

THE LIFE AND LITERATURE OF JOHN JOSEPH
MATHEWS: CONTRIBUTIONS OF
TWO CULTURES

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TWO CULTURES

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PREFACE

In searching for a dissertation topic, I found that many requirements must be met. I wanted to investigate a subject incorporating American Indians, American history, American literature, and Oklahoma. John Joseph Mathews was my logical choice, for in this man and his nonfiction, my interests would be satisfied. In the process, I hoped to shed more light on a relatively unknown twentieth century historian, author, Osage, and Oklahoman. For directing me to Mathews, I must thank Dr. Margaret F. Nelson; her encouragement, patience, imagination, humor, understanding, and inspiration--all necessary requirements for an adviser and a friend--helped me during the course of this project. Other members of my dissertation committee need to be commended also for their support, suggestions, and guidance--Dr. Edward Walkiewicz, Dr. Joseph Stout, Jr., and Dr. W. David Baird. Special thanks must be given to Dr. Gordon Weaver, too, who, in my darkest hour, assumed control at the helm of the project by agreeing to be the director of this study.

I would also like to thank the Osage County Museum and the Osage Tribal Agency in Pawhuska, Oklahoma, and Dr. Savoie Lottinville for his invaluable insights into the man, John Joseph Mathews. To that end, I also have to express my appreciation to Mathews' sister and daughter, Lillian

Mathews and Virginia Mathews, as well as the other individuals who consented to aid me in my research of Mathews' life and work.

The administration and faculty of Panhandle State University at Goodwell, Oklahoma, graciously granted me the time and the means to successfully complete the requirements for the doctoral degree, and I am most grateful for their understanding and aid.

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To complete my list of supporters, I cannot fail to include my parents and brother, Russel, Pauline, and Kevin, for without their unflagging love and neverending encouragement and constant moral and financial support, this phase of my life would not be accomplished. I owe them heartfelt thanks and offer them my love in return for allowing me to indulge in the adventures and joys of learning.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO MATHEWS

In the scant materials published on the Osage author John Joseph Mathews, the biographers or reviewers proclaim that they do not know how to categorize Mathews. Gary Jack Willis, in Mathews' obituary in the Tulsa Tribune, says that "Mathews will be remembered by various titles: author, historian, naturalist, novelist, pilot, rancher, scholar, thinker."¹ Garrick Bailey, in a biographical sketch of Mathews published in American Indian Intellectuals, echoes Willis' sentiments:

Mathews is, and has been, an impossible person to categorize. He is or has been an aviator, a scholar, a naturalist, a rancher, a geologist, and a tribal council member. He has always been an adventurer, individualist, and an individual self-confident of his own worth and abilities.²

Mathews fulfilled many roles in his lifetime.

No biographer or critic fails to mention the fact that Mathews was part Osage Indian. However, culturally, Mathews was white. Bailey says that the Mathews family did not participate in traditional Osage ceremonial or social life. The Osage clan system was

patrilineal, and the Osage ancestry of the Mathews family had passed through a matrilineal line; thus they were not part of the clan system.³

Regardless of Mathews' family's position, the family, according to Bailey

still psychologically identified, at least in part, with the Indian community . . . they maintained strong personal ties with the traditional Osages. . . . While the Mathews family did not participate in Osage traditional life, they were close observers of it, and the entire family maintained an active interest in Osage culture and history. As a result, John Joseph grew up knowing both the White and the Indian worlds intimately.⁴

These circumstances then set the stage for John Joseph Mathews' writing career which reflects these two worlds of red and white. Elizabeth Cosgrove, writing in The Chronicles of Oklahoma, states that

John Joseph Mathews is a member of the Osage Indian tribe, and superimposed upon his Indian heritage is the broad culture and education of the white man's world, thus making it possible for him to approach the writing of [nonfiction] from both the standpoints of the Indian and the whiteman.⁵

In Mathews' nonfiction, Wah' Kon-Tah. The Osage and the White Man's Road, Talking to the Moon, Life and Death of an Oilman: The Career of E. W. Marland, The Osages: Children

of the Middle Waters, and a few short articles published in The Sooner Magazine in the 1920's and 1930's, Mathews reveals himself to be both Indian and Caucasian. His duality was a direct result of his mixed blood and his environment which was dual in nature. In none of the few sources on Mathews the man or critical reviews of his work is this particular problem discussed in any depth. The fact that Mathews' nonfiction works reflect his dual heritage is worthy of investigation. As Charles Larson writes in American Indian Fiction, Mathews was a sophisticated man "who moved freely back and forth between the Native American and the white man's cultures."⁶ Even if Mathews did "move freely," he probably did not move comfortably, and observers may assume that he walked a psychological razor's edge and was not completely comfortable in either of these two worlds, perhaps unable to reject one to embrace the other.

Mathews' life revolved around the natural world, one more in keeping with his Indian background, and the artificial world, one more associated with the non-Indian world. Mathews' education and scientific training are products of the Anglo world, and interestingly enough, this expertise allowed him to gain recognition as an important figure and voice in the world of the Osage people. Full-blooded Osages came to depend on Mathews, because as Mathews' friend Georgeann Robinson of Bartlesville, Oklahoma, states, the Osages had "confidence in him."⁷ Savoie Lottinville, a friend of Mathews and also the director of the University of

Oklahoma Press from 1938 to 1967, recalls that "the full bloods recognized and honored Mathews' superb educational background and used him as a representative in Washington councils often."⁸ Mathews had much to offer the Osage as a member of the tribal council, because of his familiarity with the ways of the white world, his knowledge in geological matters which was helpful to the Osage people with their oil and mineral interests, and his local family background. A neighbor of Mathews, Gladys Buck, of Pawhuska, Oklahoma, states that residents of Pawhuska, Mathews' hometown, "were proud of him, as a writer, an Osage historian, a tribal councilman and for being the main force in establishing the Osage Museum."⁹

Lottinville claims although that

There has always been, if not a serious, then a recognized, division between full and mixed bloods, sometimes the subject of controversy, sometimes only of amused heckling. Jo [Mathews] survived them both.¹⁰

So, even with his expertise and his willingness to serve the Osage, many Osage did not fully trust Mathews and for obvious reasons. Full-blooded Indians are often hesitant to fully accept someone who has little blood quantum, and Mathews was only one-eighth Osage. Secondly, full bloods tend not to trust those tribal members who have not identified completely with the tribe. In The Remembered Earth, Geary Hobson notes that to be culturally classified as an

Indian, a person must know where he/she is from, know who his/her people are, and know that people's language, life, and religion.¹¹ Hobson's notion here seems to fit Mathews extremely well. By growing up in a business-oriented, affluent, mixed blood home, Mathews naturally did not live in the typical Indian environment. Terry Wilson, in an article for The Chronicles of Oklahoma, says, "Obviously the ethos of traditional Osage culture permeated the life of the Mathews family which nevertheless stood figuratively and literally apart."¹² Mathews actually divorced himself from his Osage heritage early in life by leaving Pawhuska to pursue an education, to join the military service, to graduate from Oxford, to marry two non-Indian women, and to travel in Europe. By the time Mathews returned to Pawhuska and began to be involved in Osage tribal life, he had reached his thirties. Regardless of these circumstances, the Osage people needed Mathews' talents, but one can see why they might have had ambivalent feelings toward the man.

In some ways then, some people might have considered Mathews more of an interloper than a true "Indian," but in another sense, a social sense, Mathews was very "Indian." Geary Hobson says, "Socially . . . a person is judged as Native American because of how he or she views the world, his or her views about land, home, family, culture, etc."¹³ Mathews' physical appearance--"tall [with] well-proportioned Indian features"¹⁴--was quite suggestive of the classic Osage appearance. One newspaper reporter remarked on

Mathews' long, slender, tapering fingers and hands and how they indicated his Indian ancestry. Mathews also was familiar with various Osage cultural characteristics as a result of the influence of his father who introduced Mathews and his sisters to Indian ways and traditions.¹⁵ Growing up in the midst of Osage culture, even though not directly associated with it, Mathews had to be influenced by it. Wilson comments that

The entire family found itself in close juxtaposition to the tribespeople who came to trade at the [family] store, but the Mathews family, father and children, were of mixed-blood and thus apart.¹⁶

Mathews knew Osage tribal members, visited their homes, watched tribal dances, learned to speak the Osage language, and heard traditional Osage songs, ceremonies, and oratory in their purest form, but was not accepted as a full-fledged member of the Osage community.

Perhaps Mathews was most like an "Indian," though, in his philosophical perception of the world at large. Indians are commonly associated with the environment and nature, and as such, they are often called "natural men." As a result of this trait, Sioux philosopher Charles Alexander Eastman claims that "the Indian was intensely poetical."¹⁷ In much of Mathews' work, particularly in Talking to the Moon, the author's words create quite powerful and descriptive imagery, especially when Mathews writes about nature. For

example, in Talking to the Moon, Mathews writes:

Full glory comes to the blackjacks at this time. They shine with profound tranquility in the sun, expressing gaiety by their multi-colored magnificence and grandeur by their incredible dignity. On moonlight nights I leave the fire to go out to stand among them. In the eerie light they have lost their brilliance, but their colors are distinguishable and their serenity more complete. I stand in the silence with emotion that hurts and cannot be relieved by expression, either by word symbols or by physical action. Then when the cold, mystical silence is broken by a coyote howling from the point of the ridge, I wait for him to stop and go back to his earthly business of hunting; then I go back to my fire. In his long quavering cry he, unencumbered by artificiality, has asked the question for both of us and expressed that which wells in both our hearts.¹⁸

This passage indicates that Mathews was very familiar with his environment and felt quite close to it. To Mathews, nature's own expressions, such as the coyote's howl, said more than he could in man's "word symbols." Mathews' attachment to his blackjacks is quite ironic, for most Oklahomans strongly dislike the groves of blackjack trees which are common in Oklahoma, because the trees grow thick and gnarled and are difficult to clear from the land. Mathews

was a keen observer of the nuances of nature and felt a mystical longing to be one with nature and not to interfere with its processes. Mathews seems only to be impressed with nature and has no desire to alter it with his human intervention. His attitude is in keeping with the traditional Indians' stance toward nature and the earth, which they saw as the spiritual mother of all living things. Indians revered the Mother Earth as a sacred person.

Mathews' obvious close ties to nature mirror what Charles Eastman, a contemporary of Mathews, wrote in 1911. The intimate relationship with nature "keeps the spirit sensitive to impressions not commonly felt, and in touch with the unseen powers."¹⁹ Mathews may not have been raised in a traditional Osage home, but his proximity to the traditional Osage and their oral history, what he termed "racial memory" in The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters, combined to elicit from him a truly Indian perspective. Mathews surely would have agreed with Eastman that "all who have lived much out of doors know that there is a magnetic and nervous force that accumulates in solitude and that is quickly dissipated by life in a crowd,"²⁰ because Mathews lived a solitary existence in his blackjack-surrounded cabin for much of his life. Mathews interpreted the world through "Indian eyes" which saw the communion between man and spirit.

Mathews, then, moved between two worlds, and in doing so, he proved himself most like an Osage, for the Osage see

all of life as having a duality.²¹ Mathews refers to this duality in Talking to the Moon:

The Osage, while in perfect harmony, assumed that he had two natures . . . and he divided himself and his universe into two parts, man and animal, spiritual and material, sky and earth, which he called Chesho for the Sky People and Hunkah for the Earth People, because he felt this duality. With his Chesho thoughts, his ornamental expressions, however, he was colored by the processes of the earth in general and by his own struggle in particular.²²

Mathews' ability to perceive this fundamental trait of the Osage people must be credited to his inherent understanding of the Osage world and probably only added to his complex personal life shared between two worlds. Mathews might have been only one-eighth Osage, but his Osage blood, heritage, and interests directed the man's world and permeated his life for the most part. Although Mathews' nonfiction and personal life reflect the two cultures in which he was involved, the Osage one takes precedence.

ENDNOTES

¹Tulsa Tribune (June 12, 1979), p. 17A.

²Garrick Bailey, "John Joseph Mathews" in American Indian Intellectuals, ed. by Margot Kidder (St. Paul: West, 1978), p. 205.

³Ibid., p. 207.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Elizabeth Williams Cosgrove, Book Review of Wah' Kon-Tah in The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. 11 (1933), p. 733.

⁶Charles R. Larson, American Indian Fiction (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978), p. 37.

⁷Telephone interview with Georgeann Robinson, friend of John Joseph Mathews, Bartlesville, Oklahoma, October 25, 1984.

⁸Savoie Lottinville, Letter to author, November 15, 1984.

⁹Gladys Buck, Letter to author, April 1, 1985.

¹⁰Lottinville, November 15, 1984.

¹¹Geary Hobson, ed., The Remembered Earth. An Anthology of Contemporary Native American Literature (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978), p. 8.

¹²Terry Wilson, "Osage Oxonian: The Heritage of John Joseph Mathews," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Fall, 1981), p. 266.

¹³Hobson, pp. 8-9.

¹⁴Buck, April 1, 1985.

¹⁵Daily O'Collegian (February 5, 1935), p. 1; Telephone interview with Lillian Mathews, sister of John Joseph Mathews, Pawhuska, Oklahoma, May 28, 1984.

¹⁶Wilson, pp. 266-267.

¹⁷Charles Alexander Eastman, The Soul of the Indian. An Interpretation (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), p. 5.

¹⁸John Joseph Mathews, Talking to the Moon (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), pp. 163-164.

¹⁹Eastman, p. 163.

²⁰Ibid., p. 11.

²¹Louis F. Burns, Osage Indian Customs and Myths (Fallbrook, California: Ciga, 1984), p. 12.

²²Mathews, Talking to the Moon, p. 221.

CHAPTER II

MATHEWS THE MAN

Mathews, a little known and little recognized historian and author, wrote four published books of nonfiction about what he knew, loved, and understood, all of which stemmed from an environment made up of two worlds: the Caucasian world and the Indian world. In terms of the Osage sense of duality, the Anglo world in which Mathews found himself could be termed Hunkah, for it was more practical and material; Mathews' Osage world, on the other hand, could be called Chesho, as it offered Mathews things of a spiritual or mystical nature. Guy Logsdon in an article in Nimrod states that Mathews' indoctrination into the white world, with his education and travel, coupled with his experiences "with nature combined with his Indian cultural heritage [to become] the basis and strength of his literary efforts."¹ Mathews' literary production comes from a culturally and socially mixed rich environmental milieu of white and red wherein the Indian aspects are the most obvious and telling. However, before John Joseph Mathews' work can be appreciated, his personal life must be examined in order to see how Mathews functioned in the Osage and Anglo cultures and what he learned from each. Mathews acquired important tools

and knowledge from both cultures and incorporated much of them into his publications.

The Mathews family had had contact with the Osage for almost two centuries. Mathews' great-grandfather was mountain man "Old Bill" (William Shirley) Williams who married an Osage woman named d'Achinga of the Big Hill Band (Grosse Cote) and the Elk gens in Missouri in the early nineteenth century. Mathews writes about his Osage ancestry in The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters.

One of his [Bill Williams'] daughters, Mary, married John Mathews from Kentucky, and after her death, he married her sister Sarah. He had trading posts among the Indians: one at Fort Gibson, one at the Osage Mission, and one at the place which the Osages called Mo'n-Ce-Gaxe-To-Wo'-n, Metal-Makers-Town. His blacksmiths repaired their guns and shod their horses, and therefore he became Metal-Maker.²

John Mathews, of Welsh descent, and Sarah Williams Mathews were John Joseph Mathews' father's parents. John Joseph Mathews' father, William Shirley Mathews, and his brother Edward fled to Texas during the Civil War after Union troops burned their Humboldt, Kansas, home and killed their parents in 1861. Before William Mathews came to his Osage ancestors' country, he and his brother worked as drovers on cattle drives originating in Texas. William S. Mathews' family became a prominent one in Osage country. The elder

Mathews', called "Judge Mathews" by local residents, helped to establish banks in the area towns of Gray Horse and Hominy, as well as Pawhuska. John Joseph Mathews became familiar with the Osage tribal organization and responsibilities through the elder Mathews' involvement with the Osage tribe. The elder Mathews served his tribe as treasurer, chief justice, national attorney, and national councilman during the late nineteenth century. In addition, he was president of the local board of education in the city of Pawhuska, made contributions to a semi-professional baseball team in Pawhuska, helped found the Osage Mercantile Company, and built a flour mill and icehouse on Bird Creek.³ With this sort of family history, Mathews came to appreciate Osage tribal movements, politics, and family ties.

Mathews' mother, Pauline Eugenia Girard Mathews, the daughter of French immigrants, gave birth to John Joseph Mathews on November 16, 1894; he was the only son to reach maturity. Siblings in the Mathews family included Sarah Josephine, Susan Frances, George Martin, William Nicholas, John Joseph (Jo), Marie Imogene, Lillian Bernadine, and Florence Julia. In this Catholic family, education and close family unity were encouraged. Mathews' father, who died on March 15, 1915, introduced his children to Osage ways, traditions, and language. Mathews' mother, who often carried her Rosary while working in her garden, was very influential in her son's life and taught him French. Close friends of Mathews remember that he spoke fluent French,

English, and Osage.

Mathews' father enrolled John Joseph Mathews with the Osage tribe in 1906; his roll number was 1600. Mathews' competency certification, allowing him as an Osage Indian to handle his own affairs, occurred in April, 1921. In 1929 and 1930, Mathews enrolled his own children, daughter Virginia Winslow Mathews and son John Girard Mathews, on the Osage census rolls.⁴

Mathews became familiar with tribal life as a young man through his father, and Mathews also had a sense of the Indian reverence for the land. Jon Manchip White writes that the Indian's traditional ties to the land are very powerful. Mathews intensely loved the land, and that love only increased as he aged. His layman's knowledge of nature started early. Mathews the lad owned a horse, and together they would roam the countryside of the wild and untamed prairie surrounding Pawhuska searching for any type of wildlife, especially birds. Wildlife in any form fascinated Mathews, and as a boy, he wanted to be an ornithologist. He came to know intimately the habitats and habits of animals and fowls of the area, not unlike the early training and knowledge that a traditional Indian boy would receive. He included this expertise in his publications, and it is highly evident in Talking to the Moon. Mathews' sister, Lillian, enjoys recalling the story of a young Jo Mathews who often begged to borrow his mother's treasured binoculars. As he rode about the prairie, he would use both the

glasses and the case--the glasses to investigate distant horizons and the case to cradle wild bird eggs.⁵ Mathews never lost his interest in science and nature, and for most of his life, he boldly lived in the middle of it. He says in Talking to the Moon that his self-built sandstone house in the midst of the Osage County blackjack oak trees

was nature's own except for the composition roof, which to this day startles me as I approach from the high prairie, for the roof's inharmonious battleship gray resists all the wild furies and the sweet cajoleries of temperamental nature over the blackjacks, and remains an alien.⁶

In the Anglo sphere, Mathews' tie to the Indian world is a significant one. Mathews had an extensive education for a person of his day and locale. He attended school at Mrs. Tucker's Subscription School, a private school, St. Joseph Parochial School, and Pawhuska High School. In high school, the popular Mathews found himself captain of basketball, football, and baseball teams and editor of the school's first annual publication, The Trumpeter. Mathews' daughter, Virginia Mathews, says that Mathews as a young man "was a very dashing, extremely handsome man. . . . He was really stunning looking."⁷ Standing over six feet tall, an Osage physical characteristic, Mathews, with his green-amber eyes, curly hair, and "English complexion," cut the image of a dashing, competent man who made "girls . . . swoon on the sight of him."⁸ Maude Chesewalla agrees that

Mathews was a handsome man that any woman aged "seventeen to eighty" would find attractive. Mathews was one of ten seniors who graduated from Pawhuska High School on May 22, 1914. During the fall of 1914, he enrolled in the University of Oklahoma, a predominantly white institution, in Norman, as a geology major until World War One interrupted his studies.

He became a member of the United States Army Flying Service Signal Corps, on November 28, 1917, trained at Houston and Austin, Texas, and rose to the rank of second lieutenant. His military activities took him to Europe for the first time. Flying was a novelty at this time, and Mathews enjoyed the excitement and danger inherent in this new male-oriented field of aviation. Because of his excellent night vision, he even taught night flying in open cockpit planes at Langley Field, Virginia. It was customary for male Indians to prove themselves in battle, and perhaps Mathews saw aviation, a male-oriented military field at the time, as a way to fulfill tradition. After his discharge on January 4, 1919, Mathews returned to the University of Oklahoma and graduated with Phi Beta Kappa honors with a degree in geology in 1920.

