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*NEWCOMERS TO NAVAJOLAND:
TRANSCULTURATION IN THE MEMOIRS
OF ANGLO WOMEN, 1900-1945*

HELEN M. BANNAN

CULTURAL HISTORIANS have long regarded narratives of captivity among the Indians as rich sources of America's myth structure. Scholars have convincingly argued that the basic plot of the captivity narrative, with its reenactment of the universal pattern of the Hero's separation, transformation, and triumphant return, has helped shape our national self-concept.¹ The standard cast of characters and dramatic embellishments of the narratives, with savage Indians violating and torturing helpless women, have strongly affected our images of Native Americans and led to the assumption of an especially intense, specifically female fear of Indians.²

The dominance of this mythic heritage has prompted its attack from several different perspectives. Historians have analyzed evidence of a variety of Indian-white interaction patterns, drawn from frontier letters, diaries, and other documents. Anthropologists have described Native American cultures in rich detail. Native Americans themselves, in oral histories, autobiographies, tribal and general historical accounts, have presented their side of the story. And, Americans who have lived among various tribes have published their versions of "my life among the Indians," seeking to capitalize upon the international fascination with Indian lore while undercutting its stereotypic content.

This article examines nine such works, produced in the twentieth century by Anglo women who had lived on the Navajo reservation prior to the end of World War II. These books were selected because they were written when most Americans believed Indians belonged in the past or in the movies, in dramatic contrast to an

earlier time, in which many readers of captivity narratives expected to experience a vicarious thrill of a possible danger. The Navajo reservation seemed an especially appropriate setting for several reasons: since continuous Navajo contact with Anglos began later than elsewhere, and since the reservation in the years prior to World War II was generally isolated from profound American influences, the experiences of "voluntary exiles" living there might be quite comparable to protagonists in captivity narratives. Also, focusing on Anglo residents among a single cultural group would highlight differences among individual responses, and selecting the Navajo, whose culture was distinctly different from the Plains stereotype that too many Americans define as Indian, would likely ensure that authors might elaborate more on details of tribal customs they found particularly striking. Moreover, the sample was limited to women's autobiographical works to draw again the parallel with women writers of captivity narratives and to test the longevity of the allegedly intense female fear of Indians. In addition, the author wished to explore interaction patterns among women of different cultures and the effect of reservation work roles upon the newcomers' attitudes toward their Navajo neighbors.

Once these criteria were established, the sample included all books a thorough searching produced, with the exception of anthropologist Gladys Reichard's *Spider Woman*.³ A professional participant observer who studied with the noted relativist scholar Franz Boas at Columbia, Reichard and the account of her experiences seemed qualitatively different from those of the other women, whose roles generally emphasized the qualities of an emissary of American culture rather than those of a student of Navajo culture. While a comparison of trained field workers to those filling other reservation roles is a significant topic, that subject is not covered here. On the other hand, the nine remaining autobiographies, written by female traders, teachers, and the wife of a government employee, provided a wealth of information for my purposes.

Although these nine writers should not be regarded as creators of great literature, their works go beyond the usual travelogue in presenting a view of self-growth through experience, an approach strikingly similar to the pattern of the Hero's initiation journey evoked in the captivity narratives, although secularized and stripped

of ethnocentric emphasis on Indian barbarism. While these works include little deep introspection into the total content and meaning of life, a clear and consistent self-concept emerges in them: the self as exile and initiate, attempting to understand a different cultural environment, and to find a place for the self in these surroundings. The title of Ruth Werner's book, *Novice in Navajoland*, could fit any of these autobiographies, since it concisely expresses the dominant self-concept each contains.

These twentieth-century women shared with protagonists in captivity narratives the experience of transculturation, which anthropologist A. Irving Hallowell defined as "the process whereby individuals under a variety of circumstances are temporarily or permanently detached from one group, enter the web of social relations that constitute another society, and come under the influence of its customs, ideas, and values to a greater or lesser degree."⁴ As this definition indicates, the process includes the stages found in any initiation experience: separation and transition. Whether the final stage, incorporation,⁵ will mean return to the original "home" society, as for the mythic Hero, or absorption into the different "host" society, as for some "White Indian" captives,⁶ depends upon the degree of transculturation achieved. This, Hallowell reminds us, depends likewise on several variables, among them the person's age when the process begins, initial attitudes toward people of the second culture, length of residence among them, roles the initiate plays in the second society, and personal motivational factors.⁷

Using this model to analyze the experiences presented in these autobiographies of newcomers to Navajoland, this essay will highlight the part these women played in the ongoing social history of Indian-white relations. By allowing readers to take seriously the anthropological truism, "Cultures don't meet, people do," these works offer an opportunity to explore the ways in which nine American women, each a unique configuration of culturally normal and deviant traits, interacted with equally unique representatives of Navajo tradition. None of these writers should be labeled a "typical" American woman, or a "typical" reservation resident; such creatures probably do not exist. Yet the fact that these nine women produced books about their Navajo years separates them from the majority

The Newcomb Trading Post at Blue Mesa, located on the Navajo Reservation, from *Navajo Neighbors*, p. 29.

