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Wisdom of the Elders:

Geary Hobson, P. Jane Hafen, Jeane Breinig, Clifford E. Trafzer, Carol Miller, Louis Owens and Vine Deloria

Kimberly Roppolo
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I am tempted to start this introduction with the Tsalagi story of Turtle and Beaver, but that would be too obvious.

Instead, just let me say that this all started over a cup of coffee and more than a few cigarettes. Like all good Wordcrafters visiting Albuquerque, NM, I found myself sitting in Dr. Lee Francis' favorite coffee shop, surrounded by swirls of smoke and imbibing caffeine in quantities previously unthinkable. I was, at Dr. Francis' behest, getting to know David Willingham, who was working on putting together this special Native American issue of *Paradoxa*. If you've read my article just previous to this compilation, you will understand much of the conversation in which we were engaged—like any other young academic, I was doing what my elders, both Native and non, had stressed that I must: trying to get published. In this particular instance, we were discussing the paper I had just presented at the Southwest and Texas Regional Popular Culture Association Meeting and talking about issues in the study of American Indian literatures and the somewhat paradoxical situation I was finding myself in trying to assert what Robert Warrior and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn's work suggested: some academic sovereignty, at least in relation to my dissertation. In it, I propose that a more tribal-centered rhetoric for academic discourse is an appropriate assertion of this sovereignty. In fact, I voiced my concerns that so many of our so few college graduates seem to be going home forgetting how to communicate with their elders, that they have internalized the discourse of the dominant culture via the academy so well that they have almost entirely lost their cultural grounding, that the academy was doing an excellent job, in short, of promoting colonization, of causing death by assimilation. During this conversation, I suggested that validating a more tribal-centered discourse for writing about Native Studies issues—and other academic material as well—could perhaps allow American Indian students the opportunity to value our own ways of thinking and communicating, rather than seeing those ways as inferior to those of the mainstream and therefore as something that should be abandoned in the struggle to advance themselves educationally. Whereas I acknowledge the fact that academe is a Western construct, I do not believe that utilizing more traditional—and I use Craig Womack's definition here of "traditional"—methods of discourse construction takes us out of dialogue with our non-Native colleagues. It simply shifts the loci of the dialogic and includes the American Indian half of the dialogue.

> Traditional native literature has always entailed both performance and commentary, with, in ... Tedlock's language, "the conveyer" functioning as the "interpreter" as well. We get, says Tedlock, "the criticism at the same time and from the same person...". In a similar fashion, contemporary texts contain the critical contexts needed for their own interpretation and, because of the intertexutuality of Native American literature, the critical commentary and contexts necessary for the interpretation of works by other Native writers. (59-60)

In other words, the traditional stories told in *Ceremony* alongside the contemporary narrative act as *indigenous critical argument*; they are interpretations of the story of Tayo and Ts'eh in a tribal context and in a tribal rhetoric. This certainly can be born out by examining the literature, oral to written, in which argument is made, *interpretation* is made, again and again by the same method. However, in accordance with Blaeser's suggestion above and in line with a Pan-Indian epistemology, a "reading" made in this fashion is not closed, that it is not the only reading that can be made by synthesizing the text with other tribal knowledge(s) and by using *forms* which arise out of both the oral and written bodies of Native literature. I would suggest that a Native person, offering an interpretative comment, if he or she is in-line with the culture from which he or she originates, would not purport that his or her reading is the *correct* reading or the *only* reading. Unlike mainstream Western philosophies, Native belief-systems are open-epistemologies, leaving room for change and growth, believing that Truth, with a capital T, can be expressed by infinite means. In Cherokee culture, for instance, the colors which symbolize the directions also symbolize a number of other things. Moreover, all of these colors change when a person is practicing "medicine," or using them for spiritual purposes. Just as these open-epistemologies allow for spiritual syncretism—because they place the focus on the signified rather than the signifier—they also allow for open-ended interpretation, many different ways of expressing the "meaning" of the text. So while a Native text may, and indeed, usually does, contain within itself critical commentary, the number of readings for that text is infinitely larger.

