

# ***Ella Cara Deloria and Mourning Dove***

*Writing for cultures, writing against the grain*

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FIRST – The anomalous position heretofore occupied by the Indians in this country can not much longer be maintained. The reservation system belongs to a ‘vanishing state of things’ and must soon cease to be.

SECOND – The logic of events demands the absorption of the Indians into our national life, not as Indians but as American citizens.

THIRD – As soon as a wise conservatism will warrant it, the relations of the Indians to the Government must rest solely upon the recognition of their individuality. Each Indian must be treated as a man, be allowed a man’s rights and privileges, and be held to the performance of a man’s obligations. Each Indian is entitled to his proper share of inherited wealth of the tribe, and to the protection of the courts in his ‘life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness.’ He is not entitled to be supported in idleness.

FOURTH – The Indians must conform to ‘white man’s ways’ peaceably if they will, forcibly if they must. They must adjust themselves to their environment, and conform their mode of living substantially to our civilization. This civilization may not be the best possible, but it is the best the Indians can get. They can not escape it, and must either conform to it or be crushed by it.

FIFTH – The paramount duty of the hour is to prepare the rising generation of Indians for the new order of things thus forced upon them. A comprehensive system of education modeled after the American public school system, but adopted to the special exigencies of the Indian youth, embracing all persons of school age, compulsory in its demands and uniformly administered should be developed as rapidly as possible.

SIXTH – The tribal relations should be broken up, socialism destroyed, and the family and the autonomy of the individual substituted. The allotment of lands in severalty, the establishment of local courts and police, the development of a personal sense of independence, and the universal adoption of the English language are means to this end. (Commissioner of

Indian Affairs, T.J. Morgan, excerpt from *Report for 1889*, in Washburn, 1973: 424)

This may sound a little naive . . . but I actually feel that I have a mission: To make the Dakota people understandable, as human beings, to the white people who have to deal with them. (Ella Deloria, 2 December 1952, letter to H.E. Beebe regarding funding for her manuscript on Dakota life. Deloria, 1988: 237)

It is all wrong this saying that Indians do not feel as deeply as whites. We do feel, and by and by some of us are going to be able to make our feelings appreciated and then the true Indian character will be revealed. (Mourning Dove, quoted in the *Spokesman Review*, 19 April 1916. Mourning Dove, 1990: xxi)

The stark words of Commissioner Morgan encapsulate the direction of official US Indian policy of the late 1800s. These words set the historical stage for understanding the personal and political concerns to which two Native American women writing culture, Ella Deloria and Mourning Dove, respond. Deloria and Mourning Dove came of age during the height of the US government civilizing mission for American Indians. The mission of these women was to write for cross-cultural understanding by writing against the grain of dominant representations of Native Americans.

Ella Deloria, a member of the Yankton Sioux of South Dakota, was an ethnographer and educator whose contributions to anthropology were rich and varied. Her professional career spanned from the 1920s to the 1970s. Deloria produced texts on Dakota language, public policy documents, ethnographic accounts of the Sioux geared to a popular audience, and a novel, *Waterlily*, the evocative story of Dakota life drawn from women's experience (Deloria, 1932, 1944, 1988; Boas and Deloria, 1941; Jones et al. 1939).

Mourning Dove was the literary name chosen by Christine Quintasket, a member of the Okanogan tribe of the Interior Salish people of Northeastern Washington state. She is credited as the first Native American woman to publish a novel. Her novel, *Cogewea: The Half Blood*, was published in 1927, nearly eleven years after she had completed the writing. Although Mourning Dove identified herself primarily as a novelist, she also produced a variety of texts including a collection of Okanogan folk tales and an autobiography, published posthumously in 1990 (Mourning Dove, 1927 [reprinted 1981], 1933, 1990).

