E-Reserves: *Cover Sheet*

Electronic Reserve Request

This cover sheet must accompany ***each*** item request.

TO: Norlin Library Reserves: 184 UCB

PROF. Sam Gill

COURSE & # (e.g. Hist. 1243) RLST 2700

SEMESTER Spring 2005

AUTHOR GILL

TITLE EPILOGUE

UCB Libraries owns a copy of the original

UCB Libraries does not own a copy of the original

[✓ **I don't know if the UCB Libraries owns a copy of the original.**]

Please be sure to complete *all* lines above. Keep a copy of each file you send us. At the end of each semester, we delete all items from the reserve listings and from the reserve server.

5. The historic treatment here will be based on the account of Edward H. Spicer, "Yaqui," in *Perspectives in American Indian Culture Change,* ed. Edward H. Spicer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 7–93. See also Edward H. Spicer, *Pascua, A Yaqui Village in Arizona* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940); and Edward H. Spicer, *Potam, A Yaqui Village in Sonora,* American Anthropological Association Memoir no. 77 (Menasha, Wisconsin, 1954).

6. For a review of this history, see Ake Hultkrantz, *Prairie and Plains Indians* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), pp. 1–4.

7. For a review of the larger history in which this prophet arose, see A. F. C. Wallace, "New Religious Beliefs Among the Delaware Indians 1600–1900," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 12 (1956): pp. 1–21.

8. See Benjamin Drake, *Life of Tecumseh and of his Brother the Prophet, with a Historical Sketch of the Shawanoe Indians* (Philadelphia: Quaker City Publishing House, 1856).

9. See Cora DuBois, "The 1870 Ghost Dance," *Anthropological Records* 3 (1939): pp. 1–151.

10. See especially James Mooney, *The Ghost Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890,* Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, 14th Annual Report, part 2 (Washington, D.C., 1896).

11. For further discussion of the Sioux during the decade ending in 1890, see Robert M. Utley, *The Last Days of the Sioux Nation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 6–39.

12. For a study of modern pan-Indian movements, see Hazel W. Hertzberg, *The Search for an American Indian Identity* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1971).

13. For a comprehensive study of peyote movements, see Weston LaBarre, *The Peyote Cult* (New Haven: Yale University Publications in Anthropology, 1938; enlarged ed. New York: Schocken, 1969).

14. As quoted in Hazel W. Hertzberg, *The Search for an American Indian Identity,* p. 243.

15. For further analysis of these points, see Bryan R. Wilson, *Magic and the Millennium: A Sociological Study of Religious Movements of Protest among Tribal and Third-World Peoples* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), pp. 414–41, 443–49.

16. For descriptions of peyote rituals, see Weston LaBarre, *The Peyote Cult* (New York: Schocken, 1969), pp. 29–56.

Epilogue

STORIES

From the viewpoint of the novel's wisdom, that fervid readiness to judge is the most detestable stupidity, the most pernicious evil.—Milan Kundera

Ethnography is autobiography.

We make up stories about others so as to better know ourselves.

Epilogue means to say in addition, a sort of postscript that suggests speech more than writing. Speech seems appropriate to stories and to Native Americans. I particularly like the ambiguity of the word story. It is commonly used to refer to myth, folktale, anecdote, history, as well as an out-and-out lie. Often we never know.

So in this saying-in-addition I use personal voice and celebrate story. This book, as are all books, is both a story about others and one facet of my personal story. I occasionally revealed my personal presence in the obviousness of first person, but the rest is, in some sense, also my story. I intend the following stories to engage each reader in his or her story.

* * * * *

One of my favorite books on Native Americans is Don Talayesva's autobiography *Sun Chief* (Yale University Press, 1942). Reading Talayesva's story has brought Hopi culture and religion to life for me and for my students. One day while I was teaching at Arizona State University I received a surprising call. I suppose it was in the mid to late 1970s. It was a woman who told me that

Don Talayesva was a guest in her Scottsdale home and he was available to come talk to my class. I was stunned that he could possibly still be alive and quickly arranged to have him come.