Elizabeth Hegemann with John and Louisa Wade Wetherill, from *Navajo Trading Days*, p. 243.

of those who shared a reservation experience. Also, in writing about herself, each woman created a persona: the person she wished readers to believe her to be. She chose those aspects of her personality to stress or downplay, those incidents to include or omit. This autobiographical angle provides an intensely personal view of each writer but also a limited, one-sided perspective. Still, analyzing several such works and placing individual differences within a common framework should illuminate the specific and general aspects of the authors' transculturation and thus enhance one's understanding of this important process in intercultural relations.

Although all the writers studied here were adults when they entered Navajoland, each had individual reasons for moving to the reservation. The four women who were single when they arrived came for teaching jobs, which they needed for their self-support, but their reasons for accepting these particularly strenuous positions varied.

Minnie Braithewaite Jenkins, who titled herself *The Girl from Williamsburg*, had dreamed of becoming a medical missionary to China, but changed her plans when she was denied entrance to the nearby College of William and Mary because of her sex. She taught school in Virginia for several years before seeking more adventuresome employment in the Indian Service. Minnie's mother attempted to use political influence to block her daughter's new dream by encouraging Indian Service officials to appoint her daughter to "a school that no one . . . [would] accept." Minnie surprised her mother by accepting that assignment to remote Blue Canyon, Arizona. In 1900, she "left home promptly, although dutiful daughters weren't ever supposed to be so independent."⁸ After a year in Navajoland, she accepted a transfer to a boarding school at Fort Mohave, Arizona, declining a post in Wisconsin because she loved the desert, but believing that her health demanded a less rigorous situation than Blue Canyon.

Health was also a concern of Franc Johnson Newcomb, but her persistent cough led her to request a transfer from the Menominee Indian School in Wisconsin to the drier climate of Fort Defiance, Arizona, in 1912. Perhaps her memories of Winnebago playmates during her Wisconsin childhood led Franc to join Indian Service

Minnie Braithwaite, 1901, from *Girl from Williamsburg*, frontispiece.

after six years of teaching in district schools. After two years teaching at Fort Defiance, she married Arthur J. Newcomb, a trader, and spent twenty-one more years getting to know her *Navaho Neighbors* at the Blue Mesa Trading post in New Mexico. In 1935, she moved to Albuquerque so that her daughters could attend school, and she began writing about her reservation experiences.⁹

Dorothy Dykhuizen began teaching at the Christian Reformed Church mission school at Rehoboth, New Mexico, in 1938, and she was still teaching there when she published *Go Quickly and Tell* in 1946. Much of her book is a general description of the work of the mission; even in its autobiographical sections, Dykhuizen referred to herself as the Teacher in self-detached third person. Presumably, the Teacher shared the motivation of other mission workers, who, Dykhuizen stated, had "assumed their duties not for personal gain but to express their love for the Master and for the people who need their help."¹⁰

Ruth Werner shared an ideal of service, but in a secular context. Her first dream was to be a cowgirl, but since her rural Iowa high school offered girls only a Normal Training course, she became a teacher. Before she entered Indian Service in 1941, she had taught in rural schools in Iowa, Wyoming, and Missouri. After her first eighteen months as a *Novice in Navajoland* at Red Rock, Arizona, she volunteered for service as a WAC for the duration of World War II. Three years later, she returned to the reservation for twenty-four years of work as a teacher, supervisor, and principal until her retirement.¹¹

While all of the single women thus made independent decisions to move to Navajoland, most of the women who were married before they arrived reported that they followed their husbands, with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Economic motivation was again primary in each case, but other factors determined the choice of the reservation as the place to earn a livelihood.

Louisa Wade Wetherill and John, her husband of four years, had several disappointing seasons farming in Colorado's Mancos valley when they decided in 1900 to move with their two small children to accept a job managing a trading post at Ojo Alamo, New Mexico. John had already developed his interest in ancient Indian ruins and decided to follow his brother to Navajo country, where he

could combine his archaeological explorations with making a living as *Traders to the Navajos*. Louisa, fascinated by stories of Navajo life since her youth on the Ute frontier, willingly made the journey and spent the rest of her life on the reservation. Her coauthor, Frances Gillmor, reported that Wetherill was buried near her home at Kayenta, Arizona, in 1945, next to her husband who died the year before.¹²

Another trader's wife, Mary Jeanette Kennedy, was more apprehensive about her husband George's plans to enter the trading business, but "after a great deal of persuasion, . . . finally consented to go" to Salina Springs, Arizona, in 1913, accompanied by her sister and two sons under four. A native of a southern city, Kennedy had misgivings about the isolation, but she and her family stayed on the reservation for twenty-five years, the last fourteen in Rock Springs, New Mexico, near enough to Gallup for her sons to attend school there. In 1938, her husband accepted a job as an oil company agent in Gallup, and they settled in town, where Mary Jeanette wrote *Tales of a Trader's Wife*, and celebrated her fiftieth wedding anniversary in 1959.¹³

