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**How Should I Read These? Native Women Writers in Canada.** By Helen Hoy. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001. 264 pages. \$55.00 cloth; \$24.95 paper.

"These texts can withstand meddling" (p. 184), says Helen Hoy in her reader-response analysis of seven contemporary works by Canadian Native women: Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash*, Maria Campbell and Linda Griffiths' *The Book of Jessica*, Ruby Slipperjack's *Honour the Sun*, Beatrice Culleton's *In Search of April Raintree*, Beverly Hungry Wolf's *The Ways of My Grandmothers*, Lee Maracle's *Ravensong*, and Eden Robinson's *Traplines*. Hoy's "meddling" amounts to an honest, self-conscious, and respectful assessment of the artistic merits of these texts, as well as an insightful commentary on the array of interpretive practices they seem to evoke from a diverse audience. Dealing with cultural and, to a lesser extent, gender issues raised by the texts, Hoy investigates the critical challenges that arise for both Native and non-Native readers. She quickly persuades her own readers that the questions about audience reception that intrigue her as an individual reader are, indeed, highly significant questions deserving of close examination.

Though Hoy's focus is always on reader response, particularly on problematic differences between Native and non-Native readers' approaches to Native literature, she successfully avoids thesis-driven repetition through wise selection of representative texts. Each chapter proceeds from its own unique angle of critical vision, a strategy making the book a pleasure to read; although the chapters build coherently upon one another, each chapter is also self-contained enough to stand alone and thus to be useful for inclusion, separate from the book, among readings for a course treating only the work in question.

Regarding Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash*, Hoy reveals the ways in which the novel provides its own "metafictional commentary on how it might be read" (p. 27). Following this line of argument, Hoy joins Elaine Jahner, Paula Gunn Allen, and others (including myself) in works discussing metatextual instruction in Native literature. In Hoy's discussion of *The Book of Jessica*, she discusses cultural and editorial appropriation as problems arising for coauthors Campbell (Cree) and Griffiths (Scottish-Canadian) as they collaborated in the production of the text, as well as the difficulties arising for readers as they negotiate conflicts and contradictions inscribed in this cross-coded narrative. A narrative strategy involving the management of silence characterizes Slipperjack's *Honour the Sun*, and Hoy analyzes the various ways in which Slipperjack's readers deal with their reactions to textual reticence. Hoy's chapter on *The Ways of My Grandmothers* by Hungry Wolf, concerns narrative continuities and discontinuities resulting from the myriad strains of discourse informing the text; these range from Eurocentric, second-wave feminism, to Native activism, to nineteenth-century ethnography. In her discussion of Maracle's *Ravensong*, Hoy looks at how the writer instructively maneuvers the non-Native reader into the position of cultural outsider, a place more typically occupied by the Native reader of Eurocentric texts. Examining Robinson's *Traplines*, Hoy suggests some of the ways in which violence is used allegorically by

the author and how such an allegorical use of violence might influence Robinson's readers' reception of Native literature in general.

