

The Use of Allusions in Contemporary Native American Fiction

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Introduction

THE CRITIC JONATHAN Culler notes that literature “has always been concerned with questions about identity, and literary works sketch answers, implicitly or explicitly, to these questions” (110). The term Native American fiction, for example, posits this relationship between literature and identity as a given: Native American writers write about Native American themes and issues, thus producing Native American fiction. That may sound like a reasonable assumption, but actually it is not. Admittedly, given the spread of multiculturalism in the United States, the trend has been to use literature to assert issues of identity (whether cultural, racial, gender-based, etc.). But individual identity is itself a composite created from multiple roles and personalities. Like most people, writers tend to choose and emphasize (or de-emphasize) particular roles based on whim or need. Thus, feminist readings of stories like Penny Olson’s “The Dream” or Louise Erdrich’s “Hauser” might provide insights and perspectives that may be dismissed or disregarded if the latter were viewed solely or primarily as Native American texts (notwithstanding the fact they were written by well-known Native American authors).

This seemingly obvious point must be made given that this paper will focus on stories that actively assert a Native American perspective and identity. Literature used in this manner has its advantages and disadvantages, as

inadvertently pointed out by Native American writer and scholar Craig Lesley in an essay for the National Council of Teachers of English. While describing the resurgence of contemporary Native American writing after 1969 (when M. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* won the Pulitzer Prize) as "a major literary force," Lesley adds that "many readers remain puzzled about the new Indian writers because their works cannot be explicated fully according to familiar literary criteria" (492). To enlighten readers, Lesley identifies six major characteristics or themes of contemporary Native American writing: importance of the land, search for the center, relationship to the past, bitterness towards white culture, belief in the power of words, and the importance of silence.

These characteristics are often analyzed and dissected in numerous studies of Native American writers and their works (whether or not the authors of these studies utilize Leslie's terminology). Rather than merely supplementing this existing body of work by tackling these themes directly (and running the risk of perhaps repeating what has already been said before), this paper proposes to focus instead on a specific mode of presentation: the use of obscure allusions. This paper will argue that contemporary Native American writers make use of these obscure allusions to introduce themes vital to their racial and cultural outlook, perspective, and identity. Moreover, this paper will also assert that how these allusions are used contribute significantly to the development of the aforementioned themes. In other words, the medium of the message is part and parcel of the message itself.

The Use of Allusions

An allusion is defined as "a reference in a literary work to some person, place, thing, or event outside the work, or to some other literary work. These references illustrate or emphasize through comparison or contrast, but when there is discrepancy between the subject and the allusion, the effect can be ironic" (Myers-Shaffer 215).

The literary effects created by allusions work for both writer and reader. The writer uses an allusion to increase the scope and impact of his words through the use of associations. For example, a journalist writing about the plight of modern-day factory workers in China might put his subject in a new light with an allusion to the suffering of Israelite slaves in Egypt. This

is a process of de-familiarization through the use of the familiar. People who have come to consider exploitative working conditions as an accepted aspect of modern capitalism are forced to re-evaluate their preconceptions with the introduction of a familiar idea that they find unacceptable, such as slavery. But for the process to work, both writer and reader must share an awareness of the historical, cultural, or literary event or object being alluded to – the writer to be able to make effective use of the allusion, and the reader to be able to recognize it.

Thus, an allusion that fails to be recognized might arguably be considered an allusion that fails to deliver. A survey of Native American short fiction, however, turns up numerous examples of allusions that do not work, or at least do not work in the way some readers would expect. Native American writers turn the aforementioned process on its head, seeming to take delight in using obtuse or obscure allusions that are lost on most readers.

On one level, this use of allusions by Native American writers is a consequence of the nature of that peculiar beast, the American publishing industry. The rise of multiculturalism has generated interest in the writings of “hyphenated Americans” (e.g. African-Americans, Asian-Americans), but the need for publishers to make a profit also forces some writers to practice a delicate balancing act: how to assert racial or cultural identity while making their works appealing (or at least comprehensible) to a mainstream American audience. Rather than bog their stories down in lengthy explanations of the sort usually found in sociology journals, some Native American writers opt to make use of allusions that will likely be missed by a typical American reader, but will provide layers of meanings and associations for those familiar with their history, culture, and mythology. Not surprisingly, the works of the writers discussed below are well-anthologized and some, like those of Erdrich and Sherman Alexie, have achieved a degree of commercial as well as critical success.