While the difference between linear and holistic thinking is only one of many differences between Western and Native American discourse that may have application in literary theory,[6] it is my hope that this article will offer

[6] This article evolves from a much larger project on Native rhetoric and literary theory in which I am currently engaged. In this, I also suggest that tribal-centered rhetoric should display an awareness of the spiritual power of words, utilize repetition and recursivity, defy genre boundaries, employ meaning-filled gaps (which manifest themselves in the oral tradition as pauses, and value paradox, as it is valued in Native thought. A tribal-centered rhetoric should strive toward communally-made meaning, with an experiential-based auctoritas and an accruing context of meaning. Borrowing

possibilities for tribal-centered readings coming from within both the culture and the literature, that is, based on those within the texts themselves. Articles such as Lee Hester's "Pishukchi: One Choctaw's Examination of the Differences in English and Choctaw Language Use" and Patricia Penn Hilden's "Ritchie Valens is Dead: *E Pluribus Unum*," though written for other disciplines, offer good models of a more tribal-centered discourse in academic writing. Moreover, Dean Rader (non-native) has proven with his presentation at the American Literature Association's Symposium on Native Literary Strategies for the New Millenium (Puerta Vallarta, Mexico, November 29-December 3, 2000), that a Native rhetoric can indeed be used for literary criticism—and that one does not necessarily need to have Native ancestry to do so, just a willingness to respect and value Native cultures, rather than trying to dissect the artistic productions of these cultures and make them one's individual intellectual property.

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from Craig Womack's *Red on Red* , I also suggest that a tribal-centered rhetoric should have a mimetic function and utilize Native humor—an important argumentative tool in a Native context—as well as being, for Native critics, an act of love for our Peoples.

With mainstream academic arguments, associational leaps are forbidden. It is not permissible to jump from point A to point Q, for instance, the way a holistic thinker forced to explain an idea linearly tends to do. The thinker sees the connection, sees the whole picture. The problem is that the reader or listener, trying to duplicate the thinking of the speaker or writer, as we as humans do when we use our receptive language capacity, can't see the connection. It's not that the holistic thinker is illogical, he or she simply uses a different sort of logic.

In most, if not all, Native cultures—there's always the possibility when dealing with many individual cultures as similar entities that unnoticed exceptions will exist—argument doesn't proceed the way it does in academic discourse, at least traditionally. Argument is done by analogy, by association, by means of indirect discourse because while we value community, the rights of the individual to make his or her own decisions are also valued. The idea is that the only way to really learn something is to learn it for yourself. Donahue says:

> In an interview, the Reverend Mr. Randy Jacob, a Choctaw scholar from Broken Bow, Oklahoma, explains that the well-composed American Indian text is designed to confuse the hearer or reader. In the oral tradition, good story tellers do not tell all of the story. The hearer/reader must supply the missing parts of a narrative and comprehend the point of the work by means of his or her own intellectual efforts. For this reason, many oral works do not move along a chronological plot line in which first one event happens and then another. Works in the oral tradition seldom demonstrate cause and effect. Events transpire, and the hearer/reader must infer possible cause and effect, significance, and chronology if such categories are necessary for comprehending the meaning of a narrative. Since a narrative assumes different meanings as the interpretive abilities of the hearer/reader change with age and experience, narrative, like the hearer/reader, stays in a constant state of interpretive motion. All of this is not to say that there is no truth to a story; it is to say, however, that truth or meaning must be perceived by a Choctaw in his own time and in his own way. (68)

What Luther Standing Bear referred to as "oratory" serves, in rhetorical terms, as argument in Native cultures. This can be seen in examples from everyday conversations. Barbara Duncan recalls the time she told her Cherokee friend, Hawk Littlejohn, about some relationship difficulties she was experiencing. Rather than saying she was "co-dependent," Littlejohn told her this story:

> You know, once there was an old man crossing over Soco Gap ... going East from Cherokee towards Maggie Valley. And it was the fall of the year, and it was cold. And just as he got over the top of the gap, and was starting down, he looked down and saw a rattlesnake laying there beside the trail. And it was frozen, about frozen to death. And because he was ani-yunwiya, one of the real people, he had compassion on his relative. And he reached down and picked up that rattlesnake and put it inside his shirt to warm it up. Well, he was coming down the mountain, and he felt the snake move a little bit. And he came down a little further, and the snake moved a little bit more. Come on down the mountain, and the air was getting warmer, and the snake was moving around. Come on down a little more, and the snake was moving around, and it bit him. And he reached inside his shirt and pulled the snake out and said, "Why'd you bite me? I picked you up and saved your life, and now you've bitten me and I might die!" And the snake said, "You knew I was a rattlesnake when you picked me up."
>
> I sat there for a minute taking this in. "You knew I was a rattlesnake when you picked me up," Hawk repeated.
>
> "Uh huh," I said, "and this means?"
>
> "If you know somebody's a rattlesnake," he said, "you don't have to pick them up." (16)

