

English 2450

Lecture 1: Creation stories,
Contact and Conquest

Questions from last week

- **Read the introduction and Cusick's version of the Iroquois and Lloyd's version of the Pima creation story, as well as the first six books of Genesis (translation of your choice.)**
- **We'll begin next week's class by discussing:**
- **- Some of the common themes addressed by each of these cosmogonic narratives.**
- **- Some of the narrative parallels they present, as well as possible explanations for them.**
- **- The relationship between the perception of the natural environment and the role of humanity in each of the stories.**
- **- The account of the origins and cause of human conflicts; in particular, note the parallels between the Iroquois story (p. 19) and the Biblical Cain and Abel.**
- **- Consider the implications of each of these narratives for "human nature," and bear this in mind while reading the Puritan writers we consider next week.**

A People's History of the U.S.

- “The beginning [of the European settlements in America] when you read Las Casas – even if his figures are exaggerations (were there 3 million Indians to begin with, as he says, or less than a million, or less than a million, or 8 million?) is conquest, slavery, death. When we read the history books given to children in the United States, it all starts with heroic adventure – there is no bloodshed – and Columbus Day is a celebration” (Zinn 9)

Cusick's Iroquois creation stories



- - Atotarho, chief of the Six Nations, shown opposite in one of Cusick's illustrations, is the primary focus of much of Cusick's history.

Lloyd's Pima creation stories



- - Lloyd recorded the stories, as narrated by Pima tribal elder Thin-Leather, shown here, in 1911.

From "The Story of These Stories," J. W. Lloyd's introduction to *Aw-Tam Indian Nights* (1911)

- Journal entry: Traditions, afternoon and until midnight. I shall never forget how the half-moon looked, rising over *Vah-kee-woldt-kee*, or the Notched Cliffs, toward midnight, while the coyotes laughed a chorus somewhere off toward the Gila, and we sat around, outdoors, in the wind, and heard the old *seeneeyawkum* tell his weird, incoherent tales of the long ago."
- My interpreter was eager and willing, and well-posted in the meaning of English, and was a man of unusual intelligence and poetry of feeling, but was not well up in grammar, and in the main I had to edit and recast his sentences; yet just as far as possible I have kept his words and the Indian idiom and simplicity of style. Sometimes he would give me a sentence so forceful and poetic, and otherwise faultless, that I have joyfully written it down exactly as received. I admit that in a very few places, where the Indian simplicity and innocence of thought caused an almost Biblical plainness of speech on family matters, I have expurgated and smoothed a little for prudish Caucasian ears, but these changes are few, and mostly unimportant, leaving the meaning unimpaired. And never once was there anything in the spirit of what was told me that revealed foulness of thought. All was grave and serious, as befitted the scriptures of an ancient people.

Lloyd's intro, cont.

- Occasionally I have added a word or sentence to make the meaning stand out clearer, but otherwise I have taken no liberties with the original.
- As a rule the *seeneeyawkum* told these tales in his own words, but the parts called speeches were learned by heart and repeated literally. These parts gave us much trouble. They were highly poetic, and manifestly mystic, and therefore very difficult to translate with truthfulness to the involved meanings and startling and obscure metaphors. Besides they contained many archaic words, the meaning of which neither *seeneeyawkum* nor interpreter now knew, and which they could only translate by guess, or leave out altogether. But we did the best we could.
- The stories were also embellished with songs, some of which I had translated. They were chants of from one to four lines each, seldom more than two, many times repeated in varying cadence; weird, somber, thrillingly passionate in places, and by no means unmusical, but, of course, monotonous. I obtained phonograph records of a number, and the translations given are as literal as possible.

Lloyd's intro, cont.

- As to the meaning of the tales I got small satisfaction. The Indians seemed to have no explanations to offer. They seemed to regard them as fairy tales, but admitted they had once been believed as scriptures.
- My own theory came to be that they had been invented, from time to time, by various and successive *mah-kais* to answer the questions concerning history, phenomena, and the origin of things, which they, as the reputed wisest of the tribe, were continually asked. My chief reason for supposing this is because in almost every tale the hero is a mahkai of some sort. The word mah-kai (now translated doctor, or medicine-man) seems to have been applied in old time to every being capable of exerting magical or supernatural and mysterious power, from the Creator down; and it is easy to see how such use of the word would apparently establish the divine relationship and bolster the authority of the medicine men, while the charm of the tale would focus attention upon them. The temptation was great and, I think, yielded to.
- **I doubt if much real history is worked in, or that it is at all reliable.**

English 2450 Lecture 2:

Introduction to the Puritan Writers

FUNDAMENTALS OF PURITAN THOUGHT

- A) Order of creation: World created for Man, and Man for God; Great Chain of Being
- B) Fallen state/Depravity of Man (redemption possible only through God/Christ)
- C) Emphasis on the family as the fundamental social unit. According to the **English Puritan William Gouge**: "...a familie is a little Church, and a little common-wealth, at least a lively representation thereof, whereby triall may be made of such as are fit for any place of authoritie, or of subjection in Church or commonwealth. Or rather it is as a schoole wherein the first principles and grounds of government and subjection are learned: whereby men are fitted to greater matters in Church or common-wealth."

Tenets of Puritanism, cont.

- 1) Extension of Luther's sola fidei, sola scriptura, and emphasis on private study of the Bible
- 2) Education and Enlightenment for the masses (so they too could read Scripture)
- 3) Priesthood of all believers
- 4) Simplicity of worship, rejection of icons and ornaments
- 5) Rejection of traditional holidays
- 6) Believed Christians should observe Sunday as the Sabbath
- 7) Different sects held conflicting views regarding church hierarchy

Anne Bradstreet



- “Bradstreet’s entire canon represents the struggle between the visible and the invisible worlds”
- - Ann Stanford

Bradstreet cont.

- “her work reflects the Puritan religious concepts with which she was thoroughly indoctrinated; it shows, too, a remarkable sensitivity to the forms and genres which she inherited from the Elizabethans and which were being developed by other seventeenth century writers”
- - Ann Stanford
- “she hoped to recount the twists and turns of a real spiritual pilgrimage, and so she cast pitfalls along the way, temptations that could lure the pious reader from the final righteous destination”
- Charlotte Gordon, “Mistress Bradstreet”

Mary Rowlandson



- Rowlandson's kidnapping became one of the most famous incidents to arise during the war between settlers and Indians known as "King Philip's War," and her narrative attained lasting popularity and influence, becoming the generic model for the "captivity narratives" that continued to circulate through the 18th century, both in Europe and the Americas.