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part by anthropologists Regge N. Wiseman, Timothy Baugh, Christopher Lintz, and James H. Gunnerson, and a historical framework should follow. Finally, Kenner did not elaborate extensively on the Plains influence on the Pueblo people, although his treatise included those factors in a few substantial ways. Moreover, the cultural diffusion of the region flows in both directions, and further study is needed to include the effect of Pueblo culture on the Plains Indians, in both durable and nondurable goods. Kenner's narrative remains valuable, and the new scholarship concerning cultural diffusion, folklore, trade fairs, and material exchange for the Southwestern and Plains cultures will deepen his chronology.

Jack F. Matthews

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Desert Legends: Re-storying the Sonoran Borderlands. By Gary Paul Nabhan. Photographs by Mark Klett. New York: Henry Holt, 1994. 207 pages. \$45.00 cloth.

Gary Paul Nabhan is the most important student of the O'Odham (Northern Piman-speaking people) of his generation. While still a graduate student, Nabhan began analyzing Sonoran Desert plants—especially those once fundamental to the O'Odham diet. He shared his hard-won knowledge with O'Odham gardeners and dietitians, founding Seed Search to maintain a bank of scarce Native American cultigens and to distribute them to O'Odham and other Native American gardeners. To the general reading public, Gary Nabhan is one of the leading nature writers of his generation.

Desert Legends is a logical step in Nabhan's writing career. He began with technical, scientific papers exemplified by "Teparies in Southwestern North America" (*Economic Botany*, 1978, with Richard S. Felger). Before long, Nabhan began writing books such as *The Desert Smells Like Rain: A Naturalist in Papago Indian Country* (1982) and *Enduring Seeds: Native American Agriculture and Wild Plant Conservation* (1989). Nabhan's books established him as a very culturally sensitive and scientifically well-informed author. Writing in the first person like John Muir and Edward Abbey, Nabhan the nature writer exhibits a genuine empathy toward Native Americans and European peasants that contrasts starkly with the elitism of Muir and Abbey. Now publisher Henry Holt

has joined Nabhan's text with Mark Klett's photographs in a small-format "coffee table" volume.

Klett's photographs are no match for Nabhan's prose; one Klett photograph is not worth a thousand of Nabhan's words. Many photographs possess great artistic merit. Few, however, portray the active human beings Nabhan writes about. An adobe-maker's feet and lower legs only are shown. Only eight human beings are portrayed as more than anonymous figures to provide a scale for views of portions of the Sonoran Desert. Two of those eight individuals really are adjuncts to buildings, and seven of them stand or sit passively. Only one bronco rider is depicted in action. In contrast, Nabhan writes about human beings interacting with the desert environment. Inasmuch as the few portraits show Mestizos, not O'Odham or other Native Americans, they contribute to knowledge of contemporary Mestizo culture rather than to knowledge of Sonoran Desert native peoples.

Two photographs show general desert scenes with motor vehicles, two show ocotillas, three show live and dead saguaros, one a Palo Verde, one a night blooming cereus, one a "cactus" (*Opuntia*) placed on an international boundary monument, one a juniper "decorated" with brassieres, one some palm trees, one an *Agave murpheyi* plant, one a snared lizard, two petroglyphs, two *tinajas*, one a modern pictograph. Thirteen photographs show what one of my former students contemptuously dismisses as "anthropological trivia," which is to say artifacts left on the desert. Other photographs show a semitrailer seen from behind, a road-kill coyote carcass, a gas station, part of a house, a CAP canal reach, a view of level land cleared of vegetation, the Casa Grande ruin, clouds at night, and lightning at night.

In 1949, I began to study firsthand the regional pilgrimage to the image of St. Francis in the parish church at Magdalena de Kino, Sonora. So my favorite story in this new feast is Nabhan's account of his pilgrimage on foot from the Gila River bed to the *santo*. Starting with an O'Odham companion, Nabhan chanced upon a Cora ex-pilgrim and stayed overnight in O'Odham villages with friends who shared with him memories of their pilgrimages and stories of the saint's miracles. He also spent nights with Anglo-American friends and pedaled a bicycle part of the way to ease his blistered feet and cramped leg muscles. Nabhan reviews the history of erosion in the now deeply and steeply entrenched Santa Cruz River bed before returning to his pilgrimage experiences south of San Xavier del Bac, among mostly Mestizo devotees from

Amado south to Magdalena. Nabhan's route took him not only via *Tubac, Tumacacori, to Hell*, as in a humorous book title, but on through Calabasas, Nogales, Agua Zarca, Cibuta, Imuris, and San Ignacio, where he encountered a Mestizo free-thinker. All these were once O'Odham settlements along an O'Odham trail already ancient when Eusebio F. Kino, S.J., brought it to European notice late in the seventeenth century. No better introduction to the pan-ethnic cult of St. Francis and its pilgrimage has been published.

