

<sup>24</sup>LaDuke and Churchill, 114.

<sup>25</sup>Boas, 9.

<sup>26</sup>R. W. B. Lewis, *The American Adam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955).

<sup>27</sup>Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

<sup>28</sup>F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925, rpt. 1953), 123.

<sup>29</sup>Per Seyersted, "Two Interviews with Leslie Marmon Silko," *American Studies in Scandinavia* 13 (1981): 17-33, 26-27.

## Critique

These days, most literary criticism, like the world view that spawned it, is obsolete, a luxury we can no longer afford. Too much of it is esoteric, egotistical, and trivial. While the world balances on the edge of annihilation, we count semicolons on our computers.

But such is not the way of Helen Jaskoski's article. It is good criticism--in the fullest sense of the word. She helps us to see the works--*Ceremony* and *Stallion Gate*--more clearly and, in turn, to see the world more clearly. And we need help with both. We need help to understand these novels more fully, for they arise from a very different world vision from the traditional paradigm of reality shaped by Western science--which most of us were trained to see. Ironically, however, understanding the vision of these novels, the traditional vision of the American Indian, in turn helps us to understand the emerging new vision of Western science.

Jaskoski begins by posing the paradox, developed in their respective novels by Silko and Cruz Smith, that American Indian people have been "first and longest in their exposure to nuclear power and its effects . . . ." Early on, she points out that in both novels, "nuclear weapons and nuclear power . . . are seen, not as a special case of weapons or power . . . but as the logical and inevitable culmination of western empirical thought. In both novels this mode of thought is juxtaposed, and in conflict, with the philosophy of the peoples within whose lands the nuclear age is created." She then takes us on a careful walk

through the novels and through these heretofore contrasting world views.

It is important for us to see that there is a paradox at work here even more fundamental than the one upon which Jaskoski focuses. To understand the traditional world view of the American Indian is no longer so much to understand the past as it is to understand the future if there is to be a future. In getting at the heart of the vision of these American Indian novels, Jaskoski is also helping us get at the heart of the emerging paradigm of the dominant culture, the new vision of modern science.

The greater paradox, then, is this: The development and explosion of The Bomb, which took place in such close proximity to the American Indian people and the ingredients of which were ripped from their sacred land, also exploded the very foundation of the world view that produced that bomb--the same vision of reality that permitted and promoted the "discovery" and ultimate occupation and destruction of the American Indian's land in the first place. It is vision that is now obsolete.

In splitting the atom and releasing its awful energy in the form of the atomic bomb, Western empirical science also literally and symbolically destroyed the basis of its own world view--that of the atom as an indivisible and fundamental building block of a material universe. Enter quantum physics. And now, traditional, left-brained, linear, reductionist science has burst its own blinders and is coming around to a vision of life and reality which is very similar to the traditional vision of the American Indian.

Listen, for example, to Chief Seattle, speaking in 1855: "Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the children of the earth."

The scientific paradigm that produced the bomb scoffed at such seeing as that embodied in Chief Seattle's words--even as it was unwittingly producing its proof. Jaskoski helps us see the examples of the irreverence, blindness, and brutality of the dominant paradigm woven throughout the two novels. So certain was science of its linear vision that it could not see the great circle of life of the American Indian vision.

But all that is now changing. From the vanguard of the same science that created the bomb now comes a steady stream of messages describing a very different view of reality. From Rupert Sheldrake's morphogenetic field theory in biology to

Karl Pribram's holographic theory of the human brain to David Bohm's *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*<sup>1</sup> in physics, the emerging description of the world is much closer to that of Chief Seattle and the traditional American Indian vision. Perhaps Fritjof Capra, theoretical physicist, says it best: "Quantum physics forces us to see the universe not as a collection of physical objects, but rather as a complicated web of relations between various parts of a unified whole."<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the paradigm that produced the bomb and has very nearly consumed the Earth now comes around to embrace the only vision that may be able to save us--the vision of Thinking Woman's Children. Fortunately, Helen Jaskoski's own vision is larger than semicolons, large enough to see where we are heading--and her work on *Ceremony* and *Stallion Gate* helps us along the way.

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<sup>1</sup>David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980).

<sup>2</sup>Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (New York: Bantam, 1975), 124.