Straightforwardly saying that a person was bad for Duncan would have been rude, not only because speaking badly of people is typically considered so, but also because Duncan's foolishness would have been pointed out. Furthermore, despite the emphasis on the group among tribal peoples, Native Americans highly regard an individual's autonomy in making personal decisions. Littlejohn, while he obviously cares enough for his friend that he would like to see her out of a destructive relationship, avoids directly telling her what to do. Had Duncan been accustomed to indirect discourse, the story alone would have sufficed. Even when she indicates with her question that she does not see how the story relates to the earlier portion of their conversation, Littlejohn finds other ways to imply this rather than fully explicating his "reading" of her situation. In short, he uses "synthesis" rather than "analysis" to help his friend. It is not surprising that this is the mode Duane Big Eagle points out is the one more common for problem-solving for Native peoples.[5]

I think the search for a tribal-centered criticism might start with an assertion by Blaeser, in which she builds upon the argument of Dennis Tedlock:

[5] In "Notes for Teachers on Native American Cultures," written for publication in his *Generations: Our People Say*, compiled by the California State Department of Education.

Between Indian and white world(view)s, to paraphrase the title of one of Szasz's books, there is a cross-cultural rhetorical obstacle. As Luther Standing Bear wrote nearly seventy years ago in *Land of the Spotted Eagle*: "Oratory receives little … understanding on the part of the white public, owing to the fact that oratorical complications include those of Indian orators." Articulating a Native rhetoric has been complicated by those very differences, structural, philosophical, and semantic. Consider the words of Clifford Crane Bear, Northern Blackfoot director of the Glenbow Museum in Calgary: "Theories are somebody's guess. Through our oral history, we were told never to use theories. We were told to use what we were taught…. The first thing my grandfather taught me was that the Earth is our Mother. Respect her." Though this comment was made in reference to museum studies, I would suggest examining the semantic difference can offer resolution to our problem in literary studies. Crane Bear's comment reveals both an epistemology and an ontology, one I would suggest that is common to many tribal peoples in North America. Moreover, this epistemology and ontology offer a theory of reading and understanding tied to a theory of communicating. American Indian Peoples have a theory of metaphysics, with all of its corresponding parts—but it is not traditionally articulated in conventional academic is discourse. Vine Deloria says that "tribal peoples are as systematic and philosophical as Western scientists in their efforts to understand the world around them. They simply use other kinds of data and have goals other than determining the mechanical functioning of things" (41). Native articulation of philosophy—of who we are and how we see the world, of what our position in it is in relation to the rest of Creation— has been accomplished by indirect discourse. We are taught by story, and we explain by story, not by exposition.

In contrast, mainstream academic discourse depends on linear argument—an argument that proceeds through a series of points, each of which is a small chunk of information, connected by the sort of logic for which verbal thinking is most conducive. This contrast can be shown using the metaphor made commonly known by Leslie Marmon Silko's widely taught and studied novel *Ceremony*. The spiderweb illustrates a Native ontology and epistemology, and not just because of its role in the stories of Southwest tribes. The spiderweb, the work of the Creator-Grandmother, is what is real, both seen and unseen. All of this creation is one story, the story which we as human beings inhabit. We can affect this story through our words, thoughts, and actions. And, like a web, if one strand is broken, the whole is affected. If someone wants to communicate something about this reality to someone else, there are an infinite number of connections between the speaker and the listener—and the story is all of the rest of the web. The speaker, knowing this, must pick a strand to follow. The listener must meet him or her at the point of connection. This is quite different from the rhetorical triangle of composition and communication theory, in which the noetic field is depicted with the speaker (subject) at one corner of the triangle, the audience (object)

at a another, the particular aspect of reality being discussed at the third, and the text in the middle.

