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Spring 2008

Review of *Notebooks of Elizabeth Cook-Lynn* By Elizabeth Cook-Lynn

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Weaver, Jace, "Review of *Notebooks of Elizabeth Cook-Lynn* By Elizabeth Cook-Lynn" (2008). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 1344.

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Notebooks of Elizabeth Cook-Lynn. By Elizabeth Cook-Lynn. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007. xii + 194 pp. \$16.95 paper.

In the preface to this new edited volume, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn notes that while she learned to read and write English as a small child growing up on South Dakota's Crow Creek reservation, it took "many decades" for her to learn to use the language "efficiently." She writes, "I published nothing until I was forty." That would have been 1970, barely two years into what has become known as the Native American Literary Renaissance.

The Dakota writer and scholar certainly made up for lost time. In the ensuing decades, she has produced a formidable corpus of work, both in terms of quantity and variety. One of the founding figures of Native American Studies, she has published novels, literary criticism, and essay collections on a wide range of topics related to the indigenes of the hemisphere. She is one of Native America's best poets. Now well into her seventies, her pace seems quickening rather than abating. Volumes like *Why I Can't Read Wallace Stegner* (1996) and *Anti-Indianism in America* (2001) mark her as one of the most important and consistent indigenous scholarly voices working today.

This current collection (a quick followup to *New Indians, Old Wars* [2007]) is a bit of a grab bag, as one would expect when a writer "clears" his or her notebooks. There are poems here, ranging from the touching and lovely to the stilettopointed. Cook-Lynn is never one to shirk from freighted issues, as her poems "Who Owns the Past?" and "Who Are You, Tim McVeigh?" remind us. The prose ranges from longer essays like "Whatever Happened to D'Arcy McNickle?" (a critique of fiction by Louise Erdrich and the late James Welch) and "Irony's Blade" (a meditation on the use of that particular tool in art and scholarship) to very brief thoughts or reflections. Yet even the briefest of Cook-Lynn's pieces can inform, surprise, or delight. Her single paragraph analysis of the Leonard Peltier case ("Great Literary Events") is the most honest and accurate statement

about that tawdry affair and its continuing consequences I have seen in print in years.

To peek inside a gifted writer's notebooks is almost always a treat. The snippets and ideas recorded there give the reader a glimpse into the author's mind and creative process more so than finely finished, polished totalities. To read this eclectic collection is to dialogue fairly intimately with an engaging and insightful personality.

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