OLIVER LA FARGE AS A LITERARY INTERPRETER OF NAVAJO INDIAN CULTURE

OLIVER LA FARGE AS A LITERARY INTERPRETER OF NAVAJO INDIAN CULTURE

By

ROBERT A. HARVEY

Bachelor of Arts

Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College

Stillwater, Oklahoma

1948

Submitted to the Department of English

Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

1949

APPROVED BY:

Cecil B. Williamson
Chairman, Thesis Committee

Hans H. Andersen
Member of the Thesis Committee

Hans H. Andersen
Head of the Department

Dean of the Graduate School

PREFACE

In all my college work in English I found the course in the American Local Color Movement to be one of the most intriguing. Of the major writers in American Literature, Local Color can claim not a one, yet the movement is highly significant in American literary history. It is an expression, or symbol, of the diverse elements of population, environment, occupations, and traditions which have been amalgamated into our distinctive American culture.

I became especially interested in the Southwest, partly because of its appealing physical setting, partly because of its interesting historical background. Resolved then to write a thesis from the material available on Southwestern Regionalism, I was confronted with what was still a wide range of possible subjects. There were Charles F. Lummis, Thomas A. Janvier, J. Frank Dobie, Andy Adams, Emerson Hough, Oliver La Farge, and many others. With little indecision I settled on La Farge, primarily because of two considerations: (1) he is a contemporary, and (2) he is in my opinion the most talented of the group. I realize that this last statement is subjective. I go on the pragmatic assumption that what reads like literature to me is literature.

In La Farge's fiction I was surprised to find that the Navajo Indians of Arizona and New Mexico do not much resemble our Oklahoma Indians. An acculturation process has brought the Oklahoma Indians into almost complete conformity with our way of life; among the Navajos the process has hardly begun and will never be accomplished in just the same fashion. We in Oklahoma no longer think of the

Indians as inferior or primitive, but only as people differing from us chiefly in skin color. For the most part they fit smoothly into our culture and we see few manifestations of their older way of life. I have seen Choctaw "stomp dances" and considered them as no more than a show put on for the amusement of the participators and the edification of the spectators. Indeed, they have come to be little more than a pastime, but once they represented far more than this. The Navajo dances still do.

My first-hand experience with Navajos is virtually nil. To compensate for my lack of personal knowledge I have studied various scientific works, to which I am indebted perhaps more than I have acknowledged in the footnotes. Particularly useful to me was The Navaho, Clyde Kluckhohn and Dorothea Leighton, Harvard University Press, 1946. I used this work as a basis of comparison with La Farge's writings and in some cases filled out his picture with that of Drs. Kluckhohn and Leighton. Otherwise, the commentary is entirely Mr. La Farge's.

I should like to acknowledge letters from The New Yorker, Town & Country, Thought, McCall's, and Esquire, letters which aided me in the compilation of the bibliography.

I am grateful for a personal letter from Mr. La Farge, in which he offered valuable suggestions and information about some of his works.

I wish to express my appreciation to Dr. Hans H. Andersen for helpful suggestions regarding parts of the manuscript.

Finally, for his valuable criticism, and for his patient and wise assistance, not only in the writing of this thesis but in all my scholastic problems of the past three years, my very special thanks are due Dr. Cecil B. Williams.

CONTENTS

PART I.

OLIVER LA FARGE, WRITER AND ANTHROPOLOGIST

In 1929 Oliver La Farge (1901--), a young anthropologist with literary aspirations, published his first novel. It was called Laughing Boy after the name of the Navajo Indian who was its hero. Laughing Boy achieved spontaneous praise from both American and European critics and heralded its author as one of the most promising of young American writers.

If contemporary judgments are of any value, Laughing Boy enjoyed success because it possessed a beautiful and poetic prose style, because the ideas it expressed were ideas of universal human significance, and because its plot and characterizations blended with the other story elements in such a way that they made up a novel of uncommon interest. Some students of American Literature found particular significance in the fact that La Farge's Indian characters were unlike anything previously written about Indians. The distinction lay largely in the perception and treatment of the Red Man as essentially a human being, guided by real human motives and striving for real human values.

La Farge has written many other works about the American Indians, particularly the Navajos. In novels, short stories, and factual writings he has revealed aspects of their religion, their philosophy, their economy, their social system, and their entire cultural heritage. The purpose of this thesis will be to re-create La Farge's picture of this racial group, to synthesize the cultural aspects of Navajo life found in his writings into distinct patterns of environment, personal and race relationships, religion, and philosophy.

Also an attempt will be made to show that La Farge's attitude toward the Navajos and his conception of their place in American civilization have undergone a slow but decided change. Finally, the significance of his Indian writings will be evaluated.

As a preliminary to treatment of the subject as outlined, it may be desirable to fill in the background with a few biographical facts--a history of significant periods in La Farge's life, his accomplishments, and his dominating interests.

La Farge comes of a distinguished family, being able to trace his ancestry both to Benjamin Franklin and to Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry (the latter, his namesake). He is a grandson of the famous painter and artist in stained glass, John La Farge, a son of the noted architect Grant La Farge, and a younger brother of Christopher La Farge, himself a distinguished writer in prose and verse.

Of Christopher La Farge it has been said, "He was not born with a gold spoon in his mouth, 'but within easy reach of plenty of old family silver.'"[1] The implications of this statement of course apply as well to all the other members of the La Farge family. There are in Oliver La Farge's writings traces of a certain consciousness of an artistic and cultural heritage, a desire to live up to the standards of family tradition. There is, at the same time, a spirit of rebellion against the stereotyped social conventions of this tradition, a sort of mild reaction against the strictures of ancestral custom. Commenting, in his autobiography (Raw Material, 1945), about this aspect of his family background, La Farge says,

---

[1]Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, Twentieth Century Authors (New York, 1942), p. 780.

> Counting in a great-grandfather who painted miniatures, I was of the fourth generation of artists, and they had all been gentlemen. My distinguished grandfather being long dead, his legend insisted upon the genteel character of his work and one was supposed to live up to him. The pressure to do the kind of writing which only a gentleman would do, to be, God help me, in good taste, was terrific....It cost me a constant struggle to write the thing as I saw it, and on many occasions I failed.[2]

La Farge's childhood was spent largely on the family estate in Rhode Island. His home was "one in which culture and field sports were considered more important than the amassing of utility bonds."[3] Hunting, fishing, and rowing with his father and brothers provided a large part of his informal education. His formal schooling was secured at St. Bernard's School, Groton, and Harvard.

To his six years at Groton La Farge attaches considerable psychological importance in the shaping of his personality, an influence which he considers largely negative. At Groton, he relates in his autobiography, it was important to be "regular," to live up to a complex standard of disciplined behavior. A collection of negatives and positives served to sketch out an explicit and detailed ideal--the Groton Boy, at once a concept and a goal. If one attained the ideal, he was a success; to the extent that he failed, something was wrong with him. Because he could not be a conformist, La Farge acquired a sense of failure which produced in him a complex of insecurity and escape. Much of his life, he says, has been a struggle to eliminate these personality defects.

Whatever the repressive effects of the Groton experience, La Farge became active enough in college. At Harvard he was president

---

[2] Oliver La Farge, Raw Material (Boston, 1945), p. 22.

[3] Kunitz and Haycraft, loc. cit.

of the Advocate, the college literary magazine, editor of the Lampoon, a comic paper, and class poet. He took the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1924 and the Master of Arts degree in 1929. He also has an honorary degree from Brown University (M.A., 1932).[4]

After college, La Farge began making a reputation for himself as a scientist. He made three archeological expeditions to Arizona and three ethnological expeditions to Guatemala and Mexico, specializing in the study of Indian cultures and languages and making valuable contributions to these fields of research.

To satisfy a creative impulse, he tried writing in his spare time. Little of his work was successful, but authorship being his greatest ambition, he clung tenaciously to hopes for eventual success. Then Laughing Boy "catapulted" him into the spotlight. He attained quite sudden fame, a degree of financial independence, and a chance to devote most of his time to writing. Cultural studies and research became a sideline occupation. Anthropologists felt their loss and hoped that his literary success was temporary.[5] To this day there are anthropologists who hope devoutly that he will fail as an author

---

[4] New York Times, November 13, 1932, p. 10.

[5] Cf. John Bird, "The Future of Oliver La Farge," Bookman, LXXII, (September, 1930), 13: The author is interviewing the curator of a well-known American museum and has assured him that La Farge's work has shown great literary promise, to which the curator somewhat indignantly replies, "All that you say is bad news. I don't believe it, and I shall be disgusted if it is true. You are a friend of La Farge. You are interested in his success as a writer. I don't give a damn about his writings. I don't give a damn for literature. I am interested in science, and in Oliver La Farge as a scientist. He is a first rate anthropologist. We need him. We can't do without him. He's the only man who can talk to the Indians and get anything out of them....If he makes a literary hit now, he'll be ruined completely as a scientist. He'll turn writer--and end by making an ass of himself. I tell you, he's a one-book man."

and come back to their field.[6]

Through the thirties and early forties, La Farge devoted his time to the writing of fiction and to his duties with the various Indian welfare agencies. During that time he produced five novels, numerous short stories, many articles on the Indian situation, an autobiography, and miscellaneous other works. Some of his writings brought him literary distinctions. His first short story, "North Is Black," was included in Edward J. O'Brien's Best American Short Stories of 1927; another story, "Haunted Ground," won the O. Henry memorial prize for 1930; Laughing Boy won the Pulitzer Prize for 1930 and received nationwide acclaim; and his philosophical autobiography, Raw Material which was the outgrowth of still another award, the Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship, has been the recipient of lavish praise from critics.

In 1942 La Farge was named Army Air Transport Command special consultant and served in South America, Africa, England, France, and Italy. He attained the rank of lieutenant colonel and was awarded the legion of merit for his services.[7] Since his release in 1946 he has lived in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where he has again taken up the cause of the Indians. Most of his recent writing has been of the factual variety.

La Farge's interest in and sympathy with the American Indians date almost from his infancy. Early in life he dubbed himself "Indian Man," a name he was always known by as a child.[8] His first

---

[6] Kunitz and Haycraft, loc. cit.

[7] Who's Who in America, 1948-49.

[8] Kunitz and Haycraft, loc. cit.

real contact with the Indians came when, at the age of nineteen, he was sent as a member of a Harvard archeological survey team to the Navajo country of the Southwest. Immediately, he was captivated by the romantic strangeness of Navajo culture, intrigued by the apparent difficulties of understanding the Indians' life-way, and enthralled by the sheer physical facts that made up their geographical environment. He describes the beginning of the experience thus :

> Here was colour that was bound to attract anyone, and very soon I began to feel qualities in the Navajos who were around our camp. These were people, a strange people, impenetrable to all appearance, yet behind the mask of race there lay a humanity one longed to explore.[9]

To La Farge this was a definite challenge, a challenge that was to be accepted and developed into a life's work.

The young scientist's first impression of these people was a lasting one. He could recognize that here was a race abundantly endowed with what Americans call "character." Dignity, pride, love of family, and respect for fellow-members of the society were universal among them. Their system of metaphysics, though outwardly artificial and ridiculous, seemed to be underlaid by a core of Truth that gave it tangible values and set it equal to the metaphysical systems of any of the so-called "civilized peoples." There was something good at the core of this "pagan" religion, something which far transcended its outward manifestations, something that it would be worth while to understand. And La Farge determined to understand it.

His interest was real, not a passing fancy or adolescent daydream, but an interest that would manifest itself in positive action.

---

[9] Oliver La Farge, Raw Material (Boston, 1945), p. 152.

"Everybody around me," he writes, "had some interest in the Navajos, but I determined to really find out about them, to know more and understand more deeply than any of them."[10]

This determination resulted in intimate association with the Navajos, an association which led to a thorough understanding of their way of life and later found vivid expression in Laughing Boy and other works. "My chief delight," says Mr. La Farge, "was doing things with the Indians, talking to them, eating with them, working with them at such times as the big sheep dips, attending any dance I could get near. With a minimum speaking knowledge of Navajo, a dark tan and a pair of moccasins, Indians of other tribes thought I was a Navajo, while Navajos used to ride up and ask me in puzzled tones just what I was."[11]

He saw, too, at this first acquaintance with the Navajo tribe, what he thought were evidences of a decaying culture, a way of life in the last throes of a slow and horrible death--starved, choked, beaten into submission by a more aggressive white civilization. He could see two distinct phases of Indian culture, one the old, the pure, the untainted, outwardly represented by "men still in velveteen shirts, calico leggings, moccasins, almost all long-haired and wearing the headband, carrying bows and arrows on their saddles."[12] The new phase, that ushered in by the advance of the whites, was a striking contrast to the old, and was typified by the "Americanized Indian"--hair cut short, dressed in loud, conspicuous, ill-fitting

---

[10] Ibid., p. 150.

[11] "Introducing Oliver La Farge," Wings, III (Nov. 1929), 3.

[12] La Farge, Raw Material, p. 152.

clothing, shoes awkwardly worn, deficient in all the arts and abilities in which real Navajos prided themselves.

La Farge's first impressions of the Navajos as real, likable people were strengthened by continued intercourse with them. The determination to understand Navajo life grew into a deeper determination to do something tangibly beneficial for the people as a whole, and as individuals. This he has accomplished in two ways. First, he has conducted an active campaign, in writing, to inform the American people of the actual deplorable conditions existing among the Indians. Second, he has made himself a recognized authority on Indian problems and as an official of various Indian welfare agencies, has exerted such influence in government circles as is most beneficial to the cause for which he fights.

Shortly after the publication of Laughing Boy brought him into prominence as an authority on Indians, La Farge was appointed director of the Eastern Association in Indian Affairs. He served in this capacity from 1930 to 1932, during which time he directed the Intertribal Exhibitions of Indian Arts (1931). He served as president of the National Association on Indian Affairs from 1933 to 1937, then founded its successor, the American Association on Indian Affairs, and was its president from 1937 to 1942. In 1941, he was vice-chairman of the Institute on the Future of the American Indian.[13] Then, after the period of active duty in the American Air Forces, La Farge was again, on May 5, 1948, elected president of the American Association on Indian Affairs. He is also the organizer and chairman of the association's American Indian Fund,

---

[13] Who's Who in America, 1948-49.

established to advance the welfare and progress of the American Indians.[14]

His activity in these organizations has been instrumental in securing government action which is providing aid for and bettering the condition of the Indians. It has also helped to swerve the notions of the general public away from the popular cigar-store myth and toward the more reasonable but less romantic conception of the Indian as a member of the human race, possessing not only body, but also mind and soul. Mr. La Farge's influence in this respect has been recognized by other authorities. One recent commentary asserts:

> Oliver La Farge has probably done more than any other writer toward the better understanding and appreciation of our American Indians. In his many books, articles, and stories about Indians, he writes as a man who has lived among them, knows their customs and rituals, loves them, and realizes their own special problems. The Indians themselves, on the other hand, recognize a champion in him, and have given him their trust and confidence.[15]

Through the popular medium of fiction, La Farge has done more toward providing a true understanding of the Navajo than any purely scientific works could have done. For years, the Navajo has been a favorite subject for the social scientist, but here the primary interest has always been on the study of the tribe as a species of primitive humanity, an antiquated cog in the complex machine of human relations. The findings of the sociologist and psychologist, while valuable within their limited fields, did little in the way of providing material aid for the Indians. The results of their

---

[14] Alexander Lesser, Letter to the Editor, New York Times Magazine, (July 11, 1948), 4

[15] New York Times Magazine (January 26, 1941), 8.

research, published in scientific journals for the benefit of those few who understand the technical vocabulary, could not become (were not, in fact, intended to become) instruments through which the public could receive information about minority problems. Besides, the emphasis they give is purely scientific, not generally concerned with humanitarian principles. Fiction, as compared with this type of scholarly writing, has the advantage of being understandable to the masses not familiar with scientific terminology or acquainted with the scientific method.

La Farge's fiction explains many of the elements of Navajo culture as thoroughly as a formal treatment of the subject and interweaves them into a framework of plot that gives them charm through their relation to typical individuals of the society. It is not a romanticizing of an inherently insipid subject, for his treatment is realistic. It is merely that, by writing of characters who live in an environment wherein they are faced with the necessity of solving human problems in their own distinctive way, the subject takes on an interest not found in the purely sociological study.

While framing his plots to conform to the requirements of good fiction, La Farge has not sacrificed truth, a term he refers to as "ultimate beauty and goodness."[16] In painting Navajo life, he has not unduly colored the picture. He has been true to the precepts of anthropology, in which field he began his career. Above all he has tried to paint the Navajos as they actually exist, and his accuracy is attested to by the words of specialists and casual observers alike.

---

[16] La Farge, Raw Material, p. 210.

He writes about the Navajos, says a review of Raw Material, "with judgment, feeling, and penetration. No one has understood better what we do to Red Men or they to us."[17] Other critical estimates run in the same vein. Mary Austin, who spent many years among the Indians and knew their culture thoroughly, says in a review of Laughing Boy,

> Oliver La Farge has lived with the Navajoes so intimately as to be taken for one of them by their hereditary protagonists, the Hopi, but his use of the minutiae of Navajo life, social custom, and ceremonial obligation, is nowhere pushed to the point of inquiry on the part of the reader as to how he came to know so much, and whether it is known truly.[18]

Critics of La Farge's Indian fiction are almost universally struck with the fact that the characters he creates are real people with real, human traits. They utterly contradict the symbolic figures created by James Fenimore Cooper, William Gilmore Simms, and other early romanticists. Writing about La Farge's volume of short stories, All the Young Men, a reviewer says,

> With the novels of Oliver La Farge, braves and squaws seem at last to have been given sensible speaking parts, emerging as complex, poetic, dignified, good-humored men and women deeply conscious of the evil times that have come upon their race. Never loquacious, they speak with an easy informality that has the charm of a good translation of dialect....La Farge's stories ....have the distinction of making Indian rites and traditions seem as human and amiable as college proms or midwestern barn dances.[19]

Mr. La Farge has written two novels utilizing the Navajo way of life and the white civilization's relation to it. The first of

---

[17] Leonard Bacon, "Quarried out of Life," The Saturday Review of Literature, XXVIII (July 21, 1945), 9.

[18] Mary Austin, "A Navajo Tale," The Saturday Review of Literature, VI (Nov. 9, 1929), 62.

[19] "Indian Shorts," Time, XXVI (August 26, 1935), 55.

these, Laughing Boy, is his best known work. The background of the story is of Navajo life in a semi-pastoral condition. Into this background are placed Laughing Boy, a Navajo youth of happy temperament, untainted by contact with the whites, and Slim Girl, a charming young Indian woman, half-indoctrinated with American customs but desiring a return to the ways of her people. Falling in love at a ceremonial, they are married by a backslidden medicine man, and from this point forward, the plot of the story concerns their struggle to find and follow the "Trail of Beauty," the ultimate aim of every good Navajo. How Laughing Boy takes infinite pride in silversmithing, the raising of sheep, and the growing of corn, how Slim Girl learns the delicate art of Navajo weaving and is taught other fine aspects of the Navajo culture which she had come to forget, how the two live together for awhile in perfect happiness, and how the inexorable taint of white contact finally forces tragedy upon them--all this goes to make up one of the most charming love stories of recent years.

The main theme of the novel is well summarized by Mr. La Farge in Raw Material.

> I saw our own Indians as inexorably doomed, I saw that they must come increasingly into contact with our so-called civilization, and that (I then thought inevitably) contact meant conflict and disaster. I put this idea into the book, along with anger at certain evil things that I had seen.[20]

As its author had anticipated, Laughing Boy did not prove a direct instrument of reform, but it did give good publicity to the Navajos and to the author. Contemporary reviews were lavish in their praise of the book and of the book's creator. Examples might

---

[20] La Farge, Raw Material, p. 177.

be quoted at length, but a few of the most characteristic will suffice.

> An almost perfect specimen of the sustained and tempered, the lyrical, romantic idyll....It is filled with love, with nature ....morals and religion....La Farge....has written a book about Indians....that is likely to be called ten or twenty years from now, real literature.[21]

> A novel of Indian life which bids fair to take its place among the more sensitive and important pieces of regional literature which have come from the forgotten crevices of these United States of recent years.[22]

> His novel is one of the most pleasurable that have come from the pen of a young American for some time.[23]

> [It] is at every point a work of art.[24]

This type of praise has not been short-lived. Eight years after publication of the book, the tone of criticism was still the same.