I met them at the campus parking lot and escorted them to my classroom. Don, sporting a red bandana tied around his steel grey hair, was feeble but walked erect. He had difficulty hearing and used this impairment to screen his interactions with others. He looked to his host, who he seemed to hear perfectly, to know if he should hear certain questions and favor them with an answer, that is, with a story. He told the stories of his life remarkably like they were written in his book, frozen versions set down 40 years before. Yet, he also awaited her cue to tell the account of his becoming Christian. His host, I've forgotten her name, told me that Don's principal activity when in her home was to read *Sun Chief.*

* * * * *

As a youth I spent many days at my grandparents' farm in southeast Kansas. My father, the youngest of seven children and many years junior to his closest siblings, remained to farm my grandparents' land. We did not live on that land however because the old ones remained there. I loved my grandparents and worked alongside both of them in the gardens and fields throughout my youth. It was the homeplace and I had roots there in the Kansas soil, roots they planted and weeded.

My grandfather, George, died at age 88 when I was in high school and my grandmother, Mattie, died at 97 when I was finishing my first graduate degree. My grandmother was such a friend to me. My dad worked several nonfarming jobs to try to keep the family with food and clothing. I was sent to the farm to work on my own. My dog Mickey was always at my side. At noon I'd go to the house where Grandma would have dinner ready for me. We'd eat and chat and enjoy one another's company. She would often tell me the stories of her youth. Every day she'd look in the local paper to read the deaths. She had a breathy way of pronouncing this word. Only rarely did she recognize the death of someone she had known, most were the deaths of their children or their childrens' children. She was baffled that she remained alive at her age.

Her death coincided with a strange undiagnosed illness my father suffered. I had come from Wichita to be with him in the hospital. It was believed he was near death. He did not know that his mother was dying. The night she died I was with him in his hospital room. He was restless, in pain, and often delirious. I stayed by the bed to comfort him, but also to keep him from pulling the IV needle from his arm and the drain tube from his stomach. Suddenly, in the middle of the night he sat up in bed and pointed to the drapes drawn over the windows. Over and over he cried out, seemingly terrified, "Mother. Mother." The next morning, more coherent, he told me he was horrified because he could see his mother at the window. Later that day we told him that she had died during the night.

After grandma died I received a bible she had kept all her years. It was wrapped in an old brown paper bag and, at the time, I glanced in it noting that there were pages of family records. I put it away only to find it again in the late 1980s shortly after I had finished writing *Mother Earth: An American Story.* I had always been interested in my genealogy, a thing I started charting when I was in high school and worked a bit more on when I was in college. It was a chart I sketched on butcher paper with notes and possible family connections traced with lines. I still have it somewhere. When the old bible surfaced I casually looked through it. Turning to the section on the births, deaths, and marriages all centering on Mattie and George, of course, I began to trace their siblings, their children, their children's children—all familiar to me, my uncles, aunts, and cousins. The following page I had never examined before. Given my interest in genealogy I can't imagine why I hadn't. This page showed who Mattie and George had descended from. My grandfather, my fathers' father, George Washington Gill, was born October 10, 1871, in Westerville, Ohio, to James Gill and Elizabeth Adams. George had five siblings: John, Hattie, Charles, Maggie, and Ettie. Mattie Delphine Fulton was born in the year 1870 in Zenia, Ohio, to Isaac B. Fulton and Ruth Ellen McGoogen. And in tiny fine script beside her name was written "born Saskwehana." My dad always told me that Elizabeth was a descendent of the presidential Adams family and that Isaac Fulton was a descendent of Robert Fulton, the inventor of the steamboat. These are his stories, now also mine, and it seems there were other stories left untold.

* * * * *

I went to visit a Navajo medicine man, a singer, who lived near Tuba City. We chatted about Navajo life and religion, about his long life and accumulated wisdom. He told me a little about his understanding of the Navajo creation. A graduate student at the time, I'd done my homework, and knew that the story he knew was not a version that had been recorded. We talked about the transmission of culture from generation to generation and he complained that he had no young Navajos learning from him. He bemoaned the fact that he was growing old and no one seemed interested in what he knew. Driven by an eagerness to contribute, a desire to help everyone more fully understand Navajos, even somehow to preserve Navajo culture for Navajos—the romantic views of a graduate student—I pleaded with this old man to allow me to record his story and to make it available through print to others.

He certainly understood what I was requesting and his answer was clear and unconditional. Stories, he said, are to be told through a living tradition. If no one is interested in them, then it is fitting they should die. But he had more to say. If lost stories should again be needed, he said, they will arise again.

I'm sure this old man is now long gone. Now I wonder about his stories.

