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The Perils of Native American Urbanization and Alcoholism in Janet Campbell Hale's *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture*

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In the imaginative literature that has furnished much of the impetus for and intellectual backbone of the so-called "Native American Renaissance" since the late 1960s, the tribulations of urbanization have been a relatively frequent but nevertheless underdeveloped theme. This has been so although one of the side effects of this urbanization, immoderate consumption of alcohol, has virtually been a *leitmotiv* in this literature.

The use of the city as a socio-geographical locus in Native American fiction can be traced back at least as far as N. Scott Momaday's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel of 1969, *House Made of Dawn*. This novel described the difficulties of a mixed-blood Pueblo ex-convict who accepted relocation to Los Angeles during the early 1950s. It apparently influenced numerous subsequent works by, *inter alia*, Leslie Marmon Silko (*Ceremony*, 1977) and Janet Campbell Hale (*The Owl's Song*, 1974). That these and many other Native American authors have written much about urban life during the past quarter-century is hardly surprising when one considers that since 1970 a majority of Native Americans in the United States have resided in cities. This profound demographic shift with its attendant social problems has prompted a spate of sociological and anthropological studies exploring the adaptation of Native Americans to urban life since the Second World War. Literary artists have participated in parallel examinations from their own perspectives, which in many cases have been internal. The ranks of the urbanized Native Americans have included many of the *littérateurs* who have followed in Momaday's tracks, such as authors Louise Erdrich, James Welch, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, and Hyemeyohsts Storm. One can safely predict that, while noteworthy imaginative literature by such authors about historical themes as well as reservation and small town life will continue, the ongoing flight to the cities and vicissitudes of adjustment to urban society will gradually become even more powerful determinants in shaping the venues and the thematic substance of Native American fiction in the future. Furthermore, since urban areas are centers of social tensions and disruption, one can equally cautiously prognosticate that alcohol and other addictive substances will more than ever constitute a central literary topic.

However, while for decades sociologists and other social scientists have paid a great deal of attention to alcoholism and various other forms of chemical dependency among both rural and urban Native Americans, literary critics and scholars have not paid equal attention to literary treatments of the same phenomena. This inconsistency in the scholarly literature can be attributed in part to the fact that most of the pertinent authors have been largely neglected. Since the 1970s international literary scholarship has illuminated the works of only a few of the novelists and other artists who have written about urban Native American life and left those of others in the shadows. Inexplicably in the latter camp are the novels of Janet

Campbell Hale, especially *The Owl's Song* and *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* (1985). This article is intended as a step in the direction of filling that lacuna by examining Hale's consideration of the difficulties of urban migrant adaptation and especially alcoholism in the latter work.

The Jailing of Cecelia Capture is arguably a milestone in the evolution of Native American fiction, not merely because it focuses on the urban scene but also because in it Hale presents a detailed analysis of a woman's tribulative adaptation to university life and cross-cultural social relationships. The latter include interracial marriage, in the San Francisco area during the era of the Viet Nam War, drawn heavily from the well of her own experiences. This groundbreaking novel thus lies at the juncture of fiction and autobiography. In the present analysis, I focus primarily on Hale's treatment of difficulties that a largely detribalized female Native American alcoholic faces in a kaleidoscopic environment of rapid social and political change.