> Laughing Boy has stood out [among the fiction of the Southwestern Indians] as the best, marked by accurate observation, sensitive understanding of the complex Indian psychology, a respect for their cultural dignity.[25]

The book is still, twenty years after publication, exciting the same kind of comments from enthusiastic readers.

La Farge's next novel to use the Indian motif was The Enemy Gods (1937), a story whose main thesis embodies condemnation of the white man's effort to remold the Indian in his own image and justification for the hero's ultimate decision to return to the ways of

---

[21] Clinton Simpson, [Review of Laughing Boy], Bookman, LXX (January, 1930), 561.

[22] T. Tobias, [Review of Laughing Boy], New York World, December 15, 1929, p. 11.

[23] Edwin Seaver, [Review of Laughing Boy], New York Evening Post, September 7, 1929, p. 7.

[24] Carl Van Doren, "Why the Editorial Board Selected Laughing Boy," Wings, III (November, 1929), 5.

[25] "Good and Bad Indians," Time, XXX (October 25, 1937), 78.

his fathers, especially in the matter of religion. The enemy gods are the forces, white and Indian, which struggle for supremacy in the mind and soul of a Navajo schoolboy, Myron Begay. Myron, shipped off from the reservation at the age of six, decides to follow the "Jesus Way." With each vacation among his people, however, he sees good things in their religion and way of life. Back in the boarding schools, he is repeatedly assured that the rites of the medicine men are nothing more than "he-then" sermons. Whether to be white and Christian, whether to be Navajo and pagan is a question posed over and over again in his mind with each change from reservation to boarding school and back to reservation again. In the end he decides that the Navajo system is the best. He marries a young Indian woman and resolves to help his people by teaching them scientific methods of farming, sheep-herding, and sanitation that will help them survive on the desert.

La Farge's Indian short stories are characterized by the same charming lucidity of style that marks his novels. Most of them embrace, in some degree, the same theme--the evils arising from the so-called "Americanization" of the Indian. Brief synopses of a few of them will illustrate his technique.

"Higher Education"[26] is the story of a young Navajo girl who goes away to spend six years in a white school. Returning to her parents, she finds that she despises her race and its customs and cannot understand the people. She is greatly depressed and loses the respect of the Indians when she becomes the mistress of an unscrupulous white trader. In desperation she throws herself over a cliff.

---

[26] The Saturday Evening Post, CCVI (March 31, 1934), pp.8-9.

La Farge's prize story, "North Is Black,"[27] is the tale of a young Navajo who falls in love with a white woman only to find that she already loves a member of her own race. Showing up his rival by catching him cheating in a poker game, he plunges a dagger through the white man's hand and expects to be rewarded for the deed. Instead he finds that his action was wrong and is greatly mystified when the woman he loves sends him back to the lonesome reservation in the South.

"All the Young Men"[28] is the story of an old Navajo medicine man, one "Mountain Singer." Mountain Singer carries the distinction of being a member of the small band that was never rounded up when Kit Carson conquered the Navajos and took them into exile. Stately, proud, hating the whites, he is intensely conscious of the deterioration of his people and hates every symbol of civilization. His own son-in-law becomes a bootlegger and tricks him into believing the liquor will deepen his religious experiences. Eventually he becomes a drunkard, grows despondent, and dies in a white man's jail, singing religious songs--the only vestige of the old life that had retained its sacred meaning.

La Farge's writings outside the field of fiction include various scientific works, numerous magazine articles, and the autobiographical Raw Material previously alluded to. The scientific works, while highly regarded by research men in cultural and linguistic fields, require no study for the purposes of this thesis.

The articles are more relevant to the subject. Written for

---

[27] The Dial, LXXXII (Jan. 1927), pp. 8-19.

[28] All the Young Men (Boston, 1935), pp. 29-44.

the most part in simple, straightforward language, they tell clearly and precisely what is needed by the Indians of America, and they pull no punches in doing so. Evils existing in the Indian Service are hit with vigorous language, satirical, stinging, even vituperative. The following passage, concerning early white policy in regard to Indian education, will sufficiently illustrate this characteristic.

> The [Indian] children were, whenever possible, removed from the reservations to government boarding schools where they were forbidden to speak their own language, their culture was disparaged, religious education was compulsory and everything possible done to root out all pride of race, all memory of their collective pasts. Schools--one might better call them penal institutions--where little children were sentenced to hard labor for a term of years to expiate the crime of being born of their mothers.
>
> An outmoded, rotten education completely dissociated from any problem the adult Indian would have to face, race prejudice and hard labor, institutionalization such as one finds in a penitentiary, destroying all responsibility, thought, initiative. A propaganda of shame towards that in which the children most craved, and needed, to take pride, produced warped and tortured personalities that sank back with relief into tribal ways, or remained adrift, neither white, Indian nor whole.[29]

The strength of La Farge's feeling, the sincerity of his convictions, the unstinted vigor of his activity are seen in this excerpt from one of his earlier articles; and it is only typical of the style of all his factual writings. So strongly does he feel that no other style seems possible for him. He tries to <u>startle</u> the public into awareness, officials into action.

<u>Raw Material</u> is a philosophical history of significant periods in the life of its author. It covers the personality-forming period of his childhood and early adolescence, his education at Groton and

---

[29] Oliver La Farge, "Revolution with Reservations," <u>The New Republic</u>, LXXXIV (Oct. 9, 1935), 232-233.

Harvard, his experiences in the Navajo country, in the art colony of New Orleans (where he was assistant in ethnology at Tulane University), and among the Indians of Mexico and Guatemala, his literary credo, and a part of his career in the Army. It is not, in the literal sense of the word, an autobiography, for it makes no attempt at transcribing the trivia of ordinary self-history. But it relates for the most part reactions to life which are significant in that they are universal in the thinking and conduct of all individuals. There are thoughtful commentaries on war and on race discrimination, on art and its relation to life and morality, on love, religion, philosophy, and science. The chapters on Indians are the only ones particularly relevant to the purposes of this paper.

Taken as a whole, Oliver La Farge's Indian writings form a complete tableau of the life of an interesting minority group. A statement of Carl Van Doren's about Laughing Boy indicates a fact that will be discussed at length in the following pages. Observes Mr. Van Doren,

> Some Americans may be surprised that the culture of the Navajo is a complete and rounded one, with traditions, philosophy, art, compelling customs, established ideas and sentiments. Mr. La Farge has shown that this is the case without once saying as much.[30]

And he shows it by looking, not at the external wrappings of the Navajo which swathe him in romantic legend, but at the heart and mind wherein lie the real secrets of the race. The picture he draws is complete; and, as a scientist, La Farge has made sure that the picture is also accurate. Comparison of cultural elements of

---

[30] Van Doren, op. cit., 5.

Navajo life found in his fiction with the facts presented in the most recent scientific work on the subject[31] reveals no essential difference in the interpretations of the people and their customs. Few details are given in the latter that cannot be found in the former. The real difference in the two lies in the points of view. La Farge's interest is humanitarian, as well as scientific.

---

[31] Clyde Cluckhohn and Dorothea Leighton, The Navajo (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946).

PART II. LA FARGE'S PICTURE OF THE NAVAJO

Chapter 1

The Domain of The People[1]

The Navajo reservation covers an area of approximately 23,000 square miles. It lies in northeastern Arizona, northwestern New Mexico, and southern Utah. The country is semi-arid, the average annual rainfall varying from eight to twenty-two inches. Vegetation varies considerably with altitude. In the lower elevations it consists almost wholly of desert plants--dodgeweed, mesquite, yucca, cactus--spotted here and there, perhaps, by clumps of cottonwoods which grow on the banks of intermittent watercourses. The middle elevations are characterized by the gray of sagebrush and greasewood, diversified with the green of pinyon and juniper trees. Higher up, in the mountain country, vegetation is made up largely of pine, oak, aspen, and fir.

Three types of climate may be distinguished--the desert climate of the southern plains, the steppe climate of the intermediate regions, and the mountain climate of the northern area. As is the case for every culture, the climate of the surrounding region plays such an important role in the life of the Navajo that it is almost beyond exaggeration.

Three distinct types of topography correspond roughly to the three climatic areas. A generalized view of these is found in Laughing Boy. The southern part of the Navajo country is made up

---

[1] Except where otherwise indicated, the purely factual material of this chapter is obtained from Kluckhohn and Leighton's The Navajo (Cambridge, 1946).

of "grey bluffs, grey, rolling plateaus and harshly monotonous, distant mountains."[2] In the middle, steppe-like region may be seen "warm, golden cliffs, painted with red and purplish brown and luminous shadows, a broken country that [changes] with the changing sun, narrow canons, great mesas, yellow sands, and distant blue mountains."[3] Finally, the northern, or mountainous, country is marked by "fierce, narrow canons with ribbons of shadow, broad valleys and lesser hills streaked with purple opaque shadows like deep holes in the world, cast by the upthrust mesas....the crazy shapes of the Monuments, the clay hills of Utah, and far beyond everything, floating blue mountain shapes softer than the skies."[4]

The people who inhabit this beautiful and varied country make up the largest Indian tribe in the United States. Still a minor puzzle to anthropologists is how the Navajo people have almost quadrupled their numbers since 1868 (from an estimated 15,000) in spite of a diet low in nutritional value, an exceptionally high death rate, and the threats of intermarriage and extinction imposed by the ruthless advance of white society. This is all the more remarkable in view of the fact that, since the same date, their cultural and linguistic cousins, the Apaches, have done little more than maintain a constant population. The answer, of course, lies in terms of an abnormally high birth rate (almost twice as high as that for the United States as a whole), which is in turn the result of an extraordinary fecundity, a desire to live and to

---

[2] Oliver La Farge, Laughing Boy (Boston, 1929) p. 148

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid. p. 150.

have children, and the biological fact that the menopause comes late in Navajo women.

Despite the apparently contradictory evidence of cold statistics, the land is crowded. Observes Oliver La Farge,

> A reservation of 23,000 square miles sounds adequate for fifty thousand people [now nearer 60,000]....But all too many of these miles are truly worthless, real desert, 'bald rock'--beautiful stretches of bare golden sandstone--that supports nothing. They need all the land they have and more.[5]

"The People," as Navajos fondly refer to their own race, realize that their land is becoming inadequate to support their increasing numbers. They have become aware of this inadequacy through the harsh teachings of adversity--drought, overgrazed ranges, and disproportionate population increases. They have sought to solve the problem by filtering across the boundaries of the reservation and settling in adjacent areas to the south and west. Yet in spite of this added territory, the total amount of land occupied is sufficient to care adequately for little more than half the population. The situation has been desperate for some time and is rapidly becoming worse.

Within the reservation, The People live in dwellings of the hogan variety. Hogan is a Navajo word which has been taken into English to designate two general types of buildings. The older variety is a pyramidal structure with a triangular base, having for its main support three forked poles thatched over with earth and branches. The newer and more popular variety is a hexagonal structure built around four forked posts set in the ground to form

---

[5] Oliver La Farge, As Long as the Grass Shall Grow, (New York, 1940), p. 97.

a square. Most of these dwellings are constructed of small logs notched slightly in the ends and mortised carefully together. Each hogan is a one-room structure with a single door facing the east and a hole in the center of the roof through which passes the smoke from the centrally placed open fire.

Every Navajo dwelling unit has more than a single structure. At the site of permanent residence, there are likely to be, in addition to the hogan, a corral for horses and sheep, a brush arbor, and one or more storage dugouts. Placed out of sight in a clump of trees or in a secluded ravine may be found one or more sweat-houses, small-scale replicas of the old-style hogan, without the smoke hole.

Within the hogan, seldom larger than twenty-five feet in diameter, the Navajos eat, sleep, and store their possessions. With large families this is made possible only by strict adherence to a system of order and a fixed disposal of all goods. The compactness of the living quarters and the fact that large numbers are frequently crowded into them tend to encourage the spread of disease and is in part responsible for the high death rate. Lice infest practically all the dwellings, sometimes forcing evacuation, but the Navajos believe devoutly that these are "a gift from Old Couple in the World Below to enable people to sleep."[6]

The primary source of life among the Navajos is livestock, which accounts for almost one-half of the total income of the tribe. Livestock is also the symbol of rank in the society, the social and

---

6 La Farge, Laughing Boy, p. 195.

economic status of the family being judged mainly by the number of sheep it possesses. For this reason Navajos have been quick to multiply the numbers of their stock wherever possible, a tendency which was encouraged by some government officials with near disastrous results to the grazing land. The situation is described by La Farge as follows:

> This [the Navajo] nation....faces a dilemma which may cut its story short in one complete catastrophe. Fifty years of officials anxious to show progress in their reports to Washington, urged the Indians to ever greater and greater flocks, without a thought as to what the range would carry. Years ago the rivers began turning to seasonal torrents in deep-cut gullies, the valleys began to dry up, the grass grew thin. Even I can remember canyons once rich with wild currants and long grass, a brook down the middle, which now are rocky wastes within which no corn can grow, and sheep can find only fragments, occasional bits of brush, on which to graze. So here is the dilemma--the sheep on which the Navajos depend are destroying the land without which they cannot exist.[7]

The only real solution, thinks La Farge, lies in reclamation of the land through government sponsored flood-control and irrigation projects, aided by stock-and sheep-reduction programs. The difficulties of such a plan are apparent when one observes that the Navajos are a people who believe with religious fervor that fertility of the land is a matter that rests completely with the gods, and who find it difficult to have faith in the white man's assurance that reducing the number of lambs on the range will actually better the quality of wool and of mutton to such an extent that a greater profit can be made from the smaller number. However, attempts are being made, at the present time, to put such projects into operation.

Next to sheepraising, agriculture is the most important source

---

[7] La Farge, As Long as the Grass Shall Grow, pp. 100-101.

of livelihood. Chief crops are corn, beans, squash, alfalfa, and fruit trees, but corn is grown more extensively than all the others combined. Most of the produce of the land is consumed on the reservation. The typical diet is boiled mutton and corn, tough wheat bread, squash, coffee with not enough sugar, and tea as black as coffee. Cow's milk is nauseating to most Navajos; on the contrary, goat's milk is a luxury.

Corn is important not only because it feeds The People and their livestock but because of the deeply religious significance it has in their everyday life. It is a symbol of life and fertility so important to Navajo thinking. It provides the pollen without which contact with the gods is impossible. And mythology asserts that it was the very origin of human life. Something of the Navajo's attitude toward his corn is seen in the following excerpt from Laughing Boy. The young Indian is trying to impress his de-Navajoized wife with the tremendous significance of the growing plant.

> It had always been a pleasure to him to work in the corn, to help make the green shafts shoot up, to watch them dance, and contrast their deep, full green with the harsh, faded desert. Among his people corn was a living thing; to make a field beautiful was not so far from making a fine bracelet, and far more useful. He drew the precious water into his field thriftily. At its corners he planted the four sacred plants.
>
> Slim Girl did not understand it at first; she had rather wanted to bar it as entailing unnecessary labour, but decided not to say anything. He saw that she thought it dull drudging work. He did not try to explain it to her directly, but told her the story of Natinesthani and the origin of corn, and taught her the songs about the tall plant growing. When the stalks were past waist-high, he took her to the field at evening, while sunset brought the drab clay bluffs to life with red, and a soft breeze made the leaves swing and whisper. He made her see the whole field in contrast, and the individual hills, the slender plants and their promise, talking to her of Corn Maiden and Pollen Boy, and of how First Man and First Woman were made from corn. Her eyes were opened to it then, as much through understanding how he felt as through

what she objectively beheld.[8]

Minor sources of Navajo income are derived from the arts and crafts, chiefly weaving and silversmithing. These jobs are sex-discriminated, weaving being the woman's work and silverworking the man's. Proficiency in either is valued greatly as a source of high standing in the community. Indeed a woman who does not know the techniques of weaving is looked down upon as lazy or ignorant. Slim Girl, anxious to re-learn the ways of her people in order to please Laughing Boy, is distressed by her inability to learn the art. Full of bitterness at her failure she exclaims,

> "I am not a Navajo; it is not given to me to do these things. Mother was happy when she wove, she was beautiful then. I cannot make anything, and he is gifted. He will despise me in the end. Being able to make something beautiful is important to him. He will feel his house empty without the sound of weaving....But I want to weave. There is nothing the matter with me. No use. God damn it to hell! God damn me! Chindi, mai, shash, Jee-Cri!"[9]

Needless to say, the latter part of the quotation is a curious mixture of Navajo and English swearing, a by-product of Slim Girl's experience in American schools. It might also be remarked that to a true-bred Navajo the loss of one's temper is a sign of bad manners, contamination by the Americans having produced the fault in this case. It is significant, however, that Slim Girl persists until she learns to weave beautifully, and proudly.

While weaving is almost universal among women, silversmithing is not nearly so widespread among the men. A very small percentage of them are adept at the trade, but those who are real craftsmen

---

[8] La Farge, Laughing Boy, pp. 113-114.

[9] Ibid., p. 119.

value their skill highly and take pride in thinking of themselves as artists. Their rings, bracelets, necklaces, pendants, belts, bridles, buttons, and hatbands bring good prices from tourists.

Navajo silversmithing was learned from the Mexicans, and to this day the techniques are the same as those originally adopted. "You make your dies out of iron files, you get some small piece of iron from a trader for your anvil. In a hard wooden board you cut depressions for hammering out bosses and conchos and hemispheres for beads."[10] While methodology has changed not at all, the Navajos have greatly improved on workmanship and design. Each artist has his individual approach to beauty, and each takes infinite pride in originality and freshness. No two designs are the same. There is no such thing as copying. "A man makes a design well because he feels it. When he makes some one else's design, he must feel it in himself first."[11] The highest compliment one can pay a Navajo silver worker is to praise the originality of one of his creations. A good example of this pride in artistic accomplishment is seen in the following incident from Laughing Boy.

> When he was alone with his father, he showed him the silver-mounted bridle and some of his other jewelry. Two Bows turned over the harness, feeling the surface with his fingertips.
> "I have nothing more to teach you--that is well done." He tapped the cheek-strap. "I should not have thought of using that design that way."
> From Two Bows, such praise made it hard to keep a quiet, modest face.[12]

This illustrates only one phase of a characteristic that is general among The People--they are an imaginative, or creative, race. Whether

---

[10] Ibid., p. 123.

[11] Ibid., p. 174.

[12] Ibid., p. 157.

it is in the arts of weaving, silversmithing, or sandpainting, whether in the conducting of a religious ceremony, the creation of an intricate new dance step, or the composition of a new song, the esthetic appreciation, artistic nature, and creative faculty of the Navajo people are ever manifesting themselves.

Another source of income to the Navajos is that of wage work within the reservation. Most of this is supplied by the Government, but some wage employment comes from traders, from missionaries, and from the more prosperous Navajos.

Almost negligible in the scheme of living is that aid furnished by wild plants which grow on the reservation. In the summer, however, most families will have a few dishes of wild greens and will utilize the seed of certain plants as cereal. Some families do well by the sale of pinyon nuts. The food and pelts of wild animals also provide some assistance. A few Navajos are aided by royalties on mineral rights and by the wage work provided by the mining of coal and copper.

Rounding out the Navajo economy is the relief provided by the Navajo Service, usually in the form of rations. A small proportion of the population has been benefited by this form of assistance. During the war, Navajo economy was bolstered considerably by allotment checks of servicemen and by increased wage work off the reservation. In recent years, however, more Navajos than ever have been forced to resort to government relief. An unusually severe winter (1948-49) has placed many of them in desperate plight, and has necessitated a nationwide radio plea for charity under the slogan, "Nickles for Navajos."

Probably The People do not cherish the position they now find themselves in. A race traditionally proud of their independence,

they would rather not lean on the white man who has taken so much from them. Says Mr. La Farge in a recent article,

> The Navajos do not want to live on relief. They want to support themselves. They are proud, they want to remain Navajos, and as Navajos they want to have true equality with their fellow citizens. They are ready to adapt themselves again, to take into the basic, free pattern of their life new elements of profound change. They can do it and still retain their fundamental values.[13]

---

[13] Oliver La Farge, "Navajos, Most Hopeful Tribe of All," Natural History, LVII (Oct., 1948), 367.