With the advent of World War Two, Mathews seemed eager to volunteer his services on behalf of his country, for he confided to Lottinville:

I am not sure yet what Uncle Sam is going to do about my returning to the Air Force, but I am now

ready to serve in any manner. As a matter of fact, I am quite anxious to get into the business.⁹

Mathews obviously felt the traditional warrior spirit of American Indians. Garrick Bailey in American Indian Intellectuals and Guy Logsdon in an article in Nimrod are both correct when they refer to Mathews as a ready adventurer seeking excitement and stimulation, as evidenced by his interests in hunting, aviation, and exploring.¹⁰

Even as an above-average university student, Mathews enjoyed excitement and novel excursions. The fact that he was a geology major contributed to this penchant. LeRoy Fischer writes in The Chronicles of Oklahoma that while at the University of Oklahoma, Mathews had the opportunity to accompany an archaeological dig on Honey Creek near Grove, Oklahoma. When local citizens heard that the investigators had discovered gold--which they had not--steps had to be taken to discourage the inquisitive fortune hunters. To achieve this end, the group of archaeologists invented the tale of a haunted cave complete with a horrible monster named Hecome-hicome. One afternoon when a group of local citizens gathered about, the "monster" could be heard making awful wailings and screams. Actually, the monster was John Joseph Mathews who from inside the cave

played a flute . . . and then concluded with a variety of groans, wails and cries which crescendoed near the mouth of the cave. Then the

other young men on the dig screamed . . . 'It's the Hecome-hicome! He's coming out!' The visitors fled in terror.¹¹

Mathews obviously had a sense of humor also.

Most people with any amount of Indian blood during Mathews' day and age rarely received the opportunity to attend school, especially an institution of higher learning, but Mathews did--in the United States and in the United Kingdom. With a geology degree in hand, Mathews decided to travel overseas again and enrolled in Merton College, Oxford, England, where he stayed for three happy years studying the natural sciences and earning a second bachelor's degree in 1923. Mathews' daughter, Virginia, says that her father truly enjoyed his stay at Oxford, for he loved the formal, high-culture world there. While in residence in England, Mathews made the acquaintance of various members of British high society who accepted him into their society, probably due to his Indian heritage. To Mathews, this set of circumstances proved to be quite exciting, and he enjoyed sharing these people's hunting exploits and visiting their castles.

Upon his return from England, he assumed the stance, diction, and accent of an Englishman. His daughter says that this characteristic was not assumed in an affected or condescending manner, but done so that he might be understood clearly and because "he liked that way of speaking."¹² Bailey credits Mathews' aristocratic demeanor however as

being more Osage than British. His bearing, according to Bailey, stemmed more from the attitude and poise of being an Indian than from any other source. Mathews' bearing probably came from a combination of these two worlds that he had come to respect and appreciate--Osage and English. Mathews himself commented that his manner of speaking could be credited to his stay in England and that "'not too many people speak Osage with an English accent.'"13

Prior to attending college at Oxford, Mathews turned down a proffered Rhodes Scholarship because, as his sister Lillian says, he did not need the funding and believed that others needed it more than he did. Mathews was financially secure because of his Osage mineral headright, rent from his land, employment as a geologist, and investments which all afforded him a comfortable income. In later life, however, Mathews accepted financial assistance to pursue his extensive and costly research projects. Close friends who contributed to this cause included Frank Phillips of Phillips 66 Petroleum Company, W. G. Skelly of Skelly Petroleum Company (and of whom Mathews proposed to write a biography), and Allen G. Oliphant of Oliphant Oil Company. In the 1950's, Mathews accepted this extra funding to help especially in his research for his book The Osages which demanded that he travel over much of the midwest and central United States.¹⁴

Mathews' connections with men of such substance and power, the influential men he met in England, and E. W.

Marland, another wealthy oilman and an Oklahoma governor, seem odd in light of his isolated and bare life in the blackjack cabin and his interest in his Osage people and heritage. Interestingly enough, Mathews could adapt to either world--hunting foxes with Marland at his Ponca City, Oklahoma, estate or visiting in the rather rustic homes of Indians. To Mathews' advantage, his affiliation with wealthy individuals benefited him because these men contributed financially to his research and scholarship and subsequently, to his overall reputation.

After graduating from Oxford, Mathews still had the urge to explore and investigate, and this desire took him to other classrooms--literal and figurative--for more education. He enrolled in the University of Geneva (Switzerland) School of International Relations. He neatly utilized this new interest in international politics by reporting on the League of Nations' activities there for the Philadelphia (Pennsylvania) Ledger. While in Switzerland, he met and in March, 1924, married Virginia Hopper from East Orange, New Jersey.¹⁵ In the mid-1920's, Mathews still had not settled down, for he had an intense curiosity and desire to satisfy something inside him which he could not name.

This curiosity developed in Mathews while he was still a young boy, and he imparted the development of it in the introduction to The Osages.

I was a very small boy when the seed which was to disturb me all of my life was planted. I

had probably been moved from my mother's bedroom because of the arrival of my second younger sister, and being the only boy in the family, I had a room to myself. At least I was alone and certainly afraid.

I might have lain all night obediently silent, but I remember the hour before dawn, when the silence was the heaviest. There floated up to my room through the open window which overlooked the valley, a long, drawn-out chant broken by weeping. I could even hear the sobbing. It was like the song of the wolf and yet like the highest pitch of the bull wapiti's moonlight challenge, and it broke, too, not with the terminal grunt of the wapiti's challenge, but with a soul-stirring sob.

I heard it many times later as I grew up and up until the time I entered high school, and I have never been able to describe it to myself; it was indescribable, and there is nothing with which to compare it. It filled my little boy's soul with fear and bittersweetness, and exotic yearning, and when it had ended and I lay there in my exultant fear-trance, I hoped fervently that there would be more of it, and yet was afraid that there might be.

It seemed to me later, after I had begun to

reason, that this prayer-song, this chant, this soul-stirring petition, always ended before it was finished, in a sob of frustration.

It was Neolithic man talking to God.

Later, when I became a man, quite consciously I searched for the continuation of that which ended before it was finished. I searched for it in the call of the muezzin from the tower of a desert mosque, searched for it in the overwhelming fervency built into Gothic cathedrals, and I tried to find it in a Mexican Indian pilgrimage to Chalma.¹⁶

To satisfy this burning curiosity then, Mathews travelled extensively in Europe and Africa, mainly on a motorcycle. During this time, Wilson says Mathews "unconsciously and unsystematically [soaked] up an awareness that would eventually lure him back to the [Osage] tribe from his intercontinental wanderings."¹⁷

Mathews himself says that he was active during this time of his life, but was basically aimless and that hunting was a major passion of his. While in Africa, Mathews, after an exciting yet odd experience, decided to return to Oklahoma.

'I remember very distinctly one evening, when we were preparing our meal, suddenly it came to my guide and my cook that it was time to worship. So they fell on their knees, their faces toward

Mecca, as usual. In this situation you feel so clumsy, so out of things--you feel that you are an absolutely sinful person. About this time some Kabyles, a wild tribe of Arabs, came up who were not Mohammedan and had no known religion at all--wild! They came racing across the sand. I think there were about six or eight of them firing their Winchesters, the model 1894 lever. I thought, here, we're in trouble. My guide and my cook were prostrate. They surrounded us shooting all the way--on their Arab horses--all mares, incidentally. Then they got off and ate with us. They were very friendly.

'That night I got to thinking about it, and I thought that's exactly what happened to me one day when I was a little boy, riding on the Osage prairies. Osage warriors with only their breechclouts and their guns had come up and surrounded me--firing. Of course, I knew some of them, about them; they knew me, who I was. That's what we called joy shooting, you see, just joy. So, I got homesick, and I thought, what am I doing over here? Why don't I go back and take some interest in my people? Why not go back to the Osage? They've got a culture. So, I came back; then I started talking with the old men.'¹⁸

He finally remembered who he was, as his friend Maude

Chesewalla says, and came home.

Even before he finally settled in Oklahoma in the late 1920's, Mathews tried his hand at being a businessman in Los Angeles, California, where for three years, he entered the real estate business. This foray into the Anglo-oriented business world was the first and last for Mathews, as the business world held little interest for him. While in California, Mathews and his wife had two children, Virginia and John, but the marriage did not last, and Lillian Mathews says that John and Virginia Mathews divorced. Mathews then returned alone to Oklahoma to live in Pawhuska.¹⁹ With all of his experience in the non-Indian world of education, world travel, and business, Mathews returned to the world of the Osage Indian in the Oklahoma blackjack country.

When Mathews returned to Oklahoma, he began his writing career in earnest. He had been encouraged to write while he attended the University of Oklahoma by a professor, Walter S. Campbell, whose penname was Stanley Vestal. Campbell recognized talent in the young Mathews. In the next thirty years or so, Mathews would produce four books of non-fiction--Wah' Kon-Tah. The Osage and the White Man's Road (1932, University of Oklahoma Press), Talking to the Moon (1945, University of Chicago Press), Life and Death of an Oilman: The Career of E. W. Marland (1951, University of Oklahoma Press), and The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters (1961, University of Oklahoma Press)--and one novel, Sundown (Longman's Green, 1934).²⁰

Wah' Kon-Tah. The Osage and the White Man's Road is based on the diary and memoirs of an Osage Indian agent, "Major" Laban J. Miles, who served the Osage tribe from 1878 to 1931. He began this service during President Ulysses S. Grant's Peace Policy, and Miles was a Quaker. On his deathbed, Miles gave his memoirs to Mathews who was a personal friend. Wah' Kon-Tah, based on Miles' journal, is a series of episodes of reservation life during Miles' tenure as agent. This book became a best seller and even a Book-of-the-Month Club selection causing Mathews to achieve fame very quickly. Talking to the Moon is an autobiographical account of Mathews' decade of solitary life in his removed blackjack cabin outside of Pawhuska. This book depends on Mathews' observations of and descriptions of nature and man. It is divided into twelve chapters, each concerned with a month of the Osage calendar year, grouped into four divisions, one for each season of the year. Life and Death of an Oilman examines the life of E. W. Marland in a favorable light. Mathews and Marland were good friends, and Mathews' discussion of Marland takes Marland from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to the Osage country where he made his fortune and fame as an oilman and politician. Mathews indicates in the preface to Life and Death of an Oilman that the biography is more of a personal impression than anything else. Mathews' final publication is The Osages, a monumental, largely historical work, which takes the story of this Indian tribe from its mythical descent from the stars

in time immemorial into the twentieth century. Mathews' only novel, Sundown, involves a disillusioned, mixed-blooded protagonist, Challenge Windzer, who goes from his Oklahoma hometown to a university to World War One and home again. Reviewers and readers who know about Mathews' personal history cannot help but make comparisons between Chal's life and Mathews' life; however, Chal cannot successfully cope with life or the pressures of being part Indian, while Mathews obviously did.

For most of his life, Mathews observed nature and civilization, wrote, researched, aided his tribe as a council member and geological expert, and served Indians across the nation by taking an active role in the reorganization of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the 1930's. Mathews wanted very much to study all native peoples of the Western Hemisphere and was fortunate enough to receive two consecutive Guggenheim Fellowships beginning in 1939 to pursue this research.²¹ As Virginia Mathews reports,

He did go to Mexico, and he wanted very much to look at the whole of Indian background of South America and Mexico and see how it compared with North American Indians. . . . He lived in Mexico for several years, and he contracted a bad fever there, a jungle fever. Dreadfully, dreadfully sick. And he had bouts of it occasionally. It would come back. Not life threatening, but it was in his blood. . . . He would get very yellow and

quite sick.²²

In later years, he assuaged the headaches which accompanied the returning bouts of fever by painting landscapes, often indicative of the birth month of family members. His sister Lillian and his late mother became proud recipients of such cherished paintings. Mathews capably handled and reflected his intense love of the land and nature with a pen as well as a paint brush. He drew his own nature-oriented illustrations to accompany the text of Talking to the Moon.

In the 1930's, Mathews built his sandstone rock house on his Osage allotment, a blackjack covered 1,200 acre parcel of land 7 miles from Pawhuska. He was quite proud of this accomplishment and loved living there. He later shared this cabin with his second wife and wrote his books in the cabin, his sanctuary. Gladys Buck says that they lived there on the ridge until poor health for both Mr. and Mrs. Mathews "forced them to move to town [Pawhuska]"²³ before Mathews died. He had been and would go to many new, exciting, and even exotic places, but in his blackjack hideaway home, he felt the most comfortable and creative. An article in the Tulsa World aptly described this cabin. The distance from Pawhuska, seven miles, and the approach to the house made a first time visitor apprehensive about the stereotypical image of the word "cabin." The outside and inside of the dwelling though reflected the man who called it home. The cabin

was large, built of red and yellow native stone

and surrounded by an ornamental red fence. A turkey gobbler ruffed his feathers and stalked off with guttural [sic] protests at the intrusion while two sleek Irish setters, tails a-wag, barked a cheery welcome and capered along beside us, escorting us to the door . . . [of] the spacious cabin . . . an amazing room.²⁴

The cabin, filled with hunting trophies, Indian memorabilia, books and more books, and comfortable furniture, was, as the reporter wrote, "just such a place as a person of bookish tastes dreams of--secluded, comfortable."²⁵ The key word in this article is "secluded"; Mathews enjoyed his seclusion, because from that environment and perspective, he could stand back and observe nature and produce findings and opinions on those observations. As Lottinville says, Mathews was selective in acquiring friends and did much quiet observing. The remote and aloof confines of his secluded, private retreat provided an excellent observation post for him.

This house became the center of his nature observations, a ritual which had begun in his youth. His daughter comments that her father

was very fond of nature. 'Fond' is too light a word. He was totally absorbed with the natural world. And so, of course, he loved nothing better than to observe it.²⁶

Mathews became quite an expert during his lifetime on the

flora and fauna of the Osage prairie, especially coyotes and prairie chickens. He was the first to make tape recordings and films of the nuptial dance of the prairie chickens. He would often sleep at night with a tape recorder at the ready in case he would be awakened by an unusual or beautiful sound; he usually slept nude on the porch of the cabin or even out-of-doors. Mathews, like traditional American Indians, preferred the solitude and quiet of a natural environment to a "civilized" environment. Margot Astrov in American Indian Prose and Poetry points out the difference in this regard between modern man and the traditional Indian.

Modern man . . . avoids the silence of solitude and meditation with such circumspection [because] he fears to face the emptiness of his world . . . [while] to the Indian there was no such thing as emptiness in the world. There was no object around him that was not alive with spirit . . . only in the solitude of remote places and in the sheltering silence . . . these spirits might be heard.²⁷

About his solitude and the satisfaction that he found there, Mathews wrote: "I was thrilled with my solitude . . . I was proud of [the] harmony with the life about me."²⁸ Mathews craved the peace and solitude of the prairie in which to work. Oftentimes, fearful that her brother in his seclusion would fail to eat properly while working on a manuscript,

Lillian and her mother, Mrs. Mathews, would fry chicken, one of Mathew's favorite meals, and take it to him on Sundays. At times like these, he would often ask Lillian to be a first-hand critic and read some of his newest material.

After living alone on the prairie for several years, Mathews, in 1945, married a widow from Pawhuska, Mrs. Elizabeth Palmour Hunt, originally of Muskogee, Oklahoma. Elizabeth Mathews aided her husband in his literary and historical pursuits as she accompanied him on research and field trips and helped him in the typing of dictation and the proofreading of manuscripts. One of Mathews' Osage acquaintances, Mrs. Robinson, recalls that John Joseph and Elizabeth Mathews "were a good combination."²⁹ Mathews' friend and neighbor, Gladys Buck, remarks that Mathews "and Elizabeth were very compatible [sic]" and that "he was king of his castle and adored by Elizabeth."³⁰ Jack Haley of the University of Oklahoma Library Western History Collection remembers Mathews as "eccentric, outgoing, yet very private; absolutely delightful."³¹ Elizabeth Mathews served as Mathews' secretary on their many trips to the Norman-based library collection to gather information, especially for The Osages.

While residing in his blackjack hideaway northeast of Pawhuska, Mathews lived in two worlds--one, the natural world, one associated with primal man, and the other, the "civilized" world, one more associated with a structured, "sophisticated" man. As part of this "civilized" world, he

was elected to the Osage Tribal Council in 1933 and served in that capacity until 1942. About this responsibility, Mathews once commented:

I let my name appear to be elected on the Osage Council for the sole reason of doing what I could for my people. . . . I am going to go straight ahead and do what I can for the Tribe, I have been proud to be a member of the Osage Tribe, I am going to do what I can. I have had advantages of education and travel, that is my duty, I wouldn't be a good citizen if I did otherwise.³²

Mathews also represented the Osage Tribe every quarter in Washington, D. C., and as a geological expert speaking on behalf of Osage oil, gas, and mineral rights, he appeared before investigative boards sent to the oil rich Oklahoma land of the Osage Nation. As Mathews once said at a tribal council meeting, "I was a geologist before turning into an author."³³ In 1935, Governor E. W. Marland appointed Mathews to the Oklahoma State Board of Education. In a speech on behalf of the Young Democrats delivered at Stillwater's Oklahoma A and M College in 1935, Mathews said that his educational committee called for a reorganization of the Oklahoma public school system from the district system to a county system. The advisory committee's concern centered on the number of students per class and wanted to limit the number of pupils to a maximum of thirty-two per classroom. In the 1940's, Mathews toyed with the notion of

running for Oklahoma State Senator, but he abandoned the idea when he realized that he could never be comfortable as a compromiser and therefore as a politician.

As indicated by the many roles that Mathews fulfilled, he fit in well in either the Anglo or Osage world, owing to his intelligence, education, world view, and erudition. Mathews could relate to all people--"uncultured" people, politicians, scholars, and members of high society. In his personal relationships with people, Mathews exhibited a certain duality however. His daughter, Virginia, states that "he fitted in with all kinds of people,"³⁴ but pointed out the fact that her father could be quite cold, especially to people of lesser intelligence or intellect. His attitude depended on his present companions and if he felt comfortable in their presence. She continues by saying:

I have seen him at gatherings with very so-called sophisticated [people] in Washington or New York . . . and he could give them as good as he got. I mean he could talk--he could trade conversation--people were fascinated listening to him. He was a storyteller really. Rather spellbinding. He loved to tell funny, involved stories with little O. Henry endings. . . . He could be extremely funny. He loved to entertain people when he felt like it. He didn't always feel like it (laughter) He could be very gregarious and have lots of fun.³⁵

Mrs. Robinson recalls that "when he would talk he would just go into time. . . . He had beautiful speech--very effective."³⁶ Gladys Buck, an acquaintance of Mathews for forty years, comments that Mathews

could converse with ease with cattlemen, cowboys, soil conservationists, town business men [sic] or politicians [sic] [but that] he of course liked his privacy [sic]. They [Mr. and Mrs. Mathews] liked to have parties and cook outs [sic] that everyone enjoyed attending. He was always glad to show his wild life [sic] film and slides at schools and other places.³⁷

Lillian Mathews takes pride in recalling her brother's annual trips to Pawhuska's grade school to share his knowledge of Indians and wildlife with children. Friend and associate Savoie Lottinville of Norman, Oklahoma, remarks that Mathews

had a touch of contempt for the dull and unthinking. . . . He warmed gradually [in a crowd] . . . [and] in time, became quite rollicky. . . . He was highly selective . . . in his choice of people with whom to be outgoing, always, however, with restraint.³⁸

Above everything else, Mathews lived his life as he wanted and lived where he did because he thought that it was "the real thing." According to Virginia Mathews, John Joseph Mathews found amusement in people, like Carl Albert,

past Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Mike Monroney, ex-State Senator from Oklahoma, who would visit the cabin in the blackjacks for an evening's visit and proclaim that Jo had the best life, full of everything. Mathews would retort to claim that these people would not stay in the prairie and blackjack environment had they been offered the chance. Other people referred to Mathews as a twentieth century Henry David Thoreau, but Mathews himself did not care for this label.³⁹

The romance engendered by Mathews' life, background, and surroundings appealed to and intrigued onlookers. To outsiders, Mathews lived an idyllic, romantic life. He lived in a rustic cabin with bird dog and shotgun as constant and reliable companions. He made exciting and daring hunting expeditions to the Colorado Rocky Mountains and American Southwest in search of bear and cougar. Mathews entertained the likes of scholars such as Savoie Lottinville, Joseph Brandt, Walter Prescott Webb, and J. Frank Dobie in the midst of an exotic and quixotic "uncivilized" prairie where Indians lived.

