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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.

Savageau writes of her search for identity, arrives at a firmer sense of who she is, and celebrates her Abenaki ancestry in verse. Her first volume of poetry, *Home Country*, published in 1992, became an integral part of this second volume, *Dirt Road Home*. Savageau revisits the ancestral voices of her maternal and paternal grandmothers, reaching back for a clearer vision of her identity as a French Canadian Abenaki Indian. *Dirt Road Home* contains approximately fifty pieces, including narrative, free verse, haiku, and prose poems, all of which reflect Savageau's imagination and skill as a poet and her talent as a storyteller.

In an introductory essay, Joseph Bruchac describes *Dirt Road Home* as "a chronicle of returning," an appropriate description because Savageau returns to childhood memories to trace her French Canadian and Abenaki Indian identity. Her mixed ancestry has been a source of pride and pain. Since she has not lived the traditions of her Abenaki ancestors, Savageau, like other mixed-bloods, must have faced the uneasy questions of identity: What kind of Indian are you? How much Indian are you? Are you a "real" Indian? One of the most appealing features of Savageau's poetry is her honesty about being of mixed blood in contemporary New England. In the poem "Looking for Indians," she recalls her innocent confusion as a child when she inquired of her father—"what kind of Indian are we, anyway" (p. 19). She remembers that, having been influenced by television images, she was disappointed that her ancestors were not "real" Indians like the Cheyenne, Apache, or Sioux who hunted buffalo on the Plains. In "French Girls Are Fast" (p. 37), she recalls being ridiculed because of her French background. In "Just His Eyes" (p. 25), she describes an incident in which her cousin was taunted at the boys' club because of the shape of his eyes. Such are the experiences of those caught between two cultures, when one culture denies that the other exists. Ultimately in these poems, Savageau reflects an understanding of the tension that accompanies her mixed identity. In the last poem in this collection, "Like the Trails of Ndinna," she acknowledges that tension:

We're French and Indian like the war  
my father said  
they fought together  
against the English  
and although that's true enough  
it's still a lie

French and Indian  
still fighting in my blood. (p. 90)

Savageau describes her youthful perceptions of the rhythms of her father's life as a New England farmer and fisherman. At first, she is unable to understand that these routines and rhythms tie him to his ancestral identity. The child's sentiment in "Looking for Indians" is poignant:

Each night my father  
came home from the factory  
to plant and gather,  
to cast the line out  
over the dark evening pond,  
with me, walking behind him,  
looking for Indians. (p. 20)

Later, in the poem "Trees," from which the title of the book is extracted, Savageau speaks in the mature voice of self-awareness as she realizes that her father has taught her to love the land and to be what she is—an Indian:

. . . You taught me the land so well  
that all through my childhood  
I never saw the highway,  
the truckstops, lumberyards,  
the asphalt works,  
but instead saw the hills,  
the trees, the ponds on the south end. . . .  
Driving down the dirt road home,  
it was the trees you saw first,  
all New England a forest. (pp. 17–18)

She arrives at an appreciation of her father and her Abenaki grandmothers as she matures and recognizes so much of them in herself. In poem after poem, Savageau recalls some nagging pain that she or other family members have experienced, but nature and the song within always heal that injury.

Although her Abenaki identity is a major focus of her poems, Savageau also writes insightfully about nature, the land, childhood, troubles facing contemporary Indians, and romantic love. The rich imagery includes preparing food, killing chickens, planting, harvesting, the Christ child, card sharks, Barbie dolls,

domestic chores—the full range of rural experiences in New England.

Savageau celebrates change and continuity in life, the oneness of all things in nature, and the comfort we receive when we trust nature to provide. In "The Sweet and Vinegary Taste," a poem dedicated to her grandmother Rose LeBlanc Meunier, she affirms that there is "enough" in nature:

Enough for everybody,  
for birds, and rabbits,  
and caterpillars, enough  
and more than enough  
to overflow the kitchen,  
to fill the winter shelves  
with the sweet and vinegary taste  
of life, the mystery  
flowing from the earth  
through her hands  
to our open mouths. (p. 72)

This vision of the earth as "[s]acred, beautiful, companion" is one of the things that makes her poetry so discerning. In a single, simple, artistic metaphor, "the sweet and vinegary taste of life" (p. 72), Savageau is able to describe the fullness of nature and the complexity of her search for identity. Such themes resonate in Simon Ortiz's *Woven Stone*, a definitive collection of his poetry celebrating nature, heritage, and continuity.

Although *Dirt Road Home* is Savageau's personal journey, all of us who share some mixed ancestry will identify with her search. All who value the Native American literary experience will welcome Savageau into the company of other contemporary poets such as Joy Harjo, Louise Erdrich, Paula Gunn Allen, Rayna Green, Linda Hogan, and many others. Savageau, like these contemporary Native American poets, is both poet and storyteller. The prose poems, especially, are stories about her grandmothers, her mother, her aunt, and other women in her childhood. They, too, help Savageau to define who she is as a woman.

Cheryl Savageau's *Dirt Road Home* tells a good story in a restrained voice, but her poetry is also sensually charged. She succeeds in transmitting her love of the land and in engaging the reader in her search for herself in the New England surroundings, yet her poetry reflects the issues of her time ("Hanging Clothes in the Sun," p. 47). She does not express anger or hopelessness as a

result of cultural estrangement. Rather, she honestly and boldly claims her heritage as an Abenaki and integrates this rich past into her present circumstances. Savageau's "chronicle of returning" is a refreshingly positive journey.

Louise C. Maynor

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**Dreaming History: A Collection of Wisconsin Native-American Writing.** Edited by Mary Anne Doan and Jim Stevens. Madison, Wisconsin: Prairie Oak Press, 1995. 120 pages. \$10.95 paper.

A wonderfully executed collection of writing styles, *Dreaming History: A Collection of Wisconsin Native-American Writing* flows with the cadences of fine storytelling. True to indigenous sacred formulae, it is constructed in four parts, each setting groundwork for the next.

The introduction sets the tone for this ritual form, telling the story of the recent birth of a white buffalo calf on a farm in Wisconsin. The farmer, although not a Native American, understands the importance of the event to indigenous people because of his early interaction with native religious figures. This tale is offered as an analogy to the wider phenomenon of Native American values and beliefs being disseminated to the rest of the world in hopes of achieving a sane balance between humans and nature. It is an exemplary premise for the body of this work, writing that seeks to reach a diverse audience with the message of enduring cultures and people, often struggling to preserve the "old ways" in an uncaring, sometimes hostile society.

The ritual now moves from its "call to the circle" into the four individual parts, "Listening to the Voices," "Living the World," "Teaching and Prayers," and "Talking Indian." Each is prefaced with a section explaining the content and intent of the separate pieces, weaving them together into a cohesive pattern addressing the section title and a theme. "Listening to the Voices" tells of the messages those who went before us continue to send, if only we will listen and heed their wisdom. "Living the World" recounts the sometimes jarring experience of trying to stay firmly rooted in an ancient worldview while surviving in a contemporary, rootless society. While "Teaching and Prayers" obviously addresses those things identifiably sacred to indigenous life, it also points