Chapter 2

The Pattern of Interpersonal Relations

From Oliver La Farge's total perception of the Navajo Indian, one of the most striking features is the apparent relative importance of the family unit in the lives of induviduals. The term "family," in the Navajo sense, appears to be virtually indefinable. There is, of course, as in white cultures, the biological family, consisting of husband, wife, and unmarried children. However, most Navajos associate daily with a wider group of relatives and may become as intimate with these as with members of the immediate family. Near relatives, especially those related maternally, commonly cooperate in the performance of agricultural tasks and other matters where joint action is demanded. Sociologists have given to the group so formed the name, "extended family." Its importance to a Navajo individual can hardly be exaggerated, for matters of prestige, wealth, and power hinge around it.

To a Navajo, marriage is the natural thing, as natural as birth and death, and bachelors are looked down upon with a good deal of condescension. The People seem unable to understand why any man should choose to go through life without a mate. La Farge comments, in Raw Material, about this attitude.

> The Indians among whom I have lived always felt rather sorry for me when I was a bachelor. This was not because they felt that I lacked for gratifications, but because to them an adult, single man was incomplete. Their sense of this rounding out of an individual by marriage is very deep and, I think, partly explains the great harmony prevailing in their homes. When I appeared among them married, those who cared for me manifested their pleasure, and I could see that I entered into a closer relationship with them.[1]

---

[1] La Farge, Raw Material, pp. 46-47.

Courtship follows along the lines of a set procedure. The initiative may be taken by the girl. At the "Squaw Dances," which are the most important of social events, she has the privilege of choosing her dancing partner. It is the custom for the man concerned to put up mild resistance and to seek ways to rid himself of her company. "According to the etiquette, whenever there is a rest, the man asks what forfeit he must pay; by the length of time taken by the girl to get down to a reasonable figure, he gauges her liking for his company."[2]

Navajos who have had limited contact with whites have virtually no conception of romantic love. Exceptions to this are rare. In one of La Farge's short stories, "Women at Yellow Wells,"[3] a newly married Navajo couple appear to be genuinely in love, a fact which is a source of complete consternation to the white couple operating the local trading post. Laughing Boy, reared completely within the old Navajo tradition, is bewildered by the love-making tactics of the Americanized Slim Girl. His confusion is apparent in the following scene.

> Then she kissed him. He did not understand it; her face suddenly near his, against his, distorted so close to his eyes, her eyes run together. He was held tightly, and something wet, at once hot and cool was against his mouth, with a tiny, fierce imprint of teeth. Vaguely he remembered hearing that Americans did this. He did not understand it; he had a feeling of messiness and disgust. He tried to move away, but she held him; he was pressed against the wall and the sheepskins. She was fastened onto him; he could feel all her body, it was entering into him. There was something uncontrolled, indecent about this. Everything became confused. A little flame ran along his veins. The world melted away from under him, his body became water floating in air, all his life was in his lips, mouth to mouth and breath

---

[2] La Farge, Laughing Boy, p. 11.

[3] The Saturday Evening Post, CCVII (November 24, 1934), 8-9.

against his face. He shut his eyes. His arms were around her. Now, almost unwittingly, he began to return her kisses.[4]

Since romantic love is uncommon, Navajo marriages are almost always motivated by economic considerations. A family may better itself by marrying one of its daughters to a member of a wealthy or prominent household. Even where the factor of material gain does not enter, the addition of a male member is an economic asset to any family. The groom usually goes to live with the family of the bride, which is thus insured of another "provider." For this reason, girls are more highly valued than boys. Boys simply grow up, marry, and move away to another locality, contributing nothing thereafter to the well-being of their parents.

Other marriage concepts are reflected in the following conversation between Laughing Boy and Slim Girl, when they first begin to think about marriage. Slim Girl is speaking.

"Your mother will never send some one to ask for me. You must just come with me."
"Wait; what is your clan?"
"I am a Bitahni; and you?"
"Tahtchini; so that is all right. But I have nothing to give your mother, only one horse."[5]

In the first place, Slim Girl intimates that it is customary for the boy's mother to send someone to ask for the hand of the bride. The initiative in marriage negotiations is always taken by the boy's family--usually by the maternal uncle on the advice of the mother. The uncle will visit the girl's family, and, if they are properly disposed, he will make all arrangements, including settlement of the marriage gift. This latter concept is also suggested in the

---

[4] La Farge, Laughing Boy, pp. 92-93.

[5] Ibid., p. 39.

above conversation, where Laughing Boy says, "I have nothing to give your mother." It is customary in Navajo society for the family of the groom to bestow a gift of considerable value (commonly twenty-five sheep or equivalent cash) upon the family of the bride. This is another reason why girls are valued more highly than boys; if a daughter marries, the economic status of her family is considerably improved. Each of the two principals in the above conversation finds it necessary to inquire the clan of the other. This brings out a third marriage concept. Navajos must always be careful to avoid marrying into their own clan or the clan of their father. Since a Navajo regards all females of his own clan as sisters, such action would constitute the sin of incest, whether or not there is a blood relation. Anything approaching incestuous thought or action is carefully and scrupulously avoided. Thus, adult brothers and sisters treat each other with great reserve. They converse as little as possible, they sleep in separate dwellings, they avoid any sort of physical contact.

So strong are these exogomous restrictions on marriage that a Navajo seldom thinks of rebelling against them. Only in the few cases where there is the motivation of love is there likely to be the least thought whatever of violating this taboo, but even then the consequences of violation are so grave that the spurious emotion is overcome. Jesting Squaw's Son, a friend of Laughing Boy, falls genuinely in love with a young woman whom he later finds to be a clan sister. In relating the experience to Laughing Boy, he reflects the typical attitude toward clan relations.

> "'You must go away, you must not see me again. I must not see you,' she said.
> "I asked, 'Why?'

"She said, 'What is your clan?'
"I told her, 'I am an Eshlini.'
"She lowered her head, then she looked up again. Her face looked calm, but her eyes were wounded. 'I, too, am an Eshlini,' she said.
"We touched hands, and I rode away."
"At first I did not even think. I was just wild at first. All I could do was remember that happiness, that had been for nothing. I felt like asking her to come with me even so. I frightened myself. Am I an animal? Would I sleep with my sister?....Why could she not have been a Tahtchini or a Lucau or an Eskhontsoni? But it was not her fault. And could I curse my mother because she was not a Bitahni or a T'o Dotsoni or a Nahkai?"[6]

Occasionally, a Navajo will not wait for his family to secure him a bride, but will himself take the initiative. In cases where the old custom is thus ignored, the wishes of the family are still respected. Some member of the immediate family, usually the maternal uncle, is appealed to for his sanction of the marriage. This person's approval is highly desirable, for should a Navajo disobey the wishes of his elder kinsmen, he would be cut off from inheritance and all other family rights. When Laughing Boy decides to marry Slim Girl, he seeks the permission of his eldest uncle.

"I have been thinking about a wife."
"You are old enough. It is a good thing."
He finished his cigarette.
"You know that Slim Girl? The one who wears so much hard goods? She danced the first two nights."
"She is a school-girl." The tone was final. "She was taken away to that place, for six years."
"That is all right. I like her."
"That is not all right. I do not know how she came to be allowed to dance. They made her stop. Water Singer let her dance, but we stopped him. She is bad. She lives down by the railroad. She is not of The People any more, she is American. She does bad things for the Americans."[7]

But Laughing Boy refuses to follow the advice of his uncle and arranges to carry out his plans for marriage.

---

[6] Ibid., p. 235.
[7] Ibid., pp. 37-38.

The wedding of Laughing Boy and Slim Girl provides a good description of the Navajo marriage ritual. Not recognized by the American government as valid, the ceremony is yet more beautiful and more deeply religious than most "legal" white weddings. The marriage is conducted by Yellow Singer, a backslidden medicine man.

> Yellow Singer's wife handed a medicine basket to Slim Girl, which she filled with the corn mush she had prepared. The singer placed it in the correct place on the floor of the house. Laughing Boy entered carefully....
>
> She [Slim Girl] sat down on the rug beside him. Yellow Singer divided the mush in four directions. Now he was praying for them....Now they partook of the yellow corn, ceremoniously, and now it was Laughing Boy's turn to make a prayer. He sang the prayer to House God with solemn emphasis:
>
> "House made of dawn light,
> House made of evening light,
> House made of dark cloud,
> House made of he-rain,
> House made of dark mist,
> House made of pollen...."
>
> ....
>
> "In beauty it is finished,
> In beauty it is finished."
>
> The confident, solemn voice ceased. He looked at Slim Girl. Now they were married 'in a beautiful way.' It might seem a little furtive, that ceremony without relatives, almost without guests, but now the gods had married them.[8]

Because Slim Girl's parents are not living, and she had, perhaps through the dislocating influence of her education, relinquished all family connections, she and Laughing Boy do not follow the usual pattern of matrilocal residence, but, after the custom of the whites, live independently to themselves. Also, because of Slim Girl's American experience and because she tries to make her life conform to a standard apart from the true Navajo one, the experiences of her and Laughing Boy are not in all cases characteristic of the true Navajo pattern of individual and group interaction. In many

---

[8] Ibid., pp. 88-89.

ways their life together is not typical of the Navajo marriage experience. For one thing, their gestures of tenderness toward each other are outside the Navajo conception of proper marriage relations. Then, too, the goal of the marriage, as set by Slim Girl, is more ambitious than most Navajos think necessary. She tells Laughing Boy, "I shall give you silver to make jewelry, and I shall weave, and you shall have fine horses. You can make money with them, and we shall be rich together."[9] Now, while jewelry and horses and weaving products are highly valued, accumulation of excessive wealth is frowned upon as dangerous and undesirable. Moderation, in this as in all other matters, is the guiding principle.

After marriage, the husband is the theoretical head of the family; actually, the wife has more power in family decisions. She is the centralizing agent of the family unit. Her husband has little authority in the home, serving his children primarily in an advisory capacity. For instance, the members of Laughing Boy's family meet to consider the acceptance of Slim Girl into their home. In lengthy discourses each of the maternal relatives gives his opinion of the match. Laughing Boy's father, Two Bows, would like to speak in his son's behalf. "And yet, in a matter like this, his rights were only those of courtesy--to Laughing Boy's own clansmen, to his mother and her brothers, was the decision. He could only watch for the time when his purely personal influence might turn the scales."[10]

---

[9] Ibid., p. 40.

[10] Ibid., pp. 154-155.

In matters of leadership, too, the Navajo matron is the power behind the throne. "White women are leaders," says Myron Begay, "And Navajos--The men lead because the women are pushing them."[11] The real function of men in community affairs is summed up by the middle-aged Navajo woman who says,

> "You men....vote on things in the council, then you have to come home and explain--if you can. Like all that talk about sheep last year. Whose sheep? Of any ten, nine belong to us women....You men stand out in front, you talk and you decide things, but suppose you decided something that all the women think is wrong--"[12]

As a token of respect, the married man avoids his mother-in-law completely. He does not speak to her directly; he does not even so much as look at her. According to mythology, any man who looks on his mother-in-law will be stricken with a serious illness. A conversation between Laughing Boy and another Indian reflects the strength of this belief. They are talking about a man for whom an illness has necessitated a curing ceremonial.

> "What made him sick?"
> "He looked at his mother-in-law; he spoke to her, they sa ."
> "Ei-yei! How did that happen?"
> "They lived near each other. When his wife was away, she got his food for him, they say. He came too soon and saw her. She covered her face, but he spoke to her, they say."
> "He spoke to her! He is crazy, I think."[13]

Rules for personal interaction vary with different classes of relatives. Myron Begay teases his feminine cousin about her boy friend, an action which would be strictly taboo were it directed to a sister. Boys are not permitted to tease certain relatives; with others they may exchange mild jokes; and with a few they are expected

---

[11] Oliver La Farge, The Enemy Gods, (Boston, 1937), p. 143.

[12] Ibid., p. 86.

[13] La Farge, Laughing Boy, p. 135.

to joke obscenely. Thus, a Navajo youth never teases his sister, but he will play practical jokes on his grandparents and tell vulgar stories about his maternal uncles' sex life.

Within the immediate family, there is little need for a person to have a name. Outside the family group, however, one must have a designation. Navajos commonly have at least three names: the "war" name, the nickname, and the American name. The war name is that given to a person in his early life; it is a symbol of power and insures its possessor of success as a warrior. The nickname usually results from some physical characteristic or mental trait (e.g., "Bent Man," "Laughing Boy," "Straight Fingers"); it may be simply a matter of attaching kinship terms to a relative's name. Finally, the American name is given to school children as a matter of expediency. Thus, "Myron Begay" is the American name of a Navajo whose war name is "Seeing Warrior" and whose nickname is "Big Salt's Son." Likewise, Slim Girl is known by her parents as "Came With War" and by the Americans as "Lily." Laughing Boy's true (or war) name is "Sings Before Spears"; he has no American name because he has not been to school. Names are terms of reference, not of address. "Even when he is a close friend, one is not free about discussing a man's name before him."[14] In a group conversation, a person is referred to as "that one" and addressed as "my friend" or simply as "thou."

The same kinship term is frequently applied to different classes of relatives. The mother's sisters are called "Mother," and children of the mother's sister are designated as "brother" or

---

[14] Ibid., p. 238.

as "sister." "Grandfather" and "Grandmother" are terms of respect and are often applied to any older person of the same clan. On the other hand, to call a man "brother-in-law" is considered rude, and Navajos enjoy teaching the term to ignorant Americans.[15] Some names, such as "coyote" and "Ute," carry the force of serious insult.

Navajos seldom have intimate friends, but they are hospitable to acquaintances and strangers alike. A traveler in the Navajo country need have no fear of hunger or cold; any family will feed and shelter him. Visitors, even long-absent relatives, are not given the boisterous welcome so common among white people. At their first appearance they are simple ignored. "Whether one loves or hates, one's spirit must always adjust to the import of another person's presence, wherefore simple considerateness dictates that one pause a moment to let adjustment take place."[16] After this preliminary, the host and his guest will engage in somewhat stereotyped conversation involving questions of personal nature and an exchange of news items. Later, they will enter into more spontaneous conversation, during which each speaker avoids looking into the other's face. "Navajo etiquette forbids staring in a person's eye. A speaker looks down, watches his hands."[17] At parting, the visitor may exchange gifts with his host as a matter of courtesy. Such transactions are always matter-of-fact and occasion no obsequious expressions of gratitude. "Navajos almost never say thank you, save in return for very great favours; ordinary gifts and kindnesses are offered and accepted

---

[15] See Laughing Boy, p. 21 ff.

[16] La Farge, Raw Material, p. 166.

[17] La Farge, The Enemy Gods, p. 32.

in silence."[18]

Contrary to popular belief, Indians have a good sense of humor. Navajos are unusually free in using it, says La Farge.

> They....are where life remains tolerable, a singing and laughing people, quick in their humor, quick in response, masters of repartee that delights without stinging. When I look in my own memory for the essence of what I have so loved in Indian camps, the summation of it, I find a tricky rhythm tapped out on a drum, a clear voice singing, and the sound of laughter.[19]

Indian humor may seem naive to those accustomed to more sparkling brands of wit. It does, however, follow the same pattern as that existing among white people--the bringing together of certain incongruities which arise naturally from situation or character. For example, an Indian friend tells Myron Begay, as they mount their horses after a rain, "When we get off, we'll look as if it had been raining upside down."[20] Humor sometimes takes the form of good-natured disparagement of a person's character, thus providing a check on egotistic tendencies. Laughing Boy boasts, "I am a good jeweller....I make silver run like a song"; and he is answered, "You should make a song about yourself....and teach the burros to sing it."[21] Frequently, these incongruities illustrate some fundamental absurdity in human nature or conduct, particularly in application to those people thought of as inferior to oneself. Laughing Boy manifests his scorn for the Piutes by telling his wife,

> "A Pah-Ute will eat almost anything, but there is very little up there. That is why the Navajos leave them alone; there is

---

[18] La Farge, Laughing Boy, p. 53.

[19] La Farge, As Long as the Grass Shall Grow, p. 6.

[20] La Farge, The Enemy Gods, p. 138.

[21] La Farge, Laughing Boy, pp. 2-3.

> nothing in that country but a few Pah-Utes and a few antelopes. You cannot make anything out of the skins of either, so we let them alone."[22]

Most games and recreation among the Navajos have a distinctly original flavor. Some pastimes, such as card games and bronc-riding, have been adopted from the Americans, but the general pattern of recreation and amusement remains native. Around the hogan fires, diversion takes simple forms--the telling of stories out of myth and folklore and the playing of simple games with sticks, arrows, or dice. Amusement at the great public gatherings is more complex and varied. Most of it involves gambling. In Laughing Boy La Farge describes a few of the most popular pastimes, the most elaborate of which is called the "chicken-pull."

> The chicken was a salt-bag half full of dirt. A piece of blue cloth tied around its neck was the head; two bits of red at the bottom corners were the legs. Whoever threw the head over the line, a hundred yards away, won five dollars; each of the legs brought two....
>
> The chicken was buried in loose earth, so that just enough of the neck of the sack stuck up to let one get a good grip. A referee stood near, armed with a long horsehair quirt; as each horseman rode past, he swung full force across the animal's rump, thus ensuring an honest gallop. Laughing Boy cantered up in his turn, tried to hold his pony in, felt it leap to the smack of the whip, and reached too late for the prize. He watched the next few tries, rode back, argued with Slender Hair about his place, and went at it again. He was leaning well down from the saddle before the quirt fell, he could have touched the ground with his fingers. Smack! and the pony jumped slightly sideways. The chicken was out of reach. He swung back to his seat and rested. Horse after horse came by, well in hand, then leaped to the stroke of the whip, or shied away from it. The horsemen swooped, swinging incredibly low, reaching amazingly far out, in a haze of dust.
>
> Ya-hai! E-ya-hai! Ei-yei! Straight Fingers had it. Straight Fingers galloped for the line. All the young men rose in their saddles, their elbows were spread forward, their knees clutched, their quirts fell on willing ponies. Those who had been waiting just for this headed him off, the others caught up with him. It became a big, spinning wheel of mounted braves, horses' tossing

---

[22] Ibid., p. 102.

> heads, and dust. Laughing Boy saw Straight Fingers just ahead of him clinging to the chicken's head, while some one else held both its legs. He took a lick at the next horse in front of him, saw it carom, and reached for the prize, yelling. Somebody cracked him over the head with the butt of a quirt; somebody else tried to pull him off. He defended himself, wrestling with the man who had grabbed him, while the two ponies plunged, then both let go as the mob swirled away from them.[23]

Another highly competitive sport is that of horse-racing. Navajos place a high value on good horses and many of them prize expert horsemanship above all other skills. They feel an excitement in a close horse race that is incomparable to any other experience. Laughing Boy's reaction is typical.

> Arrows from the bow--no other simile. At the tearing gallop, flat-stretched, backs are level, the animals race in a straight line; all life is motion; there is no body, only an ecstasy; one current between man and horse, and still embodied, a whip hand to pour in leather and a mouth to shout. Speed, speed, but the near goal is miles away, and other speed spirits on either side will not fall back.
>
> E-é-é-é-é! His left hand, held forward, would push the horse through slack reins, his heels under her belly would lift her clear of the ground. E-é-é-é-é![24]

Games of more personalized rivalry are wrestling and tree-pushing. The first of these is similar to the American sport, with some variations. Physical strength is usually the deciding factor. Tree-pushing is a rather simple game in which spectators bet on their favorites much as cock-fighting enthusiasts in white societies bet on birds of good reputation. La Farge describes it as follows:

> Big Tall Man and Man Hammer moved up to two dead trees of roughly the same size. Hill Singer and Hurries to War were judging. Now they pushed and strained at the trees, digging their feet in the sand, heaving shoulders. Big Tall Man's tree began to crack; then suddenly it went over. People exclaimed and laughed. After that nobody more wanted to play against him.[25]

---

[23] Ibid., pp. 51, 53-54.