This mingling of worlds, interests, people, and temperaments combined to make John Joseph Mathews a man who seemed larger than life. People reacted in an awestricken fashion to him. To his daughter, Mathews was a "very unusual person . . . a genius . . . a cult figure"⁴⁰ who often found himself followed by young film makers, young Indians, or young scholars who viewed him as an oracle, a

mystic, a trickster figure who could move freely and adeptly between two worlds as though the two were interchangeable--the world of high culture, Hunkah, and the world of the hunting camp, Chesho.

Regardless of how others viewed him, Mathews saw himself, according to his daughter and his sister, as an intensely private and loyal family man, "not a doer, purely sort of internal type."⁴¹ Gladys Buck and Maude Chesewalla indicate that Mathews adored his four children and his grandchildren. Virginia Mathews recalls that he was very proud of his children and allowed them every parental concession. Lillian Mathews emphasizes that she and her sisters are immensely proud of their brother, as a family member and as a scholar. In the Mathews' household, loyalty to family was very important. Mathews garnered great satisfaction from doing "what he'd wanted to do and . . . what he thought was important . . . he [did not think] too much about the product of it."⁴²

Mathews' writing then was definitely influenced by his background, surroundings, and lifestyle as a young man and mature adult. His complex nature is incorporated into his nonfiction, as he wrote of, about, and from two very different worlds--the ivory tower of the scholar and "sophisticate," associated with the "civilized" or white world, and the rude camp of the hunter and outdoorsman, associated with the "natural" world of the American Indian. Mathews' work exhibits Mathews the Caucasian and Mathews the Osage Indian.

ENDNOTES

¹Guy Logsdon, "John Joseph Mathews--A Conversation," Nimrod, Vol. 16 (1972), p. 70.

²Savoie Lottinville, Letter to author, November 14, 1984; Lyle H. Boren and Dale Boren, Who Is Who in Oklahoma (Guthrie, Oklahoma: Cooperative Publishing, 1935), p. 329; Osage County Profiles (Pawhuska: Osage County Historical Society, 1978), p. 226; Violet Willis, Letter to author, May 14, 1985; John Joseph Mathews, The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1982), pp. 628, vii, viii.

³Robinson, October 25, 1984; Telephone interview with Virginia Mathews, daughter of John Joseph Mathews, December 4, 1984; Bailey, p. 206; Osage County Profiles, pp. 226, 227; Telephone interview with Lillian Mathews, sister of John Joseph Mathews, Pawhuska, Oklahoma, August 27, 1984; Daily O'Collegian (February 5, 1935), p. 1.

⁴Osage County Profiles, p. 227; Lillian Mathews, May 28, 1984; Osage File No. 350, Indian Office Files, Heirship Papers of William S. Mathews' Estate. National Archives, Washington, D. C.; L. J. Apala, Jr., Letter to author, March 7, 1984; Osage Indian Census Rolls, Record Group 75. National Archives, Washington, D. C.; Osage File No. 312, Indian Office Files, John Joseph Mathews' Competency Papers.

National Archives, Washington, D. C.; Lottinville, November 14, 1984; Savoie Lottinville, "John Joseph Mathews, 1895-1979," The American Oxonian (Fall, 1980), p. 237.

⁵Jon Manchip White, Everyday Life of the North American Indian (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980), pp. 54, 56, 76, 150; Lillian Mathews, May 28, 1984; Logsdon, p. 70.

⁶Mathews, Talking to the Moon, p. 17.

⁷Lillian Mathews, May 28, 1984; Wilson, p. 270; Telephone interview with Lillian Mathews, sister of John Joseph Mathews, Pawhuska, Oklahoma, August 27, 1984; Osage County Profiles, p. 228; Virginia Mathews, December 4, 1984.

⁸Lillian Mathews, August 27, 1984; Osage County Profiles, p. 228; Virginia Mathews, December 4, 1984.

⁹Boren and Boren, p. 329; Osage County Profiles, p. 228; Telephone interview with Virginia Mathews, daughter of John Joseph Mathews, November 12, 1984; Wilson, p. 270; Daily O'Collegian (February 5, 1935), p. 1; Letter from Carolyn E. Graham, Chief, Records Reconstruction Branch, National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, Missouri, to author, August 30, 1985; Telephone interview with Maude Chesewalla, Curator of Osage Tribal Museum, November 7, 1984; Telephone interview with Dee Chambers, Pawhuska High School Administrative Offices, October 4, 1985; Telephone interview with Ruth Daum, University of Oklahoma, October 3, 1985; Virginia Mathews, December 4, 1984; Letter from John Joseph Mathews to Savoie Lottinville, December 28, 1942,

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¹⁰Bailey, p. 205; Logsdon, p. 70.

¹¹LeRoy H. Fischer, "The Historic Preservation Movement in Oklahoma," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. 57 (1979), pp. 3-4.

¹²Logsdon, pp. 70-71; Boren and Boren, p. 329; Virginia Mathews, December 4, 1984, and November 12, 1984; Lottinville, American Oxonian, p. 237; Robinson, October 25, 1984; Virginia Mathews, December 4, 1984.

¹³Bailey, p. 205; Tulsa World (August 3, 1971), City/State Section, p. 1.

¹⁴Buck, April 1, 1985; Lillian Mathews, May 28, 1984; Wilson, p. 271; Osage File No. 312; Virginia Mathews, December 4, 1984; Bailey, p. 212; Letters from Savoie Lottinville to John Joseph Mathews, December 16, 1952, and January 28, 1953, WHC; Letter from John Joseph Mathews to Savoie Lottinville, January 22, 1953, WHC; Mathews, The Osages, p. xiii.

¹⁵Lottinville, American Oxonian, pp. 237-238; Boren and Boren, p. 329; Logsdon, p. 71. The University of Geneva claims that it has no record of a student with the name of John Joseph Mathews. Lillian Mathews, August 27, 1984; Virginia Mathews, December 4, 1984; John Joseph Mathews, "Hunting the Red Deer of Scotland. The Thrill of Conquering the Monarch of the Highlands," The Sooner Magazine, Vol. 1, No. 8 (April, 1929), p. 213; Osage File No. 053, Indian

Office Files, Correspondence between R. G. Hopper and E. B. Merritt, February, 1924. National Archives. Washington, D. C.

¹⁶Mathews, The Osages, pp. viii-ix.

¹⁷Wilson, p. 270.

¹⁸Logsdon, p. 71.

¹⁹Wilson, pp. 271-272; Virginia Mathews, December 4, 1984; Logsdon, p. 71; Maude Chesewalla, Letter to author, May 5, 1985; Lillian Mathews, August 27, 1984; Wilson, p. 272. Virginia Mathews is vice-president of Shoestring Press in Hamden, Connecticut, and has published several children's books. Son John is a teacher, mathematician, and research geophysicist and lives near Washington, D. C. Lillian Mathews, August 27, 1984. California State records have no record of Mathews' marriage or divorce.

²⁰Lillian Mathews, May 28, 1984; Telephone interview with Lillian Mathews, sister of John Joseph Mathews, Pawhuska, Oklahoma, September 4, 1984; Christine Nasso, ed., Contemporary Authors--Permanent Series, Vol. 2 (Detroit: Gale Research Co., Book Tower, 1978), p. 343.

²¹Stanley Vestal, Book Review of Wah' Kon-Tah. The Osage and the White Man's Road in The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, Vol. 20 (1933-1934), p. 153; John Joseph Mathews, Life and Death of an Oilman: The Career of E. W. Marland (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), p. vii; Virginia Mathews, November 12, 1984, and December 4, 1984; Wilson, p. 284.

²²Virginia Mathews, December 4, 1984.

²³Lillian Mathews, May 28, 1984; Mathews, Talking to the Moon, copyright page; Wilson, p. 287; Buck, April 1, 1985.

²⁴Lillian Mathews, May 28, 1984; Robinson, October 25, 1984; Tulsa World (June 27, 1937), Section IV, p. 8.

²⁵Tulsa World (June 27, 1937), Section IV, p. 8; Lottinville, November 15, 1984.

²⁶Virginia Mathews, December 4, 1984.

²⁷Ibid.; Mathews, Talking to the Moon, p. 97; Letter from John Joseph Mathews to Savoie Lottinville, July 9, 1938, WHC; Margot Astrov, ed., American Indian Prose and Poetry. An Anthology (New York: Capricorn, 1962), pp. 40-41.

²⁸Mathews, Talking to the Moon, pp. 58-59.

²⁹Lillian Mathews, May 28, 1984; Elizabeth Palmour Hunt Mathews' two children are John and Anne. John is an author and a scientist; Anne Hunt Brown is a cum laude graduate of Radcliffe and a nurse in California. Mrs. Elizabeth Mathews died in November, 1982. Virginia Mathews, December 4, 1984; Robinson, October 25, 1984.

³⁰Buck, April 1, 1985.

³¹Telephone interview with Jack Haley, University of Oklahoma Library Western History Collection, Norman, Oklahoma, October 18, 1984.

³²Ibid.; Virginia Mathews, December 4, 1984; Logsdon, p. 71; Minutes of Osage Tribal Council Meeting, July 16,

1934, Osage Indian Agency, Pawhuska, Oklahoma. Hereafter cited as OTCM.

³³Letter from Savoie Lottinville to John Joseph Mathews, June 24, 1943, WHC; Letter from John Joseph Mathews to Savoie Lottinville, July 9, 1938, WHC; OTCM, September 19, 1934.

³⁴Oklahoma Educational Directory for the School Year, 1935-1936; Letter from Joseph A. Brandt to John Joseph Mathews, September 4, 1936, WHC; Wilson, p. 284; Daily O'Collegian (February 7, 1935), p. 1; Daily O'Collegian (February 8, 1935), p. 1; Virginia Mathews, November 12, 1984, and December 4, 1984.

³⁵Virginia Mathews, November 12, 1984, and December 4, 1984.

³⁶Robinson, October 25, 1984.

³⁷Buck, April 1, 1985.

³⁸Lillian Mathews, August 27, 1984; Lottinville, November 15, 1984.

³⁹Virginia Mathews, December 4, 1984; Mathews, Talking to the Moon, pp. 164-173, 175-180; New York Times (July 29, 1945), Section VII, p. 7.

⁴⁰Virginia Mathews, November 12, 1984.

⁴¹Virginia Mathews, December 4, 1984.

⁴²Buck, April 1, 1985; Virginia Mathews, December 4, 1984; Chesewalla, November 7, 1984.

CHAPTER III

MATHEWS THE CAUCASIAN

To see how Mathews functioned in the non-Indian world, one only has to investigate the published writings in which he fulfills the roles of scientist and historian, roles created by the non-Indian world. Much of what Mathews wrote could have been written by anyone--white or Indian--so no direct relationship between his Osage blood and some of his publications can be made. Two of his four books of non-fiction are primarily histories--Life and Death of an Oilman and The Osages. These two books are intellectually inspired--Hunkah, or practical, in nature. Mathews' formal education and training in the white world prepared him to be an investigator, as a professional scientist and as a historian.

Of course, in Life and Death of an Oilman, Mathews' two Anglo areas of specialization--geology and history--merged, as this book covers the business and personal lives of E. W. Marland, a pioneer oil explorer and Oklahoma state governor. Mathews and Marland had become friends even before Mathews served on the Osage Tribal Council or the Oklahoma State Board of Education, because of their involvements in the oil industry on the Osage reservation.¹ Mathews knew a great

deal about oil geology, especially that of Oklahoma, and he was able to write about geological formations with an expert's command of the language, as the following quote indicates:

It was, of course, the structure of the strata which first lured men to the western Osage and brought about the discovery of the Burbank field. But what they found almost three thousand feet below the surface were offshore sand bars, left by a Carboniferous sea known to geologists, appropriately, as the ancient Cherokee Sea of the Pennsylvanian Series. The bars had been left thousands of years ago--hundreds of thousands of years--and oil had been stored in them through time unimaginable, to be tapped by a drilling bit in 1920. The sand-bar reservoirs seemed to be independent of the folding of the strata that had taken place above them. They lay under the strata in such a manner that when one drilled on the structure one might hit a sand bar and release the imprisoned oil.²

Mathews' geological expertise probably added to the interest that he had in E. W. Marland as the subject of a book and to the facility with which he wrote the text of Life and Death of an Oilman.

Mathews the trained, scientific professional also surfaces in Talking to the Moon when he discusses the topo-

graphical formation of his blackjack covered land:

The ridges had no topographic importance but were a part of high lands capped either with sandstone or a later member of the carboniferous limestone, now a part of the Mississippi Delta, or resting on the floor of the Gulf of Mexico. The sandstone ridges are simply the survivals of the ancient sandstone cap of my area, and the lower prairie the limestone that underlay it.³

He continues to employ the language and his specialized knowledge of geology in The Osages when he offers a scientific description of the Missouri River:

This river . . . had not been scooped out by the ice sheet, and the hills through which it took its lower course were actually the reason for the formation of the ice sheet's wedge, since they were old Ordovician hills when the Pleistocene glacier crept over the land.⁴

It is fitting that a man who was most interested in human history, especially Indian history, was also interested in the history of the earth where those same Indians lived. Mathews' expertise as a trained scientist adds to the credibility of his nonfiction. His readers can trust his information, because Mathews knows of what he writes.

Mathews' formal education not only prepared him to be an exact scientist, but also to be a scholar. According to Lottinville, Mathews often found himself in the company of

well-educated people who shared with Mathews critical insights into historical and literary topics.⁵ As a result of this scholarly exchange, Mathews often includes historical, classical, and literary allusions in his writing. His most famous borrowing from history involves his life's motto-- "VENARI LAVARI LUDERE RIDERE OCCAST VIVERE [TO HUNT, TO BATHE, TO PLAY, TO LAUGH--THAT IS TO LIVE]"⁶--which he "painted in Chinese red on the face of [his] mantel in Roman lettering."⁷ This happened to be

the motto of some unit of the Third Augustan Legion and was placed over the entrance of the officers' club at a fort in the Aurès Mountains of North Africa, along the Roman frontier of the first century.⁸

In this motto, Mathews found great inspiration for his life. Mathews was a complex individual, as his broad education and wide interests coupled with his simple tastes and lifestyle indicate.

Another aspect of Mathews' training in the white world exhibits itself in Mathews' scholarship as a historian and researcher, especially in his historical books, Life and Death of an Oilman and The Osages. Jack Haley remembers Mathews and his wife Elizabeth as sound and detailed researchers.⁹ About her father's research, Virginia Mathews says that he worked "very hard" tracking down leads and sources and that "he spent years on The Osages."¹⁰ In preparing that manuscript, Mathews

spent a long time at the Kansas Historical Society [and] travelled all through the Missouri settlements, the French settlements, [and] tracked how the Osages had interacted among them and so forth.¹¹

Mathews painstakingly traced Osage tribal movements. His writing technique coincided with what research he had accomplished recently, as his daughter recalls: "He would write things in pieces, put them aside, write other things, depending on what piece of research he'd turned up, and then it'd all have to be sewn together."¹²

According to Savoie Lottinville, Mathews did not leave an unturned stone while researching, as Mathews sought information "in archives, acceptable monographs, particularly in history and ethnohistory, in journal articles, in interviews, and all the rest of it."¹³ Lottinville also credits Mathews' research abilities to the man's knowledge of languages, which gave Mathews "an immense advantage over most researchers in Osage and Missouri history [as] he knew both Osage and French, and he was not quite a stranger to Spanish."¹⁴ For example, in the bibliography of The Osages, Mathews lists sources written in French (Voyage au pays des Osages by Louis Cortambert; L' Attelage le Cheval de Selle a Travers les Âges by Comte Lefebvre Des Noëttes; Abrégé de l'Histoire générale: Voyage en Amérique by J. F. de La Harpe; Histoire de la Louisiane by Le Page du Pratz; Dé couvertes et établissements des français by Pierre Mar-

gry; Voyage aux Prairies Osages, Louisiane et Missouri by Victor Tixier; La découverte du Missouri et l'histoire du Fort d'Orleans by Baron Marc de Villiers, and Histoire de la tribu des Osages by Paul Vissiers) and Spanish (Historia verdadera de la conquista da la Nueva España by Bernal Diaz del Castillo).¹⁵

Given this sort of information and the fact that in The Osages Mathews reports in great, even minute detail, one cannot help but agree that Mathews' ability as a researching historian was stellar. His affinity for his subject matter probably added to his competence as a researcher. He felt very close to the subject matter of The Osages in particular. Virginia, his daughter, comments that Mathews "loved them [the Osage people]. He felt [that] he was on a rescue mission--a cultural rescue mission [of the Osage people]."¹⁶

As an example of his in-depth research, Mathews reports in The Osages that a group of Indians, including a nameless Osage Indian, accompanying a French nobleman, Etienne Veniard, Sieur de Bourgmont, arrived in France on September 20, 1725. He lists the gifts some of the Indians received while touring France: "coats trimmed in gold and . . . cock hats a repeating watch set with diamonds . . . a snuff-box."¹⁷ Mathews offers specific dates, names, places, and numbers about incidents that happened long ago and in very remote places, thus proving he was a meticulous researcher.

As a matter of fact, on September 14, 1777,
Athanasie de Mezieres, lieutenant governor of

Natchitoches, presented to Governor-General Galvez a plan for punishing the Little Ones [the Osage people]. He proposed to enlist 1,270 warriors from ten tribes of Indians living within his jurisdiction.¹⁸

Mathews reports detailed figures concerning battles in which the Osage Nation was involved during American colonial days too.

There were 600 Indians from several tribes; there were Algonkians and Siouans represented by many tribes and 200 Heavy Eyebrows [white men]. They all fought like Algonkians, from behind the boles of trees and from behind windfalls and humps in the earth, in a spot which the Algonkians had chosen nine miles from Fort Duquesne which Braddock and Washington with 1,400 of the best trained troops had come to take.¹⁹

Mathews takes the same pains to be precise in Life and Death of an Oilman.

The first well attempted was near the ranch buildings, and George Miller hammered the stake as his mother, his wife, and E. W. [Marland] stood by. This well, instead of being another Congo discovery well, was continually harassed by the hag Fate. The equipment was not adequate to the task, nor were the finances. But the driller was V. H. Waldo, an old Pennsylvania hand who had been

recommended to E. W. by the Oil Well Supply Co., with whom he had credit for his tools. He had returned pipe and other equipment to them after his failure in West Virginia, and he now took advantage of that credit. Waldo, who was paid \$6.00 a day, had instructions from E. W. to pay the hands every two weeks. For this E. W. had deposited one thousand dollars in the First National Bank--apparently all he had left from his Pittsburgh promotions.²⁰

Mathews continues in the same detailed fashion in other places, too, in Life and Death of an Oilman:

Van Waterschool van der Gracht made a report for him on the value of his producing properties and his oil reserves, exclusive of the Mexican concession. It was encouraging to know that such a scientific research gave his properties and reserves, as of 1922, a valuation of \$109,750,000, based upon oil at two dollars a barrel for 1922, \$2.50 a barrel for 1923, and \$3.00 for the future year of 1924.²¹

Obviously then, Mathews was a fastidious scholar when it came to unearthing dates, figures, and sources in order to include such detail in his work.

At times, Mathews was quite precise, but at other times, some issue may be taken in regard to Mathews' application and handling of his research materials and findings

as he created his manuscripts, especially in Life and Death of an Oilman and The Osages. Under close scrutiny, some problems arise. Mathews' talent as an objective historian may be questioned in Life and Death of an Oilman, not because of his facts, but because of his omissions and his failure to criticize Marland. Mathews states early in the preface that this book is "not constructed from documents . . . [and is] freed of the restraints of traditionally written history and the documentation required by graduate schools."²² Mathews writes Marland's biography but offers no real criticism of the man. Mathews does not examine Marland as an exploiter of the Osage land where Marland made his fortune and reputation. Readers would think that Mathews would be harsh about Marland's activities on this score, because Mathews purports to cherish this land, but he does not chastise the oil wildcatter for exploiting the land or the people of the Osage prairies.