In linear discourse[4] narrow theses are easier to work out. In fact, for those who think broadly or holistically, who see reality as an interwoven series of relationships in which everything is ultimately connected, thought is difficult to convey by this means. Thinking in smaller, verbal chunks changes the way the brain schematizes information, the way it stores and retrieves it. Verbal thinking allows, and, in fact, encourages, a thinker to move from point A to the related point B, and so forth, on to Z because the brain schematizes bits of information in relation to the ones it has already schematized. Very broadly speaking, the line of connection is known as "logic." But since it addresses only one kind of thinking, this definition does not encompass every kind of "logical" thought, though it may be that other forms of logical thought seem "illogical" to those accustomed only to mainstream discourse. As Leslie Marmon Silko said in her presentation "Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective":

> For those of you accustomed to a structure that moves from point A to point B to point C, this presentation may be somewhat difficult to follow because the structure of Pueblo expression resembles something like a spider's web—with many little threads radiating form a center, criss-crossing each other. As with the web, the structure will emerge as it is made and you must simply listen and trust, as the Pueblo people do, that meaning will be made. (48-49)

[4] During a reading by Robert Bly at the 2000 Beall Poetry Festival at Baylor University, Waco, TX, March 27-30, 2000, he and Carolyn Kizer both publicly bemoaned the use of linear thinking and suggested it was inferior to Eastern thought. Whereas Bly has offended many Native Americans in the past with his indiscriminate borrowing of Native motifs (the "Iron John" controversy) and whereas Native American cultures have often been hastily compared to Eastern cultures, I believe examining Bly's comment here can be profitable.

I would assert that Eastern thought, like Native American thought, is more holistic and syncretic, rather than linear and analytic. And there is now a scientific basis for this assertion, at least in terms of the differences between Eastern thinking and mainstream Western thought. University of Michigan social psychologist Richard Nisbett and his colleagues have recently completed several studies comparing European Americans to East Asians. At the last American Psychological Association annual conference in Washington, Nisbitt said: "We used to think that everybody uses categories in the same way, that logic plays the same kind of role for everyone in the understanding of everyday life, that memory, perception, rule application and so on are the same," Nisbett said. "But we're now arguing that cognitive processes themselves are just far more malleable than mainstream psychology assumed." *Psychological Review* has scheduled the publication of his research results.

own bridges to the past. I will not tolerate such transgressions of my being and character" (*Black Eagle Child* 140).

But finding a tribal-centered critical voice is not merely a political assertion on the part of American Indian academics. Though a great deal of the cultural literacy necessary to understand Native American texts has come from critics writing in the mainstream, though the scholarship has been done with honorable intentions, the appropriation, the cutting away, the splaying—the byproducts of mainstream modes of criticism—is offensive to many Native people.[1]

David Payne's description of his experiences with Native literature is a good example.

> Like most scholars old enough to worry about their cholesterol, I was taught to believe that good criticism spoke with the anonymous voice of a master rationalist, a sort of also-ran scientist, who dissected literary works like dead cats fresh out of the formaldehyde. I have since not only learned more ways to skin a cat, but to develop enough respect for cats to leave them fuzzy and contrary. I like them living in disdain of me (like stories) far more than splayed out on a lab table (like texts). And no matter how sharp a critic may hone in on a work/writer/movement, I now believe he's always telling me a personal story, not a universal narrative aimed at decoding a text (85).

Payne sees evidence of an evolution in approach in the latest works by Louis Owens and by Paula Gunn Allen—both mixed-bloods— works which contextualize the critic rather than positing the work as an object separate from him or her (85-89).[2] And in a few other critical works, Native and mixed-blood scholars have assumed similar stances, with the critic acting in the role of what Margaret Szasz calls a "culture broker," someone who can interpret between cultures.[3] Notably, this is seen in Allen's and Owens' earlier works, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* and *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel*;

[1] As Geary Hobson says,

> The assumption seems to be that one's "interest" in an Indian culture makes it okay for the invader to collect "data" from the Indian people when, in effect, this taking of the essentials of cultural lifeways, even if in the name of Truth or Scholarship or whatever, is as imperialistic as those simpler forms of theft of homeland by treaty. (101)

[2] The works I am referring to are Owens' *Mixed-Blood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place* and Allen's *Off the Reservation: Reflections on Boundary-Busting, Border-Crossing: Loose Canons.*

[3] Elaine Jahner recognized that critical analyses of Native literature was an exercise in cross-cultural communication as early as 1977.