[24] Ibid., p. 56.

[25] Ibid., p. 16.

Despite the fact that these patterns of social interaction may seem primitive and ignorant to the "civilized" mind, still it must be remembered that they represent the most satisfactory system possible under the peculiar circumstances of Navajo history. It should be understood, too, that the life-way of these Indians is not really crude, once the shroud of external semblance is penetrated. Few white people understand an Indian or any of his motives. Most of them, in fact, see the stereotype, "a befeathered, half-human creature of unnatural dignity with a habit of saying 'Ugh!'"[26]

Oliver La Farge has tried to replace this stereotype with a true characterization. It has been previously remarked that the Indian characters in his fiction are completely credible and understandable people. They seem as real and as likeable as the next-door neighbors or the people down the street. La Farge is one of the first to treat the Indian from the impersonal, unromantic point of view. In so doing he has sought to break a literary tradition as old as this country's literature and as strong as the incredible reputation and influence of James Fenimore Cooper could make it. Bucking such a tradition is never easy, much less so when it is ingrained firmly in the heart of public opinion, as this one has been. The job is not yet accomplished; indeed, it has hardly begun, but, through the activity of such men as Oliver La Farge, it is not inconceivable that a true appreciation of the American Indian by the general public will some day be an accomplished fact.

---

[26] Oliver La Farge, "A Plea for a Square Deal for the Indians," The New York Times Magazine, (June 27, 1948), p. 14.

Chapter 3

Relations with Other Peoples

The People, much as do all other races, tend to have ethnocentric views. They adhere to a belief in the inherent superiority of their own group and culture, a belief that is accompanied by a feeling of contempt for other groups and cultures.

Navajos have intercourse with all the other Indian tribes around them--Ute, Piute, Havasupai, Walapai, Apache, Hopi, Zuñi, Tewa, Jemez, Laguna, Acoma. Their attitudes toward these other Indians vary considerably. The People seem to consider themselves closer to the Apaches (as indeed they are in culture and language) but look down on them as having a life-way cruder than their own. At the same time the Apaches are respected and somewhat feared for their fighting prowess. This complex attitude toward these neighbors is reflected in a conversation between Travels Around and Bay Horse's Son-in-Law, two Navajo characters in La Farge's The Enemy Gods.

> "They like singing, but they aren't good at it, and any Navajo who can sing is welcome among them. You know, none of the Apaches can lift their voices the way we do."...
> "But--one hears that they're dangerous."
> "No. They're good people, except when they get drunk. When they're drunk, one wants to step aside....They get together for something, and the Mexicans come with whiskey, and the men and the women all get drunk. Then they mix up with each other's wives, and they fight, and that's when you want to step aside. If they knock you down, they jump on you."
> "They sound like people to stay away from altogether. They were always warlike."
> "They're good people. They treat you well. You can make money there, both working and playing."
> "Do they like Navajos?"
> "Pretty well. Only they think we're thieves. Whenever something is stolen, they go after the Navajos."
> "Do they catch them?" Travels Around asked.
> Bay Horse's Son-in-Law grinned. "Generally not."[1]

---

[1] La Farge, The Enemy Gods, pp. 214-215.

The various tribes of Pueblo Indians are also regarded with mixed emotions. They are feared for their magical powers but on the other hand are contemptuously thought of as poor fighters. The Pueblos, for their part, return the contempt with interest, thinking of the Navajos as ignorant, crude, unreliable, and easily exploited. In Laughing Boy, for instance, a Hopi attends one of the great Navajo dances, where, "having collected everything he could possible eat, [he] sat down....to air his school English and his bourgeois superiority."[2]

Tewas are more respected than the Hopis because of their reputation as fighters. A Navajo is generally reluctant to engage in individual combat with a Tewa, and when he does, he is likely to be beaten. The Tewa is proud of his strength and fighting ability and quick to impress them on any Navajo who provides the slightest occasion for his doing so. Thus, one Tewa's reaction to a dangerous situation is typical. The scene, from Laughing Boy, follows a shooting scrape involving two Navajos, a Hopi, and an American bootlegger. A white official and two Indian policemen (a Hopi and a Tewa) sent to quell the disturbance, find themselves confronted by an angry and threatening Navajo mob. The American official and the Hopi are acutely aware of their precarious position, but the Tewa is not much concerned.

> The Tewa policeman shifted from foot to foot and grinned. The situation might become serious, but he thought it would work out all right, and he devoutly hoped for an arrest involving a fist-fight with a Navajo. Tewas punch; Navajos kick, scratch, and pull hair. For several centuries the Tewas' official profession was fighting Navajos.[3]

---

2 p. 7.

3 pp. 45-46.

One aspect of La Farge's perception of the Navajos and their Indian neighbors is contained in a short story entitled "The Girl and the Tiponi."[4] A young Hopi girl named Butterfly, flirtatious and somewhat capricious, is anxious to obtain a husband of the most desirable sorts--one who has wealth, prestige, and good looks. To accomplish this end, she steals a medicine man's tiponi, a kind of magical contraption that insures its owner of success in matrimonial undertakings. The tiponi works well--so well, in fact, that Butterfuly finds herself pursued simultaneously by three likely prospects, a Hopi, a Tewa, and a Navajo. The Hopi and the Tewa are extremely handsome, well-built young men, apparently wealthy and of high standing in their communities. The Navajo, on the other hand, is poorly-dressed, ragged, and dirty. His wife has just kicked him out of his home for loafing.

The contest for Butterfly resolves itself into a singing match. The Hopi and the Tewa sing songs of war, powerful songs that reach up through the ceiling, up to the skies, songs that bring rain to the parched land, powerful, tradition-laden songs. But the Navajo is light and gay and sings only the gambling songs, songs that bring pleasure and laughter, songs that stop the rain. And Butterfly forgets her matrimonial ambitions and that night places her blanket next to that of Singing Gambler, the Navajo.

In the same story is shown the Navajo's own conception of his character in relation to that of other Indians. Reflects Singing Gambler,

> In the beginning, when the nations were dividing the good things of life, the Navajo came to where they were. He walked

---

[4] Esquire, VII (April, 1937) pp. 72-73, 136, 139.

> right in. He took the fast horse, the horse-racing and the gambling sticks, pleasure with pretty girls, hunting, and the fruits of other men's efforts. "I'll take these," he said. He jumped on the horse and was gone before they could stop him.[5]

Navajo attitudes toward the Utes and Piutes vary considerably but in general are characterized by some degree of superciliousness. In the old days, there was a great deal of strife between the Piutes and the Navajos, with the Navajos usually having the upper hand because of superior numbers. Laughing Boy can remember at least one time when a small band of Piutes ran rampant over the Navajo country, stealing cattle and killing the people. That time he was employed as a tracker by the American soldiers who were sent in to quell the disturbances. "They said they would pay me a dollar a day. That was a new idea to me, to be paid for hunting Pah-Utes. I thought you just hunted them."[6] Some of the Piutes were killed, Laughing Boy tells his wife, the others went to jail, and after that, there were no more raids.

> "There is not often trouble with them,' he told her, 'but we do not like them. They live wild up in that country beyond Oljeto, where they are hard to catch, and they steal things. Mostly they trouble the Mormons; the Mormons are afraid of them, they say."[7]

Despite these various expressions of contempt on the part of one Indian tribe for another, La Farge notes that there has been in recent years a growing feeling of solidarity in their relations with each other. This has been, he says, partly the natural result of the recognition of the need for concerted action against the

---

[5] La Farge, "The Girl and the Tiponi," p. 139.

[6] La Farge, Laughing Boy, p. 106

[7] Ibid., p. 101.

whites in face of the threat of extinction. Partly, also, it is the result of increased contacts with members of other tribes, brought about by the government's school program and other secularizing agencies.

If La Farge's history is accurate, the Navajo's experiences with white people have been extremely unhappy. A free, independent, roving, and migratory people, they were confined within the bounds of a reservation and placed under a restraint, the conception of which was utterly foreign to their thinking. In 1864 they were slaughtered by American troops and taken into captivity at Fort Sumner. There they lived under conditions so deplorable, so abusive and barbaric that an impression of mingled fear and hatred still stains their opinions of white people. It is doubtful that any other race has ever survived a greater shock. Without homes, without food, without clothing, with nothing but the desire to live, 8,000 Navajos returned to a homeland systematically ravaged by American troops. Hardly had they started up the road to recovery when a series of legislative acts and political chicanery started them on the ignominious road to serfdom. During all this time, a hostile, misunderstanding, contemptuous white society sought to impose its technological methods and religious dogma upon a culture totally different, but as old and as diverse as its own. This the white "authorities" thought could be accomplished in one swift change, through the expedient of force backed by legislation. Laws were passed forbidding the speaking of the native language in schools, Navajo religion was strongly condemned and Christianity imposed in its place, native customs were severely ridiculed, and innovations in farming and animal husbandry were obtruded on The People without

their approval. Directly responsible for these misadventures was the Indian Service, a bureaucratic organization filled with incompetent officials and swayed this way and that by various outside forces. It was, says La Farge, "a repository for individuals not quite able to qualify for parallel positions elsewhere. To put it bluntly, from 40 to 60 percent of those who dealt with the Indians were their social and intellectual inferiors."[8]

This sterile organization developed a program that was none too edifying for the Indians. La Farge's commentary on its defects is bitterly sarcastic.

> For a century and a half our Indian policy could be stated as follows:
> 1. Our civilization is the civilization. Anything different is savage. Anyway, Indians are inferior. The quicker they become like us the better; they must become Christian, and in so far as the leopard can change his spots, cease to be Indians.
> 2. We still need land. Though we do not admit it, we do not intend to let these aborigines retain anything we want. Gold in the Black Hills? Farming land in Kansas? The agent will get the Indians to move, and if he can't do it, the army will.[9]

All the mistakes and misconceptions of the Indian Service were concentrated in its school system. Six-year old Navajo children were snatched from their parents and taken to schools sometimes a great distance from their homes. There they were plunged into a way of life so different from anything they had ever known that bewilderment, frustration, and the warping of personalities resulted on every hand.

The experiences of Myron Begay, in The Enemy Gods, while not completely typical, are sufficient to illustrate the treatment which

---

[8] Oliver La Farge, "Revolution with Reservations," The New Republic, LXXXIV (October 9, 1935), 232.

[9] Ibid.

Indian children received at the hands of their white guardians. At the age of six, Myron enters school at the insistence of a cruel step-father. His first experiences are terrifying.

> Under a variety of hands, along with other children some of whom wept, some struggled, some were stolid, he passed through swift and astounding treatments. There were white voices and faces and the white language, bursts of laughter and grunts of effort....He was held, his hair cut, shorn, like a sheep, he was stripped, scrubbed, deloused, passed from person to person, examined swiftly and none too thoroughly by a rough-handed doctor, clothed again, and at length turned loose in the sunshine through another door.[10]

Later, Myron and the other children go into a building for assignment either to the congregation of Mr. Butler, the protestant missionary, or to that of Father Joseph, the Catholic priest. The basis of selection is simple. They pass through a door to be divided, "even to the Black Coat, odd to the Dragging Robe."[11]

For a while, Myron is unhappy at school, but eventually he becomes adjusted to his new environment. He is luckier in this respect than most of his friends, many of whom he sees being continually reprimanded or punished. His best friend, Jack Tease, tries to escape the stifling confinement of school life only to be apprehended and given the humiliating punishment of being forced to wear girl's clothing for the rest of the term.

In the boarding schools outside the reservation, life was hard and monotonous. Children were overworked, and there was little recreation. Dormitories were crowded; two boys slept in one bed; only hooks were provided for the disposal of clothing. From all this, there was only one way to escape.

---

[10] La Farge, The Enemy Gods, p. 8.

[11] Ibid., p. 19

> If hunger, overwork, bad air, and hopelessness brought you so far down with tuberculosis that you were clearly dying, you would usually be sent home. I have seen them. I have sat in a Navajo hogahn among a family that spoke no English, watching their eldest son die. They had another child at the same school, they said. We had some drugs which could ease pain, and the people received us kindly. But while we looked at them, and on what was left of the boy shipped home from Kansas, we wanted to apologize for our whole race.[12]

Besides all this, the early schooling did little in providing the Indians a practical education. On the contrary, it turned out a product neither Indian nor White. Those who did not die at the school "would return as strangers, ill-adjusted, less able to deal with life than the fortunate ones whom the schooling had missed, usually more dishonest, and imbued with a deep hostility toward white men that is alien to the natural Navajo."[13]

This is a theme that runs throughout the fiction of Oliver La Farge--the impossibility of recasting the Red Man in the white man's mold. It is seen first in Laughing Boy, where Slim Girl, trained in a white man's school to revere the white man's ways, learns to despise them instead. She dreams of

> a home in the Northern desert, and children, in a place where the agent's men never came to snatch little children from their parents and send them off to school. They would be Navajo, all Navajo, those children, when the time came. This was her revenge, that all the efforts of all those very different Americans, to drag her up or to drag her down into the American way, in the end would be only tools to serve a Navajo end.[14]

The main thesis of The Enemy Gods concerns just this problem, a Navajo's struggle to adjust to teachings totally opposed to those

---

[12] La Farge, As Long as the Grass Shall Grow, p. 17.

[13] Oliver La Farge, "White Man's Burden," World's Work, LX (August, 1931), 45.

[14] La Farge, Laughing Boy, pp. 58-59.

of his own race. Myron wavers between the two, and the result is a terrific strain on his emotions. He thinks much about "the two things that would not come together and which, separated, left the world broken in half, the certainties that faded, the snags and resistances."[15] In the end he comes to think of himself as "Not Navajo, not Christian" but "In between with an evil thought. You can be like a white man, but can you be a white man? No. Navajo or nothing."[16] And Myron resolves to be a Navajo.

More than one of La Farge's short stories dramatizes the same situation. "Horse Tamer "[17] provides a good example. It is a story about a young Navajo who carries the American name of Bill Taft. Bill spends seventeen years in a white school, where he is trained to be a baker, but upon graduation, he finds that he cannot secure and hold a job in any white man's bakery. He is told, "You got a reservation to live on, buddy, and Uncle Sam looks after you," and the job goes to a white man. Highly bewildered and not knowing which way to turn, he sums up the dilemma of all school Indians when he muses, "When you graduated, you thought you were hot stuff, but in the city you were an Indian, and that held you down, and with the Indians, you weren't much of an Indian, and nothing else got a hearing." Bill Taft solves his problem admirably, however, by becoming an expert bronc-buster, a profession which commands respect among whites and Indians alike.

Fortunately for the Navajos and their neighbors, the Indian

---

[15] La Farge, The Enemy Gods, p. 153.

[16] Ibid., p. 391.

[17] The Saturday Evening Post, CCX (January 15, 1938), 11 ff.

Service did not remain the blind and stagnant organization it had for years been. During the Hoover administration the groundwork was laid for a new Indian policy. Commissioners pledged to a reform program were appointed to office, and a new series of progressive movements was initiated. The change of administration in 1933 did not stop reform in the Indian Service but rather accelerated it. The whole school system was revamped, and Indians were given back many of the rights that had long been denied them. The main instrument of reform was the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. "By a series of new regulations the commissioner [Collier] gave the Indians back the right to their own heritage, enjoining upon the Indian Service respect for Indian culture, lifting the taboo upon native languages in the schools, and ordering that adults and children alike receive their constitutional right to freedom of worship."[18] Before long, the changes were felt even by school children. After a transfer from one boarding school to another, Myron Begay notices a marked difference in policy. "Dis is a funny place," he observes. "Dey'll give you lesson on how to be an Inyan. Weavin and silversmittin, and paintin kinda Inyan-style pictures instead o' copyin regular white ones de way we used to do."[19]

This broad-minded and far-sighted program has brought about a degree of understanding between Indian and white man that was impossible under the old system. Though most Navajos were once skeptical of and hostile to the American school program, many of them were converted into a recognition of its merits once the old

---

[18] La Farge, As Long as the Grass Shall Grow, p. 78.

[19] La Farge, The Enemy Gods, p. 202.

prejudice and intolerance were rooted out. Contrary to general belief, the Indians themselves were capable of holding sane and thoughtful opinions about education and the schools. "Their desire was....that the children should be educated in order to face the changing present but should still retain the training of the past without which the quality of the tribes must disappear. They wanted them to go forward while remaining true to their race."[20] The attitude is reflected beautifully by one old man in The Enemy Gods, an aged warrior who lectures to his truant grandson.

> "No, my grandson. You want this schooling, even if it is hard. There are many tribes of Long-Haired People, of Earth People, many strong warriors, but this one tribe, the Bellacana, conquered them all. Why? Because he knows more, I think. By paper and by wires he talks to his friends in the distance, he leaves his words behind him when he goes away. He makes things we cannot make. He is here, he is all around us, we cannot get rid of him. Therefore we must learn his secrets that we, Navajos, may continue. Long ago we asked for these schools. We want them. It is not pleasant for you, but you need it, I think."[21]

On the other hand, the old man has some sage advice for Myron Begay, who has elected to follow the "Jesus Way" and give up the Navajo way of life.

> "Now you, grandchild....I think you are making a mistake, too. If you learn all the white man's way and forget the Navajo, if that happens to our young men, then we die, we are destroyed, as surely as if by warfare. The man who will serve his people in the years to come, the man who will strengthen them, is the man who can learn all of the one without losing the other. That is what we are hoping for, we who used to be warriors and leaders, and who still wear the old-fashioned clothes."[22]

Myron's uncle, Shooting Singer, is of the same opinion. He reasons,

---

[20] La Farge, As Long as the Grass Shall Grow, p. 24.

[21] La Farge, The Enemy Gods, p. 46.

[22] Ibid.

"We need the schools, I think. We need to know what they know, so that they can't take advantage of us any longer. We must be as wise as they are; we can do that and still be Navajos, I think."[23]

In spite of the progress made, in spite of better mutual understandings, there is still much that remains to be accomplished before Navajos and other Indians become a well-integrated, functioning unit in the American social system. A good common-sense policy towards the Indians, thinks Oliver La Farge, will add significantly to the strength and welfare and survival potential of the American nation. Otherwise, the Indians will deteriorate to a race of paupers and be not only an economic detriment but a social disgrace and a moral stigma to the progress of American development. Concludes La Farge, "We are not in any case going to give America back to the Indians; but, perhaps, we shall have sense enough to give the Indians back to America."[24]

---

[23] Ibid., p. 84.

[24] "The Indian as Artist," Scholastic, XXXVIII, (March 17, 1941), p. 28.

Chapter 4

Religion and the Supernatural

Navajo religion centers about the Origin Myth, or so-called "emergence story." This is the Navajo's explanation of the creation of the world and corresponds roughly to the Genesis in Jewish religions. According to the Navajos, there were in the beginning, only the Holy People. These lived beneath the surface of an older earth, and the Origin Myth constitutes the history of their emergence to the exterior regions.

Once they were on the surface of the earth, the Holy People began creating the universe.

> They made the moon of crystal, bordered with white shells, and covered its face with a sheet of lightning and all kinds of water. They made Cholihi Mountain fast to earth with a cord of rain, and decorated it with pollen, dark mist, and she-rain. They put a yellow bird on its peak, and sent the Boy and Girl who Produce Jewels to live in it. The Divine Twins were born, the two boys travelled through danger after danger in search of Sun Bearer, they became men and Slayer of Enemy Gods stood forth, mature and ever young.[1]

The "Divine Twins" referred to in this passage from The Enemy Gods are Child of the Waters and Slayer of Enemy Gods. They are the offspring of Changing Woman (chief deity of the Navajos), who was magically impregnated by rays of the sun. The Twins, when they became men, began a trip to the land of their father, Sun Bearer, and on the way they slew all the monsters that crossed their paths. "But Slayer of Enemy Gods spared the Cold Woman and the Old Age Woman and Poverty People and Hunger People."[2] The gods were wise. They knew that if Cold Woman were slain, mild weather would no longer

---

[1] La Farge, The Enemy Gods, pp. 163-164.

