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the image of an earth-centered society. The continuity of feminine spirituality and kinship is emphasized, rather than the changing scene of masculine politics and military action. Allen wants to shock us out of our complacency based on our uncritical acceptance of patriarchal sources, to get us to dig more deeply into other sources on Indian women. Her message is one that must be pursued by historians, social scientists, and literary critics. For alerting us to the importance of the feminine in an Indian world-view, we owe her a great debt.

Walter L. Williams
University of Southern California

Simon Ortiz. By Andrew Wiget. Boise, Idaho: Boise State University: Western Writers Series, 1986. \$2.95 Paper.

Andrew Wiget's brief but comprehensive study of contemporary Native American poet Simon Ortiz reflects both the advantages and the disadvantages of Boise State University's Western Writers Series. The series has more than proved its usefulness to both general readers and more serious critics of writings about the American West. Each pamphlet in the series runs fifty pages in length and is devoted to both biographical commentary and critical/analytical consideration of recognized or at least ostensibly "prominent" Western writers in an overall attempt to reconcile—and if not that, then attempt to explain—relationships between Western regionalism and aesthetics.

Wiget's monograph on Ortiz is number seventy-four in a run that now totals seventy-six, with another hundred or so projected titles either "in preparation" or "forthcoming." The obvious question of whether or not each and every one of these writers is indeed worthy of study on either their own merits or as "Western" writers provides a starting point for all of the pamphlets.

Some series authors succeed inconvincingly in addressing this concern. Others fail. When pamphlets appear (as is projected in one instance) on the very author who has written some of the pamphlets on other authors in the series, the whole self-generating, catch-all quality of the series comes into more serious question.

In the instance of Simon Ortiz, however, Wiget does a more than credible job of justifying his particular pamphlet on Ortiz and, by extension, the inclusion of other somewhat more widely recognized contemporary Native American authors such as N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Silko, and James Welch (all of whom have been included previously in the series), as part of continuing inquiries about the definition and location of "West" and of a genre such as "the Western" which, traditionally, has been so antagonistic and stereotypically demeaning to Native Americans. In this regard, congratulations are due, one should observe, to the series editors at Boise State University who have campaigned so zealously for recognition of Western and Native American writers so often overlooked or relegated to inferior artistic status by the Eastern literary and publishing establishment. In this respect, and in the overall physical and professional results of each pamphlet, and as an enterprise which has sustained itself for a decade, the Western Writers Series itself deserves high marks.

As Wiget's pamphlet shows, however, the format of the series is confining, predictable, and therefore somewhat monotonous. A brief section is devoted to the issue of Ortiz as a "Western" writer in the first place, followed by an even briefer section on Ortiz's life—his Acoma ancestry, the influences of his father and grandfather, his education at Saint Catherine's Indian School in Santa Fe and later at the University of New Mexico and the University of Iowa's Writers Workshop, his stint in the army, his bout with alcoholism and convalescence at the Veterans' Administration hospital in Ft. Lyons, Colorado. Then, in lock-step fashion, Wiget takes up, first, Ortiz's short fiction (e.g., the early stories in Kenneth Rosen's trend-setting *The Man to Send Rain Clouds*, 1974, and then in Ortiz's own collection, *Howbah Indians*, 1978, and most recently, *Fightin'*, 1983): then Wiget turns to a consideration of the poetry: *Going for the Rain* (1969), *A Good Journey* (1977), and *From Sand Creek* (1981), in addition to *Fight Back* (1980). The pamphlet concludes with three paragraphs of evaluation of all of Ortiz's writings and why—relatively few as they may be at this point in his career—they matter.

Time and again the format which Wiget so diligently follows seems to stifle the kind of probing assertion and support which, in a more extended form, would no doubt make his observations and assessments even more convincing. Any such reader regret,

admittedly, must be met with ambivalence by anyone who picks up this or any others of these pamphlets. For if this fixed format of the series were not followed, its intended purpose might well not be met here: to "introduce" the reader, in compact form, to the life and writings of Simon Ortiz.

Wiget makes the valid but at times overlooked point that Ortiz shares much the same post-sixties tradition of Momaday, Silko (his friend from nearby Laguna Pueblo and from Albuquerque), and the Blackfoot/Gros Ventre author, James Welch, as American Indian writers "remembering" the oral story-telling pasts of their respective Pueblo and plains cultures and of the vitally central role of landscape in their own and their ancestors' lives and literatures. Wiget's conclusion that Ortiz falls somewhere between the mythopoetic work of Silko and the "equally explicit demythologization of Indians offered by James Welch," is mitigated somewhat by Welch's more atavistic novel, *Fools Crow* (1987), published after Wiget came to such a conclusion.

Wiget also relies a bit too heavily on Ortiz's autobiographical essay, "Always the Stories: A Brief History and Thoughts on My Writing" (1984), for his biographical source in tracing the importance of words and language to Ortiz. An actual interview with Ortiz might have merely reinforced the same conclusions; but it would have added both currency and cogency.

Moreover, direct commentary by Ortiz on his own stories and poems would bring more snap and, no doubt, controversy to Wiget's analyses of Ortiz's stories and his poems as well. As enlightening and generally right-headed as Wiget's critical insights and interpretations are, he nevertheless seems too restrictive and categorical throughout. His explanation of Luis Baca's pathetic, ironic death-breath utterance of "Compadre" in Ortiz's well-known story, "The Killing of a State Cop," for example, seems much over-analyzed and certainly open to less labored explanation than Wiget seems to allow. In any event, Ortiz's intent here would be worth considering and fun to know. Similarly, Wiget relies too much on another critic's, Larry Evers, accounting for the narrative and fictive differences in Silko's treatment of the same murder of Nash Garcia as "historical fact" in her own version of the killing—"Tony's Story."

Wiget is best in his observations about the political assumptions and protest stance behind Ortiz's poetry. It is here, in commentary on such poems as "The Significance of Veterans' Day," that

Wiget is most convincing in his own arguments while still allowing other approaches and interpretations. Wiget himself continually stresses that language and place are complementary themes in conjunction with politics in all of Ortiz's writing in varying degrees. All literature—and certainly all literature which deals with the racial and economic exploitation and displacements of the American West is, perhaps, ultimately "political." And Ortiz, as a "Western" writer of the present but paradoxically earliest kind goes far to demonstrate this.

Wiget contends that whatever protest Ortiz wages in his poetry is really an affirmation of a more original and ideal America, and a more ideal American West—old and new—free of Red/White, man/woman, human/environmental and other antagonisms—a place envisioned in the beginning and somehow yet to be realized. That is both the regional and the aesthetic significance of Ortiz as yet another name in the ongoing series of "Western Writers."

Robert Gish
University of Northern Iowa

Red Earth, White Earth. By Will Weaver. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986. 383 pages. Cloth \$17.95.

Red Earth, White Earth is a novel about American Indians that definitely needs to be examined critically because of its current theme, Indian land, and the real struggle going on presently at White Earth Indian Nation in northern Minnesota, about 200 miles from Minneapolis.

Literature should be honest. This criterion has to be used to evaluate the worth of the book. A lot has been written about Indians that misrepresents the truth. For that reason, it is not a problem of reality versus art but of honesty.

There are two main characters in the novel, Guy Pehrsson and Tom Littlewolf. Guy is white and Tom is from White Earth. In the book, we can only see things through Guy's eyes. That is, we can merely see what the narrator, Guy, sees.

The novel literally begins with Guy receiving an urgent letter from his grandfather, Helmer, asking Guy to return to the farm because of an emergency. Guy has been away for twelve years.