in the essays in Jeanette Armstrong's critical anthology *Looking at the Words of Our People: First Nations Analysis of Literature*; in P. Jane Hafen's "Pan-Indianism and Tribal Sovereignties in *House Made of Dawn* and *The Names*"; and in Greg Sarris' *Keeping Slug Woman Alive: A Holistic Approach to American Texts.* One recent review is also worth noting in this regard: Betty Booth Donahue's "Observations of another Trotline Runner: A Critical Discussion of D.L. Birchfield's *Oklahoma Basic Intelligence Test.*"

Nevertheless, a telling comment by Donahue shows that even this repositioning of the critic is not enough. Donahue feels compelled to apologize because literary criticism violates Native ideals:

> It goes without saying that writing a piece of literary criticism that interprets a work violates the principles of Choctaw epistemology, since [in this worldview] the hearer/reader must do his or her own independent thinking. Because literary critics, Indian and non-Indian alike, are enmeshed in a publish or perish *Catch 22*, this Cherokee critic will write and hope that Choctaw readers will overlook the inappropriate activity. (68)

Mainstream literary criticism arises from both a philosophy and a rhetoric that is antithetical to those of traditional Native cultures. To accomplish what Blaeser has suggested, to create a tribal-centered literary criticism, we have to subvert the accepted modes of criticism structurally as well as hermeneutically. We need the rhetoric of the argument to be more "indigenous" if we want the end result of that argument to be more indigenous, because a good rhetoric and its epistemology are inextricably tied. At least they are if we interpret "rhetoric" the way it is defined in composition theory: i.e., a "rhetoric" is an organized system of language whose primary function is to convey an idea, an argument.

Though I do not mean to speak for everybody, I *suspect* that for many Native readers and writers, the accepted mode of academic discourse inhibits our readings of texts, because the kinds of arguments put forth in standard literary criticism differ vastly from how we are taught to communicate, and the kinds of readings explicated in academia are certainly antithetical to the way in which we are taught to view the world. The diverse tribal cultures in North America remain heavily and richly oral, despite the changes brought on by colonization—the very changes which have created the cultural context in which Native literature written in English has evolved, the changes that necessitate the kind of explication mainstream literary criticism requires. In fact, our existence hinges, both on a spiritual level from one perspective and on a cultural level from another, on the fact that we remain "storied Peoples." "Listening" is a very important influence on our reading. And a traditional oral rhetoric is still very much apparent in our written literary works.

colonization: new fire, new life. It is a culture of reservation boundaries—sometimes shared with those who were our traditional enemies. It is a culture of shared, syncretic spiritual experiences, particularly in relation to the Native American Church. It is a culture of relocation programs. It is a culture of the American Indian Movement. It is a culture of pow wows, and frybread. It is a culture of children who have gone off to universities and found family in Native student associations. As William S. Penn writes in *As We Are Now: Mixblood Essays on Race and Identity*:

> Only a few can remake themselves as full-blood essentialists. The rest have grown up influenced by a mixture of Native traditions as a result of their participation in urban Indian centers such as those in Los Angeles or Chicago where Hopi children learned Apache ways, or Nez Perce children learned Osage dances. (2)

And this common culture, Pan-Indian and Intertribal, is a culture of literature, of writing, of storytelling, of songs. English, despite the ironies pointed out by Ashcroft, Griffeths, and Tiffen in *The Empire Writes Back* (5), is its lingua franca. Even as we wish to celebrate and preserve our individual languages, we must also celebrate our shared language of English. It is our language of survival because it is the language of the Peoples now in terms of our common experiences and interests. Seeing our relation to one another does not erase individual tribal difference, it strengthens it.

A brief review of the history of criticism of Native American literature shows that some attempt to find a shared, more tribal-centered way of approaching these texts is needed. Across the board, whether critics are of Native or non-Native descent, what Blaeser protests against is present. Traditional literary criticism posits both the artist and the product as objects to be analyzed, rather than recognizing the artist as an agent negotiating meaning with an audience, placing the critic in the role of archeologist or anthropologist, a role that, in the opinion of many Native people, has led to cultural imperialism and exploitation. This "anthropologism" happens when well-meaning critics explain cultural aspects of Native texts, attempting to catalogue discrete chunks, and, in the process, fostering misrepresentation of the whole in the same way as museum exhibits of artifacts, thus leading to the same sense of transferred ownership: the artifacts now belong to the exhibitors, to the viewers, and the cultural "knowledge" now is the "intellectual property" of the critic. Mainstream criticism is simply not appropriate for every "American" literature that makes up our multifaceted canon. Paula Gunn Allen says,