I became acquainted with Mourning Dove's novel through previous research on representations of American Indian women. When I began to read the work of Ella Deloria, I was intrigued by the common themes in the

experiences of these two women. In this paper I explore the parallels and contrasts in their works and lives as writers, activists and 'cultural mediators'.<sup>1</sup> I have organized this exploration in three parts. In Part One, 'Incorporation', I summarize Deloria and Mourning Dove's early experiences of melding cross-cultural knowledge and their commitment to education. In Part Two, 'Negotiation', I examine the dilemmas they faced as women of color fulfilling multiple roles as scholars, laborers and caregivers. I give particular attention to the relationships they negotiated with their white male mentors. In Part Three, 'Against the Grain', I consider the creative resistance in their works and lives, and explore their choice of the novel as a vehicle for voicing Native American women's experiences.

The works of Ella Deloria and Mourning Dove raise questions about the 'truth' value of the novel and the ethnographic text in representing cultural experience. By naming a work fiction does one remove it from the realm of argumentation? Does that diminish its power to contest the history and practices to which it responds? In what forms can knowledge be packaged to best challenge the histories of misrepresentation by dominant groups? Recent critical writings have addressed the fictional character and inherent partiality of ethnographic truths (Clifford, 1986). James Clifford writes, 'culture' is always relational, an inscription of communicative processes that exist historically between subjects in relations of power' (1986: 15). An examination of the lives and works of Deloria and Mourning Dove suggests that they grasped a similar understanding of culture and struggled with the complexities of representing and communicating cultural knowledge.

### *Incorporation*

Ella Deloria was born in 1888 to Sioux parents and grew up on the Standing Rock Reservation in South Dakota.<sup>2</sup> Her father, a convert to Christianity, was an ordained Episcopal minister who served the reservation. Deloria was educated in mission boarding schools. She professed a deep Christian faith and an enduring respect for the inseparable spiritual and cultural values of the Dakota people.

She attended Oberlin and Columbia Teachers College and held teaching positions at Indian boarding schools and colleges, and in adult education programs. Deloria was keenly aware of the power of the written word. She devoted much of her scholarship to transcribing Dakota language and history into text. Deloria was not content with the fixed image on the page as the final product of her scholarship. She spoke about Dakota cultural practices to diverse audiences, from policy makers to the Daughters of the

American Revolution. Deloria valued the power of performance and used storytelling to preserve cultural knowledge, build cross-cultural understanding, and give voice to Native American women's experiences (Medicine, 1980, 1989b; Murray, 1974).

Mourning Dove, in her autobiography, begins with the story of her birth in the year 1888. She writes:

I was born near the present site of Bonner's Ferry Idaho, while my mother and grandmother were in a canoe crossing the Kootenay River. . . . My father had helped to swim the horses, and my mother and her mother started over in a canoe with a Kootenay named Swansen, a name given to him by the fur traders. He paddled hard, but I came into the world before he could beach the canoe. They had brought clothing for a newborn, but it was left on a packhorse on the other side of the river with our other gear. The Kootenay man kindly pulled off his plaid shirt and lent it to my grandmother to swaddle me. Thus my first clothing was a man's shirt, and my parents always felt that this led me to act more like a boy, a tomboy, who liked to play more with the boys than with the girls. (Mourning Dove, 1990: 10)

Some biographers have debated the 'truth' of Mourning Dove's birth story. I suggest that Mourning Dove uses the story to introduce her audience to the world she experienced and created. She situates herself in the many stories that she tells, blurring the boundaries of truth and fiction.<sup>3</sup> She places herself from birth in a fluidity of movement across cultural boundary waters.

Mourning Dove shares with Deloria the experience of being and becoming Indian in the context of Christian missionary influence.<sup>4</sup> She describes how her parents, as did many Salish, accepted a spiritual dualism of deeply held Catholic and Salishan beliefs (Mourning Dove, 1990: 24, 142). However, her narrative accounts of the missions and boarding schools also speak to the powerful presence of the Jesuits and the control wielded by the Catholic church on the reservation.