[2] La Farge, Laughing Boy, pp. 285-286.

be duly appreciated. If Old Age Woman were not left alive, everyone would have youth but could not enjoy it. Poverty People and Hunger People were necessary to the scheme of things, so that prosperity and feasting would not become so common that they could no longer be enjoyed.

Next, the Holy People, led, apparently, by Changing Woman, created First Man and First Woman from two ears of white and yellow corn. These two began propagating the earth.

This, then, is the "coming-up" or "emergence" story. The gods came to the earth and began living according to a carefully planned system, a system which set the pattern of life for all subsequent generations of mortals, or to use the Navajo term, Earth Surface People. So rigid is the Navajos' belief in this story that they firmly hold that any deviation from the pattern so imposed by the gods is a serious and punishable sin. Thus, when Laughing Boy and Slim Girl fail to attain the "good life" they had dreamed of, Laughing Boy quite naturally attributes the failure to supernatural agencies. The mistake occurred, he reasons, when his wife, in striving for perfection outside the Navajo ideal, amassed excessive material wealth and thereby violated a precedent set by the gods. "She tried to kill the Hunger People; I thought she could. If we had not tried to do that, we should have been living happily within the Navajo country long ago. She was too daring."[3]

Beliefs about the Origin Myth color much of the daily life of the Navajo. At night, variations of the myth are repeated around the hogan fires for the edification of the children. Frequent

---

[3] Ibid., p. 286.

retelling of the incidents that go to make up the emergence story is also a source of satisfaction to adults. For instance, Laughing Boy is one day forced to take refuge from a storm in the hogan of a stranger. That night

> ....his host recounted the second part of the Coming Up Story to his children, the part about the Twin Gods, Slayer of Enemy Gods, and Child of the Waters, which Laughing Boy loved best ....He drowsed and was soothed by the tale of the familiar, strange adventures, the gate of the Clashing Rocks, the trail over Boiling Sands, Monster Eagle and Monster Elk and Big God, lightning-arrows and cloud-blankets.[4]

Though the Navajos conceive of hundreds of deities, Changing Woman, the Sun, and the Hero Twins are the four which bulk largest in the religion. Changing Woman (who represents the Earth) is the only consistently benevolent god. Next to her in importance is her husband, the Sun. Sun symbolism is all-pervasive in religious rites and ceremonies, all movement taking place in a sunwise direction--east to south to west to north. This four-point progression has led to attribution of strong significance to the number four in everything.[5] Even under emotional strain, Navajos are likely to think "in fours." Thus, when Laughing Boy discovers Slim Girl's infidelity and sends three arrows after the American who debased her, he turns to her with the fourth arrow and thinks, "It was right that such a thing should happen by fours. The gods were in it."[6]

Associations of activity with direction also result from these sunwise conceptions. Navajos believe that benevolent spirits live to the east, harmful ones to the north. During ceremonials, men

---

[4] Ibid., pp. 195-196.

[5] Charles S. Milligan. "Navaho Religion--Values Sought and Values Received." The Iliff Review, III, No. 3 (Fall, 1946), 123.

[6] La Farge, Laughing Boy, p. 248.

sleep with their heads to the east. The single door of all hogans faces the same direction. If a Navajo dies in a hogan, his body is removed through a hole cut in the north wall. Each direction is associated with a color: east is white, south is blue, west is yellow, north is black.[7]

Next to Changing Woman and Sun Bearer, the Hero Twins are the deities most often appealed to. They are the war gods of Navajo mythology, and occupy a central place in religious thought. The following passage is transcribed in order to indicate something of the Navajo conception of these gods.

> It is said that they are the War Gods, two persons who speak together, beautiful young men, their long hair falling like dark rain over their shoulders, their bodies perfect. Sunbeams stand around their heads, lightning rustles in the arrows of Nayeinezgani's quivor, it plays around the edges of Tobadzischini's stone knife. They are twins, it is said; they were born of two mothers who are one, of two fathers who are one father. They are the gods of war, and yet they are the protectors of their people.
>
> When people here on earth wish to pray to them, two men take their names, and put on masks which have no features, but pictures of ideas painted on them. When they tell of these divine ones talking together at the end of the Rainbow Trail, when they paint the symbols on the masks, they are only pointing toward things beyond the reach of mortal minds.[8]

In the Navajo religion, there is no belief in immortality. Life beyond the grave is quite undesirable--a shadowy and nebulous thing. Navajos believe that when one dies the malevolent part of his personality takes the form of a ghost and returns to plague the living, particularly relatives. For this reason they are extremely reluctant to go near a corpse. In case burial makes this necessary, they very carefully follow a set of intricate maneuvers designed

---

[7] Milligan, Loc. Cit.

[8] La Farge, The Enemy Gods, p. 3.

to throw the dead person's ghost off their trail. Wherever possible, someone outside the immediate family is hired to dispose of the corpse. Once, in Laughing Boy, when a Hopi man is killed at a Navajo ceremonial, a trader advises an American official, "Have the Hopi and Tewas take off that dead man...they'll never forgive you if you leave a corpse for them to take care of; spoil their party and make 'em leave. They're plumb scared to death of a corpse."[9]

Funerals, even more than other rites, are intricate in detail. When one disposes of a corpse, he must observe literally dozens of rules lest he be haunted by the dead person's ghost. The body of the deceased is placed in some inconspicuous spot and covered with rocks. Jewelry and all other personal possessions remain with the body, and custom dictates that the dead person's horse shall be slain over the new grave. The description of Slim Girl's interment by Laughing Boy affords a good record of a Navajo funeral.

> The farthest corner of the cliffs made a niche about twelve feet square, in which the rocks came to the ground sheer, or slightly overhanging, without talus. Here he carried her, and set her in the farthest recess. He walked carefully, avoiding bushes, observing all the requirements, in so far as was possible for a single individual. Over her he put her blankets, at her head, food, by her hands, her weaving tools, cooking implements at her feet. He covered her form with silver and turquoise and coral and coins. As he arranged her, he prayed. Then he looked about for fair-sized slabs, of which there were plenty roundabout, in the talus. He began to bring them, covering her....
>
> It was nearly dark when he had laid on the last stone, and he began to be aware that he was weary. Blowing cigarette smoke four ways, he stood in prayer for a minute or two. He untethered her pony and led it into the niche. It stood patiently by the pile while he notched his arrow and spoke the requisite words. The string twanged, the shaft struck, the pony leapt and fell partly over the tomb. Those clear-cut things, happening rapidly, were out of tempo with everything else; they put a period to it.[10]

---

[9] La Farge, Laughing Boy, p. 48.

[10] Ibid., pp. 280-282.

Navajos believe that all ailments are of supernatural origin and consequently can be cured only by an appeal to supernatural agencies. Reasoning follows a line of thought from effect to cause. For example, in Laughing Boy, one man becomes so ill that a five-day ceremony in his behalf is necessitated. His friends, reasoning backward, speculate that his sickness is a result of looking upon his mother-in-law, a practice strictly taboo among Navajos.

Most religious techniques are directed toward the health and well-being of the individual. Just as the Pueblo tribes appeal to the supernatural for rain and fertility of the land, so do Navajos solicit aid in overcoming or warding off sickness. These techniques, which seem so ignorant and superstitious to white people, actually have good results among The People, probably because of psychological factors. The experiences of one Navajo in The Enemy Gods indicate that this is true.

> A girl had been frightened and had fallen into a twitching sickness. She had wasted away very fast. It was so serious that they held the Mountain Chant for her, even though it was summer, a "closed" Mountain Chant without any gathering, or public show on the last night. In four days thereafter she recovered entirely, now she was perfectly well....Since then the rains had been generous, and everyone was pleased. So now they were having the Hojonji, the Towards Beauty ceremony, to complete it. Thus her cure could be made perfect and everyone would be blessed.[11]

The "Towards Beauty" ceremony here mentioned is commonly called "Blessing Way." It is one of the medicine techniques of Navajo religious practice--that is, it is one of those techniques whose purpose is to bring helpful forces into right and active relations with the human body and spirit. It insures health, prosperity, and well-being. Every Navajo knows the lovely prayer which closes a Blessing Way.

---

[11] La Farge, The Enemy Gods, p. 304.

> With beauty before me may I wander, With beauty behind me may I wander, With beauty above me may I wander, With beauty below me may I wander, With beauty all around me may I go wandering. Now on the old age trail, now on the path of beauty may I travel. In Beauty.[12]

It is not always expedient for a medicine man to perform one of the medicine ceremonies. It may first be necessary to resort to a diviner, or seer, in order to determine the source or cause of the sickness. Divination, then, is another technique of the religion. This takes various mystical forms, such as appeals to the all-knowing Gila Monster or the reading of the stars. In Laughing Boy, one old medicine man, Yellow Singer, simply relies on dreams of the previous night. Once, noting that Laughing Boy appears to be ill, he "divines" the cause of the trouble as follows:

> "I dreamed last night that when you were at the dance at Buckho Dotklish, you put those prayer cigarettes wrong. They fell down into the sand. Now they have put a spider's web into your brain."[13]

Then he prescribes the cure.

> "You must go to a place alone, you must wash your hair. Then pray to the Divine Ones whose cigarettes you offended. Then take this remedy....It is a special kind of whiskey. It is very holy. The Americans drink it; it is so good they try to keep any one else from having it."[14]

Still one other technique of the Navajo religion is that of exorcism, the rites of cleansing, whose purpose is to expel evil from the individual. It takes various forms and does not always depend on the skills of a medicine man for execution. Laughing Boy, for instance, takes sweat baths and rolls in the snow (both techniques

---

[12] Ibid., p. 303.

[13] La Farge, Laughing Boy, p. 216.

[14] Ibid., p. 217.

of cleansing). He watches other young men leap time and time again through fires in order to rid themselves of malevolent spirits which hover near them. Spitting, whistling, passing through hoops, and bathing with yucca suds are also considered to be valuable techniques in eliminating pernicious influences from the body and spirit. Those possessed with more tenacious demons may require the services of a medicine man, who, performing a rite with a feather, motions the evil spirit from the body of the afflicted.

All rites and ceremonies of the Navajos have a religious motive and by that token intensify the aesthetic and moral appreciation of those who take part in them. The spirit of the occasion reaches out and fills the soul of him who participates. Even Slim Girl, who had never known the inner meanings of the religion, finds an almost indescribable pleasure in watching the Grandfather of the Gods ceremony.

> It was a fine spectacle, the many dancing figures in the firelight, their strange masks and the dull earth-colours, blue, red, white, yellow, black--a broad white zigzag across a black chest, a red figure on blue, outlined with white, standing out in the half-light of the fire. The dancers were never more intent, the chanting more ecstatic. There was real dramatic quality in the entrance of the Grandfather. She was interested, excited. These were her people, putting themselves in touch with eternal forces by means of voice, strength, rhythm, colour, design--everything they had to use. They were creating something strong and barbaric and suitable, and still beautiful.
>
> "In beauty it is finished,
> In beauty it is finished,
> In beauty it is finished,
> In beauty it is finished!"[15]

One ceremony not directly motivated by the religious drive but yet an expression of it is the initiation ceremony, or Yeibichai

---

[15] Ibid., pp. 166-167.

Dance, participation in which is necessary before any individual may become a fully accepted member of the Navajo society. Its primary function seems to be a psychological one--permitting Navajo children to learn at first hand that the gods are, after all, only human beings disguised with masks. This knowledge does not, as might be expected, lessen the child's belief in the gods but, on the contrary, strengthens it. La Farge describes this ceremony through the eyes of Myron Begay.

> The sonorous chanting of the men behind him filled the hogahn. He stood up, in breech-clout and moccasins, facing the figures of Talking God and Female God, the two featureless, symbolic masks. Talking God changed the yucca whips in his hands. The boy's hesitation over being initiated, his fear of finding it only grotesque and barbarous, had centred in advance around this rite of being whipped by some man in a mask. He stiffened. The yucca touched him firmly, but not as a blow. There was no pain, no reality of whipping. He felt foolish, and suddenly it seemed as if the god knew and had known, the white mask with the cornstalk painted on it assumed expression; it was only something over a man's head, an ordinary man with the white buckskin hanging from his shoulder, but Talking God was there with his true face hidden and sunbeams around his head. Hasche Yahlita, the Grandfather. Now Myron was afraid his wrong thinking would be seen and he would be rejected, but the yucca was laid on four times. Female God began to put the sacred corn meal on him.
>
> With rain bubbles he paints himself,
> Kola nina....
>
> He heard the song, and turned sunwise for his back to be sanctified with corn. It was done.[16]

No levity is tolerated at any of these ceremonies; any sort of insincerity would render them impotent. Those participating must remain aloof from all worldly things and keep their minds uncontaminated by distracting thoughts. During one of these rituals, Slim Girl attempts to attract Laughing Boy's attention by taking his hand and is immediately admonished for her actions.

---

[16] La Farge, The Enemy Gods, pp. 162-163.

> "You must not do that."
> "Why not?"
> "I am thinking about the Holy Things. I have to concern my mind only with them. You should not have come here."
> "Is it bad to think about me? Are your thoughts of me not--hozoji?" She smiled.
> He remained grave. "They are hozoji, but they are not all of it. When I think about the whole, I am thinking about you, too. I give thanks for you. But I must not just think about you and forget all the rest. Now go away."[17]

In connection with his discovery of this attitude among the Indians, La Farge cannot resist a comparison of it with the religious practices of white people. He says, "I....found a religious concept which rather shames us--that no prayer is efficacious unless all present are thinking only happy and devout thoughts. We do lip-service to that idea; they practice it."[18]

Not infrequently in speaking of the Navajo religion does La Farge make a comparison with Christianity. He is not a religious reactionist; he is a freethinker who believes that truth is truth regardless of where it is found. He finds truth in the Navajo religion, and he finds superstition; both of these he sees in Christianity. He does not hold one up above the other, but he defends the tenets of Navajo theology at the points where he considers them worthy of defense. And these points are considerable; they lie within the heart of the religion, not in the exterior manifestations of it. La Farge's impressions of this religion are better described in his own words.

> Among the Navajo Indians I encountered the concept of impersonal, omnipresent God in terms as lofty as Buddhism's, and

---

[17] La Farge, Laughing Boy, p. 165.

[18] Oliver La Farge, "Red Men and Pink," Wings, III (November, 1929), 9.

> with it an advanced religious philosophy including certain terms, such as hozhoni, of a technical religio-philosophical nature....The superstitious folk-stuff with which the core of Navajo religion is overlaid is very obvious to a white man, not being that in which he was reared, and in general being somewhat cruder. I was genuinely surprised to discover this other content behind it, also to discover the division (the fancy word is dichotomy) which the more thoughtful, advanced students among the Navajos recognized between the trappings and practices on the one hand and the heart of the religion on the other. What I encountered was a genuine sophistication stated in unusually clear terms, and all in a frame so unlike anything I had previously known that I could come to it without preconceptions. I was also, of course, encountering the exceptional genius of the American Indian, outpost of the Orient, for unconfused, evolved religious thinking.[19]

A few of the characters La Farge has created in his fiction have provided him excellent opportunities for studying the Navajo religion in the light of Christianity, and vice versa. Myron Begay, in The Enemy Gods, again and again is forced to choose between the teachings of the two. At the American school he learns about an omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God whom he cannot see or hear or sense in any way. He hears about the Son of God, who lived ages and ages ago in a land so very far away that the true distance is incomprehensible to him. He is taught that his own native religion is barbaric, the product of ignorant and superstitious minds. And he believes it all--or thinks that he does. But then he goes home on vacation and observes at first hand his own people in religious response, and he learns some startling things.

> He hadn't known the stories were like that, as strong as the Bible and with a quality that struck more directly into the depths of his being than anything he had ever heard before.
>
> Not preaching or doctrine, but stories which made all one story, and the people came up out of an older earth, and the gods lived and moved; the vivid images glowed in his mind, the words recurred during the active days intervening between

---

[19] La Farge, Raw Material, p. 100.

night and night.[20]

Slim Girl, too, finds herself confronted with the conflicting white and Navajo ideologies. Inculcated first in one religion, then the other, she finds neither completely satisfactory but, under the influence of Laughing Boy, begins to discover some redeeming qualities in the religion of her people.

> In a sentimental way she played at believing her people's religion, and indeed began to find some truth in its basic doctrine, but when she attempted to extend acceptance to the forms which she observed, her sense of the grotesque made it a farce....The religion might remain meaningless to her, and probably always would, but the underlying concept of the active force of 'hozoji' became real.[21]

But full acceptance is no longer possible for Slim Girl. She tries to rationalize what she sees and the result is a curious mixture of reminiscence, hope, and outright doubt.

> When she had been a very little girl, she had trembled with terror and awe at the sight of the very gods coming into the circle of people. Out in the darkness one heard their distant call, repeated as they came nearer, until with the fourth cry they entered the firelight. They danced and sang there, majestic and strange; then they vanished again to return to their homes in the sacred places. Now they were just Indians whom she knew, dressed up in a rather silly way. Like many unreligious people, she kept slipping into the idea that these worshippers were pretending to be taken in by the patently absurd. Most of the adult spectators had been through the Night Chant initiation; all of them knew that the gods were no more than men in masks; how could they be so reverent? What was her devout husband's ecstasy, or his devoutness, when he himself put on the painted rawhide bag trimmed with spruce and feathers, pretending to be Talking God?[22]

Then to her mind flashes the inevitable teachings of Christianity. To her surprise she finds a similitude. The religion of her people

---

[20] La Farge, The Enemy Gods, p. 163.

[21] La Farge, Laughing Boy, p. 164.

[22] Ibid., pp. 161-162.

is no more absurd than the religion of white people. Perhaps neither is really absurd if one is in true harmony with his surroundings.

> She remembered the sacrament at school when she had been Christian. She had known that the wine came from the vineyard of an Italian who was a Catholic--something vaguely wicked --and that the bread was just bread. She knew the minister for a nice man whose wife rather bullied him. Yet she had believed that Christ's blood appeared in the wine, or something like that, and had been uplifted when she partook of it.
>
> The casual way in which the minister handled the jug of wine when it came used to shock her, yet when he raised the chalice, his face would be inspired. He knew it was just the Italian's wine and himself, but he had not been pretending.
>
> These Navajos were just like that. She couldn't make it seem reasonable to herself, but she understood it.[23]

And Slim Girl's conclusion is, "That is a good religion, as good as Christianity....One needs some religion. At least, I can get good out of its ideas."[24]

In secular societies, religion is apt to be turned on and off like a radio. Many Americans, for instance, attend church services on the Sabbath and give no thought to religious matters for the remainder of the week. Navajo practices afford a marked contrast to this attitude. Religion is of paramount importance in everyday life; it colors every thought, provides a motive for every action. Laughing Boy, for instance, in telling of his love for Slim Girl, relates his emotions in religious terms. The only way he can adequately describe his tremendous love experience is by way of a religious metaphor.

> "I have been down Old Age River in the log, with sheet-lightning and rainbows and soft rain, and the gods on either side to guide me. The Eagles have put lightning snakes and sunbeams and rainbows under me; they have carried me through the hole in the sky. I have been through the little crack in the rocks with Red God and seen the homes of the Butterflies

---

[23] Ibid., pp. 162-163

[24] Ibid., p. 61.

and the Mountain Sheep and the Divine Ones. I have heard the Four Singers on the Four Mountains. I mean that woman."[25]

Where religion is thus such a compelling force in a people's culture, it is likely that extermination of it would be a blow so severe that the culture itself would disintegrate as a result. At any rate, the tendency for individuals to think in religious terms testifies to the strength and unifying nature of the religion itself.