Neither does Mathews criticize Marland in his role as a family man. For example, Marland adopted his wife's sixteen year old niece Lydie Miller Roberts as his daughter in 1916, and in 1928, he "unadopted" her to make her his wife on July 14. Supposedly, the first Mrs. Marland, Mary Virginia, died in 1926 as a result of alcohol and drug abuse. Marland apparently knew that she would not live long or else planned to divorce her because the architect's plans for the fabulous Marland mansion in Ponca City, drawn up before the first Mrs. Marland's death, did not "call for Mrs. Marland's

bedroom, only his [Marland's], Lydie's, . . . and one for George [Lydie's older brother and Marland's adopted son]."²³ Mathews only makes a passing reference to Marland's affairs of the heart which could be interpreted as somewhat immoral, or at least suspect:

Two years after the death of Virginia Marland, the court of commonpleas of Philadelphia changed the legal status of Lydie Roberts Marland back to the original Lydie Roberts. In July, 1928, E. W. [fifty-four years of age] and Lydie Roberts [twenty-eight years old] were married at Flourtown, Pennsylvania.²⁴

Mathews also does not criticize Marland's rather inept term as governor of Oklahoma during which he constantly feared impeachment. Marland entered the political arena in 1931 as an unaware novice and expressed "his own grievances . . . [as] the grievances of the people"²⁵ in his campaign speeches. He entered politics because of his name and influence as an Oklahoma oil producer. Marland, used to having huge sums of money at his disposal, was a strange choice for an Oklahoma governor in the midst of a national depression. He often told his staff to "never mind the expense. It's up to you fellows to get the money"²⁶ for campaign and gubernatorial expenses. Marland wanted to achieve lofty goals for the state, such as establishing a civil service, removing the school system from the political arena, and allowing women to hold public office, but all of

these reforms required money which the state could not raise because his sweeping tax legislation plans were never passed by the state legislature. Mathews only reports these facts; he does not overtly criticize Marland as a businessman, a family man, or an elected state official.

In regard to the historical worth of the Marland biography, Mathews offers much concrete detail on the man and his activities and times; however, in the preface to the volume, Mathews writes that he "had [my] own personal paint box at my side during the writing of this story"²⁷ and that the book is an "account of the career of an oilman [which] is really a personal impression."²⁸ Mathews maintains that he "tried to be very cautious and consciously objective in writing about him [Marland]."²⁹ However, because Mathews and Marland were good friends, one wonders whether the text's veracity can be trusted. Like The Osages, Life and Death of an Oilman lacks any sort of documentation in the form of endnotes or footnotes. In a letter written before the publication of Life and Death of an Oilman, Mathews admitted to Lottinville that the book "is not so much a scholarly biography as a personal impression, and that should be it's [sic] genre."³⁰ He also wrote in this same letter that in the process of writing the manuscript, he "sometimes dismounted, conscience stricken by my speed and freedom, and walked leading the mount."³¹ This statement clearly indicates that Mathews reshaped many facts to suit his purpose, taste, and opinion.

The original manuscript on Marland was accepted and then rejected by the University of Chicago Press, because as Mathews wrote,

at the last minute Couch [the editor of the press] got some idea that there ought to be more about the first Mrs. Marland. This very unpleasant phase I sidestepped rather gracefully, since I had known Lydie and George from boyhood, an [sic] since there is still much bitter feeling in the family and among the acquaintances of both sides, I explained that I preferred to avoid this Sunday Supplement story when I first began writing.³²

In Mathews' correspondence, he seemed concerned that the Marland manuscript would be a "second rate biography."³³

On the other hand, Lottinville, as head of the University of Oklahoma Press, heralded the manuscript and appeared most eager to publish the biography of an Oklahoman written by another Oklahoman. He said that Life and Death of an Oilman "sets a new pattern in the interpretation of the lives of people recently dead,"³⁴ even though less than a year earlier he had informed Mathews that "an element of the subjective (personal bias) on Standard [Oil Company] shows through."³⁵ To this comment, Mathews replied that he had

no feeling about either Standard or [J. P.] Morgan. My feeling was in reality, that E. W. deserved what he got. Of course if your readers

have the impression that I am indicating a personal attitude toward either of these organizations, then it must be there despite my attitude. It either means that I have not expressed my feeling accurately, or that in the cutting the meaning was in some way converted.³⁶

Lottinville also requested that Mathews obtain pictures for the Marland manuscript, but asked that Mathews get "drawings because a too literal presentation [photographs] would work at cross purposes with the text, which is fine and imaginative."³⁷ This comment supports the statement that Life and Death of an Oilman is more of a personal recollection than an objective statement of history. Mathews supports this argument when he claimed that

there is much in it [the manuscript] that a later researcher would never be able to reconstruct from documents, and this very fact might lead a few captious scholars to raise their eyebrows.³⁸

Perhaps, as Mathews claims, his meaning in the Marland biography was "converted," for Mathews' treatment of Marland does not show the man in the same way that other historians have seen him--a greedy, impetuous, self-inflated, egotistical man made even more impulsive and impetuous because of his incredible wealth.³⁹ To Marland's contemporaries, the oil magnate was a greedy, selfish man, but to Mathews, he was a martyr, a self-made American who was tricked into losing his fortune through the devious machinations of con-

niving robber barons and Eastern capitalists led by J. P. Morgan.

The Marland Company was forced to sell its oil to the Humble Company, which in turn delivered it to the Standard. J. P. Morgan and Company were bankers for the Humble Oil and Refining Company. E. W.'s company was paid a premium of twenty cents a barrel. It received \$1.20 a barrel on a stipulated twenty thousand barrels a day.

E. W. became very angry with the Morgan partners over this incident. . . . He became more contemptuous of them and experienced a deeper fear of their faraway control through the manipulation of paper. . . . [and] became obsessed with the determination to break the power of the great bankers.⁴⁰

Mathews paints a portrait of Marland that makes him appear as a man who was "slickered" out of his fortune and did not know it until later. "E. W.'s heart was almost broken when he saw his name, his magic name, painted out on the symbolic red triangle on his filling stations over the land."⁴¹ Such descriptions encourage readers to sympathize with this pathetic man who lost his giant oil company, Marland Oil.

The old machinery was burnished, old parts were replaced, grease rags were picked up from the floor. . . . Little-god-worshipping attendants

were replaced by fewer [gas station] attendants who knew how to say 'sir' and 'mister.' The lumbering dinosaur was suddenly changed into a sleek lizard, fleet and protectively colored.⁴²

Mathews describes Marland in terms of the American Dream-- the midwestern, generous, self-made, magnanimous hero overwhelmed by the grasping, money-grubbing, elitist villains of the Eastern United States. "He became afraid of these gentlemen. . . . The old fear of the still-faced boys must have come over him. He could call up nothing to mitigate this fear."⁴³ How much of Mathews' manuscript is pure history and how much is pure affectation and affection can only be surmised, but in any case, Mathews' historical objectivity and methods in Life and Death of an Oilman may be suspect, especially because documentation is missing and because Mathews and Marland were close friends.

In researching The Osages, Mathews appeared indefatigable in his diligence to uncover every iota of information pertinent to the discovery of anything "Osage." Regardless of the often bothersome Oklahoma weather, Mathews was dedicated to his research for The Osages. He and Elizabeth even moved from the cabin in August, 1952, to a cooler locale to write in comfort.⁴⁴ He confided to Lottinville that the idea of The Osages had

buzzed about my consciousness for years. It's the story of the Osage tribe from the beginning. I'll attempt to move these people across a stage, which

in itself will be rather long and narrow, reaching from the junction of the Mississippi and the Missouri, across Missouri, along the Osage River, and into Kansas. Thence southwesterly, will bend the stage, and it will end in the north central part of Oklahoma, west of the 95th degree of Longitude. The backdrop will be extremely important; the French Voyageurs, the Jesuits, the Jacksonian policies, the slavery frenzy, the homesteaders of the post civil war [sic], Kansas statehood then oil. Again, the backdrop, economic, social and political determining the fate of the tribe, and on the otherhand [sic] the tribe determining the fate (locally) of the background. This latter was at one period rather a general effect, when they were the balance of power between the Spanish on the west and the French on the east.⁴⁵

Mathews realized that this task would be an enormous and difficult one. One of the difficulties he did not overcome was errors.

Readers can isolate errors in the text of The Osages. These errors, coupled with the lack of true documentation, only serve to decrease further the credibility of the volume. One of the errors in The Osages concerns the spelling of the name of the Indian Territory freighter Patrick Hennessy, the man for whom the town of Hennessey, Oklahoma, is named. Mathews surmises that the freighter,

Hennessey, and his companions were murdered by an Osage mourning party between 1870 and 1874.⁴⁶ Most historical accounts of the Hennessey massacre attribute the freighter's death to Cheyenne Indians who had fled their reservation under the supervision of John D. Miles, whose official title at the time of the incident, in 1874, was Agent of the Upper Arkansas Agency, Indian Territory. In John Miles' official report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, he states that a band of Osages arrived at the scene of the massacre after the members of Hennessey's party were already dead, appropriated most of the dead freighters' merchandise, and set fire to the wagons and Hennessey's body which was tied to one of the wagons' wheels.⁴⁷ Miles' official report indicates nothing about the depredation being initiated or committed by the Osages. Miles' proximity to the event and his intimate dealings with the Cheyenne tribe lend credence to his official report.

To compound the mistake, Mathews misspells the name of the freighter. Even though Mathews spells the man's name as "Hennessey," and the town of Hennessey, Oklahoma, spells the town's name as "Hennessey," the correct spelling of the man's name is "Hennessey." Why the town or Mathews added the extra "e," no one knows. This historical fact can be verified easily by referring to Oklahoma history textbooks, government documents, and Hennessey, Oklahoma, area history and lore.⁴⁸

A second mistake found in The Osages concerns another

misspelling, the name of the Indian agent for the Osage tribe from 1898 to 1900, William J. Pollock. Mathews spells this man's name as "Pollack." One misspelling might be attributed to a typographical error, but the name is recorded incorrectly the five times that it appears in the book. The correct spelling of the agent's name appears in various sources, including a most critical and trustworthy one and one surely investigated by Mathews--the Reports to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.⁴⁹

Yet another confusing fact occurs when Mathews writes that the federal government after the 1803 purchase of the Louisiana Territory "agreed to take over the salaries of the priests of the French and the Spanish regimes, so that the large leftover Catholic populations could have spiritual leadership."⁵⁰ In no reference book, history, or government document can even a passing reference to this fact be found to substantiate Mathews' claim. From what source did Mathews garner this bit of information? Here, then, a reader can see why and how documentation would have been invaluable to this study of the Osage people.

At one point in The Osages, Mathews implies that even his oral sources fail him, yet he writes as if the information were completely documented.

There is no tribal or gentile memory of this battle with the white men, because, . . . , it was conveniently forgotten, and one is not sure . . . [who] led the attack, but whoever did lead it had

bad luck, since . . . five hunters [were] killed.⁵¹

Mathews offers this information as factual even though he prefaces it with the statement that there is no tribal record of it which makes the information completely unreliable. Much the same thing occurs in Life and Death of an Oilman where Mathews quotes entire conversations in which he could not have been involved.⁵² Unfortunately, Mathews uses few or no endnotes, footnotes, or textual references to substantiate and prove his "facts" in his histories.

Obviously, Mathews went to great lengths to research his histories of the Osage people and E. W. Marland because of the detail the books include, but there are mistakes and omissions which could have been avoided easily. Because the errors are so evident, they create doubts in the minds of the readers. Mathews perhaps was more concerned with the grander scope of his studies than with small details, but these errors tend to make readers skeptical of the entire work. As a researcher, Mathews perhaps did not leave one stone unturned, but as an objective writer of history, Mathews should have been more critical of the facts that make up the whole. It must be noted that American Indians tend to view things in a holistic way. They are not concerned so much with the individual parts, but with the grand, global scope of things. Regardless of how much time Mathews consumed researching, he did make errors in his texts, and a history can only be judged on the basis of the printed text.

Even so, Mathews must be commended for The Osages simply because of the study's length--788 pages--and because this particular study takes the Osage tribe from time immemorial to the twentieth century in an informed, earnest fashion. Perhaps one might argue that Mathews can be excused for a bit of incorrect data. Kimmis Hendrick, writing for The Christian Science Monitor, believes that Mathews "in his research for this book . . . was not really seeking information so much as some inner satisfaction."⁵³ Regardless of this notion, because The Osages does claim to be a true historical account and is included in the University of Oklahoma Press Civilization of American Indian series, it is important that all information stated as fact be accurate and above suspicion.

In conclusion then, Mathews the white man, as evident in his nonfiction, is both sound and suspect. Mathews' stance as a scientist gives him credibility as a scholarly author. His histories are intellectually motivated, or Hunkah in nature, as the Osage would remark, but he could have made them more credible by utilizing documentation and criticism. Regardless of his success as a scientist or historian, these skills and perspectives are ones that he acquired in the non-Indian world and which helped him gain recognition in that world. Partly because of his experiences in a non-Indian environment, the Indian world made a place for him, his influence, and his skills. He successfully developed the Hunkah-side of his consciousness to

help him better himself and work for and identify with his Osage people.

However, Mathews does reveal much of his Indian nature in his work, especially in the manner he perceives and records the world at large. Here, Mathews proves to be more Osage than white; he is purely Chesho, spiritual, as he describes "ornamental expressions" so capably. Mathews the Anglo is overshadowed by his Indian heritage as he exhibits his identification with the Indian world in his nonfiction.

ENDNOTES

¹Lillian Mathews, May 28, 1984.

²John Joseph Mathews, Life and Death of an Oilman: The Career of E. W. Marland (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), p. 117.

³Mathews, Talking to the Moon, p. 18.

⁴Mathews, The Osages, pp. 4-5.

⁵Lottinville, November 14, 1984.

⁶Mathews, Talking to the Moon, p. 194.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Haley, October 18, 1984.

¹⁰Virginia Mathews, December 4, 1984.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Lottinville, November 15, 1984.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Mathews, The Osages, pp. 795, 797, 799.

¹⁶Virginia Mathews, December 4, 1984.

¹⁷Mathews, The Osages, pp. 205-206.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 235.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 224.

²⁰Mathews, Life and Death of an Oilman, p. 79.

²¹Ibid., p. 133.

²²Ibid., pp. vii-ix.

²³Ibid., p. 181; Bob Gregory, "The Marland Mystery,"
Oklahoma Monthly (January, 1981), pp. 51, 55.

²⁴Mathews, Life and Death of an Oilman, p. 181.

²⁵Ibid., p. 211.

²⁶Ibid., p. 235.

²⁷Ibid., p. vii.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Letter from John Joseph Mathews to Savoie Lottinville,
December 8, 1950, WHC.

³¹Ibid.

³²Letter from John Joseph Mathews to Savoie Lottinville,
November 8, 1950, WHC.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Letter from Savoie Lottinville to John Joseph Mathews,
October 10, 1951, WHC.

³⁵Letter from Savoie Lottinville to John Joseph Mathews,
January 20, 1951, WHC.

³⁶Letter from John Joseph Mathews to Savoie Lottinville,
January 28, 1951, WHC.

³⁷Letter from Savoie Lottinville to John Joseph Mathews,
April 16, 1951, WHC.

³⁸Letter from John Joseph Mathews to Savoie Lottinville,
June 22, 1951, WHC.

³⁹Gregory, p. 54.

⁴⁰Mathews, Life and Death of an Oilman, pp. 174, 193.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 197.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 197-198.

⁴³Ibid., p. 191.

⁴⁴Letter from John Joseph Mathews to Savoie Lottinville, August 1, 1952, WHC.

⁴⁵Letter from John Joseph Mathews to Savoie Lottinville, January 22, 1953, WHC.

⁴⁶Mathews, The Osages, p. 714.

⁴⁷Letter from J. D. Miles, Agent of the Upper Arkansas Agency, Indian Territory, to Edward P. Smith, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 30, 1874, in Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1875), p. 234; Hennessey Clipper (August 23, 1984), p. 1.

⁴⁸Hennessey Clipper (August 23, 1984), p. 1; Letter from J. D. Miles to Enoch Hoag, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, July 10, 1874, in Patrick Hennessey Collection, Hennessey Clipper Office, Hennessey, Oklahoma. Hereafter cited as PHC; Baptismal Record of Patrick Hennessey, March 2, 1837, PHC.

⁴⁹Mathews, The Osages, pp. 730, 731, 735, 745, 816; Berlin B. Chapman, Review of The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters in Ethnohistory, Vol. 9 (1962), p. 104; Letter from William J. Pollock to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 16, 1899, in Annual Reports of the Department of the Interior for the Fiscal Year Ended July 3, 1899. Indian Affairs. Part 1 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing

Office, 1899), p. 297.

⁵⁰Mathews, The Osages, p. 348.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 504.

⁵²Mathews, Life and Death of an Oilman, pp. 36, 41, 42, 43, 211.

⁵³Kimms Hendrick, Review of The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters in The Christian Science Monitor (October 12, 1961), p. 11.

CHAPTER IV

MATHEWS THE INDIAN

Mathews the Osage is revealed in his naturalistic tendencies, utilization of common Indian literary devices, fascination with hunting, tribal chauvinism, typical Indian stoicism, reliance on Indian folklore and traditions, and creation of the Osage Museum. Mathews successfully blended the two perceptions of both the Indian and the non-Indian in his work, but overall, he appears to be more like a red man than a white man.

Mathews fulfills many roles traditionally thought of as "Indian," but his role as a naturalist is a preeminent one. Certainly, other people besides Indians can be naturalists, but Mathews' study of, interest in, and knowledge of nature can be attributed in large part to his Osage legacy. Jane Katz in I Am the Fire of Time says that to American Indians, "nature was something to cling to, something eternal. By reaffirming a bond with the universe, the Native American found that life had meaning."¹ Mathews can be trusted when he speaks from this self-educated, layman naturalist's point of view. In Talking to the Moon, Mathews says that "the men of the blackjacks, the Osage"² "made . . . [their] power of thought harmonize so well with the earth law of survival

. . . [which] seems quite natural and therefore can't be wrong."³ Mathews understood well the importance of naturalism as it relates to the Osage and Indians in general.

I invariably say to anthropologists and others who come to study the Osage: 'If you want to understand the . . . Osage, first study carefully his natural background.'⁴

To Mathews, being an Osage demanded that he be a keen observer of nature. This affection for nature combined well with his intense love of hunting and wildlife photography.

While acting as a scholar, councilman, and author, Mathews lived alone in the midst of his blackjack parcel of land for an extended period of time, about a decade; as a result, he intimately knew of the land's natural offerings simply by being a keen observer of it. Mathews became very knowledgeable about birds and animals as a result of his careful observation of and fascination with them. This characteristic is a prominent one in Indians, as they traditionally live in unity with their natural surroundings. Mathews' knowledge of the habits of prairie chickens, coyotes, and insects is well-known to his readers and family members.

For example, in Talking to the Moon, Mathews acquaints his readers with bobcats.

If the visitor is a bobcat, he is far away
with his chicken by the time we appear . . .

The bobcat is a very close relative of the

lynx and looks very much like him except that he is smaller and, living in the canyons as he does, dark gray in coloration with a hint of the dappling of leaf shadows. As a matter of fact, a bobcat skin placed on the ground under trees becomes immediately a part of the sunlight-and-shadow pattern of the ground and is difficult to see again if one turns the head for a moment. Just as the coyote's yellow-gray blends with the yellow, copper-colored grasses of winter and oddly enough with the golden-green grasses of summer, so does the bobcat blend with the leaf shadows of the canyons and the blackjack hills. There is a hint of yellow in the hair for the sun-splashes of the dappled shade. This also blends with the winter grasses, just as the darker hair, which blends with the shade-patches of the summer leaves, also blends with the somberness of the winter woods.

One does not see a bobcat except when hunting them with trail hounds at night, and even then they do not always tree but may run the ridges all night. I have seen them in the daytime only hunting quail, and then only when they were caught in an incautious moment of nerve failure. Well protected by their coloration, they most certainly would be passed up as they crouch in a tree or by a cliff face. However, often unnerved by the

presence of bird dog and hunter, they break and run, and while sometimes peppered with bird shot, they are rarely killed in this manner.