Spanning nearly 200 pages and divided into seventeen brief chapters, *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* is written, strictly speaking, from a conventional omniscient narrator viewpoint. However, it is in effect a first-person account. This allows Hale to probe deeply into the mind of her troubled protagonist, a displaced Coeur d'Alène law student at the University of California in Berkeley. She is arrested on her thirtieth birthday, in 1980, for driving a motor vehicle while intoxicated. During her extended weekend of incarceration, as she awaits arraignment, she reflects on the course of her life that has placed her into that inauspicious state which contrasts sharply with her status as an aspiring officer of the court. Hale, herself a Coeur d'Alène who studied law at that university without completing a degree, empties her own cornucopia of afflictions, in creating memories that Cecelia recalls in flashbacks, to illuminate the self-righteous perspective of a person who believes she is suffering injustice at the hands of the legal system. It soon becomes evident that Cecelia has contributed greatly to her own downfall through numerous adulterous trysts and many years of abusing alcohol. In the process of reviewing her life, this confused woman attributes guilt to her family of origin, especially her malevolent mother, her condescending second husband—a welfare bureaucrat who apprehends her failing to report earned income, and the long history of Euro-American exploitation of Native Americans, while consistently exonerating herself from any responsibility other than consuming more drinks than she could handle. In a moderately Kafkaesque twist, Cecelia does not know why she is being held for several days without being charged. Eventually she is told that there is an outstanding warrant for her arrest stemming from alleged welfare fraud more than a decade earlier. Her enraged husband, who has been caring for their children in Spokane, Washington, travels to Berkeley to post bond for her and, having done so, to begin the process of ridding himself of this inappropriate spouse by terminating their infelicitous marriage. With her life seemingly in tatters, Cecelia elects to commit suicide and illegally purchases a handgun for that purpose. The statute of limitations kills the outdated charge of welfare fraud, however, and the novel ends when the would-be suicide victim cannot muster the courage to execute her plan of self-destruction. Cecelia chooses to go on with her life, complete her studies, and fulfil her dream of following a legal career.

A cardinal factor in Hale's writing which wields great influence in the plots of both *The Owl's Song* and *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture*, and colors her presentation of the urban experience, is the unsentimental and generally unflattering portrait of Native Americans, particularly those who have lost touch with their tribal culture. This reflects a decision made at the outset of Hale's career as a novelist. While drafting *The Owl's Song* in the late 1960s at age twenty-

three, she recalled more than two decades later, fear of producing a denigrating picture of Native Americans temporarily inhibited her completion of that book: "The protagonist's family was poor and the father and the sister drank a lot. . . . I was torn between writing a novel that was true to my own vision and one that presented a positive image of Indian people." Hale's mother argued cogently for the former option, and her talented daughter followed her advice to put her own vision on paper as candidly as possible and not to "write some nonsense to please someone else" (Hale,*Bloodlines* xxii). The negative quality of many of her characters also has instrumental significance. Hale is keenly aware of the debilitating effects that the imposition of Euro-American civilization on Native American life have had, yet she believes that the roots of the indigenes' difficulties lie not only in racial discrimination and economic dislocation but also in the intimately related severing from cultural moorings. Generally speaking, therefore, her few genuinely Native characters who retain an appreciable anchoring in their tribal traditions fare better under her pen than do those of miscegenated descent and those who are greatly detribalized. This does not, however, necessarily deter the former from shackling themselves with the fetters of alcoholism. A propensity for the bottle is virtually a common denominator among the author's characters.

Hale wields a wide brush in creating unsavory Native American characters in *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* and does not exempt her strongly autobiographical protagonist from this. The gallery of indigenous personae in this novel encompasses almost exclusively people whose moral shortcomings and other faults stand out in bold relief. Leading the wolfpack that has created an almost lupine environment for Cecelia is her mother, Mary Theresa, *née* Harrigan, who is an unmistakable embodiment of Hale's own mother: "When she was a little girl of four or five, her mother used to be mean to her sometimes, mean and angry, saying things like 'you dirty little thing you! You're nothing. Just a useless thing. That's all you are. No good to yourself or anyone else. Useless as tits on a boar'" (Hale, *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* 46-47).

More important to Cecelia's plight—and to her representativeness as a Native American character in the larger scale of Hale's perception of social relationships in the United States—than the isolated facts of her mother's personality is the manner in which she treats her daughter. Far from creating a nurturing environment, Mrs. Capture repeatedly flees her husband with Cecelia in tow. The two migrate through the Pacific Northwest, living almost invariably in abject poverty. Mrs. Capture rejects the indigenous dimension of her own heritage, thus leaving her largely Native American daughter in a cultural limbo.

Cecelia's father emerges as a significantly more favorably drawn character, a kind-hearted, mild-mannered soul who genuinely cares about his children's well-being and willingly makes sacrifices on their behalf. Will Capture places great emphasis on education and believes that particularly Cecelia, his youngest daughter, can find at least part of her salvation in it. He feels an affinity with his tribal land in northern Idaho, 400 acres of which he owns personally. Will Capture is reluctant to cut his ties with the land in which his ancestors' bones lie, and leaves it only after it becomes evident that his arthritic wife no longer can cope with the demands of remote rural life. Yet he, too, shares some of the negative attributes common to many of the Native Americans in Hale's fiction. Above all else, he is an alcoholic. Will Capture's concern about Cecelia's achievements at school eventually fall victim to his preoccupation with the bottle when she is in junior high school. His wife temporarily leaves him. Not far from their modest home near Yakima, Washington, Capture is beaten while inebriated and eventually dies a derelict.

