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Callahan, S. Alice: *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997, ISBN 0-8032-1460-X Cloth US \$ 20.00; 0-8032-6378-3 Paper US \$ 9.95.

While publication of poems and essays by American Indians reaches back to the late 18th century, this little novel, first published in 1891 by H.J. Smith and Co., Chicago, is widely understood to be the first written by a woman of American Indian heritage. Republished by the University of Nebraska Press in 1997, it is obscure enough to have eluded even A. La Vonne Brown Ruoff, in that most comprehensive bibliographic survey of American Indian writing, *American Indian Literatures* (Modern Languages Association, 1990) although as editor of the new edition of *Wynema*, Ruoff more than makes up for the oversight. The announcement of the first edition, in the 6 June, 1891 volume of *Our Brother in Red*, quoted in Ruoff's informative introduction, presages 106 years of obscurity "...we look forward with pleasure to a time when our other duties will permit us to read the book," puffs the announcement. It advances the condescension evident in the publisher's preface of the original edition, in which Callahan's work is offered notwithstanding its "crudeness and incompleteness." This fine new edition will renew access to a genteel but still penetrating understanding of

life among the Muscogee (Creek) of Oklahoma in the last two decades of the 19th century, and to the voice of a Native woman writer who, while silenced by an early death at age twenty-six in 1894, emerges now as a singularly brave and morally resonant voice. Some may even understand the publication as the arrival of justice long delayed.

*Wynema* is the work of a well read, devout, sentimental idealist. From the "upper crust" of Muscogee society, Callahan, a teacher, was well educated in European languages, literature, and music. But she is by no means a traditionalist. Wynema is a bright and eager Native student at the missionary school who discovers in her teacher, Genevieve, not only a model of Christian virtue but an ardent friend who imbues her with the confidence to challenge contemporary mores. Together, they espouse liberal causes, edifying and educating all around them. Notwithstanding the sermonizing, this is by no means a comfortable book of pieties. It is, rather, an avowal of positions on issues that were critical to Callahan as a Native person, as a woman, and as a Christian. Interestingly, the transparent plot line and sweet but narrow character development all strongly suggest that it is Genevieve, not the Native heroine, who functions as the virtually unmediated voice of the author. Quite clearly *Wynema* is first and foremost a political novel. Every event, every characterization, every advance in plot arises out of a nexus of issues with justice for Native persons at its centre. Certainly this dimension lifts the work above the "domestic romance," a popular genre in late Victorian fiction.

The treatment of Wynema's character is the key to Callahan's world view. While Callahan taught, just as do Genevieve and Wynema, in a missionary school, her characters are not "reformed," "refined," or "made upright" through the missionary zeal that surrounds them. Callahan makes it clear that the thoroughly believable courage and goodness of Wynema and of all the Indian characters is not the product of missionary indoctrination; it is inherent. It is this strength, in confrontation with conditions of hardship and oppression, that galvanizes the realization of both the rightness and the inevitability of struggle if justice for Indians is to be achieved. For the White characters, such understanding is not realized *in situ* but crafted through moral imagination fired by a biblical code.

But even for Whites, moral authority is not understood in exclusively abstract terms. It can indeed flow from experience—most clearly, from the experience of White women. Far removed from the current association of the religious right with the oppression of women, the "home mission movement," an obvious influence on Callahan's world view, was an empowering, even liberating force for women in late 19th century America. For both Wynema and Genevieve, the fundamentality of women's moral author-

ity, intellectual and political independence is beyond question. Conventional notions of a woman's place, such as are held by Genevieve's rejected suitor, Maurice Mauran, are deemed to be outdated opinions. The oppression of women is understood as the singular parallel of the oppression of Native peoples. This notion of the moral authority of women and, in particular, the readiness to translate it into action, is seized by Callahan as an agent of social change. In the shadow of its power, missionary/teacher Gerald Keithly, who becomes Genevieve's husband, and Robin Weir, Genevieve's brother, who becomes Wynema's husband, understand marriage as a partnership of equals. This ethical vision informs the men's attitude toward Native people, whose culture they admire and whose redemption inspires commitment.

Not surprisingly for a young writer whose work prioritizes social change, Callahan's notion of structure seems driven by the more immediate problem of bundling complex social and political issues within the constricted range of a short novel than by aesthetic considerations. But, while structure may be inexpertly handled, the author's grasp of the issues and the "reasoned passion" with which they are impelled into the developing story line are ample compensation. While the story promotes modesty, chastity, marital harmony and sobriety in the figures of Wynema and Genevieve, it is the politically tinged issues of principle and historical record that capture Callahan's most intense focus.

She finds a way to educate the reader by deepening the often trivial substance of the "domestic romance" through addressing such critical matters as the allotment of Muscogee land, the effect of the *Dawes Act* of 1887, corruption amongst Muscogee office-holders, and generally, through exposing the historical wrongs and invidious policies under which her people suffered. She grafts on to the loose shape of the novel the tale of a dreadful massacre, paralleling in quite fine detail the actual massacre at Wounded Knee. In addition to demonstrating the less-than-surprising moral status of Wynema and Genevieve's husbands, who march straightforwardly to assist the Lakota, the episode is seized upon as a means to dramatize both the irrational brutality of the American army and the nobility of the Indian in the face of desperate circumstance. Significantly, Callahan uses marriage, in this case the marriage of the Native warrior, Wildfire who faces certain death in battle and his wife, Miscona who refuses to leave his side, as a vehicle to exalt both the nobility of a people and the elevation of an institution.

To limit an appreciation of *Wynema* to that of "historical value" would be to extend the sad history of its first 106 years. Callahan was serious, perceptive and courageous. She was a beginning novelist, to be sure, but

not without talent. She realized when few did, the importance of getting out the story of the destruction of the American Indian while providing, albeit from a parochial perspective, a vision of redemption through recognition of the autonomy and moral imagination of individuals, couples and nations. The editor's introduction is comprehensive and detailed. Endnotes provide very useful clarification and discussion.

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Cardozo-Freeman, Inez (Editor): *Chief: The Life History of Eugene Delorme, Imprisoned Santee Sioux*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994, ISBN 0-8032-1469-3 Cloth USA \$ 26.00.

*Chief* is another of the many life histories in the *American Indian Lives* series put out by the University of Nebraska Press. It is difficult to review this book without having read *The Joint: Language and Culture in a Maximum Security Prison* (1984). This is because portions of chapter 2 have been reprinted from it. *The Joint* might have given some insight into the initial encounter between Cardozo-Freeman and Delorme. This interface is always of interest to Indigenous persons. Often, it indicates the quality of the production, especially since "the presence of the Great Spirit" is evoked here. We are obliged to take the encounter between interlocutor and subject as described in the Introduction. Delorme decided that Cardozo-Freeman "needed to look carefully at the life of one imprisoned man in order to understand how he came to be there. Delorme chose himself for that life-story" (xi). The crux of this endeavor is his rationale. Having taught in prisons, I am aware of the range of Indigenous prisoners—from traditional, fatalistic ones to urban opportunists who know how to play the system.

Ms. Cardozo-Freeman correctly indicates that Delorme's world view is not Native. It is significant that much of his knowledge of Native spirituality was learned in prison. And his views of "traditional" Indians are also revealing. It appears obvious that "the centrality of self" is a rationale for Delorme's life history. His concern for "what happens to Indians in the criminal justice system" might justify his idiosyncratic life, which he presents with humour in some cases, pathos in others; yet his belligerence and fuck