his chapters as expanded lectures in his course, drawing upon his knowledge of the French medieval narrative and deconstruction, and only subsequently coming together as a book. This might allow one to overlook his lack of reference to the work done by critics such as Allen. In fact, if one peruses his works cited pages, he has very little reliance on published literary criticism having to do with Silko. One can look at this in two ways: his work is so unique that no one else has expounded these particular ideas, or so much has been published that he found it an overwhelming task to get through it to find more of the works that were relevant. Certainly, no one has published a book-length work that covers Silko’s work with exactly this approach. This seems to be both its strength and its weakness.


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In LeAnne Howe’s second novel, *Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story*, a young female spirit named Ezol Day returns to Ada, Oklahoma, after one hundred years to talk about the early days of Indian baseball with Lena Coulter, a contemporary Choctaw journalist. Even within the long tradition of literary Indian spiritual helpers, Ezol is an unusual figure. She has the uncanny ability make high-level mental calculations and talks about the possibility of time travel with the use of her *iti nishkin*, or “eye tree.” At twenty-one, she was reading French at the Good Land Orphanage and displayed what one administrator terms “genius symptoms” (142). At the same time, Ezol Day wishes desperately to live a normal life, to find acceptance and love. She internally rejoices, for instance, when she manages to show some level of social competence by acting similarly to those around her. And one of her fervent hopes is to one day “speak in complicated thoughts to Blip” (163), her team’s player/manager whom she loves.

It is unclear whether Lena somehow calls for the return of Ezol Day or whether Ezol returns for some purpose of her own. Fol-
lowing the guidance of an inexplicable voice telling her to return to Oklahoma, Lena begins rebuilding her Grandmother Cora’s house (and her own family history), when she finds a leather mail bag hidden in the walls that contains information from and about Ezol. Soon after, Ezol appears and begins telling her the story about the pressures and politics of the Miko Kings baseball team. At first, Lena sees this as the kind of investigation that appeals to her as a researcher and journalist who worked in New York and later in the Middle East. But as she learns more about the history of Indian baseball, she also learns that the past becomes quite personal, forcing her to confront her feelings of abandonment by her mother and to confront the complex tragedies in her own family’s past.

In Howe’s novel, baseball is both recreation and re-creation. As Ezol says, “Choctaws and Chickasaws are renounced for their ability to rebuild. . . . We seem to manifest nature itself, as re-creators” (34). In the days of the Miko Kings baseball teams, there was perhaps never a more difficult time for the Choctaw people of Oklahoma to re-create themselves yet again: the U.S. government fragmented their communal land base into small, individually owned plots; the promise of tribal freedom in Indian Territory was soon to be completely extinguished by the creation of the state of Oklahoma; and general lawlessness pervaded the area. For the Choctaws, and particularly for the owner of the Miko Kings, Henri Day (Ezol’s uncle), baseball provides the perfect vehicle for promoting tribal identity and solidarity. For one thing, baseball, according Ezol Day, was invented by Indigenous people in North America, where versions of the game appeared among many different tribes. Furthermore, the proceeds from the team went to the Four Mother’s Society, an organization that worked to prevent the allotment of tribal lands. Finally, Henri Day bases the organization on the Four Women’s Society: he refuses to sell shares of the team to gamblers while at the same time buying shares himself so that regular people could purchase them and have ownership in the team and in the idea, even though this approach risked the viability of the team.

Howe’s novel repeatedly returns to aesthetic, creative response to the difficulties for Indians in Oklahoma in the early twentieth
century: fragmentation, changing cultural borders, and lawlessness. At the same time, the novel shows a well-founded skepticism about stories that try to do too much—that deny the complexity of human experience in the heady mist of the unbroken narrative. Justina Maurepas, for example, who lives among the Choctaws for one year, falls in love with the Miko Kings’ star pitcher, Hope Little Leader. But years before, she was known in New Orleans as Black Juice, a black nationalist who confronted inhumanity and inequality in New Orleans with terrorism and violence. Still later, she marries a prominent citizen in New Orleans and becomes a kind of fixture within the bounds of cultural norms and structural power. Algernon Pinchot, an academic from Morehouse College, visits her on several occasions when she is quite old, wishing to write her life more or less exclusively as a narrative of revolt when she was known as Black Juice. Justina, however, wishes to re-create her life within the narrative of her love affair with Hope Little Leader, not the more consumable narrative of the terrorist bomber. Eventually, after becoming her son-in-law, Pinchot drops the project altogether.

The Miko Kings likewise disassembles the obviously constructed narrative of the invention of baseball in the person of Abner Doubleday. Of course, the creation and re-creation of baseball (like so many other “inventions”) is a lengthy, transnational, and ongoing process rather than a discrete point of time in a particular person’s history. Howe’s novel reflects this process-oriented point of view by providing information from a variety of narrative angles, including letters, a diary, photographs, and drawings. In a moment of particular metafictional daring, the novel even offers a re-creation of the novel’s re-creation in the waning moments of Hope Little Leader’s life. For this reason, Howe’s novel responds to the current discussions in the field of Indigenous literatures about whether metafictional or postmodernist texts are able to reflect an authentic Indigenous point of view. The Miko Kings suggests that our experiences are far too complicated to be reduced to the simple calculus of authenticity or the unified narrative of modernist fiction, even though these conventions have for some reason become the signs of Indigenous authenticity for many Indigenous writers and critics. On a more fac-
tual level, some readers may quibble with the historic authenticity of the novel—for example, the use of relief pitchers or maple bats. My own feeling is that the book should be longer, offering more expansive, even sprawling renditions of the lives of these characters in the novel, like Thomas Pynchon’s *Gravity’s Rainbow*, Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*, or David Foster Wallace’s *Infinite Jest*. But then again, it is just as possible that, as with any wonderful work of fiction, I just did not want it to end.