Despite her partially negative perception of Native Americans, Hale makes it clear in this novel that, to a great extent, they are victims of historical and social circumstances beyond their control. It is within this perspective that she employs most of her metaphorical language of captivity. It begins most obviously with Cecelia Capture's peculiar surname, a shortened form of "Eagle Capture" which her paternal grandfather had borne but her father and his brother had abbreviated when they enlisted in the United States Army during the First World War. This involvement with the instrument of power, that had helped to dispossess Native Americans of much of their land, was part of a broad, voluntary participation that served as a prelude to the bestowing of citizenship on Native Americans generally in 1924; in theory, at least, and from a European perspective, arguably the crowning touch in the acculturation of indigenous peoples in the United States.

In the flashbacks that carry much of the narrative, Hale traces Cecelia's life segmentally, from her home reservation in northern Idaho—by way of a tenement in Tacoma, and substandard housing in Wapato, Washington—to San Francisco, to which she flees at age sixteen in 1966 and where less than a year later she becomes an unwed mother. The path from tribal land to the intercultural cauldron of the Bay Area is no simplistic pilgrim's regress from an Edenic setting to an infernal captivity in moral decay and material poverty. During the first twelve years of her life on the reservation, Cecelia is only moderately happy. Already there, she is partly isolated from her Native American tradition, "partly" because her mother militates against this cultural identity, as for example in criticizing Cecelia's desire to wear her hair long. "Long and straight and stringy. Why don't you get it cut and put in a good perm?" her mother asks plaintively. "You look just like some old witch. You look like Geronimo. You look like some damned reservation kid" (Hale, *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* 54-55).

Well-intending Will Capture unwittingly contributes to this cultural anomie by embodying mixed feelings about the family's heritage. Hale summarizes Will's ostensibly typical attitude succinctly: "Like many [other] Indian people of his generation, her father seemed to Cecelia in some curious way ashamed of being Indian, although he would have denied it vehemently. He spoke the native language, [and] hadn't even begun to learn English until he was twelve and went to mission school" (Hale, *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* 59). Will's unarticulated partial rejection of his heritage comes to expression in his insistence that Cecelia, apparently alone among the Native American children of the reservation, attend not the Roman Catholic mission school but rather a public school to which she must ride a bus twenty miles every morning and where she is the only non-Caucasian child. Underlying this parental guidance is his desire to see his daughter fulfil his own unrealized dream of becoming a lawyer and using intellectual tactics to defend tribal interests through the judicial system, a goal that fell victim to his inability to perform well enough at the University of Notre Dame to earn a degree. Typifying Cecelia's plight, while in the fourth grade she is hurled down a staircase by an older boy who escapes with impunity. Cecelia seeks to come to grips with her situation by being competitive, achieving both in the classroom and on the running track, where she enjoys moderate success.

When the prospect of her family moving away from the reservation to an urban area looms, she finds it enticing but simultaneously feels anxiety about leaving the only home she has ever known. After living briefly with her parents in an apartment on the fringe of the African-American ghetto in uninspiring Tacoma, Cecelia spends approximately three years of her adolescence among Native American friends in Wapato, where her interest in and performance at school wane markedly and she begins to smoke cigarettes and on occasion buy beer illegally.

Cecelia's flight to San Francisco soon proves to be a mixed blessing. She finds remunerative employment in a Mexican restaurant almost immediately and rents a room in a Victorian house in the Haight-Ashbury district. Within weeks of settling into that environment of hippies, marijuana, and social protest, she meets and is seduced by Brian Donahue, an Irish-American soldier who impregnates her on the eve of his departure to Viet Nam, where he dies. Cecelia lives in poverty and relative isolation while raising her infant son Corey (whose name may have been inspired by the protagonist's longing for her tribal identity) on the meagre payments of the Aid for Families with Dependent Children program until she is able to place him into a state-supported day care facility and enroll at the City College of San Francisco. There she does well enough to transfer to a baccalaureate program at the University of California in Berkeley.

