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Reviews

The Witch of Goingsnake and Other Stories. By Robert J. Conley. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988. 165 pages. \$17.95 Cloth.

At the end of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain's eternal outlaw, Huck Finn, vows to light out for the Territory. Huck's goal is "Indian Territory," that outlaw realm where the American hero could forge his own values free of the restraints of civilization. In *The Witch of Goingsnake and Other Stories*, Robert Conley illuminates the Indian no-man's-land of the "Territory"—today's Oklahoma—bringing to life a Cherokee world of witches and warriors, wandering mixed-bloods and outlaws and tricksters with names like Moon Face, Wili Woyi, Cherokee Bill and Calf Roper. Conley's is the real Indian territory, not the fantasy-land imagined by writers like Twain, but an in-between place where the Anglo-American world is manifested in hotrods and televisions while more significant values seem to rise out of mythic memory and landscape.

After a brief foreword by Wilma P. Mankiller, Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, testifying to the authenticity and importance of these stories, the collection Conley offers us is uneven, at times brilliant and absorbing and at other times slight and unfinished-seeming. At his best, as in "Wili Woyi," "The Witch of Goingsnake," and, especially, "Yellow Bird: An Imaginary Autobiography," Conley writes splendidly.

The title story, "The Witch of Goingsnake," is superb, focussing the attention of American readers on that other and older American realism—older, certainly, than the so-called magical realism of Garcia Marquez—the mythic realism of the Native American. In his protagonist, Bill Brown, Conley has conjured

an authentic American hero, a Cherokee who knows that magic is not a metaphor for the real. This is an American Indian reality, apart from Anglo-America and challenging readers to imagine another world.

In "Wili Woyi," Conley writes about a late nineteenth century conflict between Cherokee values and American law. A healer or *didahnuwisgi*, Wili Woyi—known as Bill Pigeon to non-Indians—has killed a white man in self-defense and must use his magic to escape the government noose. In the course of the story Conley makes it clear that he is not writing a fairy-tale but simply illuminating the way paths of perception differ radically for traditional Cherokee and all others.

It isn't, however, either of these solid stories for which this collection should be remembered, but the impeccable "Yellow Bird: An Imaginary Autobiography." In this piece, Conley completes the unimaginably poignant and fascinating life of *Tsisqua Dahlonageh*, Yellow Bird, also known as John Rollin Ridge. Ridge, the grandson of Major Ridge, is the trickster mixed-blood San Francisco author of *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta*, *The Celebrated California Bandit* (1854). Here, Conley allows Yellow Bird to tell in his own voice the story of a Cherokee who forged a literary career in the San Francisco of Brett Harte and Mark Twain while simultaneously nurturing Indian dreams of revenge and love. It is the autobiography of a mixed-blood who saw his father and grandfather murdered in the bitter factionalism that followed the Trail of Tears and who fled to California from the violence of the Territory, a sophisticated author who tells the origin myths of the Cherokee while strutting literally through San Francisco. With this story, Conley has re-imagined powerfully both the division and creative torment of Yellow Bird, and he has worked to recover for all Cherokee mixed-bloods a tribal heritage, and for all Americans an inescapable part of a continental heritage.

If in these three stories, plus additional pieces such as "Calf Roper's House Guest," Conley succeeds impressively, other stories in this collection of eighteen pieces leave me with a feeling of frustration. Too often the author presents fragments, quick sketches of moments in Cherokee lives that die away after scant pages, leaving the feeling that the author simply had not worked very hard. Too often the briefer pieces are missing the texture and resonance of the Cherokee world Conley—with his storyteller's skill—renders so effectively in "Yellow Bird" and "Goingsnake."

Though at times uneven, *The Witch of Goingsnake and Other Stories* offers nonetheless another valuable example of a new and important voice in American fiction. These are the stories of original Americans, what Principal Chief Wilma Mankiller calls stories of "balance and synthesis."

Were the provincial publishing wizards of New York awake and the rest of the nation alert to what is actually happening in American literature, they would really notice, at long last, American Indian fiction. Among such Indian writers as Gerald Vizenor, N. Scott Momaday, Louise Erdrich, Leslie Silko, and James Welch, they would notice Robert Conley.

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Social Change in the Southwest, 1350–1880. By Thomas D. Hall. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1989. 320 pages. \$35.00 Cloth.

This is an ambitious book. It tries to distill over 500 years of history in the space of just under 250 pages, exclusive of notes and references. At the same time, Hall uses his historical narrative to advance a complex critique of a complex set of ideas known generically as World Systems Theory (WST). Needless to say, this book is as dense as it is ambitious: packed with complex ideas, complicated arguments, and historical details.

As this description might suggest, the scope of this work is sufficiently grand that many potential readers might be skeptical of its merits, or fear it as unreadable. Nonetheless, rest assured that despite its subject matter, *Social Change in the Southwest* is an informative, readable work that succeeds well in many respects. It should appeal to, and should be read by many different audiences because it addresses diverse interests in World Systems Theory, the history of the Southwest, economic history, historical sociology, theories of social change, and relations between American Indians and Europeans. Hall should be commended for taking-up a challenging problem and handling it with adept conciseness.

Although closely linked, it is most convenient to review the theoretical contributions of Hall's volume separately from its contributions as an historical work. Early in this book, Hall takes aim