The uniqueness of each of Hoy's chapters ideally calls for a much longer review than space allows; however, a close look at her fourth chapter, dealing with Beatrice Culleton's *In Search of April Raintree*, may serve as an adequate substitute for broader coverage. Here Hoy considers key critical problems that arise from sometimes naive, sometimes condescending assumptions about the "transparent," truth-conveying capacities of, especially, Native literature that does not conform to Eurocentric aesthetic standards. By comparison to much mainstream literature, for instance, *In Search of April Raintree* seems unsophisticated in design and expression. Consequently, Hoy explains, well-intended critics offer praise for its "simplicity," "honesty," or other apparently elemental features. Hoy takes a two-pronged approach in her analysis of how readers may receive this novel (and its revised, expurgated "sister" text, *April Raintree*). On the one hand, we may assume that the text is nothing but a simple, straightforward narration intended to communicate equally simple, if painful, "truths" about Native experience. On the other hand, if we know how to look, we may also see evidence of Culleton's apparently postmodern authorial sensibility; the text lends itself to study as, possibly, a deliberately crafted investigation of "epistemological legitimation" (p. 98). Hoy persuasively demonstrates how both reader responses to Culleton's work are sustained by textual cues, and then she asks herself and her own readers to entertain a question: If we choose the sophisticated over the simple reading of the text, to what extent are we imposing upon it the Eurocentric "master narrative of polyvocality, instability, and indeterminacy"? (p. 98) Neither Culleton's readers nor Hoy can provide any final answer to such a question. Hoy's poststructuralist brand of hesitation to choose is clearly appropriate, however, and such hesitation might, as she suggests, be the most inclusive, reliable response. Moreover, as I have discussed in some detail in my own study of contemporary American Indian fiction (*Dreams of Fiery Stars: The Transformations of Native American Fiction*, 1999), much Native literature invites such audience response owing to semiotically self-aware features that seem inherently to characterize both traditional oral and contemporary storytelling in writing. I agree with Hoy that a dually vectored (and sometimes even multi-vectored) reader response is characteristic of cross-cultural texts such as Culleton's and the other works included in her study. As I have myself argued, such demands on readers are perhaps the result of the deliberately revisionary politics that so many Native writers espouse. After all, if readers can become more sensitive to their own habits of interpretation, they may also then become more alert to other culturally constructed behavior, as well.

In her intelligent, sensitive discussion of works by Native authors, Hoy develops a highly personalized discursive style that appropriately reflects her critical self-consciousness, but it is a style that some readers might reject. I will admit my own resistance to critical discourse interwoven with personal anecdotes (stories about the critic's children, about family outings or mishaps, etc.) to affect a disingenuous voice, to foreground apologetically the critic's own subjective involvement in the act of analysis, or otherwise to rebel against

the allegedly “patriarchal” or “imperialistic domination” of art by a reader. Such attention to one’s own subjectivity can easily veer into forms of self-involvement that are as problematic as any Eurocentrically imposed master narrative. However, Hoy’s voice works well for her in her project, especially in her discussions of how these writers’ works were received by students in her graduate seminars, and of how their reactions in turn influenced her own self-aware critical stance.

Indeed, partly owing to Hoy’s self-aware and self-critical approach, this volume is quite useful to a wide audience. It offers much to those who wish to understand particular texts in more depth, to those who wish to teach these books to students without inadvertently misreading them according to a narrow interpretive frame of reference, and to those in need of an introductory education in Native literature. Hoy’s prose is clear and accessible, and her book has value for audiences new to Native literature as well as for those already well informed in the area. *How Should I Read These?* is also a welcome scholarly companion to studies of contemporary ethnic literature in general.

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**Immigration and the Political Economy of Home: West Indian Brooklyn and American Indian Minneapolis, 1945–1992.** By Rachel Buff. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001. 240 pages. \$48.00 cloth; \$18.95 paper.

Several of my colleagues came away with surprised looks on their faces after reading the title of Rachel Buff’s first book. Even for comparative-minded ethnic studies scholars, it seems, the idea of linking together American Indians from Minneapolis and West Indians from Brooklyn is quite original. Based upon those reactions, Buff’s work clearly has the potential to expand the thinking of scholars in ethnic studies. Buff’s work also offers broad and comparative theoretical approaches that are seldom found in the mostly anthropological and historical texts that heavily populate this journal’s review section. I welcome these departures. Hopefully her promise will open the door to more consideration of the relationship between national understandings of race and American Indians. In all, she offers the American Indianist powerful new tools for understanding the impact of colonialism and recognizing the braided contradictions that simultaneously combat and facilitate Indian, and other racialized peoples’, resistance to colonial projects.

At the center of Buff’s concern, then, is the violence embedded within the discourses that construct our ideas of the nation and citizen, and that simultaneously provide the backbone for policing the boundaries defined by such ideas (p. 6). Buff attempts to resist the power and violence of such boundaries. She textually crosses borders by crafting a project that brings together two normally disassociated groups of people. In treating West Indians from Brooklyn together with American Indians from Minneapolis, Buff makes links between cities, communities, and events that are rarely considered in relation