In seven years of marriage, Hilda Faunce and her husband Ken had moved from Colorado cattle country to the Oregon coast, where a bank failure in 1914 prompted Ken's urge to return to the life of a Navajo trader that he had known in his youth. Hilda "had been willing to go anywhere, anyhow—with Ken—and I still was," so they decided to "turn toward the Southwest and go until we found work,—work that meant food and clothes and a new start." They found a trading post they could afford to buy at Covered Water, Arizona, and for four years Hilda was a *Desert Wife*. By 1918, the couple had saved enough money to buy a farm, and they left the reservation.¹⁴

Elizabeth Compton Hegemann had driven through Navajo country as a tourist several times before she settled there in 1925, when she married Mike Harrison, a park ranger at the Grand Canyon. When that marriage ended in 1928, she went to live with friends at the trading post at Tuba City, Arizona, beginning what she saw as her "transition period" toward "the free, simpler life of the vast Navaho Reservation." In 1929, she remarried, and with her second husband, Harry Rorick, began her *Navaho Trading Days* at a post

in Shonto, Arizona, "not only to make our living, but because we liked being among Navahos and a part of the Reservation life." In 1939, Hegemann sold her half-interest in the trading post to her husband and left him and the reservation, citing "personal reasons, of which my mother was one" as the cause of this sudden change in her life.¹⁵

Elizabeth Ward's life also changed drastically in this period; her first marriage to a rich Texas oil man, which had produced two children, ended after the stock market crash in 1929. Elizabeth then married a cowboy, Dan Ward, who soon lost his job when the boss of his ranch declared against employing hands with families. His next position at a dude ranch was tedious for a serious cowboy, and in the mid-thirties, Dan gladly accepted a job as a "range rider" on the Navajo reservation since the position offered him a chance to continue in his chosen profession, although it entailed enforcing the BIA's controversial stock reduction program. Elizabeth left her children at schools in Tucson and followed her husband to Sheep Springs, New Mexico, where she found *No Dudes, Few Women*, a title that raises questions about her views of Navajo females. She and her husband remained on the reservation until 1943, when Elizabeth could no longer endure feeling that "everyone but myself had a constructive job. . . . I simply had to leave. I had to find a part in the war, somewhere." Dan was able to arrange his transfer to the Southern Arizona Reservation near Tucson, where Elizabeth could work in an aircraft factory.¹⁶

These brief sketches enable us to analyze these nine women in terms of some of the variables Hallowell identified as affecting transculturation. All were adults at the time they entered Navajoland and thus fully socialized into American culture before their arrival. Although all expressed curiosity and eagerness to learn about Navajo society, only Newcomb, Wetherill, and Hegemann had had any previous experience with Native Americans, and even these had only brief encounters, mostly with non-Navajos. Their initial attitudes were thus not strongly formed by experience, and most seemed determined to be open-minded about cultural differences. Still, each had been influenced to some degree by attitudes prevailing in the American culture of their time. In the early twentieth century, these views depicted Indians as a wronged,

perhaps latently violent, but now vanishing race, with some romanticism about the noble values of Indian cultures.¹⁷ None of the writers dwelled upon her preconceptions in her memoirs, so the level of influence these ideas had on each person cannot be accurately determined.

More obvious is the variation among the women in the length of their reservation residence, which ranged from Jenkins's single year, to Wetherill's entire remaining lifespan of forty-five years. One can reasonably expect that those who lived in Navajoland less than a decade, Jenkins, Faunce, Ward, and Dykhuizen, would be influenced less strongly by Navajo lifeways than those who remained longer, Hegemann, Newcomb, Kennedy, Werner, and Wetherill, in order of increasing years' seniority.

These introductory sketches also indicate that each woman's motivation for moving to the reservation was very closely tied to the role that she would play there. Hegemann alone voiced a genuine interest in following a Navajo lifestyle, but she chose to pursue this interest by becoming a trader. It is important to remember that Navajos before World War II defined the roles of schoolteacher and trader, which most of these women filled, as belonging to outsiders, so the possibilities of their complete acceptance into Navajo society were virtually eliminated. The role of teacher, particularly missionary teacher, involved a conscious intent to be a carrier of American culture. The role of trader also involved bringing American material culture to the Navajos, though traders were perhaps not always so conscious of themselves as agents of change. Acculturation is a two-way process, however, and these roles were flexible enough to allow some degree of transculturation to occur, if the individual's attitudes and inclinations permitted. Each role included a "constellation of behaviors appropriate to particular situations," but such requirements should not be viewed as totally determining individual action, "but rather as imposing some kind of limits on possible action, which the actors can manipulate in order to achieve their ends."¹⁸ The next section will concentrate on the variations in the ways each woman played her role, as she responded to the stages of her initiation into Navajo life. Understanding the range of reactions to separation from Anglo society and transition into reservation lifestyles will help one appreciate the kinds of circumstances

and attitudes that promoted and prohibited these women's increasing participation in and absorption of Navajo culture.

