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government operations, for a boat launch for subsistence and rescue activities, for youth programs and softball fields, and so forth. Also, an industry Subsistence Advisory Panel holds meetings in Wainwright in order to solicit input on any subsistence-related NPR-A impacts. Resource extraction and related government policies can be polarizing and controversial, but in Alaskan villages, more shades of gray exist than the author acknowledges.

Some of Kassam's map data have been included in a collaborative project related to potential oil development in the NPR-A near the village of Wainwright. The effort combined biological data gathered by the Nature Conservancy with the cultural and ecological knowledge and maps of the Wainwright community, including data the author compiled. The local community, the Nature Conservancy, the North Slope Borough, and other state and federal agencies use traditional knowledge to implement a cooperative strategy in order to manage traditional use areas and protect local access to subsistence areas (see *Wainwright Traditional Use Area Conservation Plan Map Book*, 2008).

This book is an interesting summary of the discipline of cultural ecology and can also serve as a point of departure for conversations about future development in the Arctic. Kassam is attuned to the essential importance that hunting and gathering retain for Arctic communities and is correct in asserting that these are not relics of a bygone era but important ways of knowing and relating to the land. The theoretical treatment of cultural ecology as a discipline may be valuable in academic circles, but the traditional knowledge that the author has collected in cooperation with the communities of Wainwright and Ulukhaktok is an even more valuable commodity as an enduring source of applied sociocultural data.

*Chris B. Wooley*

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**Contemporary Native American Literature.** By Rebecca Tillett. Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 2008. 184 pages. \$34.00 paper.

British Association for American Studies paperbacks are, by definition, encyclopedic introductions designed for use by neophyte students. As such, Rebecca Tillett's overview of contemporary Native American literature fills an important place in the series. Following a broad review of early American Indian writing from its beginnings in the eighteenth century through the 1930s, the author's subsequent chapters provide biographical data, brief plot outlines, and short summaries of key critical issues in major works by nine late-twentieth-century Native writers: N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa/Cherokee), Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna/mixed blood), James Welch (Blackfeet/Gros Ventre), Louise Erdrich (Turtle Mountain Ojibwe/mixed blood), Anna Lee Walters (Pawnee/Otoe/Missouria), Luci Tapahonso (Navajo), Simon Ortiz (Acoma), Louis Owens (Choctaw/Cherokee), and Gerald Vizenor (Chippewa). Her final chapter, "Extending the Canon," considers new directions in Native writing

explored by younger writers including Sherman Alexie (Coeur d'Alene), A. A. Carr (Laguna/Navajo), David Treuer (Ojibwe), Janet McAdams (Creek/mixed blood), and others. In her discussions of these writers, Tillet sets out to highlight the complicated "sociopolitical status of . . . colonised people within a colonial state" (1).

Though Tillet draws attention to numerous aspects of this complicated, Indian sociopolitical status, her claims about what she intends to accomplish are a bit overstated, because they would be impossible to support within the designated scope of her encyclopedic project. At times, Tillet's introduction seems to describe a different, longer book than she has written when she alludes to such issues as "the legacy of the federal-Indian relationship"; the intertextual connections between Euro-American and Native literature; the origins of Native literature in oral storytelling and diverse tribal traditions; the tensions between popular, Eurocentric conceptions of Indians and "Native political realities"; and her plan to analyze subtle processes of negotiations, mediations, and translations that make "Native worldviews both visible and accessible to the non-Native reader" (1-3). All of these concerns are relevant to our understanding of Native American writing, but at best they can be only tangentially addressed in passing in such a short volume.

For a variety of reasons, the task of "introducing" Native American writing remains forever daunting. Tillet admits as much when she reminds her readers that even the term *Native American literature* is problematic. The phrase is a Eurocentrically constructed, monocultural rubric that refers superficially to an ever-increasing number of works by writers representing tribal cultures that cannot be satisfactorily understood when lumped together as one group. Indigenous literary studies has matured during the past few years to include a long-overdue emphasis on profound differences—not simply between Euro-Americans and Indians but also between tribal cultures—that are impossible to treat in general works that deal with a broad spectrum of writers with various tribal identities. Works by the slowly growing number of Native literary scholars will doubtless help to correct this generalist view of "Native American" literature that has instated a "canon" of Native American literature, a generalist view that a book like Tillet's is, unfortunately, bound to reinforce. Moreover, with the exception of Navajo poet, Luci Tapahonso, and Acoma poet, Simon Ortiz, the focus of Tillet's introduction to Native literature is almost exclusively on novelists. This overemphasis on the novel as defining a Native literary tradition is in some ways misleading, although novels are probably the genre of Native works best known to the popular, general audience.

Despite its generic liabilities, Tillet's introduction affords the student-reader some valuable glimpses into the fictive worlds of the writers covered. In her discussion of Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* (1968), for example, she equips the potential reader of this difficult novel with some essential prefatory information about the influence of oral storytelling strategies on the text, as well as about the sophisticated reader-role we are expected to play in the narrative. An attentive student will be led to understand that engaging with Momaday's novel demands much of the reader, who is required to step

outside of his or her Eurocentric interpretive frame of reference. Likewise, Tillet's discussion of Louise Erdrich's novels forewarns the student of similar challenges to the reader's acuity in *Love Medicine* (1984), a novel that draws on indigenous oral and postmodern conventions in its deliberately disjunctive narrative design.

