.

The life history genre is an important literary form that offers an intense version of a subjective experience and perspective, resulting in the selective reconstruction of a person's life. The genre's importance and *raison d'être* lies (1) in the audience's gaining insight into the idiosyncratic view of an individual's narrative of self, and (2) in how this narration of self can be used as a passage into other, more generalized historical and cultural understandings. *Desert Indian Woman* is largely successful in the first principle but it fails in fulfilling the second. It is simply insufficient to say that "Frances's words stand on their own" (p. xvii). This claim is only true in a rather general sense. Neff's statement may only be true for other, and probably not even all, O'Odham. For non-O'Odham readers, the allusions, stories, conversational style, cultural experiences, and historical realities may only be partly accessible. While it is generally true that tragedy or love is love no matter where it occurs, it is equally true that the answer as to why a tragedy occurs or love blossoms is a context-driven, dependent, and systemic event that demands elaboration, explanation, or interpretation. Neff's ultimate defense for her decision not to supply more context is that too many life histories have suffered from an abuse of scholar-outsiders who insist on interjecting their explanatory elaborations. She is opposed to those who use the words of Native persons as "data" to write a master Western narrative, thereby corrupting the purity of the telling (p. 227). But the telling of a life history is to begin with a corruption, because the O'Odham possessed no equivalent narrative strategy in their past or present O'Odham communication modes. It is well known that recording, editing, and reordering verbal text is problematic methodologically in the doing of life history. Some of those problems were confronted in the collaborative biography of Theodore Rios (an O'Odham man) and Kathleen Mullen Sands (a white academic) in their book *Telling a Good One. Desert Indian Woman*, which, like this book under review, is recorded entirely in English. Sands acknowledged the problems and limitations of an English-only O'Odham life history telling. This doesn't appear to concern Neff. Yet the English textual bias in *Desert Indian Woman* is particularly ironic because at one point in the preface Neff announces that she wants "this work [to] join the work of others in upholding the value of reading and writing the O'Odham language" (p. xix).

Frances Manuel's life stories are diverse. She discusses sororal polygyny, growing up without her mother, smallpox and tuberculosis, love, marriage, in-laws, children, living and working in Tucson, racism, the death of her husband, alcoholism, cattle ranching, horses, religion, and shamans. Many of her narratives are sprinkled with analogies drawn from myth fragments and contemporary concerns, and the myth-lets are used didactically. In all, Manuel's narratives are grounded in a strong sense of place. The overall gestalt conveyed is that Frances Manuel had an at-times difficult life, but she viewed her circumstances not with self-pity, but with determination and perseverance. From the loss of her mother at an early age, to the tragic death of her husband, to work as a domestic household servant in Tucson, her narrative is one

of a quiet, not boastful, overcoming of adversity. Many of her tellings would have been well served had they been better contextualized by Neff.

Traditional culture, its loss and its recovery, is a recurring theme in the book. Of note, O'Odham song-poetics and cattle culture figure prominently. France's love of horses and singing traditional songs are fondly reminisced. It is probably true that livestock and song-poetics epitomize O'Odham culture. Again, while Manuel's narrative offers subjective insights into these important cultural and historical phenomena, Neff fails to situate them in their proper contexts. Moreover, Neff makes some glaring and curious omissions in the book's footnotes. For instance, no mention is made of Frances's work with the ethnomusicologist Richard Haefer and his research on O'Odham musical styles, nor is the collaborative work of David Lopez and David Kozak on cattle culture, horses, and "devils" mentioned or even referenced. The omission of the biographical collaboration between Theodore Rios and Kathleen Sands is highly irregular. But perhaps the most glaring omissions are those of the previously published O'Odham biographies of Maria Chona (Ruth Underhill, *Papago Woman*, 1979) and Peter Blaine Sr. (*Papagos and Politics*, 1981) and the autobiography of James McCarthy (*A Papago Traveler*, 1985). While these are simultaneously useful and problematic books, one wishes that the authors of *Desert Indian Woman* would have compared and learned from them in order to move beyond such a pedantic treatment of Manuel's life history.

A note on language: The original language texts offered in the beginning of the book are at times awkwardly translated or glossed and other times are only loosely based on the original texts offered. In several "paragraphs," not all of the O'Odham language texts are supplied when compared to their more extensive English translations. While this may be of consequence or concern for only a few Native speakers, this reviewer found the use of the O'Odham language lacking and, given Neff's own stated desire for the book to contribute to the corpus of O'Odham texts, seriously flawed. The complete lack of a translation methodology and the inaccuracies and omissions of the O'Odham language texts reflects a sloppiness that should have been remedied either by the authors or editors of the volume.

While I found many of the recounted episodes compelling I think that this book's usefulness is compromised or at least its usefulness in understanding twentieth-century O'Odham life is contingent on consulting many other texts to gain an understanding of where Frances Manuel's life experiences fit into O'Odham and American life. I for one wished that Deborah Neff hadn't shied away from adding her own voice to this project. After all, good collaborative life history is a team effort. The responsibility of both authors is not to submerge one or another voice in the production of life history, whether the voice is Native or non-Native.

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