The isolation of the reservation and the strength of Navajo traditional culture in the first half of the twentieth century helped dramatize the "separation" phase these women experienced.¹⁹ The geography of the reservation, its vast distances, arid climate, and stark desert beauty, sets it apart from most other American landscapes. Many of the women's memoirs include long passages detailing their sense of shock and isolation upon arrival. These reactions were heightened for Jenkins, Wetherill, and Faunce by long and difficult wagon journeys to their reservation destinations. The advent of the automobile made travel somewhat easier for the later arrivals, but the unimproved roads and suddenly treacherous weather continued to present challenges.

Responses to the landscape varied somewhat according to the environment to which each woman had been accustomed. Wetherill, from southern Colorado, was the least upset. Jenkins, from Virginia, thought the "stark barren desolation" of her school and its surroundings "might have been on the moon. Such a spot surely did not belong to our earth."²⁰ The Iowan Werner, on her first day in Navajoland, "began to wonder if I would ever adjust to this country of vast horizons, towering distant mountains, mesas, eroded wasteland and a myriad of black, gray and red rocks."²¹ Ward, originally from Texas and immediately from the Tucson area, should have been more accustomed to open spaces and arid lands, but she thought the reservation "stretched in a dreary waste to every side," and stated, "It seemed incredible that people lived here, or at least existed, for three hundred and sixty-five days of the year. But here were the homes of the Navahos, and if they could stand it for always, I could stand it for a little while."²² Faunce, transplanted from the rainy Northwest, expressed her reaction in terms of fear: "The emptiness, the barrenness, the vastness threatened me. . . . I could not face life in a country without one spear of green grass, with nothing but rocks and bare dirt, with never a human being in sight."²³

When human beings were sighted, in the form of traditional Navajos, responses were mixed. Newcomb, "thrilled with my first

glimpse of Navaho people engaged in their normal pursuits," described in detail the dress of the people she saw at a trading post on the way to Fort Defiance. Particularly taken by a woman swinging a baby on a cradleboard across her shoulders as she mounted a horse, Newcomb summarized her first impression of Navajo life as "a gay and colorful pageant."²⁴ When Kennedy awoke her first morning in her trading post, a Navajo man who had walked in without knocking was standing, smiling, at the foot of her sister's bed. Kennedy described this scene as "the first of many humorous, and some frightening, incidents for us."²⁵ Jenkins's reaction was similarly mixed; she noted the "bright, intelligent faces" of her students, as they "gazed at me fearfully. Actually, I was as much afraid as they were."²⁶ Ward, in contrast, was "frankly curious" about the Navajos and "watched them with honest interest, knowing that we had come to live among these people, wondering how one ever came to know them, when they showed not the slightest interest in us. . . . Navahos, I decided, were not friendly people."²⁷ Since none of the writers dwells upon any specifically female fear of rape or captivity, their fears generally can be classified as self-doubts, questioning their personal adequacy for their tasks and their adjustment to reservation settings and lifestyles. These fears are usually mixed with other emotions, notably excitement and curiosity, that new situations often arouse. Since all of the women realized what Hegemann expressed, "The Reservation was their home and our home, and we depended upon each other,"²⁸ all made efforts to get to know the Navajo people, beginning their transitional phase.

Communication difficulties complicated the process. Ward, who had no official function on the reservation, never learned to speak Navajo, which increased and prolonged her sense of isolation: "It seemed to me that I was the only white person living."²⁹ She finally established a friendship with an English-speaking Navajo woman, who explained Indian ways to Ward and eased her loneliness. English speakers were few, however, when Wetherill arrived, and her husband immediately left her to mind the trading post while he went exploring. Louisa's younger brother became desperately ill, and she could speak to no one to ask for help. When he recovered, she decided that "never again must she be so helpless. She resolved

to learn the language of the desert people, to make them her friends."³⁰

Wetherill and the other traders felt a most pressing need to learn to communicate with their Navajo customers; all learned at least enough Navajo for rudimentary business conversations. As Faunce explained, "of necessity, I learned rapidly the Navajo words for articles in the store. Our customers enjoyed teaching me and would point to sugar, coffee, tobacco, pants and repeat endlessly, . . . until I could say [the Navajo words for] them with some shadow of the correct accent."³¹ The teachers, whose role emphasized training Navajos to speak English, had mixed attitudes about the possible effects of their own bilingualism. Jenkins refused to learn Navajo, "in order to help the progress of the children" in learning English.³² Newcomb, on the other hand, believed that "it was not until I asked them, one and all, to teach me the Navaho language, that I made any headway" with the students.³³