Mourning Dove's education was often fragmented and frustrating. As a young child she was traumatically isolated from her family and placed in the unfamiliar world of the mission boarding school. Although health problems and family concerns interrupted her formal education, Mourning Dove was determined to read and write. She credits a young Irish boy, Jimmy Ryan, who shared her childhood home, with helping her learn to read:

My father came back from one of these [freight hauling] trips with an orphan white lad, about thirteen, named Jimmy Ryan. He had previously lived with his uncle in Butte, Montana . . . Jimmy was a great reader of yellowback novels. It was from one of his books that I learned the alphabet. I could spell

the word Kentucky before I ever had a primer because it occurred frequently in the novel Jimmy taught me from. One day Mother papered our cabin with Jimmy's novels. When he got home, he made no protest, but he got busy and continued to read from the wall, with me helping to find the next page . . . (Mourning Dove, 1990: 186)

The 'penny dreadfuls' Mourning Dove read with Jimmy Ryan inspired her love of romantic fiction and her own choice of literary genre as a writer.

Mourning Dove continued her education at an off-reservation boarding school and secretarial school, and later took a teaching post at the boarding school on the Okanogan reservation. She made strategic use of Anglo education to develop her writing and teaching skills. But she remained critical of those systems as well. Perhaps Mourning Dove is offering her own sentiments when in her novel she writes that her protagonist, Cogewea, was an apt student who 'seemed to imbibe knowledge and not content' at the mission boarding school (Mourning Dove, 1981:16). Mourning Dove took her personal experiences and political concerns to public forums. She stood before civic groups advocating tribal fishing rights and sat with Camp Fire Girls telling stories of Okanogan life. In 1935, Mourning Dove became the first woman elected to the Colville Tribal Council.

I have touched lightly on the role of the boarding school in Deloria and Mourning Dove's experiences as students and teachers. An examination of the central place of the boarding school in Federal assimilationist policy is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that the experiences of Mourning Dove and Deloria present a complex incorporation of cultural knowledge that challenges the educational assumptions of the boarding school project (that is, that children can be simply stripped of their 'Indianness' and filled up with patriotism, individualism and the fear of God). Schools were one of many arenas in which Deloria and Mourning Dove skillfully integrated text and performance as tools for cultural mediation.

### ***Negotiation***

The personal labor histories of Ella Deloria and Mourning Dove are statements about the material struggles and emotional demands these women faced. Their labors exemplify the multiple jeopardies of women of color in the US. These women's commitment to writing was realized only at great personal expense. Their fieldwork and writing were tucked around the edges of their paid labor for others and their long-term commitments to the unpaid labors of love practiced by many women – family caregiving.

Both women experienced the chronic vulnerability of their low economic status. While Deloria was able to earn wages in academic arenas, her labor was the anthropological equivalent of piece work, managing from contract to contract and dependent on the patronage of established white scholars (Murray, 1974; Medicine, 1980). Deloria's lack of formal credentials left her on the professional margins. Her status as a native scholar was appropriated at times to give legitimacy to the work of others. For example, as a team member in a public policy study of Navajo land use, Deloria was placed in the awkward political position of representing the 'Indian View', suggesting that intertribal diversity was reducible to a single voice (Jones et al., 1939). Ironically it is this very process of homogenization of image that Deloria was struggling to challenge in her work (Deloria, 1944: 212).

Christine Quintasket's manual labors in domestic service and migrant farm work left little time for the creative labors of her literary persona Mourning Dove. Her life was punctuated by a history of chronic illness, her health status a commentary on harsh living conditions. Although Christine married twice, her marriages did not improve her vulnerable economic position as her spouses were also dependent on the vagaries of the migrant labor market. The immediacy of personal and cultural survival shaped the urgency with which these women sought to fulfill their missions.

Perhaps the most intriguing parallels and contrasts in Ella Deloria and Mourning Dove's practices of negotiation are exemplified in their relationships to their male mentors. The politics of gender, race and class were subtly but powerfully articulated through these relationships. Deloria maintained a long-term relationship as research assistant and informant to Franz Boas. Mourning Dove's patron was Lucullus McWhorter, a homesteader, historian and self-styled Indian rights activist in Washington state. These relationships were key conduits through which Deloria and Mourning Dove could channel their knowledge and experience; the relationships were also sources of frustration for both women as they struggled to make their views of the world understandable to their mentors. The paradoxical nature of these relationships that simultaneously supported and distorted the voices of Deloria and Mourning Dove is palpable in the correspondence between the women and their mentors. Both women exchanged letters over the years with their patrons.<sup>5</sup> My access to their letters is limited to selected correspondence published in secondary sources, where processes of extraction and interpretation have already taken place (Murray, 1974; Miller, 1989; Fisher, 1981; Mourning Dove, 1990). I hesitate to interpret too much from these selections; I explore them instead as another textual layer in which to consider the complexity of life experience to which these women respond.