La Farge does not hold up the Indian religions as superior to other religions; what he does is defend them against the railings of dogmatists and fanatic sectarians who attach to anything outside their own cults the name of "barbarism." Why, he asks, should they be ostracized for the abundance of obviously crude and superstitious and archaic beliefs--the trappings which enshroud and cloud all religions alike? Is it more "primitive" to believe that it is dangerous to cross the path of a rattlesnake than it is to have inhibitions against the eating of pork on Fridays? The whole point of his argument is that any religion is wholesome which fills the spiritual needs of its adherers. All religious systems which encourage spiritual growth are intrinsically sound. Indian religions have done this adequately for countless generations; were it not so, the adaptive mechanisms of cultural change would have developed a different, more suitable religious complex. To illustrate his conception of a sound religion as one which gives spiritual satisfaction to its followers, La Farge relates a personal experience at a Hopi Indian ceremony. "We sang all night, building song on song, filling the place and ourselves with music as fine as any I ever hope to hear, and a

---

[25] Ibid., p. 158.

delightful, uplifting happiness. It was a true approach to God."[26]

Everything he says about Indian religion, La Farge relates finally to the need for clear-sighted treatment of the Indian situation as a whole. Since that religion represents the product of centuries and centuries of serious thought, since it is the cumulative result of a highly selective process, since ages of empirical observation have shown it to be the only religious system possible under the special assumptions of Indian thought, then, says Oliver La Farge, it stands to reason that no substitution of Christianity, or any other religious panacea, can hope to displace suddenly and completely the old values and the old ideas. Some transition must be made, he admits, but it must be gradual and discreetly gentle. The most sensible policy would be to allow the old values to stand, at the same time permitting the Indians to choose those elements of other religions which can be integrated into their own system, adapting them to fit their own needs. In the meantime it is imperative for Americans to recognize "that an Indian has a constitutional right to worship as he pleases," and that he who preaches "that our Constitution guarantees religious liberty only within the Christian faith"[27] has an intellect inferior to that of the Indian he tries to save.

---

[26] La Farge, As Long as the Grass Shall Grow, p. 124.

[27] La Farge, Raw Material, p. 186.

Chapter 5

Ethics, Values, and Premises of Life

The previous pages of this paper may leave the impression that Oliver La Farge holds up Indian culture as superior to that of the white man who seeks to alter it. Such an impression would be false. It is inevitable that any thorough treatment of Indians, either in factual writing or in fiction, should involve certain points of comparison and contrast with the most readily available criterion of judgment--the Euro-American cultural pattern. That a clear-minded, scientifically trained, unbiased person is able to discern places where the standard of measurement is inferior to the thing being judged does not testify to the inferiority of the standard as a whole. La Farge says in no place that the sum total of the Indian's way of living is superior to the sum total of the white man's way of living. On the contrary, he states explicitly that such is not the case.

> I am not talking about idylls. I can clear the decks here by stating that Indians are not idyllic, any more than I am. They are also not superior to us. They are just as stupid and just as intelligent as we are, just as noble and just as mean, just as good and just as bad. They produce some of the most astute, devious, and unscrupulous politicians I have ever encountered as well as civic leaders whole-heartedly and intelligently devoted to the public welfare, they produce heroes and villains. They are different from us, strong in some things where we are weak, weak where we are strong, but averaged all together neither better nor worse.[1]

That La Farge extends this idea to his fiction is readily apparent to his readers. Says one critic of All the Young Men,

> While he finds great and noble qualities in the Indians, Mr. La Farge is no fool concerning his own people. He shows

---

[1] La Farge, Raw Material, pp. 153-154.

> them in all their variety; as, indeed, his Indians are also good, bad, and indifferent. He writes of both with the balance that can only spring of knowledge.[2]

A case in point is his conception of the principles on which rest the ethical systems of Navajos and whites. These are similar at some points, apparently unrelated at others. To illustrate one aspect of Navajo ethics--that stealing from outsiders is condoned--La Farge relates the following incident.

> ...a trader, long ago when the Navajo country was very wild and unmapped, gave an Indian friend of his five hundred dollars in silver to take to another trader some two hundred miles away. It would have been the simplest thing in the world for that Indian to have disappeared with what was, for him, a large fortune, converted it into jewelry, and stayed lost. But he delivered it as promised to the strange trader. That night the Indian came back and stole the money!
>
> If an American had been a thief, he would have taken the money when it was easy; had he been honest, he would have let it lie. This man was neither honest nor dishonest, just Navajo. To understand him, one must know several things: That his people lived for centuries by raiding and warfare, like Scotch Borderers, taking everything they wanted, by force or stealth, from their neighbors. Thus, between stealing, which is dishonorable, and warfare, which is honorable, the distinction lies, not in the act, but in whether the object is taken from a friend or an alien, all outsiders being aliens to a people who call themselves, simply and arrongantly, "Denné, Men." Secondly, one must know that an Indian is temperamentally an extremely loyal friend, also realize their extreme admiration for both bravery and skill. That Indian not only did a permissible thing, but a brave one, and a difficult one. The act unquestionably raised him enormously in the esteem of his fellow-tribesmen.[3]

This is, after all, not so very far from the position taken by most Americans, who secretly approve of "Robin Hood" thievery and who, in war, condone pillage and plunder against the enemy.

In carrying out the terms of his agreement with the trader, the Indian described in the above incident showed a sense of honor

---

[2] William Rose Benet, "Man-Who-Knows-Indians," The Saturday Review of Literature, XII (August 17, 1935), p. 10.

[3] La Farge, "Red Men and Pink," p. 9.

that all Navajos consider requisite to personal excellence. In this connection is the following sentence concerning gambling among the Navajos. Because all Navajo men gamble, the statement is of wider significance than it may at first seem. Says La Farge, "I have never known a loser to question that he lost or delay payment, I have never seen a raw decision."[4] Promises are always kept, regardless of the consequences. Laughing Boy refuses to back down on a promise to gamble with another Indian, even in the face of Slim Girl's assurance that his opponent is crooked and will take his money. "That makes no difference," he tells her; "I cannot back down now. If I let this go because I was afraid to lose, what would I be? If I refused because of you, what kind of a man should I be for you?"[5]

Pleasant manners to all, generosity, self-control, cooperation with neighbors, and moderation in every act of life are highly approved ideals of human conduct. To get along with the Navajos one should follow a few simple rules of common decency--"go slow, be absolutely polite, observe every rule of good breeding, don't force talk, don't jabber, don't push yourself at them, never show surprise or lose your temper."[6]

The astonishing flexibility and resiliency--the capacity for absorbing elements from other cultures without losing the general pattern of their own--with which some Indian tribes seem to be equipped is perhaps more than anything else the result of a highly

---

[4] La Farge, Raw Material, p. 163.

[5] La Farge, Laughing Boy, p. 40.

[6] La Farge, Raw Material, p. 151.

cooperative system existing within the tribe itself. Navajos, especially, are noted for their working together in harmony. So also are their neighbors, the Apaches. La Farge relates an incident about this latter tribe which defends its members against a charge of "backwardness" and testifies to the strength of their cooperative tendencies.

> Being "backward", that is to say, still very Indian, this tribe passed a civic test which most white communities would have failed lamentably. Oil was found under certain allotments, spelling wild, debauching riches for a few, nothing for the community. After the most careful deliberation, all the Indians made their mineral rights over to the tribe, that whatever riches might be found should be applied to the good of all the people.[7]

Moderation in all action is also a very important rule under the Navajo standard of proper conduct. This rule includes all indulgences, even sex activity. The accumulation of material wealth beyond the point of simple comfort is a serious violation of economic and social laws. Thus, Slim Girl makes a mistake when she tries to kill "the Hunger People." "I had enough," she reflects, "but I thought I could have better."[8] And the attempt to obtain the materials for a life above that dictated by necessity and custom heaps disaster upon her head.

One other ethical conception of the Navajo concerns the nature of evil and is akin to the Puritan theory that each good act or each sin brings its own reward or punishment. It is believed that bad thoughts and actions breed other bad thoughts and actions.[9]

---

[7] La Farge, As Long as the Grass Shall Grow, pp. 96-97.

[8] La Farge, Laughing Boy, p. 265.

[9] Compare the doctrine implied in Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter, where the sin of adultery leads one character to the greater sin of falseness, becomes responsible for a diabolical passion for revenge in another.

Consequently, one who can come in contact with evil without being contaminated by it is indeed an admirable person, but he who acts as medium, or agent, for thoughts of evil nature commits a cardinal sin. Laughing Boy's uncle, in discouraging his proposed marriage to Slim Girl, repeats to him a rumor that she is a prostitute for the Americans. In so doing, he propagates an evil thought that will return to haunt him. In Laughing Boy's words, "What my uncle said will stay with him. He has made a bad thing, it will follow him. The track of an evil thought is crooked and has no end; I do not want it around me; I do not keep it going."[10]

All people everywhere lay emphasis on certain values in the search for a better life. "It is characteristic of Indians," says Oliver La Farge, "...that they never lose sight of the great, fundamental question: What makes life worth living?"[11] What makes life worth living for any human group is the attainment of those values which bring it happiness and well-being. To the Navajo, health, prosperity, and peace are top values. Health is the most essential of the good things of life. In such a harsh environment, good health is requisite to survival, and the nature of all religious ceremonies indicates the Navajo's sense of its importance.

Some of the things which Navajos prize have been discussed in previous chapters. There is pride in the ability to sing, to dance, and to tell stories. Likewise, the skills of weaving, of silversmithing, of sandpainting carry high prestige. Ceremonial knowledge usually insures extraordinary power.

---

[10] La Farge, Laughing Boy, p. 39.

[11] La Farge, Raw Material, p. 160.

Personal excellence, therefore, is valued; individual success, in the American sense of that term, is not. Individuals progress only with and for the family, and riches are not associated so much with single persons as with the entire family group. The fact that any conspicuous type of leadership is absent in Navajo society points to this lack of emphasis on personal success. No Navajo ever pretends to make decisions for a group. To do so would be indecent. In council meetings nobody presumes to have more authority than the others; everyone is of equal stature; no decision can be reached without unanimity. Myron Begay, the school-Indian, learns that vehemence and bombast are not the approved forms of speech at these gatherings. Rising on one occasion to deliver an oratorical condemnation of the sheep-reduction program, he is quickly and subtly shown that other, presumably ill-informed Indians have more stable and intelligent opinions than he. Later, he attributes his mistake to a school-inspired desire for personal eminence. "I wanted to be important. Until just a little while ago I wanted to stand out, I kept adding to myself. Then something happened [the above described incident] and I became nothing, nothing at all."[12] But Myron finds himself in a return to the values of his people and the realization that to settle down on the reservation, with a Navajo wife, is his wisest course of action. He proposes marriage to a thoroughly Indian young woman, to whom he asserts, "This is what I want," swinging his hand to indicate her hogan and loom. "This, and you, and work to do for you. I'm a Navajo again. I always was one, only it was hidden from me."[13]

---

[12] La Farge, The Enemy Gods, p. 296.

[13] Ibid.

A holdover from the old warrior days is the feeling of reverence which is commanded by men who have slain Americans or Indians of other tribes. Prestige comes with bravery, and one must be brave to kill an American. In one of La Farge's short stories, for instance, a Navajo murders an American and immediately begins to think of his advanced station in society. "I have killed a Mexican, I have killed a Zuni, I have killed an American....That girl will speak to her parents now, I think."[14] This same attitude crops out in everyday speech, as when Laughing Boy tells his wife of the Piute trouble and punctuates his story with side remarks about certain respected individuals. "Then The Door came along. You have heard of him? He is the one who killed those two Americans; his father was Generous Chief, the one who never was captured when The People went into exile."[15]

Under superficial examination, different peoples seem to lay stress upon different values; actually, they are all striving to solve the same basic problems. The end is the same--the attainment of a better earth; the means to that end are the only variables. Indians may pray for rain and be laughed at for superstitious illiterates; Americans may advocate stock-reduction and thereby incur the hostility of the Indians. The hoped-for results in both cases are identical; the improvement of pasturing and general farming conditions is the aim of each. That one method is scientifically sound and the other simply a manifestation of hope and faith does not alter the fact that both are attempts to arrive at a better

---

[14] "Dangerous Man," Scribner's Magazine, LXXXVII (June, 1930), 612.

[15] La Farge, Laughing Boy, p. 103.

formula for living. The reason a white man does not understand the actions of an Indian is not that he fails to comprehend the Indian's aim but that he cannot conceive of the logic behind the means by which that aim is pursued.

In other words, the premises of life, the basic assumptions, of the white man are not the same as those of the Indians. The white man is prone to take for granted that marriage should rest on a foundation of love; the Indian is equally positive that the primary considerations should be economic. Staying in harmony with supernatural forces insures a Navajo of health and strength; an American is likely to think of the same values as being attained by proper diet, exercise, and regularity.

Navajos believe that everything exists in two parts, the male and the female, which go together and supplement each other. This is more than a biological conception, for it is extended to almost all inanimate objects. Indian characters in Laughing Boy speak of he-rain and she-rain, depending on the degree of suddenness or gentleness. Turbulent streams are male, placid ones are female. The cold harsh country of the North is masculine, the warm desert areas of the South are feminine. The classification of objects along these lines seems to be an extension of ideas found in mythology, where the Holy People are always paired.

To The People, human nature is neither good nor evil; both qualities are blended in all persons, and there is little an individual may do to alter their relative proportions. Thus, many offenses which are seriously condemned by whites are taken lightly by The People because they are considered more or less natural manifestations of human fallibility. Crimes which white people classify as

"capital" may not, for the Navajo, fit the same classification. To be sure, those who commit murder, rape, and other "serious" crimes are punished, but the punishment is relatively mild, usually taking the form of monetary compensation to relatives. Adultery is condemned, but here again the belief in the fallibility of human nature may allow for some measure of justification. The seriousness of the crime depends upon the circumstances behind it.

For instance, Slim Girl remains the mistress of a white man even after her marriage to Laughing Boy. When Laughing Boy discovers her infidelity, he is so enraged that he attempts to take her life. Later, she explains to him the reasons for her conduct, and her story is so plausible that she gains partial forgiveness. It was all part of an elaborate revenge plot, explains Slim Girl. The Americans had robbed her of her good life and substituted for it their own brand of living, causing her much pain and discomfort. To get even, she had concentrated her hate on one symbolic American, living clandestinely with him and taking his money in return. The money, she tells Laughing Boy, was to be the means through which she would seek to make him happy and through which the two of them should attain the perfect life.

> "I wanted it for you; you were giving back to me what the Americans had robbed from me since they took me from my mother's hogan. I thought it right that an American should pay tribute to you and me, I thought it was the perfection of my revenge."[16]

The explanation is logical and suitable. Her frank confession is more admirable than her original sin was despicable, and Laughing Boy is convinced that it was "error, not evil."

---

[16] La Farge, Laughing Boy, p. 265.

Another premise of Navajo thinking rests in the literal interpretation of all utterances. Thus, when a Navajo says, "I am a dangerous man," he is not bragging but merely stating his own candid opinion of himself, an opinion which is likely to be shared by others. The People do not believe in any sort of affectation. Talkativeness is considered a mark of bad manners. Similarly, to be inquisitive about personal matters is unforgivable, even in the home. "A man says, 'I'm going somewhere'; a woman answers, 'When do you start?'"[17] For the spouse to ask "Why?" or "Where?" would be undue prying. Information of a strictly personal nature is seldom given voluntarily. A Navajo character in one of La Farge's stories, after living with a white woman for several months, receives a letter from his wife. The white woman, somewhat alarmed, protests, "I didn't know you were married," to which he replies, "You didn't ask me."[18] He was not trying to be clever; to his way of thinking, his answer was the only sensible one.

These and other premises form the base on which rests all of Navajo thought, out of which grows all conduct and all actions, great or small. They regulate every phase of life. They are, in many instances, opposed to those premises which guide the thought and conduct of white people, and by that token they become instruments of mutual misunderstanding and misinterpretation. For one who really desires a true knowledge and full appreciation of the Indian, La Farge advises that he begin by trying to comprehend the basic assumptions--the habitual ways of speaking, acting, feeling,

---

[17] Oliver La Farge, "Hard Winter," The Saturday Evening Post, CCVI (December 30, 1933), 7.

[18] Ibid.

and reacting--by which the Indian lives. For, says La Farge, "until you know his reason, and all of it, for what he does, you absolutely cannot judge him."[19] In a certain ultimate sense, he continues, the only way this can be learned is by living among the Indians themselves. Then,

> "More and more you come to know what makes them do what they do. To a certain degree, your mind learns to use their premises when talking about their things--why it's all right to steal from an outsider, why you may tell a lie three times but not four, why you may plan an elaborate revenge, but do yourself harm if you lose your temper and burst out cursing."[20]

From all this, one highly significant concept is apparent. No society is automatically and intrinsically inferior, in all its aspects, to any other; no culture can truly be judged in terms of the standards of another, but only by the degree to which it effectively serves the physical and spiritual needs of those who live by it. Just as Laughing Boy, in forgiving his wife's infidelity, reasons, "You have lived in a...world that I do not know. I cannot judge you by my world,"[21] so should all human beings be tolerant and broad-minded in their judgments of other human beings, regardless of physical, mental, moral, or spiritual dissimilarities.

---

[19] "Red Men and Pink," p. 7.

[20] Ibid., p. 8.

[21] La Farge, Laughing Boy, p. 267.

PART III

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LA FARGE'S INDIAN WRITINGS

Oliver La Farge is by no means the first to utilize the character of the American Indian in fictional material. Indeed, the recognition that this "native American" is a valid and intriguing subject for literary endeavor is as old as this country's history. It is significant that the Indian should make his debut (in the Pocahontas legends) in American Literature almost coincidentally with the founding of the first permanent settlement on American shores. It was inevitable that the Red Man should become an active force in the thinking of the newly arrived Europeans, and it was likewise inevitable that this thinking should make itself manifest in the literature which they produced. It may be well at this point to summarize briefly the history of the Indian in American prose literature, so that Mr. La Farge may be judged in the light of the works of his predecessors.

The distinction of being the first to successfully utilize the Indian as subject matter for fiction belongs to Charles Brockden Brown (1771-1810). In 1799 Brown published Edgar Huntley, a novel which reflects the implacable hatred of a race driven from its native habitat by white settlers. He painted the Indian as a murderous and treacherous savage, a conception quite naturally conveyed, perhaps, by the circumstances of frontier life under which the author lived.

Many writers after Brown have attempted delineations of the life and character of the Red Man. Only the more important ones need be mentioned, along with the overall picture that each has

conceived.[1]

Washington Irving (1783-1859) allowed the Indian to play a major part in three of his works, all published during the fourth decade of the nineteenth century. Of these, one, A Tour of the Prairies (1835), was based on personal experience. The other two, Astoria (1836) and The Adventures of Captain Bonneville (1837), were the revamped notes of explorers and hunters. All these works reflect a trend in popular thought that began developing soon after the Indians ceased to be a real hazard. Irving glorified many of the traits with which Indians were supposed to be abundantly endowed, for instance, independence, love, and veneration for the family, and lofty contempt for punishment and death.

By far the most influential writer ever to use the Indian motif was James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851). Cooper, more than anyone else, has impressed his conception of the Indian upon his readers; yet this conception is in many respects the most erroneous of them all. His position is about the same as that of Irving, but magnified to unreasonable proportions. In cooper's Leatherstocking series, where his best known portraits are found, the Indian is more than the "noble savage"; he is the ultimate in perfection.

Diametrically opposed to the conceptions of Irving and Cooper is the attitude apparent in Robert Montgomery Bird's Nick of the Woods (1837). Bird (1805-1854) considered the Indian no better than a wild beast, an animal to be tracked down and slaughtered. In many respects his work represented a return to the "murderous savage"

---

[1] For comprehensive treatment of this subject, see Albert Keiser, The Indian in American Literature, New York; Oxford University Press, 1933.

attitude of Brown and the other early writers. The explanation of this is simple; both authors wrote of particularly hostile Indians--Brown of the coastal tribes, Bird of the treacherous marauders along the Kentucky frontier.

William Gilmore Simms (1806-1870), in his treatment of Indians, belongs completely to neither of these two schools, though he is perhaps closer to Cooper and Irving. His novels are a curious mixture of realism and romanticism. Writing about the Indians of the Carolina seaboard, Simms gave accurate accounts of their cultural traits but doctored his plots with idealistic characterizations and incidents highly tinged with the romantic. Simms was from the first sympathetic with the Indians, blaming their savagery not on a tendency to be brutal but on natural simplicity.