But on another level, the challenges posed by the American publishing industry represent but one facet of the overall state of affairs facing minority writers in the United States. These writers use literature to assert their racial and cultural identities, but do so within the predominantly assimilationist context of multiculturalism. Thus, Culler notes the debates within minority discourse that “bear on the relation between the strengthening of cultural

identity of particular groups by linking it to a tradition of writing and the liberal goal of celebrating cultural diversity and ‘multiculturalism’” (131).

Writing for the Mainstream

Given this need to negotiate between two worlds (mainstream American society and a specific racial or cultural identity), the use of allusions that are likely to be overlooked by one of those worlds can be an advantage: there is a power in not being seen by the mainstream.

This is especially true when what Native American writers wish to show is critical of white culture. Lesley points out that the bitterness of Native Americans towards white culture is rooted in the exploitative nature of this culture: “The white man exploits and conquers nature; in addition, he exploits the Indian in both general and specific situations” (496). As Harvest Moon Eyes’s “The Day the Crows Stopped Talking” shows, this exploitation continues in new ways – in the story, it is physically represented by a new casino being built on reservation land. The tribal elders fear the tribe will lose its land to the development project, but the younger members of the tribe are seduced by the prospect of new jobs and the money the casino will bring in. The debate is complicated by the murder of a half-breed woman, Sky, whose dream had become a rallying point for those opposed to the casino’s construction. At the end of the story, it is revealed that Sky was killed by Tom Crow, a tribal council member who wanted to clear the way for the project.

The story seems to be a straightforward tale of murder and corruption, of Native American killing Native American. But Moon Eyes creates a context for seeing Tom’s actions as not just a betrayal of the tribe but of the entire natural and spiritual order. The dream of Sky would be interpreted by most as the drug-induced hangover of an aging hippie – she was hiking, dizzy, and perhaps slightly high when her vision overtook her. But there is an allusion here to the belief in the “vision quest” among Native Americans. Joseph Epes Brown describes the vision quest as a “mode of intensification” – a method used to intensify one’s experience of the spirit world:

Through the vision quest, called *hanblecheyapi*, or “crying for a vision,” humans opened themselves up in the most direct manner to contact with the spiritual essence underlying the physical world. (46)

In fact, the circumstances that provoke Sky's vision are similar to those practiced by some tribes. Brown explains that those undergoing a vision quest "went to a remote place with the resolve to fast and pray continually and to suffer through acts of sacrifice and exposure to the elements for three or four days" (48). By subjecting themselves to suffering and deprivation, the supplicants hoped to receive spiritual advice about what choice to make during an important crossroads in the life of an individual or a tribe. To many tribes, ignoring a vision was tantamount to courting disaster, but this is exactly what happens: the story ends with the strong suggestion that Sky's vision is coming true and the tribe is about to lose its land.

The tribe ignores Sky's warning (and is seemingly complicit in covering up her murder) thanks to the machinations of Tom Crow. A politician at heart, Tom has adapted well to the white man's ways. That should come as no surprise given his last name: the Crow is a powerful animal spirit in Native American mythology. Brown notes the crow's "all-observing ability" – the ability to see that which is hidden – and relates it to another animal spirit, the Raven (35). This relationship is suggestive, for in many Native American traditions the raven often appears as a trickster figure. The trickster is a character that changes shape and form, a power that Tom himself seems to have. One moment he is the friend of the developers, willing to act efficiently and ruthlessly to remove any obstacles to their business enterprise. In return, he secures a huge bribe, thus ensuring his future even if the casino fails. The next moment, he plays the role of the pure-blooded Native American, ready to protect the tribe from the depredations of the whites. He problematizes the issue of race, for example, using his pure-blooded "nativeness" to discredit Sky before a tribal elder:

Although he seemed interested in what Lil had to say when she told him the dream meant they were going to lose their land to outsiders, Tom had patiently reminded her that Sky was white, and not one of their people. How could she have a dream about their future? (Moon Eyes 92)

But the depth of Tom's betrayal is fully appreciated only with the knowledge that, in many tales, an allusion to the trickster is also an allusion to a culture hero. The trickster relies on cunning, lies, and deceit, but his unscrupulous methods are often used for the benefit of his people. The gulf between Tom

and this culture hero is reflected in the former's dislike for the crows that are his namesake:

Many big, black crows live in those oak trees. They talk throughout the day. Sometimes they gossip about us with visiting crows from other reservations. It is never wise to talk under the oak trees. One never knows to whom they tell our secrets. The crows cannot be trusted. (Moon Eyes 85)

The irony of the story is that Tom is the one who cannot be trusted, who fears that the "all-observing" crows will reveal his secret. Tom Crow is a trickster, but he has forgotten his purpose. The natural world tries to remind him: on the day of Sky's murder, the usually noisy crows on the reservation stop talking. Their continued silence two years after the murder provides a continuing condemnation of Tom – the only source of unease and discomfort in his otherwise perfect life.

Allusions to other Native American myths and beliefs add similar layers of meaning to other contemporary tales. In Erdrich's "Red Convertible," the final journey of Henry and Lyman Lamartine is an allusion to the journey to the spirit world that comprises an important part of many shamanistic Native American healing rituals. There is no doubt that Henry Lamartine needs healing – haunted by his memories of the Vietnam War, Henry seems on an irrevocable path towards madness and self-destruction. The Lamartine clan has little faith in modern medicine, and even less in headshrinkers and psychologists:

We were afraid that if we brought Henry to a regular hospital, they would keep him.

"They don't fix them in those places," Mom said; "they just give them drugs." (120)

To "fix" Henry, Lyman cooks up an ingenious plan: he trashes their old red convertible, forcing Henry to come out of his funk long enough to repair it. The two brothers then set off on a road trip reminiscent of the one they took prior to Henry's enlistment, the last time when he was still whole. But the road trip is also reminiscent of a shaman's journey to the spirit world. For Native Americans, healing was not accomplished through medicine or

surgery alone; the shaman also traveled to the spirit world to return the lost soul of the sick man. By returning the red convertible and bringing his brother on a road trip, Lyman tries to return to Henry the soul he has lost – to no avail. The horrors of the white man's war are too much for Henry, who throws himself into a river and drowns.

This rejection of traditional values - given their seeming irrelevance in the face of mainstream American culture – is also brought out through the use of an allusion in Alexie's "This Is What It Means To Say Phoenix, Arizona." Thomas Builds A Fire tells a story about why he tells stories:

Thomas closed his eyes and this story came to him: "We are all given one thing by which our lives are measured, one determination. Mine are the stories which can change or not change the world. It doesn't matter which as long as I continue to tell the stories ... My mother, she died giving birth to me, she died while I was still inside her. She pushed me out into the world with her last breath. I have no brothers or sisters. I have only my stories which came to me before I even had the words to speak. I learned a thousand stories before I took my first thousand steps. They are all I have. It is all I can do. (17)

Thomas's story alludes to other Native American myths about the mysterious source of stories, such as the "story well" from which all the stories in the world come from, or the storytelling stone (which would tell a tale after an offering of food was placed atop it, inspiring a tradition in many tribes that storytellers should be fed and rewarded for their tales). These myths reflect the traditional importance given to words: "For the Indian, the word is powerful and sacred. It is powerful enough to change reality" (Lesley 498). But this traditional respect has diminished, as shown in Alexie's tale. Whereas storytellers used to be welcome among the tribes, this is no longer the case with Thomas. The rest of the tribe calls Thomas a "crazy Indian," for they are sick and tired of his stories. They believe the stories are no longer applicable to their lives in modern American society. After helping his cousin Victor, Thomas must ask a sad, almost pathetic favor in an attempt to find an audience: "Just one time when I'm telling a story somewhere, why don't you stop and listen?" (Alexie 18) The story highlights Thomas's isolation from his tribe because of his loyalty to the old ways and

the old stories. The aforementioned allusion, with its reference to the respect once given to stories and storytellers, emphasizes the poignancy of that isolation.

Culture versus Culture

The associations and meanings that arise from the allusions, cited above, work in the expected way: to enhance the author's theme and meaning (at least for the readers who recognize them). But, in other cases, the allusion is recognized, but different associations and meanings arise from this recognition. How is this possible? Native American writers do so by using allusions that will be recognized by both Native Americans and mainstream American culture, but will also be interpreted differently by both.