* * * * *

When I wrote the first edition of *Native American Religions* 20 years ago what mattered most was to understand Native American people in their cultural distinctness while not becoming overwhelmed by the undeniably immense diversity. I attempted to ply the skills and insights I had learned as a scholar to the materials that somehow bore witness to these people, allowing the small but important personal experiences I had had with them to quicken my efforts, to color the stories I tell. Particularly living in Arizona, as I was at the time, I felt that cultural distinctness was important. I visited Navajo, Apache, Hopi, Zuni, Yaqui, Pima, and Papago territories and people. They didn't seem to get along with one another, or even much like one another. I listened to their languages. I read their histories. I listened to their stories. Everything I experienced told me that each of these cultures was as richly complex as any other anywhere and deserved, indeed demanded, the full measure of one's attention. To present any of these cultures, any aspect of these cultures, in some broad stroke painting of Indians or Native Americans would be to create a fiction of them all. The importance of cultural difference and distinctness remains in my view of utmost importance.

The unity or sameness bestowed even through such terms as Indian or Native American is a matter that arises from contact, is a historical issue of finding commonality in the face of common oppression or being bestowed a commonality by outsiders whose own cultural and religious survival at the time depended on constructing and projecting commonality on the others to dispel the almost overwhelming threat of rampant diversity.

Teaching Native American religions I have occasionally found myself teaching to the subjects of this study. During times when it was not acceptable to be Indian some Native Americans followed the strategy of diminishing their Indian identity and encouraging their children to be ignorant of their family and cultural heritage. By the 1980s Indian identity was becoming not only acceptable, but something to be proud of. Without knowing their native languages many of the young native people I knew were not accepted by their elders and had little access to their Indian heritage. We learned together.

During the early years of my teaching I so often heard praise heaped on Indians for their spirituality, a spirituality identified with belief in Mother Earth and Father Sky. Even the overly simplistic sound of these terms suggested to me that something wasn't quite right but I often assented to these accolades though privately puzzled by what exactly they were referring to. I knew little of such figures based on my studies and my experience in several specific cultures. Most particularly was the huge mismatch between the simplicity of these mother and father images and the daunting complexity and diversity of the specific religious traditions about which I was coming to know a little bit.

I began to collect statements related to these mother-father figures and to appraise their contexts and histories. Frankly, I found nothing contentious or even controversial here, though much of that was to follow. If one accepts that people who speak different languages, have different histories, live different lifestyles, have different religious systems, and who, in one's personal experience, constantly speak of major differences among one another are . . . let's see . . . different, then to also hold that, in some central defining way, they are somehow all the same, they all hold a deep and defining belief or practice in anything specific, demands explanation.

One explanation and certainly a valid one is that all humankind is one. This can be theologically based as in all are descended from Adam and Eve or from Changing Woman, or biologically based in that humans are a species with distinction from other species. The notion of culture as developed by modern anthropology supports and demands shared distinctive features. Cultures can be defined in many ways. Still I am unaware of any who would uphold that a culture can be comprised of hundreds of people speaking as many languages and no language in common spread over an entire continent whose common existence is not even known among them. The effort to identify culture traits to distinguish broad conglomerates of cultures is inappropriate because cultural traits do not apply in this way. Such an effort is often the confusion of cultural traits with biological ones. And this position is the grounds of racism, prejudice, and oppression. To hold that Indian religion (singular) or even Native American religions (plural) hold anything in common that is specific as to belief and practice demands a correspondence with an identifiable cultural frame. Either such beings/figures/entities as Mother Earth and Father Sky (or the Great Spirit) exist for all human beings, as argued, for example, by Jung as products of the human psyche (this is a subset of the biopsychological position), or these are beliefs of a specific culture, with their own histories and traditions. People who have languages that are not even of the same families, whose ecological bases are vastly different, whose histories are distinct and do not intersect cannot hold common cultural traits. All of modern anthropology is based on this notion. Cultural traits correspond with cultural distinctions.

Realizing this I found myself compelled to tell the story of the creation of a common cultural identity among those diverse people located in what has come to be known as North America and to focus on the role of Mother Earth in this creative construction. This was *Mother Earth: An American Story* (Chicago, 1987). That there has been such a new cultural construction in the period of contact with European-Americans cannot be contested. There was nothing like an Indian identity prior to contact and while there was communication among people of different cultures there was no effort to construct among them a common identity. Notably many of the names by which individual cultures called themselves often translates as "the people" distinguishing them from their neighbors who are not. It was only in the face of the threat of oppression and extinction that there came to be a need and a value in constructing a common identity, a common culture, a common religion among people who are at the same time culturally diverse, often even hostile to one another.