Like the lynx, they seem to be ill proportioned, with a ridiculous stub for a tail and great feet that might be serviceable to a cougar. A romantic trailer in the snow might thrill himself with the idea that he was hunting man-eating game.

A bobcat loves turkey meat, and he has a mysterious instinct which guides him when I am absent with the dogs. He can tear the inch-mesh chicken-pen wire and climb with ease over the woven-wire fence of the yard if there are turkeys there, and he can carry a full-grown gobbler back over the fence. He comes, like most night prowlers, just after a shower, and, like the great horned owl, on moonlight nights when bobcats look like moon shadows. If he kills more turkeys than he can eat at the time, he will carry the others away from the house and meticulously cover the carcasses with leaves to await his return, as a bear might do with a sheep. He has no coyote tricks; he is powerful and silent, with his mind deep in the groove of savage instinct, and his protective coloration, as in the case of all big hunter-cats, serves him as a hunter primarily.

His only enemies, with the exception of man and his hounds, are screw-flies and bacilli. His deep silence is broken only on damp spring nights when he goes awooping, and his great scream-growl comes up from the head of the canyon to startle me from sleep and the dogs to frantic bluff-barking.⁵

This detail of the intimate aspects of a bobcat's life and habits could have been obtained only by close and constant observation by Mathews.

In another passage from Talking to the Moon, Mathews discusses an eagle, another species of animal that he came to know just as well as the bobcat.

Hunting golden eagles know this [that jack-rabbits have incredible speed]. I have seen an eagle fall from the air like a bomb only to lose the jackrabbit prey because he suddenly became a weed or a bunch of grass, even to the keen eyes of the great bird. Then . . . that eagle [will] sail back and forth over the spot, zoom into the higher air, then fold his wings to feign a dive as though he could actually see the prey. If the eagle is persistent, the nerve-shattered rabbit will sooner or later jump to speed away, or become so dominated by fear that he cannot run but jumps in a series of high leaps. In either case the eagle takes him with ease, even beautifully, at the apex of the useless jump.⁶

Mathews obviously had the patience and the opportunity to witness such events, and he could describe them most accurately. Lillian Mathews says that her brother is most like an Indian because of his love of and observation of nature and wildlife. Neighbor Gladys Buck recalls Mathews' "easy life style [sic]" and the fact that "material things didn't mean much to him. He was a naturalist."⁷ Terry Wilson in The Chronicles of Oklahoma writes that the publication which best illustrates Mathews as a naturalist is Talking to the Moon wherein "the author's penchant for finding metaphors in nature reflected the man's continuous preference for unsullied natural vistas."⁸

In Talking to the Moon, Mathews immerses his readers in the natural world where he finds many treasures. According to the text, Mathews sees himself as an humble creature of the earth, who is awed by what surrounds him, as the following quotation suggests: "Long before I came to the blackjacks [I was] . . . an insignificant bit of life."⁹ Mathews' attitude regarding his natural environment is not unlike the attitude of primitive man toward nature. A. J. Fynn in The American Indian as a Product of Environment says,

The [Indian] looks out upon the universe and finds it full of mystery. He endeavors . . . to interpret the extraordinary things about him. What he cannot account for he looks upon with dread or veneration. . . . The lofty peaks, the dark caves,

the narrow ravines, the steep precipices, the tall, lonely, and isolated rocks, the forests of mountain pines, the noisy, rugged, and impetuous streams, the unusual intensity of lights and shadows, the ancient ruins, the homes and graves of ancestors,--all co-operate to stir the imagination of the natives, to inspire them with awe, and to leave upon them impressions which deeply influence their daily life and conduct.¹⁰

Fynn was a contemporary of Mathews, but even more recent authors echo Fynn's remarks, such as Vincent Gaddis in American Indian Myths and Mysteries:

In his animistic religion, the red man was his own priest and the forest, plains and desert his temple. Nature was alive with spirit, with unseen forces. The Great Spirit was in all things, omnipresent. To look at a tree, to listen to a waterfall, to drink in the balmy odor of pine, was to become conscious of God.¹¹

A passage from Talking to the Moon reflects what both Fynn and Gaddis say:

This freedom . . . in the middle of a great expanse of blackjacks and prairie, with nothing in sight to recall the screeching and the clanking of the mechanized world somewhere beyond the wild ridges, inspires primitiveness. . . .

I am not smug as I sit here [in the midst of

nature]. I am small and overpowered by the primitive forces, but there is no fear. Instead there is the only true freedom that man can feel; the serenity that comes with the absence of emotion and the complete absence of man's pitiful urge to express himself; the only complete contentment.

My thoughts . . . are lost with my spirit in my oneness with the earth about me.¹²

From this state of reverence and awe, the concept of American Indian religions comes. Mathews states in Talking to the Moon that "after you have some understanding of that [nature], his [the Osage] religion becomes clearer to you."¹³ Mathews knew man's place in the panorama of nature, what he liked to call the "balance" of things.¹⁴ He saw man as another "species of the earth. He mates, he fears, he struggles to survive, and he expresses himself in song and in play."¹⁵

Because Mathews is so well-versed in nature and can see the purpose of nature in the grand scope of things, he writes in a very pastoral, descriptive fashion. In this regard, he is like traditional Indian "authors," for much of traditional Indian literature, such as songs and myths, is very poetic. A. Grove Day states that Indian literature utilizes "certain stylistic devices recognized as poetic--usually consisting of archaic, tersely suggestive, or imaginative language."¹⁶ Day continues to say that much traditional Indian literature is impressionistic and includes an

abundance of metaphors and allusions which once again reflect the Indian perspective of seeing the relationships between all things.¹⁷ Mathews, true to traditional Indian literary techniques, often makes efficient use of evocative, descriptive language as he capably writes of the natural environment which he knew so well. Even his descriptions of weather conditions and climate make use of numerous poetic devices as he paints colorful word pictures.

It was a relief to drop down into the creek bottom again, where the long grasses were dappled with yellow; where the quiet holes of water looked cool under their arches of elms, and little water-striders skated here and there over the surface as though they had nothing else to do. The constant, shrill buzzing of the cicada was so deafening that the leaves of the cottonwood seemed to move gently, without the usual accompanying whisper; as in pantomime. The white boles of the sycamore, reflected in the water, danced crazily.¹⁸

When he writes in this vein and employs personification, alliteration, simile, and onomatopoeia, as he does in the previous passage, Mathews is most appealing, realistic, and touching. Through descriptions such as this one, readers may perceive clearly the Osage reservation environs where Mathews lived most of his life.

Some of Mathews' most vivid descriptions are similes and metaphors based on nature. For example, in Life and

Death of an Oilman, a memorable phrase describes Oklahoma's "heat of early spring [as] dog's breath from the Gulf [of Mexico]."¹⁹ Anyone familiar with Oklahoma's hot and humid spring and summer weather can identify with this descriptive remark. In Mathews' nonfiction, he makes numerous climate or nature-oriented comparisons, similes, and personifications, which capture an exact image and feeling. Mathews and his Osage ancestors lived on the prairie, and Mathews writes "that the winds screamed there [on the prairie] in the winter like a crazy woman and during . . . June . . . the winds talked there in whispers."²⁰ Another vivid image that Mathews supplies in The Osages is one in which he describes a still, deep, dark night filled with "spilled-ink moon shadows."²¹

Also in The Osages, Mathews pens other striking metaphors and similes. "Mad clouds would begin to race across the skies, as ragged as an old buffalo robe."²² Europeans "came across the Mississippi like lemmings or grasshoppers."²³ "To follow the [Indians] after they disengaged [from a battle] . . . was like trying to find the mountain stream you have been following when it reaches the desert, where it fingers out and is then completely lost."²⁴ "It was as if all life had left the earth in the white silence."²⁵ Mathews also includes such literary devices in other books as well. For example, in Life and Death of an Oilman, he writes: "The wagons crawled across the swells like migrating beetles, then disappeared into the canyons as

if they were sliding into concealing cracks in the earth, only to appear again."²⁶ "The automobile was in mass production now, and cars were being spawned like salmon by Henry Ford."²⁷

Again, in Talking to the Moon, Mathews turns to metaphor, personification, and simile for apt, colorful descriptions. "There is one old post oak [which] . . . is like an old man who once had a great shock of shining hair, but who is now bald on top, with only a graying fringe around the edges of his skull."²⁸ Mathews says that his "thoughts . . . tend often to circle indecisively like a flock of sandhill cranes high above the prairie."²⁹ Again referring to his thoughts, Mathews states that they "skipped with warmer enthusiasm and more quickly from one pleasant thing to another, like a hummingbird in a boundless garden."³⁰ Mathews describes spiders' webs in this fashion: "Stretched between the house and the locust trees, they are as large and as perfect as pieces of Swiss lace."³¹ Another stunning description can be found in Talking to the Moon:

The sun was just coming up to take charge of a world as fresh as mint flavor, appearing suddenly with the glistening blackjacks etched in its red like an inlay, like some cloisonne conceived by a whimsical artist.³²

Personification is one of Mathews' favorite writing devices to express clear images. In The Osages, Mathews writes, "The limbs of neighboring elms and sycamore, scra-

ping against each other, complained pettishly."³³ Mathews, in Life and Death of an Oilman, says that coyotes question "the moon about the mystery of existence."³⁴ At one point in this book, Marland's oil company is described as "a full-blooded, lucky, healthy youth with a future."³⁵ Marland's field of oil--Petrolia--"had secrets yet unrevealed, and she favored the men who had the courage to seek them. E. W. . . . was . . . still fascinated by her whimsies."³⁶

Mathews also makes effective use of alliteration, as the following quotes from Talking to the Moon indicate. "I hear growls grumbling in [the dogs'] throats, and they begin barking."³⁷ "Strange insects fly in swarms across the ridge, and flocks of dragonflies pass over."³⁸ Mathews' alliteration is quite effective when he creates original hyphenated adjectives and nouns to further sharpen his descriptive passages. "The clank-CLUNK of the drilling tools began on the wild prairie-plains that had known only the pulsing of the earth."³⁹ Oilfield workers "started out again across the trackless prairie, attempting to follow their seemingly whimsical tire-trail back to the dusty road."⁴⁰ These coined hyphenated words appear elsewhere in Mathews' writing, but not always as an alliterative couple. "Here the water-bearing sand strata were eroded."⁴¹ Mathews reports that Marland had a dislike for the "still-faced boys"⁴² of the eastern capitalists. In Talking to the Moon, Mathews coins more of these phrases. He feels that there is "a racial memory-fear in man's heart,"⁴³ says that he enjoys

looking at "the gold-washed prairie,"⁴⁴ and believes that gardens and crops are destroyed because of "bake-oven winds."⁴⁵

Perhaps Mathews' creation of these hyphenated, descriptive words stems from the proper names of traditional Indians, Indian events, or Indian seasons, for example "Wah-Hah-Koh-Lee, the Thorn People. . . . [or] Wha-tze-piah, the Town Crier,"⁴⁶ the Give-Away dance, Eagle-That-Gets-What-He-Wants, Yellow-Flower Moon (August), or Wah' Kon-Tah (the Osage religion and prevailing mystical spirit).⁴⁷ Mathews' penchant for descriptive narrative is quite stunning and may be attributed in large part to his Osage ancestry because traditionally, Indians tend to be descriptive and nature-oriented in their literature.

To illustrate the traditional Indian's use of poetic devices, the following quotations from traditional American Indian literatures may be used. They also employ devices such as alliteration, metaphor, simile, etc.

When I went there, she who walks on the water was wild, Her walk was wild, her eye was wild [or] The water-bug is drawing the shadows of evening toward him across the water.⁴⁸

An Ojibwa love song is a plaintive metaphor: "A loon I thought it was, But it was my love's splashing oar."⁴⁹ A Navajo planting song utilizes alliteration and repetition in this fashion:

The corn grows up. The waters of the

dark clouds drop, drop.

The rain descends. The waters from the
corn leaves drop, drop.

The rain descends. The waters from the
plants drop, drop.

The corn grows up. The waters of the
dark mists drop, drop.⁵⁰

Poetic selections from Indian oratory include these sentences:

My heart filled with joy when I see you here, as the brooks fill with water when the snow melts in the spring; and I feel glad as the ponies do when the fresh grass starts in the beginning of the year. . . . [and] Where are the . . . once powerful tribes of our people? They have vanished before the avarice and the oppression of the White Man, as snow before a summer sun.⁵¹

From these samples of original Indian literatures, one can see that Mathews and traditional Indians share the same way of expressing themselves in poetic terms and the same scrutinization of nature and their environment.

Mathews also shares another characteristic with traditional Indians: hunting. Traditional American Indians saw the hunt as life's major necessity. Few Indian tribes practiced agriculture as a mainstay of life. Hunting was the most important factor in an Indian's life, and it was the responsibility of the male members of the tribe to

undertake the hunt. With this knowledge, it is not unusual for Mathews' daughter to say that nature and the land "was his whole life."⁵² When asked to characterize himself, Mathews' ready response was always "a hunter." Virginia Mathews reports that hunting

was his absolute favorite topic and interest That's what he felt he was [a hunter]. That's what he felt most natural doing. He loved it, and some of his happiest times were spent hunting. . . . When he finally came not to be able to do that . . . that was probably the saddest moment of his life. . . . When he realized [that] he no longer had the physical strength. He was very scornful, very impatient of weakness, especially in himself.⁵³

Readers can see a correlation between Mathews' dedication to hunting, to nature, to conservation, and to his Indian legacy. Lottinville comments that Mathews "was absorbed by upland game hunting and by hunting for deer and elk."⁵⁴ In Talking to the Moon, Mathews details a number of his hunting expeditions and the excitement that he felt about hunting.

I stand outside looking into the north, then go back to the fire and examine the guns and look again at the shells in my hunting coat. . . . If I am in bed when the first V of geese fly over the ridge like an excited pack of hounds, I jump up to

run out and gaze into the blackness, shaking a little but not from cold. . . . [In the morning], I . . . wait for the light, then walk carefully behind the dam. If I hear no splashing or goose chatter, I pull a broomweed and, holding it in front of my face, look cautiously over.

Sometimes geese are very canny and sometimes very stupid. They will often become frightened at the slightest blowing of a strand of hair over the dam and then fly directly over the spot where the hunter is hidden. . . . I have crawled through the broomweeds and the dead bluestem for a quarter of a mile to get a shot at them. . . . One cold, foggy morning I crawled into the middle of a flock of mallards feeding at the shallow edges and inlets of the pond. I couldn't believe it when I found myself looking into the steady eye of a greenhead only a few yards away. . . . [At home], I draw the ducks and string them up on a wire on the front porch.⁵⁵

In Mathews' correspondence with Savoie Lottinville, Mathews' often refers to hunting and the availability of game in the Pawhuska area, as he does in this excerpt from a letter dated October 19, 1947:

The ducks and geese; mostly snow and blue geese have been following the way my ridge points into the indefinite south. They fly over in great

flocks. Some of them are organized into perfect V's and some are scattered all over the skies like sun-glinting fragments. All of them mouthing like so many excited trail hounds. My shrunken ponds must look like pitiful little man-designed lures to them from their positions high above the earth. Anyway they have not stopped; havn't [sic] even been inspired to circle and investigate.

There is much better cover for quail in the Osage this season, and the early cold rains or the late drought, seem to have effected [sic] them here on the ridge very little if at all.⁵⁶

In another letter, Mathews describes a hunting expedition to Wisconsin. He had been sent, on behalf of the federal government, to the Menominee Indian Reservation in that state to investigate the area's conservation. He was there during the fall of 1942 and stayed about a month; while there, he carried a rifle, shotgun, and fishing tackle daily.

It was rather awful to be compelled to hunt deer, ruffed grouse, ducks and catch trout and bass in an ideal setting of primitive forest dotted with 40 large lakes and drained by a wild river. I ran the rapids, fished in the still waters, oozed around the wild rice beds, and shot the flushed mallards and blackduck. I froze on stands while the hounds brought whitetail deer flashing by me

across a logging road, and shot ruffed grouse
among the glaring white birch groves.⁵⁷

The word "awful" here relates to the "awe" that Mathews experienced whenever he was in a natural environment. Finding himself in this type of setting, he would feel a natural impulse or compulsion to take advantage of the region as a hunter, a traditional American Indian, or a conservationist would--a great opportunity.

Besides hunting, Mathews also enjoyed the sport of fishing, which allows the fisherman a time to commune with nature and feel close to it. He talks about the lure of fishing in hot weather in Talking to the Moon:

The escape alternative is fishing. I pay little attention to fishing signs; I go simply because I happen to be in the mood for fishing or to escape the heat by physical action. . . . Once the tackle is assembled and I am whipping the water with a little black gnat with a red tail, and the reel is singing, I am a true fisherman and triumphant. As I approach the big holes along the bank through the weeds, fighting spider webs, gnats, and mosquitoes with my left hand while I fish with my right, the heat is forgotten. When I am wading upstream up to my middle, I am entirely too happy to think of the heat. . . .

Later, as I cook my fish, the mosquitoes start their nocturnal hunting and the cicada chor-

us becomes sharper.⁵⁸

Mathews also fished in mountain streams

for rainbow trout. Nature never made a fish more beautiful or more satisfactory. I have never caught the golden trout of the east slopes of the Sierra Nevadas, the almost legendary trout of Lone Pine Creek, but I have tried. But even under the emotion of the legend concerning their rarity and their beauty, I still think that whipping the dashing, feathered mountain streams for rainbow places one a step closer to paradise.⁵⁹

Obviously, while hunting or fishing, Mathews believed that his life neared perfection, as this last quotation attests. In yet another reference to this same idea, Mathews writes: "[While hunting,] for a few hours man and dogs and life are in singing harmony."⁶⁰

Lottinville says that Mathews could have easily assumed a "macho" stance, because of his interest in the sport of hunting, but that this particular attitude "never seemed to take."⁶¹ Lottinville comments that

The hunting jackets that he [Mathews] inevitably wore completed what might have been an irritatingly macho image had not his soft-voiced humor, respect for nature, and tribal education rendered him a wilderness sage, a gentler sort of Hemingway.⁶²

The operative word in the previous quotation is "respect,"

for that is the impression that observers have of this man-- he respected, even revered, according to Robinson, "all that was around him."⁶³ In doing so, Lottinville claims that Mathews naturally felt a sadness and a loss at the disintegration and disappearance of what he held holy--"the wild turkey, the pigeon hawk, the passenger pigeon, the bison, . . . the bear. . . . Indian culture, Indian gods, Indian epic, Indian song."⁶⁴ The fact that Mathews hunted wildlife and yet revered it also parallels the way that traditional American Indians felt toward the game that allowed them to exist. Mathews understood that the Indian, as a hunter, fulfilled a role as part of the natural world. The Indian, according to Gaddis,

has always been a partner with nature, not a destroyer of it. Sensitive to the rhythms of mother earth, he can teach us [white people].

. . . In exploitation lies extinction. The land and the people who dwell upon it must live in harmony.⁶⁵

Mathews never killed an animal only to kill it, but he enjoyed the competition inherent in the hunt. Traditionally, an Indian, after killing an animal, would "perform a little ritual such as apologizing to it, . . . addressing it as 'grandfather' or 'grandmother,' and seeking in every way to appease its spirit."⁶⁶

Lottinville comments that Mathews' interest in hunting was immense and that he had a sincere reverence for things

of nature which, according to Lottinville's interpretation, "was an Osage characteristic (of the Imperial Osages)."⁶⁷

Mathews, like Jon Manchip White, sees hunting as

an art. It nurtured admirable qualities in the Indian. It gave him his endurance, his preternatural patience, above all his innate sense of being bound up with the intricate processes of nature. To be able to hunt successfully, it was necessary to understand nature in her most intimate aspects.⁶⁸

Mathews did just that, so observers can say that he was most like an Indian in his high regard for nature and wildlife.

Nature was the major force in Mathews' life, for Lottinville insists that Mathews was excellent "in his personal interpretations of the landscape, its surface and its subsurface; bird, mammals, and plants."⁶⁹ For example, in Talking to the Moon, Mathews recalls his relationship with a spider.

