Title
Mario Blaser Storytelling Globalization, Review

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Author
Delgado-P., G

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for scholars and laypeople alike, Ojibwe and non-Ojibwe peoples.

Perhaps the most essential revelation of this work is the way in which William Berens navigated his complex socio-political position. In the 1930s, Aboriginal communities were undergoing a vast number of changes and Berens represented the bridge between dichotomies of the day. Berens was both Christian and Ojibwe, navigating and embracing all aspects of both worlds. Utilizing the wisdom of his father, William Berens integrated Aboriginal knowledge with the emerging European economic order. As an historical actor, Berens challenges the reader to move beyond the dichotomies (perhaps partially created by scholars) and understand how these expansive transitions were experienced on the individual level.

Finally, the collaboration between Berens and Hallowell brings us back to the words and wisdom of William’s father, Jacob Berens. Chief at Berens River from 1875-1916, Jacob was the first treaty chief of his community and the first Berens River Ojibwe to convert to Christianity, living during a time of profound political, social and religious transformation along the shores and rivers of Lake Winnipeg. Remembered as a wise man, Jacob cautioned his son to remain open to these changes. “Don’t think you know everything. You will see lots of new things and you will find a place in your mind for them all” (38). These visionary words remind us of the wisdom with which many Aboriginal peoples faced this challenging period. They challenge us now to find a place in our minds for these complex and beautiful stories, just as William Berens found a place in his mind for the new world into which he led his people; a world which he fortunately shared with Irving Hallowell.

Patricia Harms
Department of History
Brandon University


A timely contribution to the ethnographic record of Indigenous peoples of the Americas, this book by Mario Blaser about the Yshiro, also known as Charnacoco, of the Alto Paraguay Chaco constitutes an innovative anti-totalizing text inspired by border theory and postwestern thought. The Chaqueño writer Jesús Urzagasti, one of the few to have symbolically represented the Gran Chaco Boreal in literature, tells me: “the Chaco is a world in itself, despite the fact that its inhabitants have been dismembered in four nation states.” The Chaco is remembered as the place where 100,000 Paraguayans and Bolivians killed each other in a nonsensical war (1932-1935) over scanty data, later proven overstated, announcing the discovery of oil. A considerable number of the cannon fodder were drafted Guaraní brothers. Undoubtedly, Yshiro predecessors were among the fallen too.

Against such tragic leftovers of history, Blaser's book is about the remembering of the Yshiro as subjects that recall and come together, pressing the author to dialogue, learn, and reflect on Yshiro life beyond naive empiricism.
As a way to understand Yshiro relational ontology, the author re-frames ethnography as (self)writing, shedding light on Yshiro (and his own) thinking and being in the world. Rather than offering an author/ty account, Blaser becomes a self-reflexive interlocutor that is challenged. He situates himself as an experimental ethnographer that negotiates a space with the Yshiro, in a productive dialogue that is revealing of both difference and sameness. This entails a successful attempt by the author to grasp Yshiro meta-language articulated by the Konsaha (Yshiro intellectuals) who understand critically their own sense of history and place in the world based on the Yrmo (reality/world) that Blaser locates in the entanglements of Modernity, Coloniality and the Decolonial (MCD).

The three parts that constitute the book, Punulhe/genealogies; Porowol/moralities; and Azte/translations, are further subdivided into nine chapters. Yshiro concepts head respective chapters, serving as guiding principles of Yshiro knowledge. In this case, the ethnographer qua writer and interlocutor, understanding that “knowledge always connotes storytelling” (xv) productively engages Yshiro myths as history and history as myths, looking for clues to the ways the Yshiro make sense, prompting the author simultaneously to make sense of making sense. In conjunction with Yshiro holistic ways of knowing, rendered through their oralitutes, Blaser re/captures their space and place in the pluriverse from several interrelated perspectives including Yshiro episteme as Indigenous philosophy, postcolonial ethnography, history, economics, and the politics of development.

The book strengthens studies on Native American societies, specifically the stunning resilience of South American Indians, complementing an experience of survival with other socionatures around the world. Blaser warns, though, that he does not want the text to be read from the perspective of indigeneity since he, “never have /i/ (my) ethnohistory as storytelling, a performance which, along with other ways of relating (with) myself, the Yshiro, and the world, seeks to contribute to further (corpo)realizing that of which it speaks: globality as a pluriverse” (229). In this way, the author contributes “to performing globality as an alternative to modernity” (35). By leaving this history of consciousness story open-ended, partial and aware of its fractal temporality, Blaser offers bits of transcommunal thinking where no episteme is more dominant than the other.

Guillermo Delgado-P
Anthropology Board of Studies
University of California, Santa Cruz


When the Makah Nation of coastal Washington hunted and killed a grey whale in May 1999, it had been almost a century since they had last practiced their whaling tradition. The hunt was legally sanctioned, but brought condemnation from (and direct conflict with) animal rights groups and some environmentalists who claimed the Makah were too modern to pursue traditional whaling due to the use of guns, modern communications and motorized support.