I found that Mother Earth served in this creative effort and told that story as I came to know it. It was a story that spawned others. I am sometimes a character in these stories—a trespasser, a white man, a clarifier, a culture thief.

* * * * *

As we age the stories of our elders pass from the world. Sometimes we learn them, often we don't. Sometimes we remember them, often we don't. As my mother aged and became the last one to have lived in the times of her stories she would laugh that the authority of her story rested on her imaginative memory and her advanced age. With a twinkle in her eye, she'd say, "Since I'm the only one left, if I say it was so, then it was so."

One Thanksgiving when I was a college student I went home for the annual feast. My aunts were always there. Really they were my great aunts, sisters to my mother's mother, Ocy Lenore Avey. I'd loved these old women my whole life. Aunt Alu, Susan Alice Avey (1877–1971), was a slight little woman who had never married. She'd stayed at home to tend to Pa, Joseph Osborn Avey, until he died. I have vague memories of him, yet my memories may be of pictures and stories about him. He was born in 1857. She lived in a tiny house on Clark Street in Cherryvale across from the park where I played and swam as a youth. I'd always drop by to chat and eat and watch her make lye soap. She had a great sense of humor and a wonderful sense of life. She was a reader for the Christian Science Church and, so far as I know, never went to a physician in her 94 years. When ill, she'd Christian Science herself into good health. My Aunt Betsy, Margaret Elizabeth Avey (1878–1971), was kind of a nutcase, always smelling of moth balls and bad breath from bad teeth, but she was pure goodness. She grew ferns and sweet potato vines. Occasionally she'd make special dishes for me like cheese-topped baked onions and raisin pie, the latter because my mother didn't like raisins. When my mother's mother died, Aunt Betsy married my mother's father, her widowed brother-in-law, and raised my mother. She was mother and aunt to my mother, a better aunt than mother according to my mother. My grandfather died when my mother was in high school. The deaths of her parents in her youth scarred my mother's life, I think, and came to obsess her with unresolved grief at the end of her life. I think she died from the pain of it.

Well, this Thanksgiving we'd eaten to the point of discomfort and somehow the conversation came around to the stories of Betsy and Alu as girls when their parents took part of the opening of the Oklahoma Strip in 1889. I'd always loved these stories. They told of the wagons lining up for the great rush and that they had somehow managed to get to the spot along the Arkansas River that would eventually be the town site of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Of course, this land passed from the family before that happened. I still have relatives who live in Tulsa. Aunt Alu, even in her nineties, was forward looking and indulged these stories only if pushed. But Aunt Betsy enjoyed telling and retelling them. I remember, on that day, them telling of their family camped out somewhere in the territory when the Dalton Brothers Gang, a notorious family of thieves, came by. Aunt Betsy got up from the table and walked about demonstrating how they held their guns pointing them at various members of the family. The Dalton Gang was finally subdued, all shot dead, while attempting a bank robbery in Coffeyville, Kansas. This town, just a few miles from where I grew up, had larger-than-life-size grainy photographs on the wall of this same bank showing the dead members of the gang laid out on the sidewalk by the bank.

My mother died a couple years ago and I received some letters that had been passed down through the family. Don't know if my mother had ever read them. She certainly never told me anything about them. Maybe they were part of the estates of Betsy or Alu. A few days after I got home from my mother's funeral I sat down to look through this little ribbon-tied bundle of letters. They were yellow and flaking. Most were letters written among the female siblings of my great grandmother, that is, my mother's grandmother. They were written in large thin cursive in both directions. This was a devise used, I think, to take advantage of what little paper was available and doubtless expensive. First write across the page in one direction then turn the page ninety degrees and write across the page over the other words. Fascinatingly, with a bit of concentration, it is quite legible.

One letter dated March 1881 was to Susan Maria Bales (b. 1853) wife of Joseph Avey, from her sister Sarah. A line from that letter reads, "Joy be to God that Ocy Lenore was born healthy and sound into the wilderness you call home. The secret of your Cherokee paramour is safe with me, though Ocy's features may one day betray you." The hint of a story swallowed by the territory and time.