The ability to recognize an allusion often serves as a marker of competence in a particular culture. In the same way a citizen of ancient Rome had to recognize the allusions to Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in Vergil's *Aeneid* to be considered "cultured" or "educated," young Filipinos today might need to recognize references to hit TV shows like "Star Search" or "Darna" to be considered "in." The particular culture one belongs to not only affects one's ability to recognize a particular allusion, but also the associations that will be drawn from it. An allusion to the 1986 EDSA Revolution might evoke ideas like "freedom from tyranny" or "democracy of the streets" from Filipinos, whereas a Singaporean might associate it with political chaos or mob rule.

A literary device that refers to a specific culture in order to be acknowledged or recognized might not seem to offer much in the way of asserting Native American identity – at least until one realizes that, as pointed out above, these references are to "a" culture, not "the" culture. This crucial difference is perhaps best appreciated through the use of postcolonial theories which, given their anti-hegemonic bias, often highlight the way hegemonic systems operate. Such awareness then offers a way to combat these systems:

Postcolonial for me signifies a position. It is a position produced by being constructed or represented as Europe or America's "ontological Other." From this deterritorialized (for me, "deterritorialization" refers to political, economic, cultural dislocations) subject-location, the "others" (now plural), are attempting to make whole their

fractured/deformed identities in order to create new identities and modes of existence outside universalizing/homogenizing Eurocentric perspectives. (Patajo-Legasto 8)

Traditionally, allusions seem tied to notions of “universality.” A university professor might expect his students to recognize an allusion to Shakespeare, for example, in the same way an imam expects his listeners to identify an allusion to the Koran. After thousands of lectures and sermons, both the professor and the imam might assume the universality of their allusions, though all it would take to prove this false would be to switch speaker and audience around. A small change, but a crucial one according to postcolonial theory, given the reliance of hegemonic systems (whether colonial or neo-colonial) on emphasizing their monolithic, universal nature, denying the possibility of alternative discourses.

In the modern United States, Native Americans face problems ranging from poverty to rampant alcoholism, but perhaps the deadliest problem is a sense of dislocation. Historical attempts at “assimilation” stripped many Native Americans of their unique cultural identities, leaving them with only the prism of mainstream American culture with which to view themselves and their culture. And viewed through that prism, the vision they received was both twisted and distorted, but what alternatives existed? Native American writers have tackled that question head-on: if an allusion draws differing, perhaps even conflicting, associations from readers, it emphasizes that alternative discourses are alive and well, tearing down the hegemonic front of mainstream American culture. This culture comes under challenge when presented with allusions that do not look to it as a sole point of reference because these allusions, in fact, also refer to Native American cultures that contradict the dominant discourse. Native American writers tap into this subversive potential of allusions.

In concrete terms, even an allusion to something as seemingly universal as the concept of ghosts and spirits will draw divergent meanings and associations. The narrator in Joseph Bruchac’s “Bone Girl,” for example, muses about these differences. Though the main event of the story occurs in an Indian graveyard, the narrator emphasizes what this place means to him:

Indian graveyards, you see, mean something different to me than places of dread. Maybe it's because I've spent time around real Indian graveyards, not the ones in the movies. (238)

The mention of an Indian graveyard is an allusion recognizable to most Americans – it is the traditional setting of ghost stories told around campfires, a place filled with vengeful Indian spirits out to punish the living (at least those of Caucasian descent). But the narrator makes it a point to counter these associations. A ghost among white Americans is an “outsider” being that haunts the living, but for Native Americans it is a more benevolent entity. The reason for this is apparently linked to William Beavis's contention that Native American stories usually follow a “homing” plot, wherein the hero finds fulfillment in going or staying home, in contrast to the “leaving” plot of contemporary American literature, where growth and fulfillment are achieved by leaving home (582). The narrator of “Bone Girl” wryly notes that ghosts of white people, finding themselves abandoned by their restless descendants, eventually become like homeless people: “Talking to themselves, ignored unless they really get into your face, disconnected and forgotten” (Bruchac 240). In contrast, Native American spirits and ghosts take an active interest in the welfare of their descendants, as the narrator discovers to his shock:

And because we stay put, close to the land where we were born ... we also stay close to the land we're buried. Close to our dead. Close to our ghosts – which, I assume, do not feel as abandoned as white ghosts and so tend to be a lot less neurotic. We know them, they know us, and they also know what they can do. Which often is, pardon my French, to scare the shit out of us when we're doing the wrong things. (Bruchac 240-241)