> The beginning issue ... is not one of whether we can adequately discuss all the literature written in the United States since the beginning of the century (or the beginning of the nation), because, given our existing critical tools and the epistemology that gave rise to those tools, we cannot.... What we must devise, then, are critical strategies that do not descend only from Anglo-European criticism, for example, the Western Masculinist Aristocratic Tradition, for that tradition of necessity speaks only to and from itself .... (147)

Though Allen asserts that we need to find a shared way to address American literature as a whole, which indeed we do need to do, my purpose here is to assert that we need to first find a way to talk about our own stories appropriately. Blaeser, referring to a lesson taught by the character Uncle Luther in Louis Owens' *The Sharpest Sight*, puts it this way:

> We must first 'know the stories of our people' and then 'make our own story too.' And then ... we must 'be aware of the way they change the stories we already know' for only with that awareness can we protect the integrity of the Native American story. One way to safeguard that story is by asserting a critical voice that comes from within the tribal story itself. (61)

While I do not want to claim a privileged epistemology, one where mainstream criticism is *never* productive, *never* an appropriate enterprise, I do believe that articulating a tribal-centered criticism is a much-needed and Foucauldian assertion of power. As Paula Gunn Allen observes, "Even our few solid backers in academe perceive us as extensions of the great white way.... Our capacities as creative, self-directing, self-comprehending human beings are lost in the shuffle of ideology and taxonomy" (164). Native American academics are continually subjected to the mindset noted by Eduardo Galeano: "Throughout America, north and south ... the dominant culture acknowledges Indians as objects of study, but denies them as subjects of history" (qtd. in Stone ix). To assert ourselves as subjects, we must claim our own ways of making meaning, and we must give back to our Peoples in our roles as American Indian intellectuals. It is, as Elizabeth Cook-Lynn points out, an issue of sovereignty:

> Indian Nations are dispossessed of sovereignty in much of the intellectual discourse in literary studies, and there as elsewhere their natural and legal autonomy is described as simply another American cultural or ethnic minority. Scholarship shapes the political, intellectual, and historical nation-to-nation past as an Americanism that can be compared to any other minority past. (127)

We must, along with Ray Young Bear's character Edgar Bearchild, declare: "For too long we have been misrepresented and culturally maligned by an ungrateful country of Euro-American citizens who have all but burned their

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Towards a Tribal-Centered Reading of Native Literature: Using Indigenous Rhetoric(s) Instead of Literary Analysis

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> When outsiders can read between every stitch of beadwork, every wrap of quillwork and every brushstroke, then our stories will be told. —Del Iron Cloud on his philosophy of art

In an essay entitled "Native Literature: Seeking a Critical Center," Anishinabe critic Kimberly Blaeser has suggested that when scholars have attempted dialogic, or Bakhtinian, readings of Native American Literature, they have fallen short because the "native half to that vision has been conspicuously absent" (56-57). She argues that we need

> ... a way to approach Native Literature from an indigenous cultural context, a way to frame and enact a tribal-centered criticism [a way to] seek ... a critical voice which moves from the culturally-centered text outward toward the frontier of 'border' studies, rather than an external critical voice which seeks to penetrate, appropriate, colonize, or conquer the cultural center, and thereby, change the stories or remake the literary meaning. (53)

To rephrase that, we have been reading *against* Western notions, or at least explicating against them, instead of *from* Native ones; we have been forcing Native ideas onto a western ontological framework.

However, no one has fully articulated a more Native way of reading literary texts or, to strike at the heart of the matter, a corresponding way in which the readings offered by such a practice could be explained in writing. For one thing, Native American cultures are very diverse, and articulating a theory of reading/explicating that could apply across those cultures would be extraordinarily difficult. On the one hand, tribal cultures are autonomous entities—each maintaining distinct heritages and histories. The differences in these cultures cause us to be positioned differently as readers. A Chirachua friend has, for instance, a very different reading of N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* than I have as a reader of Cherokee/Choctaw/Creek heritage.

On the other hand, however, there is a strong Pan-Indian culture in the Americas today as well. It is a culture that has grown out of the ashes of