Helen Hunt Jackson (1832-1885) conceived of her Indian writings as vehicles of propaganda designed to relieve the miserable plight of the mission Indians of the Southwest. She considered her work as the badly needed work of reform, and in her two novels, Century of Dishonor (1881) and Ramona (1884), she struck out forcefully and bitterly against the injustice of the Government's Indian policy. In her books Mrs. Jackson utilized the humanitarian approach, but her work suffers from a tendency toward sentimentalism.

Adolf F. Bandelier (1840-1914) was an ethnologist who lived for years among the Pueblo Indians and came to transcribe, in The Delight Makers (1890), the minutiae of their customs and everyday life. This novel has experienced a great deal of popularity, and it is, in many ways, an excellent work. In reconstructing an ancient civilization, Bandelier gave to his writing the truth and accuracy demanded by his scientific training. His chief failing is in plot,

where a love story intended to bind the story together is unimpressive and does not accomplish its purpose.

This, then, is a brief history of the major trends in American Literature regarding the characterization of the Red Man. These are the precedents from which later writers may choose or reject. Oliver La Farge for the most part has rejected them all and based his own approach on the theory that Indians must be studied as men. To Brown and Bird they were brutal bipeds who roamed the forest like animals and preyed on unprotected women and children. To Irving, Cooper, and Simms they were "noble savages" on whom nature had bestowed a multiplicity of magnanimous traits and virtues. Mrs. Jackson, to be sure, found real and human emotions in the Indian, but in the strength of her passion she lost herself and presented a highly idealized picture that was erroneous. Bandelier, finally, characterized his Indians with scientific accuracy, but this was not enough. Bandelier the ethnologist, not Bandelier the man, seems to have written his book, and the result is that his Indians are not as real as they might otherwise have been.

Of the writers mentioned above, Oliver La Farge has little in common with any of the first five. With Mrs. Jackson he shares a real, human interest in the people he writes about, and with Mr. Bandelier he shares a passion for unadulterated truth and a corresponding revulsion for anything falsely tempered with romanticism. In one fundamental conception he goes beyond them all--he believes that the secrets of the Red Man lie <u>within</u> his mind and soul. There and there only must they be looked for. In projecting himself into the mind of the Indian, in using the Indian's own premises of thought, La Farge has attained a degree of insight which all his predecessors

lacked.

Most of La Farge's Indian writings have been centered on one tribe--the Navajo. This does not mean that the value of his work is impaired because of the smaller canvas on which he works, for the Navajo, the largest, most primitive, and most colorful of Indian tribes, faces the same problems of adjustment with which all other tribes are vitally concerned.

La Farge's work on the Navajos is in a sense a study of world affairs seen in microcosm. It is also a history of the evolution of principles guiding the white man's conceptions of propriety in his relations with other races. This history is easily traced in his writings.

Not so long ago, it was common to speak of the Indian as "The Vanishing American." One seldom hears this expression today, for the Indian is not in the process of becoming extinct. Some years ago, however, all indications pointed in that direction. Many tribes, through intermarriage and cultural mobility, were losing their most distinctive traits. The tendency, had it continued, might have justified, eventually, the implications of the term "Vanishing American," but fortunately the trend was reversed, or at least substantially altered.

At any rate, La Farge's early writings reflect the attitude prevalent twenty years ago. With poignant regret, he expresses the conviction that those qualities which distinguished the Indian were being replaced by something nasty.

> It is not just their picturesqueness which is going, not just their really good crafts, but their character, their manhood, is going. The Navajo whom we still can find, who will shoot a trader for monkeying with his women, who is insufficiently washed and often dressed very raggedly, quick

> to laughter, scornful of aliens, independent and proud, laughing at Americans as a good joke....feeding every stranger who passes his door, even in dire poverty, devoutly seeking his religious concept of beauty within and without, devoted to his children, a craftsman, an artist, is going day by day, replaced by a cheap actor selling blankets to tourists.[2]

The cheap actor was likely to be one of those Indians who endured their helpless situation with calm stoicism and apathetic passivity, adopting the easiest methods to get along in their changed world, regardless of how debasing. A complete mental and moral inertia threatened for a while to replace the dignity and proud independence characteristic of the race in earlier and happier days. This attitude is described in the following passage.

> ...there is nothing to do but wait and hope that some day this Washington will pay us for all the land he stole from us, one big claim that will make us all rich. If we are not dead first. And in the meantime sit, and count the dead, and remember a time when it was a great thing to be a Lakota, an Apsaroka, a Dineh, and remember that in our hearts, sick as we are, we still have what was given us to make us men. Our footprints may be gone from the earth soon. In the meantime, if anyone has a little liquor, or has had the chance to earn the price of a bottle, that really passes the time....[3]

Not all Indians succumbed so easily to the pressure of adversity. Some of them reacted in just the opposite manner--by retiring to regions where the white man was not a dominant factor and steeping themselves in the traditions of their ancestors. Unfortunately, this solution proved to be no better than the first. The truly wise members of the various tribes saw through the fallacies of reasoning manifest in the actions of these extreme groups. They recommended the full acceptance of those elements of the white man's culture a knowledge of which was essential to their own well-being,

---

[2] La Farge, "Red Men and Pink," p. 19.

[3] La Farge, As Long as the Grass Shall Grow, p. 36.

at the same time emphasizing the necessity for the retention of their own basic values. This position is clearly expressed by one old Navajo in the following discourse from The Enemy Gods, the novel in which La Farge's social philosophy regarding the Indian is seen in a transitional stage. The Navajo, Shooting Singer, is addressing his nephew, Myron Begay.

> "Did you ever shake water from your hand onto a plate or a board or anything like that? Each drop stands up by itself, with lots of room around it. That's how we were, we and the Mikis, the Utes, the Supais, the Apaches, and the rest. The Mexicans, too. They were many, but they were pasturage for us. But you pour a whole barrel of water onto those drops--where are they then? That's what the Bellacana is....Think of all the People. We are still a nation, we can still be found in the barrel. We must live with the white men, we must learn their good things, all that we can. We must change, of course. But that which stands up in us is Navajo; if we destroy it, life isn't worth living."[4]

In the end Myron comes to see the truth of his uncle's statement. He perceives the utter futility of trying to preserve every aspect of the old way of life, yet he also recognizes the absolute impossibility of recasting himself in the white man's mold. He reasons,

> "Our world is changed; that is no longer the way for me. Just following the old Navajo way won't save us, and we can't walk in the white man's trail. We have to give up a lot of little ideas, that we have held because they were the best we knew. If we want to save ourselves, we have to learn to use the white man's knowledge, his weapons, his machines--and--still be Navajos....
>
> "We can do it. Our life, our prayers, are full of truth. I know. And I know all about trying to be a white man, and I know about trying to be a kind of Navajo whose world has ceased to be, I think. That is where I have reached. Now I want to get to know my relatives and my neighbours, to learn the country and the life, and find my place, and as time comes and things happen and I grow wiser, to use what I have learned."[5]

Such clear-sighted and practical reasoning by a few influential

---

[4] La Farge, The Enemy Gods, p. 126.

[5] Ibid., pp. 323-324.

individuals among the Indians provided a working basis for the progressive work which was instigated by various welfare groups and continued by Government agencies. But it was not until 1934 that a new and revolutionary policy gave the Indians more advanced and better education than they had ever had before, urged them into higher positions in their own Indian Service and in private enterprise, and demanded respect for their culture and their freedom of religion. This new policy toward the Indians was a recognition of the fact that the old method--the method of smashing everything Indian and forcing a violent mutation in the lives of children and adults alike--was a total failure, producing extreme poverty, death, and misery. It was also an attempt to get at the very heart of the Indian problem, that is,

> ...to make possible an adaptation from one culture to another diametrically opposed to it, so that in the end there need no longer be wardship or special laws, but only Americans of a very ancient descent, adding to our national riches their own strong traditions and special gifts.[6]

The whole history of this movement in Indian affairs is traceable in La Farge's writings. The picture from Laughing Boy and the shorter works of the period immediately following is a hopeless one; it is a picture of a race inescapably doomed, deteriorating into senility because it cannot adjust to changed conditions. Then began the years of experiment and reform, bringing the first indications that things were not so hopeless for the Indian as it seemed. The Enemy Gods traces the developments of these critical years. Finally, as the plan began to be given wide application, its eventual success was no longer a matter of doubt. A more confident attitude is

---

[6] La Farge, As Long as the Grass Shall Grow, p. 120.

reflected in La Farge's later works, where the hopeless picture of earlier years is turned upside down. Tracing, in As Long as the Grass Shall Grow (1940), the evolution of the principles guiding Indian policy down through the years, as well as the Indians' reactions to progressive innovations, La Farge ends on a note of optimism. Indians belonging to more primitive tribes, he notes, had come to acquire faith in their white neighbors at a point where doubt and hesitation had previously existed. Self-confidence and self-assertion had replaced, in large measure, the old lethargic indifference. Some tribes managed to tip their economic balance from poverty to comfort by the combined practice of unchanged, traditional arts and the newer ones.

In the work previously alluded to, the increase of grass on reservation pastures, where overgrazing once caused innumerable hardships, is made symbolic of the entire movement toward assimilation of the Indian into American civilization.

> One sees it on the Crow Reservation, One sees it north and south, at San Carlos where the tribal cattle cooperative brings in year after year the best prices paid in Arizona, on the Flathead of the far north, not everywhere yet, but it is beginning and spreading--confidence in the ability of oneself and one's people to face this new world, a future worth exploring, the possibility that Washington is at last making sense, the great fact that the grass has started to grow again.[7]

It was not, however, until the advent of the second world war that many Indians still thought to be "primitive" misfits were given a chance to demonstrate their readiness to assume a vital role in promoting the national welfare. In Raw Material (1945) and in retrospective post-war articles La Farge makes much of the fact

---

[7] Ibid., p. 110.

that Indian groups were extremely patriotic and highly cooperative in promoting the total war effort. Enlistments ran high, and war bond subscriptions were proportionately higher than among any other element of the population. On the action fronts Indian and white soldiers could be found operating the same tank or flying the same bomber. All this, thinks La Farge, is highly significant, for it means that a minority group which was once a burden to the nation is on the way to becoming a valuable asset instead.

The Navajo tribe, despite its isolation, its hardships, and its special problems, has made great strides in the direction of readjustment and has pointed the way to successful reorientation of ancient life-ways along the lines dictated by an altered environment. This does not mean that everything Indian has been given up but simply that some things non-Indian have of necessity been incorporated in a new scheme of living. The transition is not yet complete. Much remains to be accomplished in those cases where vicinal isolation has fostered immobility and retrogression. But, observes La Farge, the general outlook is hopeful.

> There is hope for a time when there will be neither tribes of paupers nor slums in the open country, nor yet the prophesied mere memory of a vanished race, but strong, American communities of Indian descent, participating in all our national life, contributing richly to it.
>
> Then the longing one young Indian expressed to me will be realized, the dream of a race that knows it is equal to any other, and has not yet given up the fight. It is the ambition, often baffled, often discouraged, never quite lost, of the educated young progressives, of the old men looking down the years from their memory of another era, it is the desire of the Indian people speaking: 'WE SHALL LEARN ALL THESE DEVICES THE WHITE MAN HAS, WE SHALL HANDLE HIS TOOLS FOR OURSELVES, WE SHALL MASTER HIS MACHINERY, HIS INVENTIONS, HIS SKILLS, HIS MEDICINE, HIS PLANNING--AND...STILL...BE...INDIANS.'[8]

---

[8] La Farge, As Long as the Grass Shall Grow, pp. 134-140.

Summarizing, the significant points of Oliver La Farge's Indian works lie in several directions. First, of course, his fiction may be studied as literature. Laughing Boy, certainly, demands attention as one of the best regional novels yet produced in the twentieth century. Completely detached from the naturalistic school of fiction so dominant in recent literature, it is yet strong enough to stand on its own merits--a serene and poetic prose style, character creations of the highest order, truth and beauty in every conceived idea. As a short story artist, too, La Farge deserves high ranking. Besides his incomparable stories about Indians, he has written skilfully of cowboys, Mexicans, sailors, artists, and scientists.

Second, La Farge's treatment of the Indian--the mere conception of what he is and what he is not--may be of interest to some students of American Literature. Many volumes have been written about him; he is an integral part of the writings produced in what is now the United States. His character has been variously described and interpreted, depending upon the author's purpose and the circumstances under which he became acquainted with the native. An immensely interesting study could be made around this particular subject.

Finally, La Farge's works have a specific sociological significance. This characteristic has been discussed and illustrated at length in the preceding pages of this paper. Its importance would be difficult to overemphasize. In analyzing the social problems of a small group of Americans, La Farge has touched on a question which should, in some very real senses, concern all people everywhere: "How can minority races be dealt with so as to prevent their being a burden to the nation of which they are a part and so

as to preserve those distinct human values which should be a part of the heritage of all humanity?" The question is alive and practical. It poses itself to many of the world powers, and the need for a satisfactory solution is pressing.

It is probable that Oliver La Farge, in providing what appears to be the definitive portrait of the Navajo Indian as a component in American culture, has proposed the only workable solution. As one writer points out in a forthcoming article,[9] La Farge's primary interest, whether in letters, in science, or in social affairs, is always "the relationship between man and man"; because of this fact, one somehow feels that his most significant contributions to the life and culture of these United States may be yet to come.

---

[9] Robert Bunker, "Oliver La Farge: the Search for Self." To appear in New Mexico Quarterly Review, XIX (Fall, 1949).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. WORKS BY LA FARGE

Books

Autobiography

Raw Material. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1945.

Novels

The Copper Pot. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1942.

The Enemy Gods. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1937.

Laughing Boy. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1929.

Long Pennant. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1933.

Sparks Fly Upward. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1931.

Collection of Short Stories

All the Young Men. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1935.

Scientific Works

Santa Eulalia: the Religion of a Cuchumatán Indian Town. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1947 (Publications in Anthropology).

Tribes and Temples, with Frans Blom. New Orleans: Tulane University Press, 1927.

The Year Bearer's People, with Douglas S. Byers. New Orleans: Tulane University Press, 1931 (Middle American Research Series, No. 3).

Miscellaneous

As Long as the Grass Shall Grow. New York: Alliance, 1940. Popular treatment of the Indian problem.

The Changing Indian (Edited by Oliver La Farge). Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1942. From a symposium arranged by the American Association on Indian Affairs, Inc., with introduction and contribution by Editor La Farge.

The Eagle in the Egg. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1949. Publication pending.

Introduction to American Indian Art, with John Sloan. New York: Exposition of Indian Tribal Arts, Inc., 1931.

A Man's Place, by Ramón J. Sender. Tr. from the Spanish by Oliver La Farge. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1940.

War Below Zero: the Battle for Greenland, with Corey Ford and Bernt Balchen. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1944.

Short Stories

"All the Young Men." All the Young Men. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1935. pp. 29-44.

"Backwoods of Mexico." Esquire, IV (October, 1935), 43 ff.

"By the Boys Themselves." The New Yorker, XIV (May 14, 1935), 26 ff.

"Camping on My Trail." Good Housekeeping, C (January, 1935), 22-25, 164-168. Republished in All the Young Men, pp. 185-210.

"Country Boy." The Saturday Evening Post, CCX (March 5, 1938), 10-11, 71-72, 74-75, 77.

"Dangerous Man." Scribner's Magazine, LXXXVII (June, 1930), 609-612. Reprinted in Golden Book Magazine, XXI (January, 1935), 44-47. Republished in All the Young Men, pp. 125-134.

"Discovery." The New Yorker, XIII (February 12, 1938), 18 ff.

"Divinely Fair." Esquire, V (February, 1936), 76 ff.

"A Family Matter." Esquire, III (January, 1935), 25 ff. Republished in All the Young Men, pp. 53-60.

"First Day." The New Yorker, XIV (March 5, 1938), 27 ff.

"The Girl and the Tiponi." Esquire, VII (April, 1937), 72-73, 136, 139.

"The Goddess Was Mortal." Hearst's International-Cosmopolitan, (Jan. 1935), 28ff. Republished in All the Young Men, 111-124.

"Grounds for Offense." The New Yorker, XIV (March 26, 1938), 25 ff.

"Guatemalan Goodbye." Esquire, V (January, 1936), 89 ff.

"Hard Winter." The Saturday Evening Post, CCVI (December 30, 1933), 5-7, 45-47. Republished in All the Young Men, pp. 1-28.

"Haunted Ground." Ladies Home Journal, XLVII (August, 1930), 9 ff. Republished in Short Stories of Today, Peirce, ed., 1934. Also republished in All the Young Men, pp. 45-52.

"Higher Education." The Saturday Evening Post, CCVI (March 31, 1934), 8-9, 66-67, 69-71. Republished in All the Young Men, pp. 79-110.

"Horse Tamer." The Saturday Evening Post, CCX (January 15, 1938), 11, 69-70, 72.

"Independent Research." Esquire, VIII (August, 1937), 32, 203-208.

"Interior of Mexico." Esquire, IV (September, 1935), 50 ff.

"Introduction to Mexico." Esquire, III (June, 1935), 34 ff.

"Kittens Can Climb." Esquire, I (March, 1934), 43 ff.

"The Little Flower." Esquire, IX (January, 1938), 74-75, 162, 164-166.

"Love Charm." Harper's Bazaar, _____ (May, 1932), 74 ff. Republished in All the Young Men, pp. 135-150.

"Mr. Skidmore's Gift." The New Yorker, XVI (March 23, 1940), 20-22.

"The Natives Are Friendly." Esquire, VI (August, 1936), 76 ff.

"News by Lip Service." Esquire, V (May, 1936), 101 ff.

"Night Watch." Harper's Magazine, CLXXI (November, 1935), 710-718.

"No More Bohemia." Harper's Bazaar, LXIX (April, 1935), 88-89, 178-188. Republished in All the Young Men, pp. 211-272.

"North Is Black." The Dial, LXXXII (January, 1937), 8-19. Republished in All the Young Men, pp. 61-78.

"Old Men's Plans." Esquire, XVI (July, 1941), 66 ff.

"Permanent Grade." Town and Country, CII (September, 1948), 96-97, 136, 142, 144, 146.

"Policeman Follow Order." The Saturday Evening Post, CCXI (August 20, 1938), 18-19, 42-44.

"Prelude to Reunion." The New Yorker, XV (April 15, 1939), 35 ff. Reprinted in Short Stories from the New Yorker, 1940.

"The Saga of Zela." Esquire, XVII (February, 1942), 40 ff.

"The Runaways." Collier's, CXXIII (June 4, 1949), 26, 34-38.

"Spud and Cochise." Forum and Century, XCX (January, 1936), 27-31, 60-63.

"The Shower of the Road." Town & Country, XCVII (September, 1942), 64-65, 82-83.

"Thick on the Bay." Esquire, VII (January, 1937), 58, 126, 128.

"Touch of Greatness." The New Yorker, XIV (June 4, 1938), 20 ff.

"We're All Pretenders," with Felicia Gizycka. The Saturday Evening Post, CCXII, (April 13, 1940), 20-21, 134, 136-137, 139-140.

"Women at Yellow Wells." The Saturday Evening Post, CCVII (November 24, 1934), 8-9, 57-62. Republished in All the Young Men, pp. 151-184.

"The Young Warrior." Esquire, X (December, 1938), 95 ff.

Articles

"Adaptations of Christianity Among the Jacalteca Indians of Guatemala." Thought, II, No. 3 (December, 1927), 476-495.

"Alien Races in Fiction." North American Review, CCXLIV (September, 1937), 202-205. A review of John Louw Nelson's Rhythm for Rain.

"American Indian's Revenge." Current History, XL (May, 1934), 163-168.

"The Changing Indian." The Saturday Review of Literature, XXV (May 16, 1942), 8. As printed in the foreword of The Changing Indian, University of Oklahoma Press, 1942.

"Colleges and War." Scribner's Magazine, LXXVIII (July, 1925), 13-17.

"The Dream." Town & Country, XCVII (August, 1942), 38-39, 62-65. Reprinted in Raw Material.

"The Eight-Oared Shell." Harper's Magazine, CLXXXV (July, 1942), 174-179. Reprinted in Raw Material.

"Experimental School for Indians." Progressive Education, IX (February, 1932), 87-94.

"Fighting Tribes." The Saturday Review of Literature, XXV (May 16, 1942), 28. A review of Morris Edward Opler's An Apache Life-Way, University of Chicago Press, 1941.