Even in the case of seemingly minor allusions, the associations they provoke reveal the gap between the experiences of Native Americans and other Americans. The conflicting emotions aroused by a dog named Custer in Louis Owen's humorous “The Last Stand” might confuse a mainstream American reader. For most Americans, the association raised by George Armstrong Custer's name is that of a vainglorious fool, an idiot who led the 7th Cavalry into military defeat and disaster. But Custer arouses more complicated emotions among Native Americans. On one hand, he was a hated military leader during the “Indian wars,” when the US Army sometimes

attacked and killed defenseless women and children. On the other hand, the annihilation of Custer and the 7th Cavalry was one of the last great military victories of the Native Americans against the Army, and remains until today a source of pride. A white American might see the act of naming the dog after Custer as little more than a joke; for Native Americans, the reactions are likely to be more varied and complex, as seen in the hostility of the story's narrator towards the dog: "I appreciate your thoughtfulness, Alex, but we don't need a killer to protect us from killers" (Owen 190).

The associations from these allusions also remind Native Americans of the contempt thrown in their faces in seemingly mundane ways by mainstream American society. In Erdrich's "Red Convertible," Lyman Lamartine notes that it is the profile of "Red Tomahawk, the Indian who killed Sitting Bull" that is "on signs all along the North Dakota highways" (119). For white Americans, Red Tomahawk would be a symbol of the "good Indian," given his role in bringing down the rebellious Sitting Bull; thus, it is his profile that is used as a symbol for Native Americans. But for Native Americans, the choice of Red Tomahawk would be similar to the replacement of George Washington on the US one dollar bill with famous traitors from American history like Aaron Burr and Benedict Arnold. After all, Sitting Bull was the victor over Custer in the Battle of the Little Big Horn. And Sitting Bull was killed after he had made peace with the US government. Fearing that Sitting Bull was involved in the Ghost Dance movement that swept through the Great Plains in the 1880s, the US Army tried to arrest him. Hoping to preempt the army, a group of native policemen caught and killed Sitting Bull. Thus, Red Tomahawk became a symbol for Native Americans of the US government's success in turning them against each other.

This process of making Indian fight Indian works its way down to the most basic unit of society in Leslie Marmom Silko's "Private Property." The bitter conflict between the two sisters, Reyna and Etta, is at the heart of the story, but a clue to its cause is found in the allusion to the Indian School that Etta attended. For the US government, the Indian Schools were part of the government's attempt to integrate Native Americans into mainstream society. But the allusion arouses different associations in the minds of Native Americans. For the activist Vine Deloria Jr., the policy of integration was an attempt to stop Indians from being Indians:

Indian children were kidnapped and forced into boarding schools thousands of miles from their homes to learn the white man's way ... Everything possible was done to ensure that Indians were forced into American life. The wild animal was made into a household pet whether or not he wanted to be one. (457)

Years later, it is the two sisters who must deal with the consequences of the Indian School. Reyna regards the land in the traditional way, as belonging to and usable by all, but this is a worldview irreconcilable to the concept of private property learned by Etta.

New Ways to Fight Back

The different uses of allusions discussed so far – those meant to be overlooked and those meant to be differently interpreted – and the different theories used for analyzing them – minority discourse and post-colonial theory – refer to the unique position occupied by Native American literature in particular, and the Native American experience in general. Theories of minority discourse reflect the current position of Native Americans in modern American society, where they are just one of many minority voices struggling to be heard. But, at the same time, the historical experience of Native Americans differs greatly from those of other minorities. They did not come to America as either slaves or immigrants; they were the continent's original First Nations (the Canadian government's official term for them). These First Nations lost their territory and sovereignty to the European colonizers - an experience akin to those of other colonized peoples, and one that lends itself well to post-colonial analysis.