Ella Deloria's relationship to Franz Boas is fraught with complexities and contradictions expressed by many 'native' women anthropologists (Medicine, 1972; Mikell, 1989; Obbo, 1990). Boas was committed to the comprehensive documentation of North American Indian cultures. While Deloria's labor supported Boas's ethnographic agenda, her role as informant seemed to be valued over that of scholar. Reports of her relationship with Boas and the tone of their correspondence also reflect a strong mutual respect (Medicine, 1980; Murray, 1974). While Boas cultivated a paternal persona and was often referred to as 'Papa Franz', Deloria transformed that title of kinship to 'Father Franz' (DeMallie, in Deloria, 1988). This title reflects Deloria's respect for Boas and her sense of kinship obligation (Medicine, 1980). It is this expression of a kinship bond with Boas that renders Deloria's relationship to him especially poignant. For Deloria, kinship obligations were intimately tied to her ways of knowing the world. Her knowledge of the power and centrality of kinship ties among the Dakota people was an experiential knowledge which she lived as she documented its diverse forms. Boas, however, saw personal relationships as separate from the objective rigors of his anthropological project. In her correspondence with Boas, Deloria sought to sensitize him to their epistemological differences and educate him about the dilemmas of fieldwork for the native anthropologist (Murray, 1974; Medicine, 1989a).

For example, in 1928 Boas had enlisted her skills in verifying previous accounts of the Sun Dance Ceremony. Deloria wrote to Boas describing the dilemmas she faced in that two key informants were also relatives of hers (Murray, 1974: 119). Deloria anticipates their reluctance to speak about the ceremony and to share their knowledge with outsiders. However, she notes, they may also feel obligated to share their stories because of their kinship ties to her. Their continuing dialogue about the Sun Dance ceremony points to Boas's concern with verification and documentation of an 'objective' truth, while Deloria saw the diverse accounts as true for the informants, reflecting the perspectives of their particular social locations and relations.

The differing meaning of kinship obligations exemplifies the epistemological chasm that resonates through the works of many indigenous scholars and their 'Western' counterparts who gaze into their worlds. It is the chasm between separate and connected knowing (Belenky et al., 1986). Deloria not only reported on and documented kinship systems and social organization, she was also obligated by those ties to a lifetime of caregiving responsibilities. While Boas valued the knowledge Deloria gained from her intimate connection to her informants, he presumed that

as an objective researcher she could detach herself from the world she documented to fulfill her scholarly obligations. Deloria's correspondence with Boas posed an ongoing challenge to that belief.

Financial struggles were an ongoing concern for Deloria as she negotiated small research contracts with Boas and other established white scholars. The impact of this concern is voiced in her letter to Boas of 11 December 1935: 'I have never told this, but besides my nieces and nephews for whom I am guardian, I am responsible for providing the roof for my sister as well as for me . . . I live in my car virtually. . .' (Murray, 1974: 124). I am struck more by the context than content of this letter. At this writing, Deloria was a 47-year-old woman living on an isolated, economically depressed reservation in South Dakota. She was invested in a profession that valued the documentation and preservation of historic life ways over the dynamics of domination and resistance that defined the cultural present in which she lived.

