

## *Explorations in Sights and Sounds*

In reviewing references, it appears that the authors do not include Korean newspapers published in America dealing with the riots (*The Korea Daily*, *The Korea Central Daily News*, *The Dong Aha Daily*) and the documentary videos ("L.A. Is Burning: Five and "Sa-I-Gu" [April 19, 1992], [National Asian-American Tele-Communication Association, San Francisco, 1994]).

Undoubtedly, the authors put together the book with enormous perception of and empathy toward the *Blue Dreamers* and the realities which transformed into "Elusive American Dreams." As K.W. Lee, a noted Korean journalist and the Freedom Forum awardee of 1994 put it, "*Blue Dreams* is a welcome exploration by outsiders into the vexing and largely invisible Korean American predicament in Los Angeles and the nation."

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**Sherman Alexie. *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*. (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1993) 223 pp., \$21.00 cloth.**

A member of the Spokane tribe, Alexie writes the heart of a community that is joined through hardship, hope, land, and story. On and off the reservation, from the storytelling of Thomas Builds-the-Fire to Norma's fancydancing, a drumbeat of home follows everyone.

Alexie deals with what many Indian people in cities and on reservations across America experience everyday—pow-wows and all-Indian basketball games that are just as real as alcohol and other common tragedies like car accidents and the U.S. government's broken promises. With his poet's eye for vivid detail, Alexie pulls readers into the text, making us experience reservation life and, especially through his exceptional characterizations and poignant humor, inviting us to make an emotional investment in this community. The reader becomes both participant and observer via the different stories' first-person and third-person points of view. Also, throughout the book, reader and reappearing characters keep crossing each other's paths, as if the reader were a part of the community and thus fated to receive these fragments of community members' lives.

The reader identifies with the characters' ordinary situations, but we go deeper than identification when the ordinary becomes extraordinary, as it often does in this magical collection. "The ordinary," one of Alexie's narrators says, "can be like medicine." In the chapter for which Alexie takes an epigraph from Kafka's *The Trial*, we experience the eerie truth of the wonderful lies of storyteller Thomas Builds-the-Fire. Placed on the witness stand, Thomas confesses to the 1858 killing of two U.S. soldiers; he confesses to history. Thomas holds himself responsible

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because as an embodiment of his people, he embodies the people's stories. He has inherited his ancestors' actions, just as whites have, though the white people in what the judge heatedly calls the "fucking court[room]" don't comprehend this.

In Alexie's vision of Spokane life, "it is always now. That's what Indian time is." Alexie writes of the past, present, and future—not a linear telling, but backwards and forwards and in the simultaneous present all at once, like remembering, a putting back together. The reader is encouraged to think about the past, owning instead of denying it. Because the history of white-Indian suffering is still festering, through Thomas's ludicrous, yet historically and temporally transforming confession, the reader (Spokane and non-Spokane) can realize and be absolved of the guilt of never-ending stories of ordinary horror, thus affording the extraordinary opportunity to heal the past, restoring to the descendants of all the sufferers the human ability too "smile [and] laugh again" and thereby make room for joy, new life, the future.

For the non-Native, this collection of short stories is a look at reservation life, a storyteller's gift to foster understanding. For American Indians, the book is a window into the life of another tribal community. For the Spokane, Alexie's vision is a reminder to everyone, even themselves, that the Spokane exist, living the reservation commonplace of tragedy and survival, but through the visionary power of the "tribal imagination."

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**Elizabeth Ammons and Annette White-Parks, eds. *Tricksterism in Turn-of-the-Century American Literature: A Multicultural Perspective*. (Hanover and London: Tufts University/University Press of New England, 1994) 201 pp.**

Opening the volume is a brief introduction by Elizabeth Ammons in which she discusses the major premise around which this book is organized—namely, that "tricksterism" is a phenomenon in turn-of-the-century literature that, through tricks in authorship and narrative intention, disrupts the "master narrative" of the dominant racist Anglo culture. The articles concern works from a range of cultural backgrounds: Chinese American, Mexican American, Native American, European American, and African American. Each article includes endnotes and a list of works cited. The volume also offers contributors' notes and an index.

Two of the articles are less successful than the others. The connections between Frank Norris's McTeague character and the Coyote trickster are unconvincing in Eric Anderson's "Manifest Dentistry, or Teaching Oral Narrative in McTeagues and Old Man Coyote." Tiffany Ana