Of the two theoretical frameworks, minority discourse (as implied by its name) finds itself in a position of continuous struggle and opposition to the majority discourse, wherein the best result may be a sort of “armed peace” between the two:

Theoretical questions swiftly become entangled with questions about the status of theory, which is sometimes said to impose ‘white’ questions or philosophical issues on projects struggling to establish their own terms and contexts. But Latino, African-American, and Asian-American critics pursue the theoretical enterprise in

developing the study of minority discourses, defining their distinctiveness, and articulating their relations to dominant traditions of writing and thought. Attempts to generate theories of ‘minority discourse’ both develop concepts for the analysis of specific cultural traditions and use a position of marginality to expose the assumptions of ‘majority’ discourse and to intervene in its theoretical debates. (Culler 131)

Post-colonial theory, on the other hand, seems to offer the possibility of “de-centering” the dominant hegemonic power structure, placing it in an inferior or subservient position vis-à-vis the oppressed racial or cultural subject-position. Culler describes the post-colonial project as an attempt by intellectuals from post-colonial societies “to write their way back into a history others have written” (131). But in the last two allusions discussed below, Native American writers may have done more than write their way back into history; they may have written History (with a capital “H”), assuming the position traditionally reserved for the hegemonic power. The two allusions below assume the existence of a “universal” frame of reference, but that frame of reference belongs to the Native Americans.

Take this story from Thomas Builds-A-Fire in Alexie’s “This Is What It Means To Say Phoenix, Arizona”:

There were two Indian boys who wanted to be warriors. But it was too late to be warriors in the old ways. So the two Indian boys stole a car and drove to the city. They parked the stolen car in front of the station and then hitched back home to the reservation. When they got back, all their friends cheered and their parents’ eyes shone with pride. *You were very brave*, everyone said to the two Indian boys. *Very brave.* (13)

The most perplexing thing about the story to mainstream American readers would not be the actions of the boys themselves, but the reactions of their parents and the adult members of the tribe. Why congratulate and encourage an act of juvenile delinquency? But the story contains an allusion to the Native American practice of “counting coup” – when a warrior proved his superiority to his enemy not by killing him, but by performing a reckless, nonviolent act of bravery. Traditionally, a warrior would “count coup” by moving close

enough to an enemy to touch him with a hand or stick. It was a dangerous practice, for the enemy could respond violently, but the warrior who successfully counted coup also showed his superiority: instead of doing the smart, safe thing and killing his enemy, the warrior humiliated him instead. Certain American tribes viewed it as a sign of superiority over the more bloodthirsty ways of the white man, a mark of the bravery of their warriors over the soldiers of the US Army who often fired indiscriminately into their camps. Thomas's tale showed that while it was too late to be warriors in the traditional sense, it was not too late to find new ways to be brave and fight back. More importantly, the concept of juvenile delinquency, a perspective of white society, is not even raised or acknowledged.

Lastly, Silko's "Return of the Buffalo" (excerpted from her novel, *Almanac of the Dead*) contains allusions to the Ghost Dance of the 1880s, when Native Americans led by the shaman Wakova performed mystic ceremonies that they believed would make the white man disappear from the continent and return the buffalo herds that comprised their primary food source. In the story, lawyer Wilson Weasel Tail makes it clear that this event was badly misinterpreted by white historians and social scientists. In particular, Weasel Tail takes to task the sociologist James Moody, who interpreted the actions of the Ghost Dancers in purely scientific and materialistic terms.

Instead, Weasel Tail argues that the event was a religious one for Native Americans, who did not expect the immediate fulfillment of Wakova's prophecies. Much like Christians who maintain their faith in the Second Coming, the Ghost Dancers believed Wakova's vision would also come to pass in the fullness of time. Thus, Weasel Tail gives a speech to an audience of naturopaths, holistic healers, and herbalists – those influenced by Native American beliefs about living in oneness with the land. The US government's Indian schools once created a generation of Native Americans filled with ideas of conformity and assimilation; Weasel Tail's audience is proof that Native American ideas have now spread to the whites. In a sort of ultimatum, Weasel Tail offers the members of this audience a chance to save themselves by rejecting the exploitative outlook of mainstream American society, and embracing instead the Native American perspective. For from that perspective, Wakova's prophecies are indeed coming to pass: the natural world is reasserting itself. The farms built on lands taken from the Indians are dying

out (they were never really suited for agriculture), allowing the buffalo to return. Meanwhile, the damage inflicted by modern Americans on the environment is slowly but surely destroying them: the water is undrinkable, the food carcinogenic, and the air poison. The polluters are being destroyed by their own products, and as Wakova promised the spirits will in the fullness of time make the white man “disappear.” The signs are all there, Weasel Tail seems to suggest, but they will only be seen by those who adopt a Native American perspective.

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