The relationship of Mourning Dove to her patron Lucullus McWhorter has a different character but echoes of similar themes. In language very telling of the power dynamics of their relationship, biographer Dexter Fisher (1981) describes McWhorter as 'charging' Mourning Dove with the task of preserving the cultural history of her people. Mourning Dove saw in McWhorter a sponsor for her lifelong desire to write novels informed by and incorporating Native Americans' experiences. McWhorter recognized her literary ability and saw in Mourning Dove the ideal informant capable of documenting the 'primitive folk ways' of the Okanogan peoples. Mourning Dove agreed to assist McWhorter in his salvage ethnography project in exchange for his support in the editing and publishing of her fictional work. For McWhorter, editorial control over Mourning Dove's writing offered him a means for voicing his political views through her text (Fisher, 1981; Miller, 1989). Mourning Dove's correspondence to McWhorter reveals a style reminiscent of Zora Neale Hurston (Mikell, 1989; Hernández, this volume). Mourning Dove at times played on the 'native' image her patron held of her, employing colloquial self-references such as 'Injun' and 'squaw' (Miller, 1989: 169; Mourning Dove, 1981: xii). Her style, however, is dramatic, the letters themselves stories in which she constructed herself as a character. These multiple characters experimented with identities as she variously signed herself as Mourning Dove, Christal, Christine or Catherine (Miller, 1989; Mourning Dove, 1990). Like Boas, McWhorter was obsessed with determining the veracity of his key informant's accounts. McWhorter's search for ethnographic facts was mediated by a woman who challenged the very premises of his notion of truth. I suggest that both Mourning Dove and Deloria grasped an



understanding of ethnographic truth as partial, perspectival and embedded in social and material relations of power and obligation. Their letters offer glimpses into the struggles that shaped their cultural understanding, and the complex fusions of meaning and power through which their knowledge was extracted in the process of ethnographic production.

### ***Against the grain***

At times, Mourning Dove and Deloria voiced strong challenges to their mentors and to the stance of the Anglo ethnographer. Mourning Dove writes, 'No foreigner could possibly penetrate or research (the legends, religion, customs and theories of my people) because of the effort needed to overcome the shy reluctance of the Indian when it comes to giving information to whites' (Mourning Dove, 1990: 12). And Deloria, in a letter to Boas, more bluntly states, '. . . to go at it like a white man, for me, an Indian, is to throw up an immediate barrier between myself and the people' (7/11/32 in Murray, 1974). These words suggest a theme of resistance that plays out in multiple and complex ways throughout these women's works and lives. I am still grappling with my own construction of this theme and its place in my reading of Deloria's work. Much of her work portrays a sense of a cultural whole, set apart from struggle and contest. In reading her 'non-fiction' work, *Speaking of Indians*, I found myself uncomfortable at times with the conciliatory tone Deloria employs to engage a white readership. She actively avoids any hint of recrimination for the repressive history of US public policy toward American Indian peoples. However, there are stories within the text that offer strategic and subtle commentaries on resistance. For example, she describes the Sioux use of government issue muslin to line the inside of their new domiciles – log homes – in the post-allotment era. As Deloria describes, 'on these [wall coverings] they painted beautiful designs and made lovely . . . drawings of historical scenes . . . and courtship scenes' (Deloria, 1944: 60–61). She described the incorporation and refashioning of the material culture of white society to create a context of familiarity within the foreign walls of the log home. Deloria's story merges incorporation and creativity as the muslin is taken in and made over. The story implicitly suggests resistance as the outside walls of the log home stand stoic and silent, not divulging the activity within. The very materials of the white system become the walls of resistance and the symbols of creativity.

In contrast to Deloria, Mourning Dove's writings strain with her resistance to the constraints of gender roles she experienced both within Salishan and white societies. In her autobiography, she openly voiced her

resistance to men and marriage as a young woman. She refused the esoteric knowledge of love medicine offered her by a Salish medicine woman, resisting what she saw as obligations that would bind her to traditional tribal roles (Mourning Dove, 1990: 81). In the 1930s she expressed her resistance through direct political action in the effort to preserve Indian rights and resources on the Colville Reservation (Miller, 1989; Mourning Dove, 1990). A painful statement on the toll her struggle extracted from her appears in that ironic textual summary of one's life, her death certificate. Her cause of death is attributed to 'exhaustion from manic depressive psychosis' (Miller, 1989: 180). In a single label the years of political resistance have been reduced to personal pathology encoded in a permanent text she is unable to challenge.