Cecelia's encounter with urban society, and particularly with governmental officials, from a position of vulnerability allows Hale to highlight her captivity to social and bureaucratic factors largely beyond her control. The young protagonist is described as a "welfare mother" when she is seventeen, eighteen, and nineteen years old, although according to Hale's narrative that appellation is equally apt until she is in her early twenties. Cecelia's paucity of education compels her to accept "low-paying jobs any moron could do and then having to go back on welfare, tired of the stigma of welfare and the rat-infested apartment buildings and budgeting her pennies, waiting for the first and the fifteenth of every month, welfare days, to roll around." Cecelia, like countless other beneficiaries or victims of this revolving door system, is trapped in it: "It was no kind of life, and she could see no way out" (Hale, *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture*111, 117). One seeming escape presents itself in the form of a thirty-three-year-old divorcé who proposes marriage to Cecelia and promises her that they would inhabit a tract house in South San Francisco. Aware that this suitor is a racist and a boor with whom she has little in common, she declines his offer, determined to overcome her plight on her own devices.

Almost immediately thereafter Cecelia, then twenty-one years old, matriculates at the City College of San Francisco and registers for courses in anthropology, English composition, Spanish, and psychology in the hope of eventually transferring to a university and earning a degree. However, a Euro-American welfare official belittles her plans to pursue a liberal arts education, and insists in not making available additional financial support beyond her current monthly stipend of $147. When Cecelia protests that one of her acquaintances has received supplementary public aid after undertaking studies, the same official replies that such would be the case only for recipients who enroll in vocational educational programs. "You want the taxpayers of California to send you to college to study anthropology, for God's sake. You must be out of your mind. Do you think that's fair?" (Hale, *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* 123) Cecelia then turns to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in search of financial aid, but her letters remain unanswered. Consequently, during her year at the City College of San Francisco, she takes occasional jobs reading to blind students to supplement her meager income. During her Christmas vacation, Cecelia finds a temporary post at a Woolworth's lunch counter and hopes thereby to save enough money to purchase a sorely needed typewriter. Her plans are dashed, however, when the previously encountered welfare bureaucrat enters that store and finds Cecelia earning unreported income while receiving public assistance as a supposedly unemployed person. The incident is reported, but Cecelia is not prosecuted, and the matter is apparently forgotten while she moves to Berkeley and continues her studies. Like many other commentators, Hale thus describes the welfare system as little better than a safety net which unintentionally tends to ensnare people in self-

perpetuating poverty rather than motivating or equipping them to become economically self-supporting as fully integrated citizens.

As a woman who succeeds in earning an undergraduate degree at the University of California and gaining admission to its prestigious Boalt Hall law school, Cecelia Capture is not, of course, a typical Native American character. Hale emphasizes, however, that her atypicality has nothing to do with economic deprivation on the urban landscape. The other Native Americans in the San Francisco area are also trapped in a morass of poverty that makes a mockery of what advocates of "relocation" naively envisaged. Hale describes a downward spiral of increasing poverty, social isolation, and alcoholism in tracing the migration of individuals from the reservation to a rural community to the city, thereby reversing the underlying assumption that urbanization was the key to prosperity and assimilation.

Living conditions on the reservation in northern Idaho, Hale insists, were not unbearably bad. She establishes this explicitly in the second chapter when Cecelia, then in her mid-twenties and living with her husband and two children in Spokane, discusses the matter with a cousin, who remembers visiting the supposedly impoverished Captures at Cecelia's childhood home, where they lacked both electricity and an indoor toilet. "It wasn't because we were poor, Em," explains Cecelia. "The power lines didn't go out that far in those days. Everyone who lived out in the country had kerosene lamps and outside toilets." Continuing the debate, the cousin describes the Captures' residence as an "awful, ugly old house." Cecelia rejoins, "My father built that house himself, and he was a master carpenter," adding that "that land where you got lost in the wheat belonged to my father, all of it, all four hundred acres surrounding that house!" To be sure, Cecelia's memory of her childhood appears to have been partly idealized by the tribulations she has endured as a teenager and young adult. The cousin with whom she discusses her early years can counter that on at least one occasion Cecelia "had to pick up beer bottles alongside the road for lunch money" and had holes in the soles of her shoes (Hale, *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* 50). Hale does not give a comprehensive, external description of the Captures' living conditions at that stage; her main concern in this regard is with Cecelia's perception of them.