I am fascinated by the black widow spider that has now taken over my coyote-, owl-, bobcat-, and opossum-depleted hen houses, but I don't know much about her except that, as a well-supplied, dominant widow, she impresses me as being truly American. I let her live with the idea that I shall watch her and learn something, but I always forget her, and what happens to her when the cold weather comes I don't know. Since she has already

eaten her husband earlier in the summer after mating and goes into widowed hibernation, she isn't of much literary interest.⁷⁰

Because of Mathews' great interest in nature, Lottinville feels that one of Mathews' key qualities was "evoking response by the use of familiar things . . . not without a certain poetical feeling. Good, just plain good."⁷¹

John Joseph Mathews does indeed write of "familiar things" with a certain, special feeling with which everyone can identify, as the following quotation suggests:

They [hunters] tell others of the feats of their hounds, and I have often sat about a fire with several hunters listening to each one singing the praises of his hounds; men who from the medley of voices seem to know which voice belongs to which hound as well as they know the voices of their children.⁷²

The following passage offers a commonly shared experience also:

When the hot winds blow and the vividness of life fades, there is no comfort under the Blackjack, and there is no relief to be found in the house. I stick to the red leather chair and moisten the couch with sweat.⁷³

Readers do not need to have lived in the blackjack environment to know that type of heat and discomfort, and it indicates that Mathews could express archetypal human ex-

periences.

Lottinville says that Mathews saw "poetic configurations in the things of daily life"⁷⁴--ordinary things--which can be ascribed to Mathews' Osage blood. There is a definite correlation, in Lottinville's interpretation, between Mathews' ancestors and Mathews himself, for Mathews spoke often of Osage oral literature which Lottinville calls "deeply imbedded influences" which left their marks "of a hidden depth in the Mathews consciousness."⁷⁵ Mathews' identification with nature, then, stems primarily from his Osage heritage; certainly racial memory and philosophical attitudes cannot be discounted in a case such as his. Mathews, like his Osage ancestors, understood and respected that which is found in the natural world and chose for his life to be an integrated part of the environment.

Mathews also is Indian-like because in The Osages, he is revealed as being a typically chauvinistic member of the Osage nation. He seems to be quite prejudiced against other Indian tribes, especially members of the Five Civilized Tribes--Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Seminole, and Chickasaw--as well as white people, or what Mathews liked to call "Europeans." The Cherokee Nation especially receives negative criticism in The Osages, as the following passage indicates. One must wonder if Mathews was serious or ironic in passages such as this one.

The Cherokees were perhaps more intelligent than the Little Ones [the Osage] inherently, and

they had been in rather intimate contact with the European and his ways for a long time in their homes in North Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia, and they knew well how to employ the subtle chicanery of the European. Not only that, but their blood in many instances was well mixed with Scotsmen and English, some of the mixed-bloods becoming their aggressive leaders. They had even progressed in civilization to the stage where they in many instances owned African slaves.⁷⁶

If Mathews is ironic here, he surely uses the irony to illustrate the type of "civilization" some Indian tribes had reached in the early nineteenth century. To Mathews, the higher forms of "civilization" were more heathen than the "civilization" of most "primitive" men.

In The Osages, Mathews points out various Indian cultural discrepancies also, as the following quote shows:

The Cherokees, devoted to agriculture, had to work their land with only their hands [because the Osage had stolen their horses], and, what's more, the Osages had only recently, 'horrors,' killed two young Cherokee warriors.⁷⁷

Again, readers have to question whether or not Mathews is being serious or ironic, but he seems to be making light of this situation and pointing out the fact that atrocities and outrages are relative judgments based upon who is the victor and who is the victim.

He also aims uncomplimentary and possibly ironic words toward other Indians: "The Chickasaws, Peorias, Delawares, and Miamis were drunk, since that was their normal state."⁷⁸ White people too are targets of Mathews' "ironic" criticism; he often calls whites "Heavy Eyebrow" people as the Osage did. He felt that those individuals who migrated to the North American continent were people "who had . . . not yet had the gutters of Europe bred out of them."⁷⁹ In no way, could any people be compared to the noble and proud Osage in his mind.

Mathews, obviously, greatly admired the Osage. When he refers to his tribe, he calls the Osage people most handsome and righteous and compliments them profusely, especially noting the "whimsical and . . . serious warrior energy of the Little Ones,"⁸⁰ which made them superior to other peoples. Mathews takes pride that the Osage warriors were "the painted giants of the Arkansas River . . . [and] would play with their frightened victims, who signed their death warrants through their visible fright."⁸¹ Because Mathews lauds his own people, critics understand that Mathews feels a concrete tie to his tribal heritage, for he identifies strongly with the Osage tribe as an Osage tribal member.

Another aspect to Mathews' "Indianness" is his stoicism. Traditionally, American Indians have been known for their stoic natures. Gaddis says that Indians are "trained from infancy to hide [their] emotions."⁸² Mathews sometimes appears to be stoic in his nonfiction by the way that

he objectively "reports" things. Even though Mathews usually treated subjects about which he felt passionately, sometimes he assumed a detached attitude. Lottinville comments on Mathews' sense of objectivity which he credits as a direct result of his training as a scientist: "In many contexts he had an almost strange objectivity in narrating incidents . . . and . . . in analyzing the life of the natural world, where he was entirely at home."⁸³

This stoic attitude, which can be attributed more to his Osage heritage than to his scientific training, can be seen in an article entitled "Passing of Red Eagle" published in The Sooner Magazine in 1930. Mathews details the scenes of the funeral of Red Eagle as if he were describing any scene, not necessarily a moving, emotional funeral of a friend. As proof of this statement, the following quotation reads like a reporter's newspaper story:

On his [Red Eagle's] left cheek was the daub of black. On his right cheek the five red lines alternating with as many black ones. These were parallel with the long axis of the ear. He wore his beaver skin turban; his shell neck ornament, and his wristlet of silver. In the right hand he had his eagle feather fan. His moccasins were unornamented. He was wrapped in a new red blanket.⁸⁴

Direct, emotionless descriptions, such as the previous one, prove that Mathews could divorce himself from the emotion or

feeling of a scene or moment and capture it, almost like an artist capturing a tableau on canvas, by concentrating on details to evoke a mood or spirit in the reader. This stoic attitude is most typically Indian.

Another aspect of Mathews' Indian nature lies in his interest in and reliance on various Indian traditions, especially the oral tradition. Talking to the Moon and The Osages are the best indicators of his faith in the oral tradition as the purveyor of truths. Mathews has been praised and condemned for the inclusion of such mouth-to-ear knowledge, because, as N. Scott Momaday comments, "What remains is fragmentary; mythology, legend, lore, and hearsay."⁸⁵ One finds it difficult to separate fact from fiction when relying so heavily on the oral tradition. Nevertheless, Mathews embraces the oral tradition completely in The Osages, especially with his reliance on and many references to "racial memory," "gentile memory," and "tribal memory."⁸⁶ He even makes a biblical parallel to his own text with the prefatory quotation from the Book of Wisdom that introduces Chapter One of The Osages: "And our name in time shall be forgotten, And no man shall have any remembrance of our work."⁸⁷ Mathews sees his work apparently as a mission to preserve what he holds in an almost holy fashion.

In Talking to the Moon, such folkloric attitudes in places add much to the "Indian-like" feel of this personal account. Shirley Hill Witt and Stan Steiner in The Way

state that traditional Indians depended "upon oral transmission for all things. . . . [and that] Indian people have a vast respect for the worth of the spoken or written word."⁸⁸ Talking to the Moon includes anecdotes meaningful for Mathews, and he recounts them as a storyteller would. For example, he writes about the reason why a hunting companion could not join him for one particular hunting expedition.

One day a friend drove up to my gate with a worried look. He had planned to go deer hunting with me, but I knew that he had come to tell me that he couldn't go.

'Say,' he said, 'I'm gonna hafta dog it on you.'

'Why?'

'I got a carload of corn on a sidin' at my place and mud's belly deep to a horse in that low place by the tracks. Can't get trucks in there to unload, and I gotta start feedin', the rain comin' like it is. I just can't make 'er, and I sure hate it, but I gotta dog it this time.'

'Well, all you can do is wait until it drys [sic] up; your cows won't starve. When we get back, you can unload then; surely the railroad people. . . .'

'Yeah, but this cold rain and no feed--liable to hurt a man's calf crop next February. Tell you

what I'm gonna do; I'm gonna buy me some sacks and get me some loafers from town, and put 'em in that car a-loadin', then drive the trucks up as far as we can, and string them fellas out from the car to the trucks, acrost that mud, then kinda piss-ant that corn over.'⁸⁹

To Mathews, this incident was worth recounting because it illustrated the humor, ingenuity, attitude, and sensitivity of his friend and his reaction to the weather, fate, and a cancelled hunting trip.

As this last quotation attests, Mathews, as Lottinville says,

was a good story teller. . . . remarkably good at oral mimicry. . . . [for he] had an ear of surpassing fineness for dialect. Repeatedly, in oral anecdotage, he made Indian conversation come off with unforgettable clarity and charm. . . . And he was mercilessly amusing with uneducated white dialogue. His pronounced guttural enunciation often gave him away in the latter. In his time, A. B. Guthrie, Jr. . . . and Oliver LaFarge . . . had something of this skill, but Mathews was part of the [Indian] culture and he had a bit more than a little genius.⁹⁰

If he were adept at oral mimicry, a talent cultivated by American Indians, Mathews was just as practiced in capturing the vernacular on paper as the story of the aborted hunting

trip illustrates. He does so in some of his articles published in The Sooner Magazine, as well as in Talking to the Moon and Wah' Kon-Tah. His written dialogue represents, Lottinville says, the "uneducated white" speech as the following quote indicates: "Whur yu bin grazin'--haint seen yu, rekon, since me and Jim and you was out after ole shep we shore ketched that ole shep.'"91

In Talking to the Moon, Mathews reproduces Indian speech quite effectively as well. An Osage woman described the manner of traditional Osage planting to Mathews who then wrote about it just as he had heard it, in broken English, from her, a woman named Ee-Nah-Apee.

'My son, you asked about this here Wah-Pee, what we call Plantin' Moon. Some time we call it woman's moon--that's what we say; woman's moon, but we just say that 'cause it's Plantin' Moon. Some time we call Just-Doing-That Moon, crazy woman moon too, but it ain't that.

'L-o-o-o-ng time ago we used to have them bags, I guess you call it, made out of grass. We put corn in these here bags, and we put them on our back; we tie them too with buckskin strings on our back. We go there with long pole in our hand too. We stand there at that place where we gonna plant that corn. We stand there with that pole in right hand, and we look at Grandfather the Sun. We have cleaned all them weeds and stuff off from

that place where we gonna plant this here corn; we make little opah, hehn? What you call it hills, hehn?'

'Purty soon womens go to them little--hills, I guess, and they make hole with that pole on south side of that there hill. They used to say Grandfather sure would see them holes in them hills on south side, that-a-way. We put corn in them hills, in them little holes; and when we have all of 'em with corn in it, we put our feets on it. We stand on them little hills and make drum against the earth with them poles and sing purty song [which goes like this]:

I have made a footprint,
a sacred one.

I have made a footprint,
through it the blades push upward.

I have made a footprint,
through it the blades radiate.

I have made a footprint,
over it the blades float in the wind.

I have made a footprint,
over it the ears lean toward one another.

I have made a footprint,
over it I pluck the ears.

I have made a footprint,
over it I bend the stalks to pluck the ears.

I have made a footprint,
 over it the tassels lie gray.
 I have made a footprint,
 smoke rises from my lodge.
 I have made a footprint,
 there is cheer in my lodge.
 I have made a footprint,
 I live in the light of day.⁹²

When only oral communication is present, speakers are indicated by changes in their speech patterns so that conversations can develop. Mathews was able to convey speech patterns very well and obviously was quite sensitive to language.

Mathews continues to transcribe language patterns accurately in Wah' Kon-Tah. In conversation, Osages, as well as members of other Indian tribes, traditionally avoid using a person's proper name or correct personal pronoun for identification purposes. Many native peoples feared that mentioning one's name would bring misfortune to that person. "The possession of a name was everywhere jealously guarded, and it was considered discourteous or even insulting to address one directly by it,"⁹³ according to the Bureau of American Ethnology. Mathews is true to this mystery of identity and gender when in Wah' Kon-Tah he attributes dialogue to an Indian named Shi Kuh talking about his little girl: "I have come to take him back to my lodge. You will let him go."⁹⁴ Mathews' affinity with the Osage and his

understanding of the speech patterns of whites and Indians allowed him to reproduce dialogue exactly as his ear heard it.

This ability adds to Mathews' profile as a storyteller and keeps him firmly in the tradition of his Osage heritage, for all American Indians are renowned for their oratory and storytelling abilities. Traditionally, an Indian could achieve renown within a tribe through the talent of oratory. Oratory was a much practiced skill among Indian tribes because tribal decisions normally were made by consensus. Any tribal member had the opportunity to speak at council meetings to try to persuade others to his or her point of view. Also, to American Indians, the "word" equalled "power," and the practice of effective oratory increased one's power. According to Astrov, Indians hold that the "word" exerts

a strong influence and [brings] about a change,
either in [themselves] or in nature or in [their]
fellow [beings]. . . . The magic quality of these
words . . . will render [them] invulnerable.⁹⁵

Language is powerful, for it not only reveals one's thoughts, but it also shapes "reality." Thus, the Indian is careful in the selection of the most appropriate words to convey most accurately the meanings intended, and Mathews wrote within this tradition.

Mathews may be said to be more Indian than white also in his attitudes, for he understood the Osage world. He felt compelled to write of it due to an intuitive yearning.

Paula Gunn observes that Indian peoples traditionally "write"

to embody, articulate, and share reality, to bring the isolated private self into harmony and balance with this reality, to verbalize the sense of the majesty and reverent mystery of all things, and to actualize, in language, those truths that give to humanity its greatest significance and dignity.⁹⁶

Gunn observes that Indians traditionally sought

through the sacred power of utterance [the Word] . . . to shape and mold, to direct and determine, the forces that surround and govern human life and the related lives of all things.⁹⁷

Mathews is clearly within this belief as he held that, "each word had a certain sanctity."⁹⁸ Mathews also writes that "words became sacred since they became charged with all the intensity and hope and fear and mystery in their souls."⁹⁹ American Indians place great value on language, and in this regard, Mathews is very Indian.

Mathews relied heavily on the oral tradition or what he termed "racial memory" when he compiled and wrote The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters. This dependence on the oral tradition makes Mathews seem most like an Indian. He realized that the work preliminary to the completion of this book would be enormous and that he had to rely on oral sources because the Osage history had never been recorded, because the Osage had no written language. So, he used the

typical way of recording and transferring Indian myths, history, and ritual--oral tradition--from one generation to the next. Mathews also realized, as Jeannette Henry reports, that

more than any other part of the Native life was the art of storytelling. Perhaps this, more than anything else, still remains in the heart and mind of the people. The old tales, as told in the words of those with an ancient memory.¹⁰⁰

In a letter to Lottinville, Mathews comments about the literary plan for The Osages:

There will be rather wide spaces between documentary evidence, that I shall have to fill in with material [sic], which I have gleaned through the years from the old men. This will necessitate the play of instinct as well.¹⁰¹

In regard to this "play of instinct," Mathews says that "one had to be aware at all times of the difference between 'instinctive knowledge' and fiction"¹⁰² and admits that

there were incidents in which fiction had to be employed. I had seen the marriage festivities, just as I had seen a mourning dance, yet in the descriptions of the marriage of Bloody Hands and The Light I used fictitious names, since my ceremony was not descriptive of a specific one. . . . So, in setting out to write about the Osages, especially in my search for information about

them, I thought of myself as a paleontologist searching for a lost femur, a lost tarsus, several vertebrae, or ribs. In assembling the fact-bones for my reproduction, I had to supply the missing ones with the plaster of 'instinctive knowledge.'¹⁰³

Fortunately, old men of the Osage tribe trusted Mathews, and older tribesmen would not speak about the tribe to anyone except Mathews. Mathews writes in the introduction of The Osages:

I noted that the old men talked more eagerly and with more patience to me than they had ever done before. . . . Their only chance now of immortality was to live in the word symbols of the . . . , white man. So they talked eagerly, with precision and with meticulous care, preserving the sanctity of every word that had been handed down to them from their fathers. I became almost at once aware of the importance of oral history, which I have called in this book, tribal or gentile 'memory' I at first experienced a European or Amer-European impatience when, during every visit to the old men, I had to listen again, word for word, to that which had been told me before. Then suddenly it occurred to me that if there were fabrications or misinterpretations in the history I was hearing, they might be from two to three hun-

dred years old, and the very atmosphere they bore would be of great value to me. . . . About these stories handed down from father to son, this oral history of a people, there was, I began to note, a biblical atmosphere, but with the advantage of never having been written down. . . . This history was a part of them, of the informants and the tribe.¹⁰⁴

Mathews felt, according to his daughter, a "responsibility to pick up the oral culture that could so easily die when the Osage old men died, and to institutionalize it."¹⁰⁵ In an interview with the Tulsa World, Mathews said that he spent

hours at a time respectfully listening to the old men tell the handed-down stories of the Osages Osage wise men decide[d] . . . [I] could help them keep the 'sheetwater of oblivion' . . . 'from washing their moccasin prints from the earth.'¹⁰⁶

One of Mathews' prime sources for this oral history, what he called "gentile" or "racial" history, was Osage Chief Fred Lookout who would not speak English in public.¹⁰⁷ Their conversations occurred over a period of thirty years. Mathews informed the Tulsa World that "'I would listen while he repeated what he had told me earlier, then added the new segment. It took patience but it always was rewarding.'¹⁰⁸

This Indian legacy and tradition, however, became a source of much criticism after Mathews published The Osages in 1961. Most reviewers chastised Mathews for his reliance upon oral history and the resultant lack of documentation. In a book review for Montana, Nyle H. Miller states that The Osages'

weakness is that the story--even the late section--is completely undocumented. . . . [making] the book then . . . a story. . . . for the historian the lack of documentation means that the history of the Osage is yet to be published.¹⁰⁹

Mary E. Young in The American History Review states that Mathews "takes pains not to confuse documentation with truth."¹¹⁰ William T. Hagan in a review of The Osages for The Mississippi Valley Historical Review tells readers to be "wary . . . in the absence of footnotes"¹¹¹ and ends his review of Mathews' book by saying that it "is art; it is not history."¹¹²

The Osages can be criticized on this count, but Mathews' utilization of the oral tradition makes this book a true reflection of Mathews' Osage heritage. He says that the book reveals "the experiences of my father and grandfathers."¹¹³ According to a review of The Osages for The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Mathews employs

a rare technique . . . in weaving together tradition and folklore. . . . [in composing] what

might be called a prose poem, partly fantasy and partly reality. Yet who is to say where the fantasy leaves off and reality begins.¹¹⁴

This meshing of art, history, and fantasy can be seen, for example, in the imaginary child of the imaginary bride and groom, The Light and Bloody Hands, whom Mathews creates to illustrate Osage childbirth and child rearing practices.

Mathews surmises that

Such wah-don-skas [metal items] as trade sewing thimbles [might be] attached to the head of the baby board, [just as there might be] the long, elegant tail-feathers of the scissortail fly-catcher, the tail-feathers of the scarlet tanager or the cardinal.¹¹⁵

Here, Mathews supposes what an Osage mother and father might do to please and entertain their infant.

Because of reviewers' comments about the role of fantasy in The Osages, one can see a similarity between Mathews' text and many American Indian mythological accounts. A 1961 Tulsa World article reports that "the Indians say [that] he [Mathews] understands [the Osage language] well. The book's prose even captures the rhythms of speech in their traditional stories."¹¹⁶ For example, in the first chapter of The Osages, Mathews writes of how the very first legendary Osages were nurtured and taught by the Earth, the Sun, and the animals. The following passage from The Osages sounds very much like a traditional Indian myth.

Grandfather the Sun . . . called them [the Osage people] to him and had pointed out to them the thirteen rays that radiate from him in the mornings and again in the evenings during certain atmospheric conditions. He asked them to note their straightness, and to note that there were six of these rays on the left side and seven on the right side, and that further there was a glow on the left side that was the shape of the soft under tail-feather of the golden eagle. These things would have great significance in their lives He then showed them how to make arrow shafts from the dogwood and the ash tree as straight as his own rays, and he fashioned a bow from the Osage orange tree, and another from the antler of the wapiti.