The functions each woman served on the reservation affected more than their attitudes towards language skills. Teachers and traders did not complain of the "monotony" the unemployed Ward experienced,³⁴ but then, neither did Hegemann, who, in her pre-trading days, held a similar position as wife of a government employee. Hegemann from the first had a strong interest in the Navajos who lived near the Grand Canyon and frequently visited their hogans, preferring their company to that of the families of Park Service employees, whom she found rather stuffy. Hegemann decided to learn to weave and received pieces of the necessary equipment from Navajo friends who

showed their interest in the Belecana (any white-skinned person) woman who wanted to work as they did, by parting with their treasures. . . . To set up a Navaho loom in our Park Service headquarters was a project in itself. . . . As my work progressed and I continued to wear Navaho dress with more and heavier pieces of old pawn silver, I became rather well known in the El Tovar lobby.³⁵

Hegemann was called "the woman who weaves," and Ward, "Dan's wife," by local Navajos; these descriptive names reveal Navajo appreciation of each woman's response to her situation.³⁶ Ward spent

much of her time, while her husband was riding the range, with a local trader's family "because they understood the homesickness and the emptiness. The days went by, more or less alike, depending on the weather."³⁷

Trader Kennedy held a nearly opposite view. "People were always asking if we didn't get very lonely living so far away from other white people. Each day seemed to be an adventure in itself for we never knew who would come or what would happen before the day was over."³⁸ Living in outlying posts near Navajo communities, traders became closely involved with the daily and the ceremonial life of the people. Their memoirs are filled with interesting stories of their interactions with their neighbors and often emphasize incidents that show their appreciation of Navajo beliefs and customs. Since Navajos avoided the dead, traders were often called upon in times of grief, and each of the traders' books includes some discussion of insights into Navajo family life gained through care of the dead and dying. Although traders' trips around the reservation were limited in length and duration because of the literal need to mind the store, they frequently attended nearby sings and ceremonies, and most regularly visited the homes of their customers. Newcomb, who married a trader after two years as a teacher, appreciated the widened opportunity her new role afforded to learn about "the lives, ambitions, projects . . . [and] problems of the individual Navajo."³⁹

The teachers grew to know and like their students, but their confinement in school compounds isolated them from the full round of Navajo life. Much of Jenkins's book, for example, concerns her problems with an obnoxious and overbearing couple, the teacher-in-charge and his wife, the matron running the dormitory, who burdened her with unnecessary chores and made her adjustment as difficult as they could. Jenkins got along much better with her students, who called her "beautiful teacher," and with a Navajo woman who lived near the school, with whom she communicated in gestures and through the children's interpretation.⁴⁰ Forty years later, the car and school bus gave Werner greater mobility to attend ceremonies with the Navajo employees of her school and to visit the homes of her day school students. On one school bus run, Werner stopped to visit and was invited to help her female students

complete their after-school job of grinding corn. Her inept efforts created a small explosion of corn, laughter for everyone, and greater understanding of her students' daily lives.⁴¹ At a mission boarding school, Dykhuizen was farther removed from the homes of most of her students, but she particularly enjoyed the Saturday visits of children to her classroom. Then, "they talked at length of their home life, their ideas, and their reactions. In short, they revealed so much of their character and personality that their Teacher was able to come to a much better understanding of them through these conversations than the limited contacts which the school room permitted."⁴²

Limited or extensive, such contacts led to friendships with Navajo families, relationships that taught the newcomers much about Navajo culture through their new friends. Interestingly, friendships reported in the autobiographies do not fit feminist expectations of women bonding across cultural boundaries. Although Ward and Jenkins emphasized their friendships with Navajo women, their closest female friends were other reservation Anglos. Several of the other authors mentioned especially close relationships with Navajo family groups, including men and women, with whom they interacted according to patterns of fictive kinship, informally "adopting" the newcomer as daughter or sister. An act of service often cemented these friendships. Faunce, for example, altered a man-sized coat to fit a small boy, although she worried as she sewed: "I was never much of a seamstress . . . but I worked and prayed the coat would please them. If it did, we had made not one friend, but many; if it did not, I had perhaps destroyed their slight confidence in us." The tailoring was a success, and Faunce heard a Navajo customer say to the boy's father, "'She is a grandmother to your small boy, my friend.'"⁴³