I turn now to the novels of Deloria and Mourning Dove. Through their novels, these women wrote against the dominant grain of Indian image making. Their novels challenged the capacity of the impersonal ethnographic account to 'capture' Native American experience; they countered popular stereotypes of Indian people; and they posed an alternative form for elucidating cultural knowledge. Deloria's novel, *Waterlily*, follows the life course of a young Dakota woman growing up on the plains in the late nineteenth century. The reader learns about Dakota values and cultural practices through the day-to-day experiences of *Waterlily's* life. As *Waterlily* learns the complexities of kinship systems and their obligations, so does the reader. Deloria pays careful attention to the central place of children in Dakota life. Perhaps this serves as her own subtle commentary on Anglo practices of removing Indian children from family and culture to adoptive homes and boarding schools.

Deloria tells stories at many levels in *Waterlily*. Through the character of a tribal elder she describes the cultural sanctity of storytelling: 'Speech is holy; it was not intended to be set free only to be wasted. It is for hearing and remembering' (Deloria, 1988: 50). Deloria poses here the relational and emotive context of storytelling such that the story is inseparable from the act of telling. She uses stories throughout the novel both to educate her reader about cultural practices and to demonstrate a process of learning that contrasts sharply with the Anglo educational system.

Deloria also portrays the respect for personal dignity that shapes relations between women. She describes the hesitance of Dakota women to share their intimate secrets, pleasant or unpleasant with other women, noting that 'she could live and die with her own secrets and she did so. Her one concern was to maintain her dignity' (Deloria, 1988: 179). Ironically, it seems as if the very dignity Deloria finds as so intimate to Dakota women's experience is violated in efforts to come to terms with women's struggles. I

remain torn by my own participation in this process as I peel back and probe Deloria's private world. I am reminded of my first reading of *Waterlily* as Deloria drew me into the centrality of Dakota women's experience, then abruptly confronted me with my whiteness and separateness from her world. Swiftly and silently, the violence of white presence penetrated the core of Dakota life with the arrival of smallpox-infested blankets. My intimacy with *Waterlily* was suddenly polluted with a sense of complicity. I wanted to set myself apart from this history and claim my place among the circle of women I had come to know. I felt a flush of shame, reminded that I cannot erase my history and its privileges. And what conditions of history and privilege allow me now to pull aside the muslin walls of dignity covering Deloria's private struggles? I find I must rethink the 'personal as political' and situate that maxim of feminism within a context of critical inquiry that asks: Which person? Whose politics?

Mourning Dove crafts a very different story of Native women's experience in her Western romance novel, *Cogewea: The Half Blood*. *Cogewea* is the story of a mixed blood young woman coming of age in the rural West in the early 1900s. Cogewea, is caught between the pull of her roots to Okanogan culture and the pressure to assimilate into the encroaching white world. In contrast to the sense of cultural integrity that Deloria creates, Mourning Dove writes of fractures and tensions. Cogewea's identity as 'half blood' locates the conflicts and contradictions of social position in the body of the woman.

Mourning Dove takes the reader into Cogewea's private world of thought and feeling. Cogewea is a spirited woman, who like her creator, chafes against the constraints of her gender, race and class identities. Mourning Dove uses Cogewea's private thoughts for her own social commentary. She addresses the diversity of Indian women's experience and the particular nature of her own struggles by placing Cogewea in a position of uncertainty vis-a-vis her two sisters, one enacting a stereotypically 'traditional' Native women's role, one 'passing' in her marriage to a white rancher.

A central plot develops around Cogewea's growing affections for a white suitor. Densmore, the suitor, is up to no good; he has self-interest in mind as he seeks to marry Cogewea. Mourning Dove articulates gender and race conflict through this relationship. She also uses the themes of trust and betrayal in the relationship as a metaphor for the larger struggle for preservation of native kinship, land and resources.

Mourning Dove weaves features central to Salishan culture, such as spirit power and the sweat lodge into her text (Fisher, 1981:xi) She

develops the character of the Stemteema, Cogewea's grandmother, as the storyteller. Stemteema provides a voice for Salish history and beliefs creating a cultural counter-pattern to the events unfolding in the story. Through Stemteema, Mourning Dove is able to incorporate Okanogan stories and storytelling style into a text reminiscent of a Harlequin romance. Her popular literary genre becomes a tool for popular education.