The Little Ones were well armed now, and soon they had furs to keep them warm, and plenty of meat from the generosity of the buffalo. They met him one day and he gave them four colors of maize, and instructed them in the use of his hide, fat, sinew, and horns, and he gave them squash. They met the crayfish, who brought up from the earth the four sacred colors, dark, red, blue, and yellow. They met the cedar and the evergreen water sedge, the symbols of life everlasting. A panther showed them the lotus fruit which they

have ever used for food, and the roots of the water lily.¹¹⁷

This account of the beginning of life for the Osage on earth is not unlike other myths of creation from other tribes, because of the common elements--animals, their gifts, their instructions, and the acquisition of food, clothes, and weapons.

The Osages then is the product of an Osage Indian, and Hagan says that the volume "is almost incomparable in its treatment of an Indian culture."¹¹⁸ The Chronicles of Oklahoma reports that The Osages' "greatest merit is probably in its revelation of the Indian's character and his reactions to his environment."¹¹⁹ The Indian culture and environment are treated when Mathews deftly explains the creation of various elements of Osage culture. As an example, he explains how and why the "Little Old Men" came into existence and how important they were to Osage tribal life.

The old men became intrigued with their own observations and soon they . . . moved a little farther from the . . . village and met each day . . . under the shade of an elm. Soon they were called wise men, and during the hours of peace and full stomachs all through the centuries, these wise men, called the Little Old Men, with their inquisitive groping created a formal religion, an organized buffalo hunt, an organized war movement, and a civil government.

The Little Old Men thus came into being and they were called No'n-Ho'n-Shinkah. . . .

The Little Old Men became sacred, but of course they were never little, and certainly characteristically tall.¹²⁰

To this day, the role of the Osage Little Old Men is important to Osage culture, for they are the wise men who harbor tribal traditions and history and who became a major source for Mathews' research.

In regard to the Osages' reaction to their environment, Mathews relates in great detail how the tribe adopted almost all elements of its environment into its daily living as parts of its religion, society, and government.

There was more to the universe than sky, earth, land, and water. There were the stars, the groups of stars, that must have special meaning, and the animals and the plants and the insects and the birds; and winds and thunder and lightning. So the little Old Men divided the [Osage tribe into twenty-two divisions and] . . . each [division's] . . . leader [was] to find a suitable symbol from among the animals, plants, insects, stars, birds, etc.¹²¹

Mathews understood that nature was an integral part of Osage life. Many people respected Mathews for his Osage insight and sources. Georgeann Robinson is one of them.

I did appreciate him. He at least put it down.

So, a lot of us can say we did all these things and we know all these things, but there comes a time when we've got to put up or shut up, and he did.¹²²

Robinson insists that Mathews was "proud of his Indian heritage and did something about it"¹²³--he wrote it down. He learned and remembered it, as Indians traditionally do, by listening to older people who hand down such precious memories in hopes that they will live forever.

His Indian nature also exhibits itself in Talking to the Moon when Mathews decides where to build his stone house in the blackjacks. He displays here the American Indians' trust in customs, omens, and signs--the ways that nature can guide a human being and show how inexplicably the two are woven together.

One day when I was riding over the pastures my attention was drawn to a white object gleaming in the sun. When I climbed to the top of a rounded prairie hill, I saw that the white object that had demanded my full attention and had imperiously called me was not a single white object, but the scattered bones of a horse. As I stood looking down at them, I remembered that . . . the last colt of my favorite mare had been killed by lightning on that hill. . . . I picked up two of the leg bones and examined them, then mounted and rode to the middle ridge. I sat on my horse for

some time just dreaming, then realized that I still had the leg bones with me. I dismounted and laid them one across the other.

Later . . . I noticed that the [water well] driller had picked up the crossed bones and had laid them carefully aside and had spudded in on the exact spot where I had whimsically put them several days before.

I had left no location sign for the well, so the conscientious driller had assumed that the carelessly dropped bones were the marker. . . . I felt that I had to accept the area as the location for the house. . . . As I looked again at the bones, I became even more whimsical in the realization that white had imperiously played its part as well. It had attracted attention and had inspired acute interest and activity as it ever does on the prairie.¹²⁴

The carelessly discarded horse bones became a sign and an important turning point in Mathews' life.

Another way that Mathews exhibited a reliance on Indian tradition is in his inclusion of Osage literature, practices, and symbolism in his nonfiction. In both Talking to the Moon and The Osages, Mathews includes the Osage planting song.¹²⁵ In The Osages, Mathews includes a ceremonial war song:

I go to learn if I shall go on,

To learn of the sun if I shall go on . . . ,
 . . . Truly by the noon sun, I, as a man of
 mystery, go.

To fall unaware upon the Ps-I'n [enemy].¹²⁶

One of Mathews' favorite Osage songs was "Song of Red
 Horse," which he incorporated into Talking to the Moon:

I heard singers sing song of his father.

I saw red horse shine in sun.

I saw sun shine on flanks of red horse.

I saw his shining ears point to heaven.

I hold rope in my hand.

I hear my heart sing.

Red Horse is mine.¹²⁷

Only a person who is trusted to hear the Osage songs and is well-versed in their meaning and significance can use these songs effectively and reverently.

Mathews' knowledge extends to Osage symbols and practices also. He writes in Talking to the Moon that, for example, "to the Osage the coyote is a symbol of cupidity and double-dealing."¹²⁸ He also mentions the fact that the Osage people admired the "male intensity and salacity" of the boar squirrel and that Osage Indians used the skin of the scrotum of the black squirrel to hold their love medicine: "The scrotum has much significance in itself, and it forms the bag into which other ingredients are placed."¹²⁹ Another Osage practice related by Mathews in Life and Death of an Oilman concerns the care of dead bodies.

The Osage, had never buried their dead until persuaded to do so by the white man. . . . The Osage had placed their dead in cairns. There was also a practical reason for this, since the coyotes and wolves hunted constantly.¹³⁰

Mathews is very familiar with the cultural aspects of the Osage people. Again, Mathews accumulated these materials from his Osage oral sources, so these traditional Osage songs, symbols, and practices were handed down to another member of a younger generation, just as they had been for generations before. Mathews' reliance upon the oral tradition and legacy is probably the strongest support for Mathews' reputation as an Indian and as an Indian author.

Mathews also showed how interested and dedicated he was to Osage history by being almost singlehandedly responsible for the creation of the Osage Museum in Pawhuska which opened in May, 1938.¹³¹ Into this museum, he poured his energy. He saw the museum as a bank of sorts--a bank wherein the traditions, values, and history of a people could be deposited, and the legacy, learning, and appreciation of that people could be withdrawn by any people. The interest, compounded daily on the deposits, was shared by all peoples, Indian and non-Indian, to make them culturally richer.

In death, as well as in his life, nature and Mathews' Indian essence commingled. Mathews died, at age eighty-four, on Monday, June 11, 1979, in Pawhuska and was buried

at his blackjack ranch house on June 14, 1979.¹³² Georgeann Robinson attended his funeral, and she considers herself fortunate to have been able "to see the place where he spoke so beautifully of and with great respect and love."¹³³ Both traditional and nontraditional Osage Indians attended his funeral. Because Mathews was raised in a Catholic home and had never abandoned his faith, he was buried from Pawhuska's Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic Church. Lillian Mathews recalls that the service became very emotional. Osage Assistant Chief Ed Red Eagle eulogized Mathews this way: "The man who knew more about our heart and what we thought is gone."¹³⁴ At the gravesite where traditional Osage song recordings were played, Lillian Mathews says that a thing of wonder occurred--a black bird, which no one could identify, flew over very low as the casket was being lowered into the ground. As the bird passed above the group of mourners, it made a very mournful sound. This sign capped off the Osage burial and indicated, at least to Miss Mathews, that her brother's spirit was free.¹³⁵ Typically, birds are intermediaries between the heavens and Indian people, so it is fitting that a black bird traditionally associated with death and Indian spirituality would have made an appearance at Mathews' burial.

In the greater part of his nonfiction, Mathews proves to be most like an Osage Indian because of his naturalistic tendencies, Indian literary devices, interest in hunting, tribal chauvinism, typical Indian stoicism, Indian tradi-

tional folklore, and museum plans. Mathews' sensitivity to, knowledge of, and insight into Osage culture, acquired mainly through oral history, found itself as a basis for a majority of his work. Other American Indian authors, such as Leslie Silko and N. Scott Momaday, also have relied on the oral tradition in their contemporary fiction. Regardless why he had an interest in his Indian heritage, why he developed it, and why he exercised it, Mathews made effective use of it which makes his writing very interesting, memorable, and admirable. If John Joseph Mathews had not taken this sincere interest in and effort in preserving Osage history, it might never have been done. To the Osages' advantage, their history was preserved by an individual who was truly respectful and concerned with the tribe and its past, and the majority of John Joseph Mathews' nonfiction reflects that.

After examining Mathews the Anglo and Mathews the Osage, his merits as an author ought to be investigated. In this respect, he is not so much a white man or red man, but simply an author with the problems and successes that any author has with his or her published work. However, much of his writing style can be attributed to his Osage Indian legacy, making an even stronger case to prove that Mathews was more Osage than white.

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- 124Mathews, Talking to the Moon, p. 5.
- 125Ibid., p. 48; Mathews, The Osages, p. 450.
- 126Mathews, The Osages, p. 274.
- 127Mathews, Talking to the Moon, p. 83.
- 128Ibid., p. 188.
- 129Ibid., pp. 157, 156.
- 130Mathews, Life and Death of an Oilman, p. 81.
- 131Lillian Mathews, August 27, 1984; Wilson, pp. 280-281;
Letter from John Joseph Mathews to Savoie Lottinville,
April, 1938, WHC; Daily Journal-Capital, May 2, 1938, pp. 1,
2. Lillian Mathews was appointed as the museum's first
curator.
- 132Tulsa Tribune (June 13, 1979), p. 14C.
- 133Robinson, October 25, 1984.
- 134Ibid.; Lillian Mathews, May 28, 1984.
- 135Lillian Mathews, May 28, 1984, and August 17, 1984.

CHAPTER V

MATHEWS THE AUTHOR

In some ways, Mathews' writing style, too, has its roots in his Osage heritage and therefore adds to his profile as an Indian. American Indians tend to see the world in its completeness and are not necessarily caught up in the parts that make up the whole. Mathews' style sometimes reflects this Indian-like aspect because it includes poor paragraph development, a lack of transitions, awkward sentences, some odd diction, and much redundancy. To some critics, these elements might combine to show that Mathews is not a very competent writer, regardless of his race.

Mathews includes many short paragraphs in The Osages. In the twenty-first chapter of the work, a chapter entitled "Fort d'Orléans," Mathews has eight paragraphs on one page, and the longest paragraph includes only three sentences which contain a total of seventy words. The shortest paragraph on this page contains one sentence of forty-eight words.¹ Many of Mathews' shorter paragraphs consist of only one sentence, like the following: "They arrived in large bands and often with the Hietans, perhaps the modern Comanches, and told Sibley that the Hietans had no guns at all."² Another example follows: "This, say the Little Ones, threw

the Caddos into a funk, and they became excited."³ Yet another one-sentence paragraph reads: "The expedition had planned to stay with the Osages-of-the-Oaks near the Three Forks during the first winter."⁴ These three examples from The Osages illustrate Mathews' utilization of very short sentence-paragraphs, but Mathews also goes to the other end of the spectrum with long sentence-paragraphs. The following passage is one paragraph made up of one sentence which contains a total of ninety-eight words.

The Pawnees of the Red River had urgent need for arms, even if they were not in conspiracy with Cordero in San Antonio; they never had sufficient arms for their wars with the Little Ones, although they told Sibley that 'horses and mules were to them like grass, they had them in such plenty, they had likewise dressed Buffalo Skins & knew where there was Silver Ore plenty; but there was a Nation of Bad Indians (Osages) [sic] who gave them much trouble and vexation, and they were more formidable to them On Account of that having Arms, etc., etc.'⁵

This last passage is from a chapter entitled "Mauve Shadows" in The Osages and is only one of twelve one-sentence paragraphs in this chapter which has a total of only forty-four paragraphs in it. This chapter, only eight pages long, has the following frequency of sentences per paragraph:

6 sentences: 1 paragraph

5 sentences: 2 paragraphs
 4 sentences: 3 paragraphs
 3 sentences: 9 paragraphs
 2 sentences: 17 paragraphs
 1 sentence: 12 paragraphs⁶

As one can see, more than half of the paragraphs of this particular chapter contain very few sentences. Sometimes this problem of short paragraphs makes the text appear to be unconnected or similar to a list.

Talking to the Moon also suffers from this paragraph problem. It is not unusual to find seven or eight paragraphs on one page.⁷ These numerous, short paragraphs often include just one sentence, as the following quotation shows: "These exhilarating days are short-lived, and soon the heat settles again, and the days seem hotter than ever."⁸ Mathews pens yet other small, one-sentence paragraphs like the following quote: "He was done in profile, and his portrait shows a classic American Indian contour that would not be out of place on a coin."⁹ Of the seven full paragraphs on page 112 in Talking to the Moon, there are two paragraphs of one sentence each, two paragraphs of two sentences each, and three other paragraphs, each having three, four, and five sentences. The five-sentence paragraph is, of course, the longest, consisting of one hundred twenty-one words, while the shorter, one-sentence paragraph consists of eighteen words.¹⁰ Mathews apparently has a tendency to write brief paragraphs. In Talking to the Moon, this element of his

writing style aids in representing Mathews' thought processes. This technique makes the autobiography appropriately appear to be a stream of consciousness at times.

The uneven paragraphing, however, is made even more uneven at times due to the lack of transitions. For example, in Talking to the Moon, Mathews writes about Oklahoma's oftentimes unpredictable and dangerous spring weather, and the fact that one day after being in a tornado on the prairie, he sees his first dead man--a victim of the violent storm. However, he leaves his audience with the sight and does not prepare his readers for what follows this shocking scene.

I rode to investigate this strange thing, my horse shied, and I saw the first dead man I had ever seen.

The blackjacks have shed their brown leaves of winter by this time, and they etch their bare branches into the afterglow as the very red sun sinks slowly into the prairie.¹¹

Mathews too abruptly shocks his audience and does not prepare the audience for this sudden change of pace, mood, and subject.

A second example of the lack of transitions in Talking to the Moon occurs when Mathews recalls the fall season and its effect on his blackjacks and the lonesome call of the coyote that he hears at night when a full, brilliant moon appears. However, he immediately leaves this strong,

earthy, Oklahoma image to go to the Guadalupe Mountains without warning his audience.

In his [coyote's] long quavering cry he, unencumbered by artificiality, has asked the question for both of us and expressed as well as it can ever be expressed that which wells in both our hearts.

When we go bear hunting in the mountains, it is during the latter part of the Deer-Breeding Moon, but during this moon following one of the great drought summers, the Deerslayer telegraphed that the bear had come down out of the Guadalupe Mountains.¹²

Perhaps cognizant of the missing transitions, Mathews eventually comes to utilize blank spaces, approximately a triple space in the text of Talking to the Moon, or even subtitles, such as "For Posterity" or "Sheila" or "Holly and Coyotes," in lieu of actual transitions to indicate a change in topic or location.¹³

The lack of transitions also appears in The Osages. A rather shocking leap must be made in Chapter 35 of The Osages when Mathews introduces the role and appearance of Osage homosexuals.

Quite often the homosexuals were cowardly in war, and did decorate themselves as women, and really enjoyed the company and conversation of women.

If the Little Ones had felt the terrifying shocks of the New Madrid earthquake in the years

1811-12, they would probably have had a very simple explanation for it--Wah' Kon-Tab showing his anger.¹⁴

A more startling shift in subject matter would be hard to find, and the inclusion of a simple transition, or even the blank spaces that he uses in Talking to the Moon, would be helpful in a case such as this one.

The lack of adequate transitions leads to problems in Mathews' prose, namely the problems of place and chronology. Often in Talking to the Moon, as with the shift of locale mentioned earlier from Oklahoma to the Guadalupe Mountains of New Mexico, readers can never be sure where they and Mathews are. An example of this problem occurs in Chapter 9 of Talking to the Moon where Mathews discusses his blackjacks, the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and the blackjacks again, all within the space of five paragraphs.¹⁵ Because of these sudden shifts in location, reading Mathews' prose sometimes becomes a slow and confusing process.

Chronology suffers in The Osages mainly, again, due to a lack of transitions. The Osages is a history, and, of course, chronology is vital to a history. Mathews' chronology could be sharper. In Chapter 39, Mathews discusses events that occurred in 1821, and in the next chapter, he discusses events that occurred in 1815.¹⁶ Mathews has this same problem elsewhere in the volume--in Chapters 41 and 42. The year 1835 is referred to in regard to the Cherokee Neutral Land, and with the following chapter, Mathews refers

to the establishment of Harmony Mission on the Marais de Cygnes River where a "'factory' would be established later, in 1821."¹⁷ With the lack of transitions and the resultant sometimes poorly handled chronology, Mathews' writing is often cloudy.

Such problems with his texts are compounded by his sentence type selection, which can be criticized also. He apparently has a penchant for lengthy and involved sentences. In Wah' Kon-Tah, Mathews' descriptive sentences tend to be lengthy and are compound or complex while the narrative sentences (usually involving a story about an Indian from the Osage Reservation) are made up of normally shorter, simpler sentences. One descriptive paragraph in Wah' Kon-Tah, for example, consists of three lengthy sentences, two of which are complex and very involved.

Out on the high prairie and among the black-jacks, the world became steel hard. Above the prairie grasses the winds howled and stung the face of the traveler until it was numb, or tore at the coverings of the freighters' wagons, as though they would sweep such infinitesimal objects from the wild expanse. Into the teeth of the wind the mules lowered their heads, and the drivers walked looking at the ground, moving over the prairie like forlorn insects. Fortunate was the freighter who had his bottle on the seat of his wagon or in his pocket, and could find warmth in frequent

nips; a great boon in a world of stinging wind, even though he might grow maudlin, or fall over asleep in his chair when he finally reached the warm fire in the trader's store.¹⁸

Mathews' narrative discourse, on the other hand, is composed of simpler sentences, basically independent clauses connected by either semicolons or conjunctions and commas and lacking much subordination, prepositional phrases, or dependent clauses, and containing repetition. His diction in such passages includes many monosyllabic and/or simple words. The following example comes from Wah' Kon-Tah also.

He got up and walked cautiously. He was afraid the Pawnee had heard the noise. He staggered a few steps and his feet slipped into a small ravine and he fell. He felt the cold water gurgling around his body, and he was suddenly helpless and very tired. His pony came to his mind and he thought that the pony must be somewhere near, sleeping. He thought he would rest for awhile. Pawnee is over hill, he thought, and when pony is rested we will go find this Pawnee. Pawnee will be asleep too, and we will wait until the pony is rested. He would remain in the water and the Pawnee could not hear him. Pawnee would say that it was noise of running water. He closed his eyes and lay against the muddy bank. He would sleep there in running water and Pawnee could not

hear.¹⁹

Mathews, with this simple sentence structure, composed of straightforward English grammar usage--subject, verb, and object--conveys his narration in a rather "Indian" fashion, as Indians traditionally speak newly-learned English in halting, abrupt sentences. The result is therefore effective, for in this way, Mathews indicates Indian thought patterns used as narration as opposed to his own passages of description.

Mathews offers shorter sentences also in creating dialogue that he attributes to Indian speakers, just as he does in transcribing Indian thought patterns. In Talking to the Moon, Mathews transcribes what an Osage named Little Panther told him about why buck deer hide during the fall. "'Cause they 'shamed I guess. They don't want women deers to see 'em with that thing on its horns, I guess. They sure hide good, too."²⁰ Again, Mathews, by creating short, simple sentences which involve a simple sort of diction, offers "realistic" Osage thought and speech patterns.

In Mathews' two histories, however, his tendency is to write long and involved sentences. For example, in Life and Death of an Oilman, Mathews, early in Chapter 10, pens a somewhat rambling sentence which, in sixty words, includes two introductory elements (an adverbial one and a gerund one) and a main independent clause having ten prepositional phrases, two non-restrictive clauses, and a sentence interrupter:

Now, believing that he could find other fields if he could get acreage west of the line of contact between the Permian and the Pennsylvanian, he was confronted with the necessity of dealing with the home steads [sic] of 'Old Oklahoma,' the former unassigned lands, as well as those of the Cherokee Outlet, each of whom owned only a quarter section.²¹

This sort of structure is not unusual in Mathews' writing, as this next passage indicates.