Newcomb, whose Navajo name was medicine woman, earned her reputation and the friendship of noted medicine man Hosteen Klah when she bravely volunteered to assist in the cure of his nephew. Dressed Navajo-style, Newcomb entered the medicine lodge and asked the healer performing the rite if she could use her medicine to help; perhaps since Billy Yazzi was near death, the singer accepted. Newcomb lanced Yazzi's infected arm, drained

and cleaned the wound, and instructed the patient's wife to continue to apply clean compresses. If the man had died, Newcomb would have been blamed for interrupting the ceremony and destroying its efficacy. Fortunately for her, Yazzi recovered, and the native healer was given full credit for the cure. "In discussing the affair, the Navahos agreed that I had done no harm in adding my assistance to the ceremony, as I had acted with a friendly purpose. Any of his friends would be willing to do as much. This attitude we were very happy to accept, as it assured us of a continued cordial relationship with our Navaho neighbors."⁴⁴ Hosteen Klah, the uncle, became Newcomb's close friend, and, in her biography of him, she states, "It was through his influence that I was able to attend Navaho religious ceremonies, and it was with his permission that I started making sketches of his sacred sand paintings."⁴⁵ This friendship was a most interesting one, revealing a great deal of intercultural exchange. Newcomb learned much about Navajo religion and curing from Klah, and encouraged by her enthusiasm, he began to weave sandpainting rugs, a breach of tradition that others with less power feared. Neither partner in this relationship was "typical," yet each learned much of the other's culture in the exchange.

Louisa Wetherill provides the strongest example of the power of friendship to overcome cultural boundaries. Wetherill learned to speak Navajo so well and became close to so many Navajo families through her medical assistance, listening, and arbitration of disputes that she was not viewed as a true "belecana." Since a Navajo woman the Utes captured long ago had never returned and since Wetherill came from the Ute country, it was assumed that she was a descendant of the captive, whose clan adopted the trader, bringing her fully into the Navajo kinship web of rights and responsibilities. She, for instance, was asked by Hoskinini, a Navajo head man who accepted "slim woman" as his grand-daughter, to dispose of his property and care for his slaves after his death, which she did. Also, with the help of friends in California, Wetherill provided her Navajo friends with ocean water needed to purify ceremonial objects.⁴⁶

No other Anglo woman of this group reached this level of incorporation. Werner expressed most clearly the feeling that emerges

from the works of all the others: "In general we lived in the Navajo world, enjoying our experiences but never quite becoming an intimate part of their unique existence."⁴⁷ Some of this distance resulted from the newcomers' inability to change culturally induced attitudes. For instance, to Ward hogans seemed smelly, crowded hovels, while to Faunce they seemed spacious and clean. Hegemann found them home-like and architecturally suited to the environment; she had several built at her trading post to house Navajo and Anglo guests alike.⁴⁸ Clearly, these attitudes affected these women's behavior while visiting Navajo homes, affecting in turn their relationships with the inhabitants.

Religion and traditional beliefs that governed much of Navajo life drew similarly different responses from these women, according to the degree of cultural relativism each achieved and conversely the degree of cultural distance each maintained. Newcomb, Wetherill, and Hegemann were very observant of Navajo customs and diligently tried to adapt their own behavior to avoid affronting their neighbors. Even when Newcomb acted against tradition, as in her intervention in Billy Yazzi's cure, she used her knowledge of tradition to mitigate novelty: in that case, she hummed a Navajo song while working and followed proper protocol in entering and leaving the medicine lodge, attempting to become a part of the ceremony. Such knowledge was not easily acquired; as Hegemann wrote, "Sometimes at Shonto I felt that the Navahos we knew well, often dropped little kernels of truth in a casual way, but never in answer to direct questions."⁴⁹ Those who lived long among the Navajo and respected their traditions learned to listen well, and trust and friendship brought understanding.

Some of the women never learned to appreciate the religious aspects of Navajo culture. Kennedy, Jenkins, and Dykhuizen did not mention attending Navajo ceremonies in their memoirs. Dykhuizen, as a missionary, might not have wanted to appear supportive of native religious beliefs; her book includes instead a chapter on a mission-sponsored harvest festival.⁵⁰ Faunce, Ward, and Werner did attend ceremonies, but had mixed reactions to them. Faunce was impressed by the ritual and sense of earnestness at Navajo sings, yet found the social "squaw dance" boring and called Navajo patients "victims" of their cures.⁵¹ Werner attended a fire dance

and a yeibichai dance, and although she felt "fortunate" to have had these opportunities, she could not appreciate the harmony of the singers and found the clowns more obscene than funny.⁵² Ward was interested in learning about Navajo religion and was determined not to "scoff," since she "always felt that sincere belief merits respect, and the Navajos were sincere." Nevertheless, the fire dance severely taxed her intellectual commitment to a relativist position; she found the dance "completely savage," which verified her sense of cultural distance: "I knew that this was their world, and we were interlopers."⁵³

Interlopers seems too strong a word to use to describe all of the women in this group. Certainly, each of these women had learned through personal contact something of what it means to be Navajo. Only Wetherill can be considered to have experienced fully transculturation, but many of the others, particularly Hegemann and Newcomb, were deeply affected by their Navajo experience. Werner expressed an idea that echoes throughout all their books: "How much more the Navajos had taught me that I had taught them!"⁵⁴ Not all of the lessons so taught were actually learned and accepted; none of the women acknowledged personal belief in witchcraft or relied totally on Navajo medicine, although they respected Navajos who did. Still, those who left the reservation did so with a sense of some regret, appreciating the broader awareness of life their years in Navajoland had given them. Unlike their antecedents, the authors of the captivity narratives, they did not emphasize their return to "civilization" as triumphant. The mood of Faunce's final page epitomized what most of these writers seemed to experience: "I had not realized that we had woven so many threads of friendship that it hurt to break them. I stopped often to think that in all my life these . . . years were the most isolated and the most colorful."⁵⁵ What their Navajo years had taught them, essentially, was to understand and respect a different way of life and the people who lived it.