Unfortunately, in her overview of Momaday's works, Tillet does not alert her audience to Susan Scarberry-Garcia's invaluable *Landmarks of Healing: A Study of House Made of Dawn* (1990), an insightful guide to reading this difficult novel that thoroughly immerses the reader in its Navajo and Laguna Pueblo cultural contexts and that, incidentally, is also quite helpful to readers of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977); nor, in connection with Erdrich, do we learn of Beidler and Barton's *A Reader's Guide to the Novels of Louise Erdrich* (2006), a thorough resource that affords the reader detailed access to the Ojibwe historical and cultural material informing Erdrich's writing. A very important function of a volume in an introductory series for students is to provide a complete list of particularly useful reference sources, and although Tillet's bibliography mentions important ones, a few indispensable sources are conspicuously absent.

Beginning with her fourth chapter, Tillet begins to group writers together based on how they express gender concerns. She discusses works by Erdrich, Walters, and Tapahonso in connection with their in-depth portrayals of the concerns of Native women, not only as writers and individuals but also as members of tribal and national communities. Though the inclusion of Anna Lee Walters as a Native "canonical" writer might seem odd (Walters is not so widely known as most of the other writers the author considers), Tillet is correct in noting this writer's relative importance.

Walters's politically engaged work not only highlights the difficulties of Native women whose voices have often been silenced even within Native American writing (by males), but also her novel *Ghost Singer* (1988) is one of very few works that directly addresses issues of cultural disrespect and oppression arising from US policies governing museums and their management of Native artifacts and burial sites. *Ghost Singer* is extremely important to include in any introduction to Native literature, owing not only to its aesthetic merits but also to the powerful statement it makes about the rights of Native peoples to recover and control their ancestral property. Tillet draws well-deserved attention to Walters as a "writing woman" focused on illuminating areas of Native disempowerment that have been underrepresented.

In her chapter on Ortiz, Owens, and Vizenor, Tillet again focuses on gender—particularly on the "emasculatation of Native men's culture" (101). Her review of the important contributions of Simon Ortiz, in keeping with her promise to focus on the "legacy of the federal-Indian relationship," connects Ortiz's concern with the Native recovery of masculine dignity to his preoccupation with Pueblo history (1). Tillet's discussion of Ortiz draws the student-reader's attention to the distinctive history of political injustices that have shaped Native life in the southwestern United States from the time of the Spanish invasion of the Pueblos to the present-day disputes with the federal government over nuclear pollution and Indian health. Treating some of the

same kinds of social issues, but from a decidedly humorous perspective, the prolific writer Gerald Vizenor is noted for his linguistic tricksterism as well as for his large number of essays that deal directly with the political concerns he raises in his comic novels. As Tillett introduces readers to Vizenor's works, she alerts her audience to the importance of humor to all tribal groups. Vizenor, along with Canadian Native Thomas King, is without a doubt the best-known humorist among North American Native writers.

A student in search of a text that opens a door into the world of American Indian writing will not be disappointed with Tillett's book. Although to a great extent it duplicates the work of other encyclopedic reference sources, it commits no egregious errors and replicates no injurious stereotypes or clichés. The long road to a fuller, complex understanding of Native literature could as well begin here as anywhere. Other useful works for readers new to Native American literature include Joy Porter and Kenneth M. Roemer's *Cambridge Companion to Native American Literature* (2005), Robert Dale Parker's *The Invention of Native American Literature* (2003), and Andrew Wiget's *Handbook of Native American Literature* (1996).

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**A Description of New Netherland/Adriaen van der Donck.** Edited by Charles T. Gehring and William A. Starna, translated by Diederik Willem Goodhuys with a foreword by Russell Shorto. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. 240 pages. \$40.00 cloth; \$24.95 paper.

Charles Gehring and William Starna add to their formidable list of edited primary documents pertaining to the history of New Netherland with this valuable edition of Adriaen van der Donck's classic narrative, first published in 1655. Citing the "defective" character of the 1841 translation of the original document (reprinted unchanged as late as 1968, under Thomas O'Donnell's editorship), the editors and their skilled translator provide a substantial updating of a highly significant early American historical document (xvii). Van der Donck, as *schout* of the patroonship of Rensselaerswyck (a position that entailed responsibilities as a law enforcement officer and prosecuting attorney), came into regular contact with Iroquoian and Algonquian peoples from 1630 to 1647, and this edition of his *Description* renders van der Donck's highly insightful statements and opinions (not only regarding Native people) in clear, accessible prose. Additionally, Gehring and Starna include three chapters of van der Donck's *Description* that concern Native Americans (103–6), yet were unpublished until 1990, when Ada van Gastel published her translation of these chapters in the *William and Mary Quarterly*. The edition under review should be considered the new standard in the English language, superseding all previous efforts.

Readers of the *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* will be most interested in what the volume offers regarding the history of Native