Soon, where there had been no sound except the doleful whistle of the upland plover, the nuptial booming of the prairie chicken, the prairie winds that had many voices, the coyotes questioning the moon about the mystery of existence, and the bawling of the impatient, pettish steers, there developed the metallic rhythms of drilling, the coughing of pumps, and the explosive laboring of trucks stuck in the mud.²²

The preceding descriptive sentence includes one lengthy adverbial introductory element composed of a five-element series which precedes an independent clause wherein the subject follows the verb and is a lengthy series of phrases based on one preposition.

Mathews does much the same thing in The Osages, for again, his staple sentence structure is complex and lengthy. One particular fifty word sentence is made up of two inde-

pendent clauses with four subjects and nine verbs.

The party rode to Fort Smith with anticipation, but though they were punctual, the Cherokees did not show up, but sent a message that the prisoners were mostly women and were married to Cherokee men and were very happy and did not wish to come back and live with savages.²³

The first eight words of this last sentence, one of the two independent clauses, are quite simple and straightforward, but the sentence then becomes confusing because of an abundance of conjunctions--"but" appears twice and "and" appears four times. The sentence includes four prepositional phrases also. The last subject in this sentence--"prisoners"--is a subject to a complex verb construction involving five verbs. All of this rambling could lead to a bit of confusion on the reader's part. In the preceding sentence, the number of verbs seemingly outweighs the number of subjects to comfortably accompany them which adds to the awkwardness of the sentence. However, even when Matthews' sentences include an equal number of subjects and verbs, the sentences are oftentimes still confusing. The following sentence serves as an example.

Each unit of hunters was organized according to the old tribal hunting organization of the Little Old Men, except in the physical division units, the chief of the divisions took the place of both the Grand Hunkah and the Grand Tzi-Sho,

and if the hunting unit were gentile, of course, they were under their chieftain, but the organization of the hunt was the same.²⁴

This last sentence, consisting of sixty-four words, has three independent clauses, involving nine prepositional phrases, four passive voice verbs, and one lengthy nonrestrictive element, which is separated as a dependent clause, but reads as an independent clause because of the placement of the first comma. Another awkward sentence in The Osages includes two independent clauses with one main subject involving four verbs. In this sixty-eight word sentence, there are three other "minor" subjects inside nonrestrictive elements, an understood subject, a parenthetical element, and noun clauses connected to only two verbs. Again, Mathews includes several prepositional phrases in this sample sentence--four of them. The inclusion of the nonrestrictive appositives and clauses with their accompanying punctuation creates an awkward sentence:

Thunder Fear, the late No-Pa-Wa-The (Nopawalla), who was not even of the Plateau Forest physical division but of the Little Osages, could not recall the gentile leaders of the warriors, but thought that Traveling Cloud might have been one and Walks-in-the-Firelight another, and he thought that Standing-Brown might have been one of the gentile leaders who left the hunting party to bluff the Pawnees away from the herds.²⁵

Mathews might have been more direct and simple in his sentence construction in order to avoid lengthy and often rambling and confusing sentences.

One positive aspect to Mathews' writing style is his word choice, which is often very good. He uses many concrete nouns. Mathews' prose is specific and very descriptive because of these concrete nouns, so his prose acquires a definitive or "visible" effect. Overall, Mathews' style of writing is permeated with a majority of complex sentences which are rather lengthy, perhaps to a fault in some instances, but which also are quite tangible due to the many concrete/specific nouns that he elects to include.

Within those sentences, Mathews often chooses to use an odd sort of diction or word choice. For instance, he often capitalizes common nouns, like the following: "Duty," "Symbol Tree," "Cowhand," and "Cowwooly."²⁶ One might say that Mathews does this capitalizing to personify select nouns--to give common concrete nouns specificity and an aura of life and familiarity. Rarely in Talking to the Moon does he give characters names, so perhaps by capitalizing common nouns to make them proper nouns, Mathews hopes to imbue his writing with a sense of familiarity without naming names. This characteristic is typically Osage also; for example, in Osage mythology, individuals are never mentioned, but are referred to as common, concrete nouns, such as "the warrior," "the brother," "the woman," etc., to indicate that the whole is more important than any single part.

Mathews also creates a problem within his prose by using passive voice verbs excessively, a problem especially notable in The Osages. For instance, a series of eleven pages contains an average of twelve passive voice verbs per page. In a sampling of one hundred sixteen pages from The Osages, the frequency of passive voice verbs (verbs derived from the infinitive "to be") range in number from nine to eighteen per page. On these 116 pages, the number of passive voice verbs equals 1,339. The frequency of passive voice verbs increases near the end of the book. Because of the great number of passive voice verbs in The Osages, the text often becomes turgid.²⁷ As an example of the prevalence of passive voice verb constructions, in a single, short paragraph from The Osages, five passive voice verbs can be found:

All the eyewitnesses say that one at least was crying, and all agree about the story they told. The one who was crying said that one of the scalps which the Osages had was that of his brother. They were hunting on the Walnut River, which was of course within the Osage Reservation.²⁸

The inclusion of so many passive voice verbs makes the book appear unimaginative and dull because the prose rarely conveys life, action, or movement.

Another problem with Mathews' prose is redundancy. Mathews repeats ideas, words, and definitions many times,

especially in The Osages. One idea that becomes increasingly redundant is the concept of the dual nature of Osage tribal life--the dual force of nature and man, the Hunkah and the Chesho (Tzi-Sho)--the right and the left, the earthly and the heavenly, the practical and the ornamental. Early in The Osages, Mathews makes clear this distinction, yet he repeats it so often that the concept sometimes gets in the way of the history of the Osage Nation and the narrative of the people.²⁹

A second concept that Mathews refers to again and again is the importance attributed to mo'n-ce (metal) by the tribal members after traders introduced it to them; the sacred ritual associated with it seems especially important to Mathews.³⁰ Actually, the importance of metal can be noted quite readily, for such a new and revolutionary material certainly would have had a tremendous impact on the Osage in regard to the tribe's defense, tools, decoration, and visibility; Mathews mentions it so often that mo'n-ce is obtrusive.

Another item that becomes obtrusive is the Osage notion of the mysterious "little people," we-lu-schkas, who "came into their [Osage] stomachs or their limbs or their heads to take away their remaining years."³¹ Once again, Mathews refers to these "little people" quite often, usually in the context that the white men brought these bad things to the people in their semen. Readers can see why and how this superstitious concept affected the tribe. The tribe needed

something on which to blame disease, death, and disaster, and after the white man arrived, the Osage certainly would have seen the Anglos as carriers of the dreaded we-lu-schkas. In a five page series in The Osages, in a chapter whose title includes the phrase "Little People," we-lu-schka is mentioned nine times. Less than ten pages later, Mathews mentions the word again two times on one page, giving the definition twice also.³² This concept, obviously important to the Osage people, is one that is remembered easily, so the repetition seems groundless.

Mathews does the same thing when he refers to the Osage word for "slave" and "Pawnee"--Pani--which he does twice in the course of four pages. He twice mentions the fact also that the Osage only have one indecent word in their vocabulary, pi'she, but when Mathews mentions it again, he spells it differently than the first time and says that pi-zhi means "bad"--"the only profanity known to the Little Ones."³³ It is important that Mathews' readers become familiar with these cultural nuances, but he need not mention them over and over.

Mathews also wants his readers to know about the Osage warrior Black Dog and how he got his name, for he repeats the derivation and the pronunciation of the name again and again. Mathews calls this chief of an Osage division by three names--Shonkah-Sabe, Black Dog, and Black Horse--and often by all three at once, although sometimes with just two of the appellations. Here, Mathews is inconsistent in his

redundancy, because in many more places, he simply refers to Black Dog's name or band which only adds to the confusion concerning this Osage leader. Indians often have more than one name, so Mathews might have indicated this fact or been consistent when referring to this Osage.

He repeatedly informs his readers about Osage burial customs, too, which stay basically the same throughout the ages, from ancient days, to Christianity's influence, and to peyotism's influence.³⁴ Dress, ornaments, position of the dead body, etc. basically remain constant throughout Osage history, and yet Mathews insists on bringing it to his readers' attention quite often. The many instances of redundancy of facts and concepts weaken The Osages, for the reintroduction of such items sidetracks the narrative. In defense of Mathews, one must remember that Mathews' staple research technique in preparing The Osages' manuscript was listening to the tales of the elders. Teaching, the main goal of these traditional stories, is reinforced through repetition, so perhaps Mathews intended to reconstruct his history by copying what he had heard over and over from his teachers.

As an author then, Mathews has several problems which can lead to confusion for his audience. Some of these problems, like the poor paragraph development, awkward sentence structure, lack of transitions, and redundancy, probably stem from his Indian heritage. The internal problem of poor transitions may be one of the biggest

factors contributing to Mathews' "Indianness," for in traditional Indian speech, few breaks or transitions are utilized. Also, usually when Indians stop talking about something, they are finished with that particular subject, and they say no more about it. One must remember that Mathews garnered much of his material, for The Osages in particular, from Osage oral sources, so perhaps it is not too unusual for him to adopt this peculiarity in his writing.

Mathews' writing style "problems" only attest to the fact the Mathews is more Osage than most people think. His Osage cultural background did indeed influence his writing style, as well as his selection of subjects. Taking his writing style and his Osage legacy into consideration, readers must see Mathews' work as a whole in its effectiveness to convey what he wanted--basically a history of a tribe and its geographical region. Again, one must see things as an Indian traditionally does and as Mathews obviously did--in a complete, entire, holistic way. The sum is more important than the separate parts, meaning that Mathews was most concerned with the total effect of his prose.

ENDNOTES

- ¹Mathews, The Osages, p. 201.
- ²Ibid., p. 347.
- ³Ibid., p. 345.
- ⁴Ibid., p. 380.
- ⁵Ibid., p. 347.
- ⁶Ibid., pp. 341-349.
- ⁷Mathews, Talking to the Moon, pp. 62, 86, 112, 134.
- ⁸Ibid., p. 112.
- ⁹Ibid., p. 132.
- ¹⁰Ibid., p. 112.
- ¹¹Ibid., p. 37.
- ¹²Ibid., p. 164.
- ¹³Ibid., pp. 123, 132, 126, 121, 208.
- ¹⁴Mathews, The Osages, p. 400.
- ¹⁵Mathews, Talking to the Moon, pp. 154-155.
- ¹⁶Mathews, The Osages, pp. 489-490.
- ¹⁷Ibid., pp. 523, 525.
- ¹⁸Mathews, Wah' Kon-Tah, p. 239.
- ¹⁹Ibid., pp. 286-287.
- ²⁰Mathews, Talking to the Moon, p. 139.
- ²¹Mathews, Life and Death of an Oilman, p. 95.
- ²²Ibid., p. 117.
- ²³Mathews, The Osages, p. 432.

²⁴Ibid., p. 453.

²⁵Ibid., p. 481.

²⁶Mathews, Wah' Kon-Tah, pp. 101-102; Mathews, Talking to the Moon, pp. 54, 100, 170.

²⁷Burns, pp. xiv-xv; Mathews, The Osages, pp. 674-684.

²⁸Mathews, The Osages, p. 674.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 31, 33, 35, 37, 39, 85, 93, 99, 100, 462, 486.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 233, 302, 439, 556, 557, 582, 707-708.

³¹Ibid., p. 16.

³²Ibid., pp. 288, 567, 569-573, 582.

³³Ibid., pp. 182, 185, 245, 41.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 552, 558, 598, 628, 744, 565, 580, 602, 150, 152, 631, 723, 738-739, 779-780.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In retrospect, it may be said that Mathews successfully combined both of his ancestral heritages as an author, for Mathews the Caucasian and Mathews the Osage present themselves in his nonfiction. Mathews the Anglo is evident in his historical research methods and precision and in his knowledge of geology and science. His Osage qualities predominate, however, and can be seen in his selection of subject matter, his love of nature and hunting, his use of the traditional American Indian poetic devices, his pride in his tribe, his stoicism, his familiarity with the language patterns of whites and Indians, his knowledge of Osage tribal customs, especially his reliance on the oral tradition, and even in some aspects of his writing style.

Mathews preserved Osage customs, traditions, and history via a very "white" process--he wrote it all down on paper. To accomplish this feat, he had to employ a strong American Indian characteristic--the oral tradition. Mathews learned about what to write, especially for Talking to the Moon and The Osages, from the oral sources of his tribe, and for Life and Death of an Oilman from contemporaries of Marland and Marland himself. In regard to Mathews' "Indian-

ness," he acquired much of it on his own through observation and study. He had to seek this heritage, and because of his efforts, he was able to preserve much of his heritage even as it was threatened with extinction. Mathews knew of this threat:

Then I suddenly realized that they [the tribal elders] were worried; they were worried about the disruption of their father-to-son history. They were worried about the end of their own gentile and tribal importance.¹

These oral sources had to be preserved on paper, which is not a traditional Indian characteristic, for the oral sources were dying, and few young members of the tribe were interested enough in tribal history to learn it in the usual fashion--sitting and listening for hours to the traditional stories told by the elders of the tribe. Many Osages at the time had to deal with their great wealth from oil and mineral leases on their reservation allotments and found themselves often falling prey to unscrupulous, conniving white people who saw the Osages as easy marks.

One has to imagine Mathews' reaction to these circumstances: knowing that both his white and Osage blood were responsible for what was happening. His Anglo blood probably felt ashamed because of the way that whites were taking advantage of his fellow tribespeople; his Osage blood might have felt shame because his Osage fellows were the targets of such manipulation and crime. Because of the times and

his heritage, Mathews could have felt "schizophrenic," and as a result, he did not know to which bloodline to pledge "allegiance."

Much of Osage tradition was being forgotten at the time Mathews did his research and writing, and Mathews, perhaps hoping to find something worthwhile in his Indian fellows and therefore in himself, decided to preserve Osage culture so that it would not be forgotten. In so doing, Mathews the Caucasian became Mathews the Osage. Early in his life, he separated himself from the Indian world by attending predominantly Anglo universities, entering military service, marrying white women, traveling in Europe, and experiencing the Southern California business world. Until the 1930's, Mathews was culturally more "white" than "red." However, at this time, he began in earnest to become interested in and study the Osage culture and tribal life. He was not a complete alien to this culture, because as a young man, he had been introduced to it in Pawhuska, Oklahoma. These early contacts proved to be beneficial ones, because they became the people who imparted Osage history and traditions to Mathews. By the time the The Osages was published, Mathews had evolved to become more Osage than Anglo. His indoctrination into the Osage world was a premeditated one; he sought it because he admired it so. To Violet Willis, Mathews pointed "out repeatedly, [that] he found inherent dignity in his tribesmen, especially the 'old ones.'"²

Perhaps Mathews felt cheated because he only had one-

eighth Osage blood quantum and wanted to make up for it by intensive and extensive research and learning about the Osage people. He was not born a traditional, full-blooded Osage, but he could become like one by studying and immersing himself in Osage culture. His main source for this cultural acquisition was Osage oral history, but he augmented the oral history by what he had learned in the white world--scholarly research, writing, and languages. Mathews could "translate what he heard [from tribal elders] into beautiful prose that would enlighten the world about his Osages,"³ according to Violet Willis, a friend of the Mathews' family and a co-worker of John Joseph Mathews.

The longer Mathews lived, the more he came to appreciate his Osage heritage. Lottinville believes that the longer he [Mathews] watched white civilization the more his instincts turned him inward to his tribal inheritance. . . . [, and as a result, Mathews] combined to near perfection the interests, thought processes, and attitudes of both Osage and English cultures.⁴

Mathews lived with a dual sense of race his daughter reports. According to Violet Willis, Mathews' background prepared him to fit into both cultures. The fact that he spent so much of his time gathering material on his tribe and interpreting it might indicate that in attitude he was more Osage [than white].⁵

Mathews probably would have taken great pleasure in this observation. He employed "white" skills to gain recognition in the "red" world as a geologist, historian, and author, and he used traditional "red" skills to achieve prominence in the "white" world as a naturalist, a hunter, and an heir to and recorder of Osage oral history.

Mathews lived a divided life, and possibly because he could not completely embrace either the Osage world or the Caucasian world, he chose to separate himself physically from both worlds. Violet Willis says that Mathews was "stimulated by contacts with both cultures . . . [and that he] chose to live at the Black Jacks [sic]."6 Even as his life was divided, so were opinions about him. Friends and relatives indicate that Mathews revealed himself in Talking to the Moon and that reading the book is to come to know its author intimately. Charles Banks Wilson, a prominent Oklahoma artist and a friend of Mathews, says: "He was a very private person and the book 'Talking to the Moon' [sic] best expresses his inner-most [sic] feelings."7 Virginia Mathews wrote that his son, stepson, and stepdaughter believed that there is really nothing they would care to add to [my information about our father.] My late father was an intensely private person, and I [believe] that he would not have relished any further discussion of his personal or family life. We all agree that he put the part of himself that he wished to share with the public into his

books.⁸

When questioned about Mathews, most people, like his children, are reluctant to discuss the man in much detail. A typical response to inquiries about Mathews is, "I have said more than he would have wanted me to."⁹ People seem to respect his preference for personal privacy and divulge little about the man himself.

In his work and in his life, Mathews, according to Violet Willis, "'bridged' the two cultures, fitting into each with equal ease, finding [that] both worlds offered him something, adjusting to both."¹⁰ Mathews' affiliation with both cultures allowed him to see things from a different perspective than those individuals who live strictly in one culture or the other. He realized that the Osage culture was a treasure about to be lost for eternity and that it needed to be rescued quickly. Mathews' daughter comments that her father

had a great deal to do with ensuring that Indian people continued to hold the kind of special relationship and status that they had [by doing what he did in his life]. At the time, there were very, very few Indian people who considered themselves as Indian, who thought of themselves as Indian who had that kind of education, and that kind of persuasion. So, Daddy was very important in that sense--to the continuation of Indian people, really.¹¹

Both of the worlds in which Mathews moved and about which he wrote were embellished by each other. Mathews brought the best of two cultures together to complement and enrich the other. Mathews, a complex man, had to reconcile the dichotomy of two complex cultures in his life, and this task he successfully accomplished in his nonfiction publications which reflect more of the Osage Mathews than the Anglo Mathews. Mathews' education and experience in the Caucasian world allowed him to express appropriately and communicate that which he knew, revered, and appreciated in the Osage world and can be seen in his subject matter, lifestyle, and writing style.

John Joseph Mathews assumed a strong Osage characteristic inasmuch as he lived in a world of duality, just as all Osage people traditionally do--a world divided into the Hunkah (material or earthly) and the Chesho (spiritual or heavenly). To the Osage people, their perfect man was idealized as "Symbolic Man." Louis F. Burns in Osage Indian Customs and Myths says that "Symbolic Man" held the tribe together "with one mind and one action. To symbolize this unity of thought and action . . . symbolic man's body was made of the two grand divisions,"¹² Hunkah and Chesho. He, embodying the tribe so with its daily life and its spiritual life, bonded the people together and figuratively formed their future with his constancy and determination to keep a balance between the internal (Osage) and the external (Caucasian) pressures on the tribe in order to preserve the

tribal unit. John Joseph Mathews may be said to be the twentieth century "Symbolic Man," for he helped to maintain many of the Osage internal characteristics by recording much history of the tribe for the benefit and advantage of both the Anglo and the Osage worlds. Always thinking of his two universes, Mathews was at once both Hunkah and Chesho.

ENDNOTES

- ¹Mathews, *The Osages*, p. x.
- ²Violet Willis, May 14, 1985.
- ³Ibid.
- ⁴Lottinville, November 15, 1984.
- ⁵Virginia Mathews, November 12, 1984; Violet Willis, May 14, 1985.
- ⁶Violet Willis, May 14, 1985.
- ⁷Charles Banks Wilson, Letter to author, June 12, 1985.
- ⁸Virginia Mathews, Letter to author, March 8, 1985.
- ⁹Chesewalla, May 5, 1985.
- ¹⁰Violet Willis, May 14, 1985.
- ¹¹Virginia Mathews, December 4, 1984.
- ¹²Burns, pp. 128, 12.

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