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Author

King, Patti Jo

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Cherokee Stories of the Turtle Island Liars' Club. By Christopher B. Teuton. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012. 272 pages. \$30.00 cloth.

In *Cherokee Stories of the Turtle Island Liars' Club*, indigenous literature scholar Christopher B. Teuton highlights the work of four master Cherokee storytellers: Hastings Shade, the late deputy chief of the Cherokee Nation; Sammy Still, United Keetoowah Band citizen and editor of the UKB tribal newspaper; writer Sequoyah Guess, also a UKB citizen; and Woody Hansen, a former tribal community healthcare worker. These men have been fast friends for over two decades and are renowned members of the Turtle Island Liars' Club, an informal association of highly skilled traditional storytellers whose purpose and passion is to preserve the practice of the historic storytelling conventions of the Cherokee people. The designation of these storytellers as "liars" is a tongue-in-cheek reference to the fanciful nature of their work, and since there is no succinct word in the Cherokee language for exactly what a storyteller does, they are referred to as *gagoga*, which literally means "he or she is lying" (2).

The book is divided into four chapters, beginning with a discussion of origin and creation stories, and segues through sections on community, teachings, beliefs, and cosmology. The author himself is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation, and his collaboration with the Liars' Club members attempts to provide a more nuanced glimpse into the cultural mind-set of the Cherokees. Weaving through each section of the book are conversations between the men, amusing anecdotes, and stories both old and new.

From ancient times, the Cherokees relied on oratory, rhetoric, and storytelling to pass on their worldview, epistemology, religious ideologies, and history. Well known for their oratorical prowess and skill, tribal storytellers compiled cherished information in allegories, myths, and legends that were routinely recited before the public. The perpetuation of Cherokee culture, history, and identity depended on the dissemination of this information, making each retelling a weighty and honorable responsibility, as well as a work of high art. Members of the Liars' Club continue this critical work today, yet, as the author points out, the "club" includes the entire community, including audience members. Club member Hastings Shade once explained the concept to the author as *sgadudv duhdatlesuh*, the community coming together to help one another (3). Although through their stories these orators continue to address such meaningful existential questions as, "Who are we?" "Where do we come from?" and "What is our purpose?" they also tell contemporary stories about their own lives and goings-on in the community. By doing so, they draw distinctions that help to define and clarify modern Cherokee identity, while

providing a viable means for negotiating the boundaries between mainstream and Cherokee culture.

Much attention in this collection is rightfully given to the work of Hastings Shade, one of the most revered Cherokee cultural ambassadors of his day. Throughout this volume, Teuton relates his conversations with Shade in which the late storyteller brilliantly explained the finer points of the Cherokee worldview, including information on origins, cosmology, symbolism, kinship, relationships, and history. Shade had a beautiful way of telling about these things and then relating them to contemporary Cherokee problems, issues, and concerns. He referred to the traditional stories as “teaching tools” and lamented the lack of time modern parents spend actually sitting and talking to their children today, giving them moral guidance through the old stories (134). As told by these four orators, moral wisdom is evident in these old and contemporary stories, most notably in Shade’s explanation of “How the Terrapin Lost His Whistle” and “Why the Mocking Bird Sings.” It is also prevalent in Sequoyah Guess’ tale about why “Wolf Wears Shoes,” Sammy Still’s recitation of his grandmother’s story “The Return of the Bear,” and in Woody Hansen’s “The Copperheads at the Four Corners of Kenwood.” Even so, all the men agree that these stories are dynamic, constantly evolving through their telling: as Shade said, “they’re growing, living things” (200).

With the invention of Sequoyah’s syllabary in the 1820s, the Cherokees suddenly stepped across the perceived anthropologic dividing line that separated “primitive” pre-literate societies from “civilized” literate societies. The genius of the Cherokee syllabary is its uncomplicated design of eighty-six characters, each of which designates a particular symbol to represent a syllable sound of the Cherokee language. An intriguing aspect of this book is Teuton’s inclusion of phonetic transcriptions of some of the stories in that syllabary, as well as English, an addition that corroborates the author’s emphasis on the critical importance of language. There are a number of pitfalls associated with translating Native oral stories into English, not the least of which is trying to decide how to transition from oral expression to written form. Some Native languages have no adjectives, and some rely heavily on metaphor, which is incredibly difficult to translate. Translating that entails the transformation of living, vibrant, spoken words into static, fixed text that is subject to criticism is also problematic. Yet the storytellers all agree that since many Cherokees today no longer speak the language, English translation is helpful in assuring the dissemination of the stories. Another important aspect of this book is the artwork; it is beautifully illustrated with more than a dozen black-and-white plates by award-winning Cherokee artist America Meredith.

While Teuton’s choice of storytellers is excellent, one wonders why he did not include any women in his book. Historically, women and men both

performed the role of storyteller, and there are some very fine and reputable women storytellers in the Cherokee Nation. Particularly given the matrilineal and matriarchal nature of early Cherokee society, including their stories and storytelling methods would be very interesting. From a traditional standpoint, their inclusion would not only enhance this collection but might be quite useful as a much-needed tool for analyzing and delineating the perspectives of Cherokee women. The stories they tell and the ways in which they tell them in comparison to the men would make the collection additionally fascinating.

As in the case of all Native oral stories, the stories do not contain knowledge; rather, they are themselves the knowledge. Teuton believes that in constantly tying their contemporary stories to oral lessons of the past, the members of the Liars' Club are actively reinforcing and preserving the power of stories as a critical source of tradition and knowledge, an observation that is well-supported by the stories he includes in this volume (8). This engaging book is both a wonderful introduction and a useful analysis of that age-old tradition. It is a delightful read that will be an invaluable addition to any scholar's library on Cherokee culture and history.

Patti Jo King

University of North Dakota

Civilizing the Wilderness: Culture and Nature in Pre-Confederation Canada and Rupert's Land. By A. A. den Otter. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2011. 520 pages. \$49.95 paper.

A. A. den Otter offers a comprehensive history of the mid-nineteenth century project to civilize the Canadian wilderness circumscribed in pre-Confederation Canada and Rupert's Land. He argues that British North Americans aggressively, even forcefully, imposed a civilizing mission that would transform the wilderness they feared into a veritable Garden of Eden and lift the indigenous inhabitants of that wilderness out of their fierce and savage state into what the newcomers perceived as the loftier form of humanity: farmers and agriculturalists. Promising to provide a fuller analysis of the definitions of wilderness and civilization than were fashionable in the mid-1850s, or even in the current secondary literature, he also examines how the drive to civilize British North America with agricultural settlement and a westward expanding transcontinental railway constituted a different mandate than the American program of conservation. Den Otter unravels how liberal ideology and Britain's new nineteenth-century imperialism went hand in hand to transform the northwest prairies and their adjoining forests into an organized and patterned landscape