These works will never have the impact on American culture that the captivity narratives have had, but they do include valuable insights for those who wish to understand intercultural relations. They are particularly useful for those who study the social history

of acculturation from the other direction, emphasizing the transculturation of Native Americans in Anglo society. Many early teachers and missionaries, convinced of the superiority of American culture, were thoroughly disappointed when Indian students returning from boarding schools resumed their native way of life. These twentieth-century Anglo women similarly accepted permanently few Navajo traits, and most left the reservation, again to live like and among their own people, although they valued their Navajo experience. "Cultures don't meet, people do," and both change very slowly.

NOTES

1. Roy Harvey Pearce, "The Significance of the Captivity Narrative," *American Literature* 19 (March 1947): 1-20; Richard VanDerBeets, "The Indian Captivity Narrative as Ritual," *American Literature* 43 (January 1972): 548-62; Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1973).

2. The roots of this assumption are ably discussed in Sandra L. Myres, *Westerling Women and the Frontier Experience, 1800-1915* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico [UNM] Press, 1982), chapter 3. Myres questions the assumption and presents convincing evidence to refute it.

3. Gladys A. Reichard, *Spider Woman: A Story of Navajo Weavers and Chanters* (1934; reprint ed., Glorieta, N. Mex.: Rio Grande Press, 1976).

4. A. Irving Hallowell, "American Indians, White and Black: The Phenomenon of Transculturation," *Current Anthropology* 4 (December 1963): 523.

5. Arnold L. Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (1909; reprint ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

6. James Axtell, "The White Indians of Colonial America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 32 (January 1975): 55-88.

7. Hallowell, "American Indians," p. 523.

8. Minnie Braithewaite Jenkins, *The Girl from Williamsburg* (Richmond, Va.: Dietz Press, 1951), pp. 4, 252, 255.

9. Franc Johnson Newcomb, *Navaho Neighbors* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), pp. 8, 229. Also, typescript ms., "Autobiography of Franc Johnson Newcomb," Newcomb Papers, Maxwell Museum of Anthropology, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.

10. Dorothy Dykhuizen, *Go Quickly and Tell* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1946), p. 196. See also J. C. DeKorne, *Navaho and Zuni for Christ: Fifty Years of Indian Missions* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Christian Reformed Board of Missions, 1947), p. 47.

11. Ruth E. Werner, *Novice in Navajoland* (Scottsdale, Ariz.: Southwest Book Service, 1972), biographical statement as preface to text, unpagcd.

12. Frances Gillmor and Louisa Wade Wetherill, *Traders to the Navajos: The Story of the Wetherills of Kayenta* (1934; reprint ed., Albuquerque: UNM Press, 1953), pp. 46-49; foreword by F. G., unpagcd.

13. Mary Jeanette Kennedy, *Tales of a Trader's Wife (Life on the Navajo Indian Reservation), 1913-1938* (Albuquerque: Valliant Company, 1965), pp. 12, 16, 27-28, 60.

14. Hilda Faunce, *Desert Wife* (1934; reprint ed., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), pp. 9, 7.

15. Elizabeth Compton Hegemann, *Navaho Trading Days* (Albuquerque: UNM Press, 1963), pp. 59, 115, 383.

16. Elizabeth Ward, *No Dudes, Few Women: Life with a Navajo Range Rider* (Albuquerque: UNM Press, 1951), pp. 244, 1, 12, 14, 16, 27, 32.

17. American attitudes toward Indians are much more complex than any brief statement can express; see especially Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978).

18. H. G. Barnet, Leonard Broom, Bernard J. Siegel, Evon Z. Vogt, and James B. Watson, "Acculturation: An Exploratory Formulation" in Deward E. Walker, Jr., editor, *The Emergent Native Americans: A Reader in Culture Contact* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1972), p. 27; Frederick George Bailey, *Tribe, Caste and Nation*, quoted by James A. Henretta, "Social History as Lived and Written," *American Historical Review* 84 (December 1979): 1301.