"From Raw Material." The Writer, LVIII (December, 1945), 376-377. Excerpt from Raw Material.

"Gift for Saint Mark." Theatre Arts Monthly, XIV (August, 1930), 673-678.

"The Human Boy and the Microscope." Scribner's Magazine, LXXII (November, 1922), 614-618.

"The Indian as Artist." New York Times Magazine, (January 26, 1941), 8-9. Reprinted in Scholastic, XXXVIII (March 17, 1941), 20-21, 28.

"Indians at the Museum of Modern Art." The New Republic, CIV (February 10, 1941), 181-182.

"The Land of Gog and Magog." Scribner's Magazine, LXXIX (June, 1926), 607-616.

"Mayan Ethnology; the Sequence of Cultures." The Maya and Their Neighbors. New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1940, pp. 281-291.

"Mediaeval." The Dial, LXXXV (August, 1928), 135-136.

"Mississippi Memorial." Town & Country, XCIX (May, 1944), 64, 116-117. Reprinted in Raw Material.

"Navajos, Most Hopeful Tribe of All." Natural History, LVII (October, 1948), 360-367.

"New Concepts in Indian Affairs." The Changing Indian. Ed. by Oliver La Farge. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942, pp. 166-174.

"Old Man Facing Death." The New Yorker, XVII (December 12, 1942), 20-22. Reprinted in Raw Material.

"Our Feathered Friends." Town & Country, XCVI (February, 1941), 58-59, 88.

"Out of Kiva." Town & Country, XCII (August, 1937), 41-42, 85.

"The Penitente Book." New Mexico Quarterly Review, XIX (Spring, 1949), 75-79. Critical study of Alice Corbin Henderson's Brothers of Light, New York, Harcourt, Brace, 1937.

"Plastic Prayers, Dances of the Southwestern Indians." Theatre Arts Monthly, XIV (March, 1930), 218-224.

"A Plea for a Square Deal for the Indians." New York Times Magazine, (June 27, 1948), 14-15, 37.

"Post-Columbia Dates and the Mayan Correlation Problem." Maya Research Quarterly, I (1934).

"Postgraduate Course in New Orleans." Town & Country, XCVIII (March, 1943), 51, 82-85. Reprinted in Raw Material.

"Red Men and Pink." Wings, III, No. 11 (November, 1929), 6-10,19.

"Scientists Are Lonely Men." Harper's Magazine, CLXXXV (November, 1942), 652-659. Reprinted in Raw Material.

"Sons of the Desert." McCall's, LVII (July, 1930), 7 ff.

"They Were Good Enough for the Army." Harper's Magazine, CXCV (November, 1947), 444-449. Abridged, Reader's Digest, LII (February, 1948), 115-118.

"Two or Three Mountains." Thought, III, No. 4 (March, 1929), 533-551.

"Unscientific Expedition." World's Work, LX. Part I--"Indians in Spite of Themselves," (January, 1931), 50-55. Part II--"Americans All," (February, 1931), 76-80. Part III--"The Apache Reservation," (March, 1931), 72-76. Part IV--"The Navajo Reservation," (May, 1931), 69-73. Part V--"Hopis and Tewas; and the End of the Trail," (July, 1931), 54-59.

"Wampum Woes of the Navajoes." Nation's Business, XXXVI (July, 1948), 32-34.

"White Man's Burden." World's Work, LX (August, 1931), 45-58, 64-65.

Pamphlets, Bulletins, Unpublished Manuscripts, etc.

An Alphabet for Writing the Navajo Language, with John P. Harrington. U. S. Indian Service, 1940.

Derivations of Apache and Navajo Culture. Unpublished master's thesis, Harvard University, 1929.

The New Day for the Indians: a Survey of the Working of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. Ed., with Jay B. Nash and W. Carson Ryan. New York: Academy Press, December, 1938.

Notes for Hopi Administrators. U. S. Indian Service, 1936.

Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Americanists, 1930.

Three Guatemalan Calendrical Manuscripts in the Berendt and Brinton Collections. Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, 1935.

Poetry

"Draft Names Drawn." The Saturday Review of Literature, XXIII (March 8, 1941), 8.

II. WORKS ABOUT LA FARGE

Biographical Articles

Anonymous. (Biographical Note). The Saturday Review of Literature, XVI (October 16, 1937), 26.

---. (Biographical Note). Scholastic, XXXVIII (March 17, 1941), 20.

---. (Biographical Note). Wilson Bulletin for Librarians, IV (May, 1930), 486.

---. "Introducing Oliver La Farge." Wings, III (November, 1929), 3.

---. "The Pulitzer Blues." The Literary Digest, CV (May 31, 1930), 19.

Bird, John. "The Future of Oliver La Farge." Bookman, LXXII (September, 1930), 13.

Bunker, Robert W. "Oliver La Farge: The Search for Self." To appear in New Mexico Quarterly Review, XIX (Fall, 1949).

Lesser, Alexander, Letter to the Editor. New York Times Magazine, (July 11, 1948), 4.

Book Reviews

All the Young Men

Anonymous. "Indian Shorts." Time, XXVI (August 26, 1935), 55.

---. Booklist, XXXII (September, 1935), 15.

---. Christian Century, LII (October 2, 1935), 1251.

---. Churchman, CXLIX (September 15, 1935), 35.

Benet, William Rose. "Man-Who-Knows-Indians." The Saturday Review of Literature, XII (August 17, 1935), 10.

Chamberlain, John. "The World in Books." Current History, XLIII (October, 1935), xiii.

Haxton, Grace. New York Herald Tribune, August 18, 1935.

Long, Haniel. "Several Young Redmen." The New Republic, LXXXIV (August 28, 1935), 80-81.

Mann, D. L. Boston Transcript, August 17, 1935.

Walton, E. H. New York Times, August 25, 1935.

Weigle, Edith. Chicago Daily Tribune, December 15, 1935.

As Long as the Grass Shall Grow.

Anonymous. "Indians, Then and Now." Time, XXXV (May 20, 1940), 96.

---------. The Atlantic Monthly, CLXVIII (July, 1940).

---------. Booklist, XXXVI (June 1, 1940), 380.

---------. The Nation, CL (June 29, 1940), 786.

---------. The New Yorker, XVI (April 27, 1940), 91.

---------. Wilson Library Bulletin, XXXVI (June, 1940), 111.

Bourke-White, Margaret and Erskine Caldwell. "The American Indian: 1940." The Saturday Review of Literature, XXII (May 11, 1940), 11.

Duffus, R. L. New York Times, May 5, 1940.

Gannett, Lewis. Boston Transcript, May 3, 1940.

Hooper, Alban W. Social Studies, XXXI (December, 1940), 374.

Kane, H. B. Boston Transcript, May 25, 1940.

Sergeant, E. S. New York Herald Tribune, May 12, 1940.

The Changing Indian

Anonymous. Booklist, XXXIX (November 1, 1942), 67.

---------. The Christian Science Monitor, October 7, 1942.

---------. School and Society, LVI (August 15, 1942), 136.

Collier, John. Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, MMCCXV (January, 1943), 259.

Fergusson, Erna. New York Herald Tribune, November 8, 1942.

Lindeman, E. C. Survey Graphic, XXXI (October, 1942), 428.

Seymour, F. W. New York Times, September 6, 1942.

The Copper Pot

Anonymous. Booklist, XXXVIII (July 15, 1942), 442.

---------. The Nation, CLIV (June 20, 1942), 720.

---------. The New Republic, CVI (June 29, 1942), 902.

Bullock, F. H. New York Herald Tribune, June 21, 1942.

Fadiman, Clifton. The New Yorker, XVIII (June 20, 1942), 65.

Follett, Wilson. The Atlantic Monthly, CLXX (September, 1942), 144.

Wallace, Margaret. New York Times, June 21, 1942.

The Enemy Gods

Anonymous. "Good and Bad Indians." Time, XXX (October 25, 1937), 78.

---------. Booklist, XXXIV (December 1, 1937), 129.

---------. Boston Transcript, November 27, 1937.

---------. Wisconsin Library Bulletin, XXXIII (December, 1937), 176.

Eastman, E. G. Springfield Republican, October 24, 1937.

Feld, R. C. New York Herald Tribune, October 24, 1937.

Gessner, Robert. "The Education of a Navajo." The New Republic, XCII (November 3, 1937), 379-380.

Mirrielees, Edith. "Realism About Indians." The Saturday Review of Literature, XVI (October 16, 1937), 5, 26.

Riggs, T. Lawrason. "Plea for Paganism." The Commonweal, XVII (October 29, 1937), 23-24.

Wallace, Margaret. New York Times, October 17, 1937.

Walton, Eda Lou. "View of Indian Life." The Nation, CXLV (November 13, 1937), 538.

Laughing Boy

Anonymous. Booklist, XVI (December, 1929), 119.

---------. The New Republic, LXI (December 25, 1929), 151.

Anonymous. Springfield Republican, December 8, 1929.

Austin, Mary. "A Navajo Tale." The Saturday Review of Literature, VI (November 9, 1929), 262-263.

Lawrence, I. W. Boston Transcript, November 9, 1929.

Robbins, Frances L. Outlook, CLIII (November 6, 1929), 386.

Seaver, Edwin. New York Evening Post, September 7, 1929.

Sergeant, E. S. New York Herald Tribune, November 3, 1929.

Simpson, Clinton. Bookman, LXX (January, 1930), 561.

Tobias, T. New York World, December 15, 1929.

Van Doren, Carl. "Why the Editorial Board Selected Laughing Boy." Wings, III, No. 11 (November, 1929), 4-5.

Wallace, Margaret. New York Times, November 24, 1929.

Long Pennant

Anonymous. "Oliver La Farge's Story of the Sea." The Saturday Review of Literature, X (October 21, 1933), 199.

---------. Booklist, XXX (December, 1933), 121.

---------. Boston Transcript, November 25, 1933.

---------. The Forum, XC (December, 1933), ix.

---------. New York Times, October 22, 1933.

---------. Springfield Republican, December 17, 1933.

---------. Wisconsin Library Bulletin, XXIX (December, 1933), 264.

Brickell, Herschel. "Another Good Story." The North American Review,

Matthews, T. S. The New Republic, LXXVII (November 5, 1933), 24.

McFee, William. New York Herald Tribune, November 5, 1933.

Raw Material

Anonymous. "Unlaughing Boy." Time, XLVI (July 30, 1945), 104.

---------. Booklist, XLII (September, 1945), 17.

Anonymous. The New Yorker, XXI (July 21, 1945), 60.

---------. Wisconsin Library Bulletin, XLI (October, 1945), 100.

Bacon, Leonard. "Quarried Out of Life." The Saturday Review of Literature, XXVIII (July 21, 1945), 9.

Bausman, C. K. Springfield Republican, August 19, 1945.

Binsse, Harry L. The Commonweal, XLII (August 10, 1945), 412.

Geismar, Maxwell. Chicago Sun, August 5, 1945.

Hansen, Harry. "Back Into the Democratic Stream." Survey Graphic, XXXIV (August, 1945), 347.

Jones, H. M. New York Times, July 22, 1945.

Weeks, Edward. The Atlantic Monthly, CLXXVI (September, 1945), 133.

Williamson, Margaret. Christian Science Monitor, July 24, 1945.

Wright, Richardson. New York Herald Tribune, July 22, 1945.

Santa Eulalia

Anonymous. United States Quarterly Book List, III (June, 1945).

Adams, Mildred. New York Times, May 11, 1947.

Garrison, W. E. Christian Century, LXIV (May 21, 1947), 655.

Lothrop, S. K. American Anthropologist, L (January, 1948), 112.

Wolfe, B. D. New York Herald Tribune Weekly Book Review, July 20, 1947.

Sparks Fly Upward

Anonymous. The American Mercury, XXV (February, 1932).

---------. Boston Evening Transcript, November 28, 1931.

---------. The Forum, LXXXVII (January, 1932), x.

---------. The Nation, CXXXIV (January 6, 1932), 25.

---------. New York Times, November 1, 1931.

Anonymous. Pittsburg Carnegie Foundation Monthly Bulletin, XXXVII (January, 1932), 4.

---------. Springfield Republican, December 20, 1931.

---------. Wisconsin Library Bulletin, XXVII (December, 1931), 313.

Butcher, Fanny. Chicago Daily Tribune, October 24, 1931.

Dodd, Lee W. "In Central America." The Saturday Review of Literature, VIII (November 7, 1931), 261.

Sergeant, E. S. New York Herald Tribune, October 25, 1931.

Young, Donald M. "Mestizo." The New Republic, LXIX (December 30,

III. A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE NAVAJO INDIAN.

Adair, John. The Navajo and Pueblo Silversmiths. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1944. Bibliography, pp. 213-216.

American Association on Indian Affairs. Fundamentals of the Navajo Problem. New York, 1941.

Bandelier, Adolph F. "The Navajos." The Nation, XLII (May 13, 1886), 397-398.

Brennan, G. A. "The Deities of the Navajos." American Naturalist, XXI (1887), 206.

Brink, L. P. "Religion of the Navajos." National Republic, XXII (November, 1934), 16-18.

Carr, Malcolm, et.al. "Navaho Clans and Marriage at Pueblo Alta." American Anthropologist, XLI, (1939), 245-257.

Coolidge, Dane and Mary Roberts Coolidge. Navaho Rugs. Pasadena, California: Esto, 1933.

Dykhuizen, Dorothy. Go Quickly and Tell. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1946.

Dyk, Walter (Recorder). Old Mexican: A Navaho Autobiography. New York: Viking, 1947.

----------. Son of Old Man Hat: A Navaho Autobiography. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1938.

Franciscan Fathers. An Ethnologic Dictionary of the Navaho Language. St. Michaels, Arizona, 1910.

Haile, Berard. "The Navaho Land Question." The Franciscan Missions of the Southwest, No. 10 (1922), 8-16.

----------. Origin Legend of the Navaho Enemy Way. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938.

Hannum, Alberta. Spin a Silver Dollar; the Story of a Desert Trading Post. New York: Viking, 1945.

Hill, Faith. Ashkee of Sunshine Water, a Navajo Indian Boy. Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1941.

Hill, Willard Williams. The Agricultural and Hunting Methods of the Navaho Indians. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938. Bibliography, pp. 191-193.

----------. Navaho Humor. Menasha, Wisc.: George Banta, 1943. Bibliographical Footnotes.

----------. Navaho Warfare. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936.

Hogner, Dorothy C. "The Navajo Indian and Education." New Mexico Quarterly Review, III (1933), 227-230.

James, George Wharton. Indian Blankets and Their Makers. Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1914.

Jones, Thomas Jesse, et. al. The Navaho Indian Problem. New York, 1939.

King, Jeff. Where the Two Came to Their Father, a Navaho War Ceremonial. New York: Pantheon, 1943.

Kirk, Ruth F. "Grandfather of the Gods." New Mexico Magazine, XIV (July, 1936) 23-29, 43-44.

----------. "In Beauty It Is Finished." New Mexico Magazine, XIII, (December, 1935), 16-17.

Kluckhohn, Clyde and Katherine Spencer. A Bibliography of the Navaho Indians. New York: J. J. Augustin, 1940.

Kluckhohn, Clyde and Dorothea Leighton. The Navaho. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946. Bibliography, pp. 248-252.

Kluckhohn, Clyde. Navaho Witchcraft. Cambridge, Mass.: The Museum, 1944. Bibliography, pp. 145-149.

La Farge, Oliver. As Long as the grass Shall Grow. New York, Alliance, 1940. Illustrated.

Leighton, Alexander H. and Dorothea C. Leighton. The Navaho Door. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1944. Bibliography, pp. 144-145.

Leighton, Dorothea and Clyde Kluckhohn. Children of The People. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1947. Bibliography, pp. 265-270.

Lewis, Stephens. "Deplorable Conditions Are Described Among the Navajo." American Indian, II, No. 7 (1928), 12.

Matthews, Washington. "The Gentile System of the Navajo Indians." Journal of American Folk-Lore, III (1890), 89-110.

----------. "Marriage Prohibitions on the Father's Side Among Navajos." Journal of American Folk-Lore, IV (1891), 78-79.

----------. "The Navajo Clan." American Anthropologist, VI (1904), 758-759.

McGregor, John C. "Zwei Gegensatzliche Indianer-Stamme in Arizona." Natur und Volk, LXVIII (1938), 535-544.

Milligan, Charles. "Navajo Religion--Values Sought and Values Received." The Iliff Review, III (Fall, 1946), 114-126.

Morgan, William. Human-Wolves Among the Navaho. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936.

Ostermann, Leopold. "The Navajo Indians of New Mexico and Arizona." Anthropos, III (1908), 859-869.

Reichard, Gladys Amanda. Dezba, Woman of the Desert. New York: J. J. Augustin, 1939.

----------. "Distinctive Features of Navajo Religion." Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, I (1945) 199-220.

----------. Prayer: the Compulsive Word. New York: J. J. Augustin, 1944. Bibliography, pp. 95-96.

----------. Social Life of the Navajo Indians, New York: Columbia University Press, 1928. Bibliography, pp. 160-161.

----------. Spider Woman, New York: MacMillan, 1934.

Rollins, Warren. "The Spirit of the Dead, a Navajo Ceremony." El Palacio, XII (1922), 71-73.

Rudhyar, Dane. "The Navajo 'Male Mountain Chant' Once More Resounds Before the Assembled Tribe." New Mexico Quarterly Review, IX (February, 1939), 29-38.

Stephen, Alexander M. "Marriage Among the Navajoes." Our Forest Children, IV, No. 4 (1890), 222.

----------. "The Navajo." American Anthropologist, VI (1893), 345-362.

Van Valkenburgh, Richard F. "Navajo Common Law I; Notes on Political Organization, Property, and Inheritance." Museum of Northern Arizona, Museum Notes, IX (1936), 51-54.

Watkins, Frances Emma. The Navaho. Los Angeles: The Southwest Museum, 1943. Supplementary Reading List, pp. 46-47.

Wattles, R. J. "Sketches of Indian Life; the Navajo Wedding." Overland Monthly, LXVIII (August, 1916), 170-173.

Wetherill, Louisa. "Navajo Legends." The Kiva, XII (March, 1947), 36-50.

Wilson, C. M. "Navajo New Deal." Current History, XLVIII (August, 1938), 49-51.

SUPPLEMENTARY BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Page 94. "Dangerous Man." Also reprinted in Twentieth Century Short Stories, Bates, ed., 1933.

Page 96. Insert "Time Watcher." Coronet, ____ (August, 1938), 59 ff.

Insert "With a Capital R." Household, ____ (March, 1940), 6 ff.

Page 98. Insert "Revolution with Reservations." The New Republic, LXXXIV (October 9, 1935), 232-234.

Insert "Strategic Air Supply." Air Transport, II (September, 1944), 20-25.

An Alphabet for Writing the Navajo Language and Notes for Hopi Administrators are available in the files of the U.S. Office of Indian Affairs.

Insert A.T.C. Transport in World War II: A Study of Types, Performances, and Fleet Augmentation, MS in the Military Air Transport Service Historical File, 1946.

Insert Control of Strategic Air Transport, MS in the Military Air Transport Service Historical File, 1945.

Insert Women Pilots in the Air Transport Command, MS, book length, in the Military Air Transport Service Historical File and in the archives of the Office of Air Force History, U.S. Air Force, 1945.

Page 99. Insert, Allen, Charles. "The Fiction of Oliver La Farge." Arizona Quarterly, I, No. 4 (Winter, 1945).

Insert, Hill, W. W. New Mexico Quarterly Review, XII, No.4 (November, 1942), 465-466.

Insert, Laughlin, Ruth A. New Mexico Quarterly Review, VIII, No. 1 (February, 1938), 63-64.

Insert, Major, Mabel. New Mexico Quarterly Review, XII, No. 3, (August, 1942), 362.

Insert, Reeve, Frank. New Mexico Quarterly Review, X, No. 4 (November, 1940), 267-268.

Entry on Bunker, Robert M. should read "La Farge: The Search for Self." To appear in New Mexico Quarterly Review, XIX (Winter, 1949).

Typist: Marie Lull