

Book Review

From the Publisher

Bawaajimo A Dialect of Dreams in Anishinaabe Language and Literature. By Margaret Noodin. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State U P, 2014. 234 p. \$29.95 USD.

Bawaajimo: A Dialect of Dreams in Anishinaabe Language and Literature (See fig. 1) combines literary criticism, sociolinguistics, native studies, and poetics to introduce an Anishinaabe way of reading. Although nationally specific, the book speaks to a broad audience by demonstrating an indigenous literary methodology. Investigating the language itself, its place of origin, its sound and structure, and its current usage provides new critical connections between North American fiction, Native American literatures, and Anishinaabe narrative. The four Anishinaabe authors discussed in the book, Louise Erdrich, Jim Northrup, Basil Johnston, and Gerald Vizenor, share an ethnic heritage but are connected more clearly by a culture of tales, songs, and beliefs. Each of them has heard, studied, and written in Anishinaabemowin, making their heritage language a part of the backdrop and sometimes the medium, of their work. All of them reference the power and influence of the Great Lakes region and the Anishinaabeakiing, and they connect the landscape to the original language. As they reconstruct and deconstruct the aadizookaan, the traditional tales of Nanabozho and other mythic figures, they grapple with the legacy of cultural genocide and write toward a future that places ancient beliefs in the center of the cultural horizon.

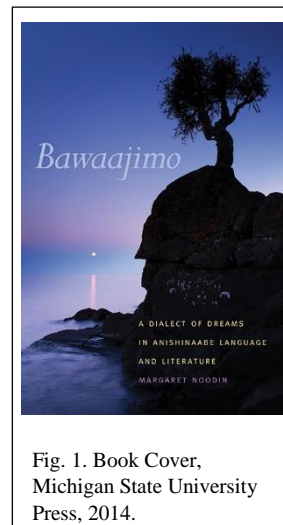


Fig. 1. Book Cover, Michigan State University Press, 2014.

Book Review: Margaret Noodin's *Bawaajimo: A Dialect of Dreams in Anishinaabe Language and Literature*.

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Margaret Noodin's book reminds us that indigenous knowledge is often conveyed through storytelling. Similarly to other forms of knowledge, Anishinaabe storytelling has developed from a long history of experience with, and deep understanding of, the lands of the Great Lakes region in the U.S. and Canada. In fact, the author makes clear that language and literature practices are vital to the assertion of a key indigenous rights' issue: the assertion of a unique indigenous identity. Noodin achieves this by introducing her theory

“*bawaajimo*,” a word she creates by joining two Anishinaabe words together: *bawaajige* (to dream) and *wabaamaa* (to see) (xv). In traditional Anishinaabe culture, a dream or vision is commonly experienced as a religious act in which someone receives knowledge during a dream or vision state. Noodin applies her theory of “*bawaajimo*” to the act of academic critique by performing “*bawaajimo*” from an Anishinaabe perspective; in other words, Noodin sets out to “wonder if in dreams we sweep reality away, cast time aside, and see the other side for a while” (xvi). In fact, it is in this state of “*bawaajimo*,” between reality and a dream-like sequence, that as readers we can begin thinking in Anishinaabe while reading or hearing Anishinaabe stories.

Noodin, like other contemporary Anishinaabe scholars and writers, stresses an Anishinaabe-centered approach to the study of language and literature as vital to the preserving and the exercising of rights to their cultural traditions (including stories, both oral and written). In storytelling, actions, through the use of verb forms, dictate characterizations and plot. As a result, action-oriented texts provide readers with a distinct form of thinking, speaking, and writing in Anishinaabemowin, the language of the Anishinaabe. However, as Noodin makes clear, in our contemporary period an Anishinaabe-centered approach involves more than a focus on Anishinaabe-derived knowledge. It is a dialect, or a mediation, between the Anishinaabe worldview and the European-derived worldview, since these two overarching worldviews have been in tension, arbitration, and conversation for centuries.

References

Noodin, Margaret. *Bawaajimo: A Dialect of Dreams in Anishinaabe Language and Literature*, Michigan State U P, 2014.

Michigan State University Press. Marketing Copy for Margaret Noodin’s Book, *Bawaajimo: A Dialect of Dreams in Anishinaabe Language and Literature*. 2014. Michigan State U P. Web. 4 Jan. 2015.

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