After leaving the reservation in Idaho where the bones of Will Capture's forebears are interred, the family's standard of accommodation clearly declines. Tacoma is "old and seedy, decaying, full of factories, refineries, pulp mills, sailors and soldiers. It always smelled like skunk in Tacoma." The Captures' apartment near that city's decrepit African-American ghetto is poorly illuminated and "smelled of mothballs and God knew what else." Moreover, "its walls were covered with brown wallpaper, and naked light bulbs hung from the ceiling." The junior high school that Cecelia attends in Tacoma "was a place to keep students off the streets, a sort of holding tank for tough, inner-city whites and cool, bad, shuckin' and jivin' blacks" where Cecelia feels quite out of place (Hale, *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* 89, 91). She finds her refuge and security in the quietude of the public library.

When Cecelia and her mother leave Tacoma and settle in Wapato, they enter a social environment in which displaced Native Americans and Chicano migratory laborers inhabit tar paper shacks. "There was no grass growing anywhere nearby, only dust, thick dry white dust" (*The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* 99). An immense sign greets them as they enter this stricken habitat: "WELCOME TO THE BEAUTIFUL, BOUNTIFUL YAKIMA VALLEY." Nevertheless, Cecelia develops numerous friendships, chiefly with girls from similar ethnic backgrounds. She tolerates "being wretchedly poor because she was just thirteen and Wapato was a welcome change from Tacoma" (Hale, *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* 98, 100).

Hale reserves her most biting social commentary for Native Americans in San Francisco and extends her consideration of the abuse of alcohol from the Captures to these uprooted indigenes in general. Their relocation has entombed them in an utterly alien environment in which they seek solace in the bottle. Cecelia discovers that her personal situation is not unique in that city. Yearning for Native American companionship, she calls at the American Indian Center but is singularly unimpressed with this "shabby, rundown suite of rooms up a dark flight of stairs in a skid-row section of town." The center is deserted save for "a couple of disreputable-looking men playing pool." Cecelia gains further insight into the fallout of relocation when, though only eighteen years old and thus too young to purchase alcoholic beverages legally in California, she enters a "seedy" bar patronized by many Native Americans in San Francisco. Representing tribes from throughout the United States of America, most of them "were already drunk, though it was still very early." They strike Cecelia as being "hopeless, displaced people. No longer Indian, yet not white either." These uprooted indigenes, "a band of outcasts," are thoroughly discontented with their lot in the city and discuss endlessly how much better their lives were "back on the rez." Hale underscores their loss of tribal identity. One "very drunk" old man accosts Cecelia in this bar and asks her to which tribe she belongs. When she ignores his query, he presses the issue: "I know what tribe you are—you're like me, that's what you are, that's okay, sweetheart. You know what? We're the biggest tribe of all. That's right. Us Sidewalk Indians. Hee Hee Hee. Us homeless ones, like you and me, yeah, us Sidewalk Indians." Cecelia flees this locale, perhaps having seen in it the terminal moraine of her own drifting. "She preferred being alone to being one of them. She had seen such awful desperation in their Indian faces. Big-city Indians. She was truly cast adrift, without people of her own, except for Corey" (Hale, *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture*111, 112).

Despite these infernal surroundings, Hale sees a glimmer of hope for urbanized Native Americans. When Cecelia is contemplating suicide in the cemetery in Berkeley where the father of her son lies buried, she recalls participating in the occupation of Alcatraz in 1969, the year after the American Indian Movement was founded. "Good feelings out there then. Indians feeling effective," she remembers. Hale does not develop this potentially significant theme explicitly and turn *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* into a political novel, but one gains the impression that she is underscoring the responsibility of urban Native Americans to take the initiative in social reform movements. Cecelia recalls in paraphrased form the words of the aging drunk in the bar more than a decade earlier: "We are the biggest tribe of all, us displaced ones, us urban Indians, us sidewalk redskins" (Hale, *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* 199).