19. For anthropological analyses of Navajo culture in the period, see Clyde Kluckhohn and Dorothea Leighton, *The Navaho* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946); Gladys A. Reichard, *Dezba: Woman of the Desert* (New York: J. J. Augustin, 1939); and Ruth M. Underhill, *Here Come the Navaho!*, ed. by Willard W. Beatty (Kansas: Haskell Institute, 1953). For Navajo accounts of their life in this period, see Left Handed, *Son of Old Man Hat: A Navaho Autobiography*, recorded by Walter Dyk (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1938), and Kay Bennett, *Kaibah: Recollections of a Navajo Girlhood* (the author, 1975).

20. Jenkins, *Girl from Williamsburg*, p. 29.

21. Werner, *Novice in Navajoland*, p. 4.

22. Ward, *No Dudes*, p. 20.

23. Faunce, *Desert Wife*, p. 58.

24. Newcomb, *Navaho Neighbors*, p. 6.

25. Kennedy, *Tales of a Trader's Wife*, p. 4.

26. Jenkins, *Girl from Williamsburg*, p. 33.

27. Ward, *No Dudes*, p. 18.

28. Hegemann, *Navaho Trading Days*, p. 64.

29. Ward, *No Dudes*, p. 105.

30. Gillmor and Wetherill, *Traders to the Navajos*, p. 51.

31. Faunce, *Desert Wife*, p. 98.

32. Jenkins, *Girl from Williamsburg*, p. 96.
33. Newcomb, *Navaho Neighbors*, p. 7.
34. Ward, *No Dudes*, p. 96.
35. Hegemann, *Navaho Trading Days*, p. 37.
36. Hegemann, *Navaho Trading Days*, p. 38; Ward, *No Dudes*, p. 29.
37. Ward, *No Dudes*, p. 66.
38. Kennedy, *Tales of a Trader's Wife*, p. 43. For descriptions of traders, see Frank McNitt, *The Indian Traders* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), and Robert M. Utley, "The Reservation Trader in Navajo History," *El Palacio* 68 (Spring 1961): 5-27.
39. Newcomb, *Navaho Neighbors*, p. 18.
40. Jenkins, *Girl from Williamsburg*, pp. 55, 61-72, 228-35. For a history of Navajo schools and teachers in the period, see Hildegard Thompson, *The Navajos' Long Walk for Education: A History of Navajo Education* (Tsaile, Ariz.: Navajo Community College Press, 1975).
41. Werner, *Novice in Navajoland*, p. 17.
42. Dykhuizen, *Go Quickly*, p. 136.
43. Faunce, *Desert Wife*, p. 104.
44. Newcomb, *Navaho Neighbors*, p. 56.
45. Franc Johnson Newcomb, *Hosteen Klah: Navaho Medicine Man and Sand Painter* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), Introduction, p. xv.
46. Gillmor and Wetherill, *Traders to the Navajos*, pp. 107-11, 173, 195.
47. Werner, *Novice in Navajoland*, p. 131.
48. Ward, *No Dudes*, pp. 51-52; Faunce, *Desert Wife*, p. 91; Hegemann, *Navaho Trading Days*, p. 292.
49. Hegemann, *Navaho Trading Days*, p. 93.
50. Dykhuizen, *Go Quickly*, chapter 9.
51. Faunce, *Desert Wife*, pp. 168-72, 208.
52. Werner, *Novice in Navajoland*, pp. 49, 23, 48.
53. Ward, *No Dudes*, pp. 38, 224.
54. Werner, *Notice in Navajoland*, p. 169.
55. Faunce, *Desert Wife*, p. 305.

THE GILBERTO ESPINOSA AWARD

Through generous gifts from the family and friends of the late Gilberto Espinosa, the *New Mexico Historical Review* will be able to award an annual prize of \$100 for the best-written, best-researched essay appearing each year in the *Review*. The award is particularly appropriate since Gilberto Espinosa retained a lifelong interest in the history of New Mexico and the Southwest, devoted a good deal of his time researching the society and culture of this region, and gave generous and valued service as a consultant to the *New Mexico Historical Review*.

For further information, check with the editorial office of the NMHR, 1013 Mesa Vista, UNM, Albuquerque, 87131.

NEWS NOTES

Four new resident scholars have joined the staff of the School of American Research in Santa Fe. Larry Logue, Ph.D. candidate at the University of Pennsylvania, Jill Neitzel, Ph.D. candidate at Arizona State University, G. Carter Bentley, visiting assistant professor at Washington University in St. Louis, and Daniel Reff, Ph.D. candidate at the University of Oklahoma, will be provided with living quarters, an office, and a stipend. In addition, the Resident Scholar Program provides an atmosphere free from administrative and teaching responsibilities and offers residents the opportunity to interact with other members of the scholarly community.

The School of American Research in Santa Fe has received a \$20,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to preserve the school's 110-piece collection of Native American art done on paper. Funds will also be spent to organize and conserve the archival material of Kenneth Chapman, instrumental in putting together over 6,000 pieces of Southwestern Indian art, which is housed at the school's Indian Arts Research Center. The conservation program is under the direction of Patricia Morris, conservator.