The novels of Mourning Dove and Deloria placed women center-stage and challenged both scholarly and popular representations of Native Americans. Their novels were integral parts of their broader commitment to cultural mediation. But this brings us to the problematic question of audience and impact. In ironic contrast to the urgency of these women's missions, it took years to get their novels in print. Mourning Dove's novel was published after eleven years of effort. Deloria completed *Waterlily* in 1944, but it was not published until 1988. What are the implications of the erasures of these works and what is the import of rekindled interest at this particular moment?

Deloria and Mourning Dove are part of a legacy of women who have recognized the value of what anthropologist Faye Harrison (1990: 3) has termed 'anthroperformance'. Harrison speaks to the pedagogical power in communicating the social and cultural processes of lived experience through fiction, drama and performance. She points to the pioneering work of folklorist and novelist Zora Neale Hurston and the dancer and anthropologist Katherine Dunham in creatively integrating performance as pedagogy (1990: 2). Similarly, Deloria and Mourning Dove creatively melded cultural knowledge and lived experience into expressive forms that offer new ways of knowing. Both women had a keen awareness of the politics of popular knowledge. They were concerned not so much with knowledge about the world as with knowledge for transformation of their worlds. Their cultural knowledge was grounded in critical awareness of social and historical conditions affecting the lives of Native Americans. As their opening quotes suggest, these women sought to challenge and change conditions through cultural mediation grounded in human relationship and empathic understanding. The writings of both Deloria and Mourning Dove challenged the boundaries of truth and fiction. They sought truth in emotive experience and used their positions in the borderlands to translate those truths across cultural boundaries. Their works echo the themes of feminist and 'postmodern' anthropologists who call for consciousness of one's own multiple and at times conflicting subject positions (Clifford, 1986; Caplan, 1988; Gordon, 1988). They acknowledged their political missions, self-consciously explored avenues of textual expression, and turned to the novel to reach audiences they hoped to transform.

The politics and poetics of the Native American women's voices, represented in the lives and works of Deloria and Mourning Dove, anticipate many of the conflicts and struggles being addressed today by feminist anthropologists (Harrison, 1991; Gordon, 1988; Stacey, 1988; Obbo, 1990). The politics of ethnographic field work and the dilemmas inherent in writing texts are issues that resonate through the living and telling of these women's lives over the past century. Trust and betrayal, the authority of the written word, and the politics of knowledge production and appropriation are meaningful themes for Deloria and Mourning Dove. There are many lessons to learn from our mothers, aunts and sisters who have rejected the constraints of 'separate' knowing and have asserted the truth value and political power of connected knowing in the ethnography as well as the novel. In the folk wisdom of country music, we are 'walking contradictions, partly truth and partly fiction'. The challenge for women writing culture is to capture the truth value of our contradictions.

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### **NOTES**

1. The term 'cultural mediator' is used by Beatrice Medicine in her portrayal of Ella Deloria (1980) and by Jay Miller in his biographical work on Mourning Dove (1989).
2. I draw from Murray (1974), Medicine (1980, 1989b) and Picotte (1988) in describing Ella Deloria's background. See these works for more detailed accounts. Picotte notes that 'Dakota' refers to all divisions of Sioux people. Dakota and Sioux are used interchangeably in these texts and I employ both terms here. Biographical information on Mourning Dove is drawn largely from her autobiography (1990), Alice Poindexter (Dexter) Fisher's introduction to *Cogewea: The Half Blood*, and Jay Miller's work (1989, 1990).
3. Jay Miller describes Mourning Dove's birth story as foreshadowing her life of 'constant motion and independent activity' (Mourning Dove, 1990: xii). Miller challenges the truth of Mourning Dove's claims that her paternal grandfather was of Scottish descent (Mourning Dove, 1990: xvi).
4. I have borrowed the expression 'being and becoming' Indian from James Clifton (1989).
5. I have used both the terms 'mentor' and 'patron' here. I am still uncertain as to which term best portrays the nature of the relationship. The term mentor suggests that these men were grooming the women to take over their roles, which was

certainly not the case. 'Sponsorship' suggests a level of financial support that was not in evidence here. It seems that the relationships may have more parallels to a client/patron relationship, though that may suggest a more particular type of arrangement than I read here.

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