Cecelia's ultimate decision not to commit suicide but to make the best of her post-marital life serves as a metaphor that reinforces this point. Occurring in the last chapter of the novel, it is also the final episode of a marriage that itself is a metaphor for the history of relations between Euro-Americans and Native Americans. Cecelia's tweedy, bespectacled husband, Nathan Welles, is a weakly autobiographical reflection of Hale's second husband, Stephen Hale. (The allusion to the eighteenth-century Connecticut school teacher who regretted that he had but one life to give for his country presumably will not be lost on any historically conscious American reader.) This fictional character embodies more Anglo-American history than one person can reasonably be expected to bear without sacrificing his plausibility. His pedigree, we belatedly learn, expends back to the *Mayflower*, and one of his ancestors was an officer in the Revolutionary War. Confirming its New England intellectual roots, the Welles family is Unitarian. From the late eighteenth century until the twentieth, all the men in that clan had studied at Yale; Nathan, however, has broken that tradition by attending San

Francisco State University as an undergraduate. His liberal leanings manifest themselves in his atheism, his refusal to inherit a sword that had belonged to the Revolutionary War ancestor, and his marriage to a Native American. Cecelia, in short, has married the Anglo-American tradition that dominated indigenous peoples, and her role as a spouse is accordingly that of a junior partner. To be sure, her husband has turned against certain aspects of his cultivated heritage, yet his racist attitudes remain deeply entrenched. Cecelia initially admires Nathan and envies his privileged upbringing. Later, however, "she realized how condescending his attitude toward her was." The limits of his liberalism become clear when they attend a nearly all-white party in San Francisco. Cecelia overhears him refer jokingly to the 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, then a current topic in intellectual circles in the wake of the publication of Dee Brown's historical study of Native American and Euro-American relations, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (1970), a copy of which Cecelia has given him but he has refused to read. She subsequently informs him that Indian children who had given him and other Boy Scouts *en route* to a camp many years earlier the finger "sure had the right idea." Nathan counters that he has bestowed on his underprivileged Native American wife civilization in the form of a washing machine and a drier and taken her and their children to Disneyland. Cecelia is no longer impressed with this bestowal of Euro-American culture. When she announces that she wants to study law, he replies, "No, you don't. You just think you do" (Hale, *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* 165, 167, 170). No longer willing to let the white man control her thoughts and actions, this central Native American character declares her independence, packs her bags, and returns to the University of California. Paternalistic white liberalism has shown its limits; the once-dominated indigene no longer willingly plays second fiddle but insists on calling her own tune.

Interwoven with Hale's narrative, of Cecelia's moral decline as an alcoholic uprooted Native American, is an inconclusive discussion of the role of personal moral accountability in tension with social determinism of self-destructive behavior. Hale's critique of "relocation" and attribution of responsibility for Cecelia's plight to her loss of rootedness in tribal tradition and concomitant urbanization stretch far but do not cover all her tribulations. Clearly Cecelia is personally accountable for many of the ills that befall her. Yet the line of demarcation between moral accountability and social history is not sharply defined. In Hale's perception, the roots of Cecelia's apparent ethical nihilism lie partly in her cultural displacement.

Little is revealed about Cecelia's moral and spiritual development as a child on the reservation in northern Idaho, where she performs well enough in the classroom to be promoted directly from the second to the fourth grade and is sufficiently athletically gifted to place second in the only footrace described. There is not a hint of anchoring in traditional Coeur d'Alène spirituality, which seems foreign to both of Cecelia's parents. Her hard-drinking father attended a Jesuit high school in Spokane before, as indicated earlier, studying briefly at the University of Notre Dame. Cecelia's verbally abusive and condescending mother, like Janet Campbell Hale's, is of one-half Irish-American extraction and is apparently Roman Catholic, although that is stated only obliquely. Cecelia's primary education is in a public school rather than at one run by a Catholic mission. In any case, the spiritual traditions of her tribe had faded so much by the 1960s that they hardly could have lent significant moral guidance to youth during that decade. The only direct reference to Cecelia's spiritual moorings is negative. In the first chapter, shortly after being arrested she considers praying to Saint Jude, the patron of people in desperate situations, as her mother had done on many occasions. For some unexplained reason, however, Cecelia cannot (Hale, *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* 9). In terms of personal spirituality, she seems to occupy by analogy the

cultural no man's land of the Native Americans she has encountered in San Francisco: "no longer Indian, yet not white either."