"Finding the Hidden Garden" is partly Nabhan's panegyric for the late Dr. Howard Gentry, the greatest scholar ever of the plant genus *Agave* ("Century plant"). The "Hidden Garden" is, however, a "horticultural experiment so well adapted to the desert that it ultimately needed no human intervention to keep it going" (p. 171). The "Hidden Garden" consists of one specific stand of *Agave murpheyi* on an ancient O'Odham-made, water-retaining, stone terrace north of the Salt River valley. That stand became a key to the scientific interpretation of this strange species that some contemporary cultivators believe grows better in dry than in wet years. This story summarizes how Nabhan, Suzanne and Paul Fish, Wendy Hodgson, Rick DeLamater, and Charles Micsicek collected evidence to demonstrate that pre-Columbian O'Odham grew this specific species extensively for centuries. All *Agave murpheyi* plants known to date apparently originated in a single clone that ancestral O'Odham transplanted over hundreds of square miles. This is a scientific mystery story of the first order, as well as a tribute to pre-Columbian O'Odham folk science and horticultural sophistication.

Nabhan turns near-reporter in "Extinguishing the Sound of Summer Heat." He describes the governor of the Mexican state of Sonora flying to a Seri settlement on the Gulf of California coast to cut a ribbon starting electrical service, which immediately brought Seri families the convenience of electric light, electric blenders, and the strange messages conveyed by television programs. Nabhan holds up to the reader in the United States a trans-ethnic mirror of televised programs by relating a remark by one Seri viewer: "We have just learned that the people from Los Angeles can take their clothes off on TV after midnight" (p. 184). This final chapter in the book then gleans grains of wisdom from a visit to central Australia, a charco (waterhole) in the Sonoran Desert when rains brought out the toads, and a study of peasant flood control with willow and cottonwood cuttings planted along the edges of the San Miguel River in Sonora. Continuing ancient

O'Odham symbiosis with these pheatophytes, the Sonoran peasants have kept the San Miguel a living, surface-flowing stream. North of the international boundary where farmer irrigators have relied on machines, the same floods of 1890, 1905, 1914, 1915, 1926, 1940, 1961, 1977, and 1983 eroded stream channels deeper and wider so normal flows and diminished, drought period flows sink into the sands and gravels at the bottom. This volume's liquid prose makes fundamental points about human life on the unforgiving Sonoran Desert and in its riverine oases.

Nabhan's stories enchant, because they relate his personal adventures. "Searching for the Cure" describes his visit to an elderly *curandera* to have her treat his sore ankles. It contains no hint of Nabhan the scientific investigator into the relationships between traditional Native American foods and noninsulin dependent diabetes (Janette C. Brand, B. Janelle Snow, Gary P. Nabhan, and A. Stewart Truswell, "Plasma Glucose and Insulin Responses to Traditional Pima Indian Meals," *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* [1990]). Nabhan's stories in this volume appeal, because he recognizes that ethnobotany is more than a science: "It's a reservoir of stories that link humankind with the verdant earth, a reservoir of legends we need to dip into now and again" (pp. 178-79). In this volume, Nabhan dips into his personal reservoir of legendary personal adventures and stellar scientific research to share both with the reader.

This reviewer highly recommends Gary P. Nabhan's stories to everyone interested in learning about how native peoples adjusted to the Sonoran Desert environment, particularly by managing plants. That the author turns his stories into personal adventures makes them all the easier to read. Admittedly, the book's price reflects the cost of Klett's frequently striking photographs, most of which are irrelevant to Nabhan's stories. Students of the Sonoran Desert and its native peoples should nonetheless pay the book's price; it is a treasure.

Henry F. Dobyns

Dirt Road Home. By Cheryl Savageau. Willimantic, Connecticut: Curbstone Press, 1995. 92 pages. \$11.00 paper.

Dirt Road Home by Cheryl Savageau is an appealing collection of poems that carry both a personal and a universal meaning.