

life through all five senses and by making real the human experiences of Ch'idziguaak and Sa', Velma Wallis can be sure that *Two Old Women* will create both fascination and pride in future readers.

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Anna Lee Walters. *Talking Indian: Reflections on Survival and Writing*. (Ithaca, NY: Firebrand, 1992) 222 pp. \$22.95 cloth, \$10.95 paper.

Anna Lee Walters creates an interesting chronicle that is both personal and historical. As she writes of self and family, she also writes about a multitribal web of cultural beliefs and historical interactions with whites that have come to define tribal people today.

Walters includes a few of her short stories, some previously published and others published for the first time here; excerpts from her novel, *Ghost Singer*; and individual histories of Pawnee, Otoe-Missouria, and Navajo from the time of contact with white to the present, offering a litany of ancestors' names along the way. Walters recognizes that her own survival is due to the survival of those ancestors. Many are positive figures; others are more controversial. Her honest inclusivity serves as a bridge toward understanding. By allowing her readers the opportunity to acknowledge a rich ancestry that conjures up a certain ambivalence, her readers may feel more at ease with their own family histories. Her white readers may also begin to realize that "Indian" history is, first, a human story.

The contexts for Walters' discussion of these personal/com-munal histories and of her own literature is the idea of talking Indian, thinking Indian. Her own literary perspective starts in the oral tradition—personal word memories and voices from her earliest recollections define her literary experience. She begins the book by discussing the oral tradition. Obviously, her literary expression cannot be separated from her experience of tribal expression. The voice of oral tradition "emanates from several directions," Walters says, "and leads the people around to other times and places, as far out as into the heavens and up to the stars, a journey still accessible, but only through the spoken word...It is our voice and the voice of our ancestors, and yet it is something me, something larger. We cannot separate ourselves from it because it is impossible to know where it ends and we begin...It is an ancient being, this voice that survives longer than one human being..."

Walters is much more eloquent and powerful in her nonfiction prose than in her fiction. Her stories are enjoyable, but they seem

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skimpier than this prose that carries elegantly—in her simple informative style—so much weighty personal and communal legacy.

Walters illustrates from her “insider” point of view the alienation and confusion of a Native child in a white educational system. In school, Indians were discussed always in reference to the past or were erased completely from the curriculum because they were seen as defeated people.

In literature, Walters sees the misrepresentations and the eradication of tribal people as educative propaganda used to keep Indians in their place—that is, invisible, dead—while maintaining the “mainstream’s” status quo. Because nontribal scholars “do not necessarily know tribal people best,” Walters argues for the “inherent right of tribal people to interpret events and time in their worlds according to their own aesthetics and values, as a component of American history, even when this interpretation is different from that of mainstream history.” So far, she adds, even after five hundred years, Native people “remain strangers to American society and history.”

With this book, Walters’ discussion of her own life and literature makes her and her nontribal readers less estranged from one another. Walters generously offers readers a rather comprehensive look into the legacy of one Native American writer, her way of thinking and being in the world, a personal definition that refines and expands public definitions of “American “ history and literature.

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Usha Welaratna. *Beyond the Killing Fields: Voices of Nine Cambodian Survivors in America.* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993) 285 pp., \$29.95 hard cover.

Although approximately 150,000 Cambodians now reside in the United States, very little information has been published on this group. When available at all, descriptive and statistical data about Cambodians is generally lumped together with that of Laotians and Vietnamese in the category “Southeast Asian Refugees.” This is a grave shortcoming: first, because the Cambodians’ culture is quite different from that of other Southeast Asians—making aggregate accounts of their experience inaccurate; and second, and perhaps even more important, is the fact that the Cambodian people have experienced one of the most horrible holocausts in modern history, making their ordeal one which should be well-documented such that