The significance of this spiritual vacuum stands out in bold relief when one considers *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* against the backdrop of Hale's previous novel, *The Owl's Song.*In that work of juvenile fiction, the protagonist, a Coeur d'Alène youth named Billy White Cloud, leaves the reservation in Idaho at age fourteen to continue his education at a junior high school in a West Coast city that appears to be Portland. Before migrating, he presses his father, the son of the tribe's last shaman, to share with him details of his successful vision quest. The elder White Cloud does so but has begun to question its validity. Billy's own quest is fruitless, and his months in a school that bears some resemblance to the one Cecelia attends in Tacoma are miserable, characterized by scholarly mediocrity and tense relations with bullying African-American students, and only briefly relieved when he finds expression in painting scenes that reflect his cultural background. Eventually Billy returns to the reservation and realizes that he has had a vision, though one whose reality he did not grasp at the time, at the waterfront in that city. He is thereby fortified to face life confidently, even after his aging father succumbs to a heart attack.

Cecelia Capture, on the other hand, has no tribal vision, isolated as she is from her cultural background because of geographical distance from her ancestral land and estrangement from her parents. There is simply no evidence of significant moral or spiritual anchoring in this alcoholic woman, cast adrift at age sixteen in a socially turbulent city, where she has no permanent friends and soon finds herself caught in a web of unwed motherhood, poverty, and a welfare system that does little to promote upward mobility of any sort. Small wonder, then, that most of her actions contravene weakly prevailing moral standards. To be sure, Cecelia's childhood conduct on the reservation is hardly exemplary. She throws a cousin's doll into the pit under the family outhouse and disingenuously denies committing that act of theft and vandalism both at the time and many years later when the cousin in question broaches the topic. Cecelia nurtures hateful thoughts about some of her classmates and her verbally abusive mother. After resettling in Wapato, she becomes addicted to nicotine and, as noted above, on occasion purchases and drinks beer illegally with young friends while paying little attention to her schooling. In San Francisco, Cecelia's need for affection and companionship drives her into the arms of Brian Donahue, an exploitative relationship which traps her in pregnancy and parenthood, perpetuating her poverty. After electing to resume her law studies at Boalt Hall while her husband and children remain in Seattle, she enters a series of adulterous trysts that begin while she is driving through Oregon and end shortly before her arrest. Typifying Cecelia's denial of her moral laxity, she ironically rejects the term "sex partner" as lacking connotations of permanence, warmth, and romance (Hale, *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* 50, 22). Notwithstanding her promises to Nathan about sobriety, her consumption of alcohol resumes and increases to the point where she brings wine to Boalt Hall in a thermos bottle and eventually pays for her insobriety by spending a protracted weekend behind bars.

Yet, once in jail, Cecelia vacillates between acknowledging her personal guilt and seeking to absolve herself of responsibility for her plight. She recognizes that she is an adulteress and, apparently, a criminal. At the same time, however, her domineering Euro-American husband is a convenient scapegoat: "It was his fault, then. It was his fault she had become an adulteress and disgraced herself this way, landing in jail. She hated Nathan" (Hale, *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* 45).

The uncompleted suicide in the final chapter is a *dénouement* in which Cecelia does not reach any closure with regard to her inner problems but believes she sees light at the end of a tunnel. She feels relieved that her humiliating marriage to Nathan Welles, the embodiment of Euro-American culture, has ended, and she believes that she can find meaning in life by living partly for her children. Cecelia feels "free"—"No longer constrained. Not hemmed in" (Hale, *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* 201). However, Hale leaves the impression, perhaps quite realistically in the light of recent Native American history, that this sense of liberty does not yet extend to escaping the burdens of either condescending Euro-American attitudes or alcoholism, both of which bear part of the responsibility for her plight, a fact Cecelia understands only vaguely.

Hale thus leaves unresolved the overarching and interwoven issues of Native Americans' maladjustment and chemical dependency in the urban environment in which a growing majority of them strive for—or have abandoned striving for—economic prosperity and, in some cases, the recovery of ethnic community. Fairly extensive research by social scientists has suggested that a majority of urbanized Native Americans have done precious little of the latter, and Hale's brief consideration of the limits and unappealing character of relevant social institutions corroborates this. Against this backdrop, the final notes in *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* are played in a mournful minor key.

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