John Joseph Mathews and Michael Snyder. *Our Osage Hills: Toward an Osage Ecology and Tribalography of the Early Twentieth Century*. Lehigh University Press, 2020. 318 pages. ISBN: 9781611463019.
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Sharing co-authorship alongside John Joseph Mathews (1894-1979), Michael Snyder draws primarily upon archival research using the newspaper *Daily Journal-Capital* (Pawhuska, Oklahoma) to locate additional and lesser-known writings of Mathews, the Osage "author, historian, and naturalist" (1). *Our Osage Hills: Toward an Osage Ecology and Tribalography of the Early Twentieth Century* reintroduces Mathews to a new audience and firmly centers his writings to the growth and development of Indigenous intellectualism in the first half of the twentieth century. While Snyder does not draw these parallels or conclusions, one should place Mathews' literary work alongside the literary and cultural achievements of both D'Arcy McNickle and Ella Deloria who are contemporaries of Mathews. Snyder further reminds the reader that Mathews "was a brilliant intermediary between lower Plains Indian culture and mainstream North American readers, and an intrepid advocate for his Osage Nation" (1). The monograph draws upon a newspaper column, "Our Osage Hills," written by Mathews with companion essays, written by Snyder, each with their own italicized headings, providing historical, cultural, and literary contexts. Snyder explains: "my pieces tell a broader story of Osage cultural survivance, continuity, and the struggle for sovereignty" (2). Furthermore, Snyder explains that his intent was to loosely organize Mathews' writings chronologically; although, he does depart from a rigid timeline to group the writings according to theme. These eleven themes are as follows: Scene Setting, Birds of the Osage, Culture and Politics, Romance of the Osage, African Americans, Autumn, Man in Nature, Osage Women and Others, Conservation, Critique of Settler Colonialism, and Murder. These themes are given titles by Snyder, including the titles for each of Mathews' narratives which have a publication date but did not include a title other than the title of his column, *Our Osage Hills.*

Snyder uses the theoretical lens of "tribalography," a term he attributes to author LeAnne Howe which "entails synthesizing through narrative the collective experiences of individuals, families, clans, and ancestors into a meaningful form to inform readers about who, in this case, the Wahzhazhe people truly are" (8). Additionally, Snyder

draws attention to what he terms as the "Osage ecology" contained in the writings of Mathews. For example, in the first theme of the text, "Scene Setting," the reader is introduced to Osage ecology when Mathews writes, "The Osage is unique in its topography. Its hills can be seen from almost every direction from adjoining counties"; he continues, "One wonders if we who live here will ever grow to the stature of the Osage Hills. Man's environment plays a great part in moulding him, but he must come to an appreciation of that environment" (16). Clearly, Mathews had been "moulded" by his environment because he writes in his many observations about the natural world and the "balance of Nature. This was the status quo before the advent of the white man. In the struggle for existence, each animal, bird, fish, and insect played a role in the Osage" (25). Osage ecology is further explained in Mathews' narrative #49, found in the second theme, Birds of the Osage, and titled "Hawk and Quail: The Balance of Nature Before the White Man." In this narrative, Mathews writes about the hawk being a "flesh-eater and […] very fond of quail" (23). He continues at length to describe the "delicate balance" (25) between the hawk and quail: "To go back to the hawk, we find that the number of the hawks is limited by food supply, which really depends upon the ability of the quail to protect himself. But there is more to the balance of Nature than this" (24). Snyder also expands upon Mathew's observations of hawks and quails by writing, "Mathews knew hawks like the back of his hand, and he deeply loved this bird of prey. He described more than once gazing up at the circling red-tail hawk as a boy and literally crying tears of frustration at his inability to fly" (35). Mathews' use of "Osage ecology" also made him a conservationist, as when he writes of prairie chickens:

> the chicken is admirably adapted to the prairie of the Osage. There is no reason why there should not be thousands of them […] These gunners seem to feel vindictive; they, in a spirit of defiance of the law and its representative, the game warden, take pride in outwitting the latter and in shooting the remnant of the great flocks wherever and whenever they find them; it is a sort of determined action to exterminate this great bird. (38)

For Snyder, he sees a distinct Osage ecology emerge in the writings of Mathews – an Osage ecology that is rooted to the close relationship Mathews has with the land, his observations about the interplay between animals and "man," but also Mathews' call for the preservation of those animals against "man."

In Snyder's companion essays, he follows through on his earlier statement that his "pieces tell a broader story" (2) by including discussions and deeper research into the historical change that came to Mathews and the Osage people in the 1920s and through the Great Depression. While the third theme of "Culture and Politics" speaks to these tumultuous changes, Mathews' *Our Osage Hills* column remains focused on landscapes, found within, for example, the narratives titled "One of Many Beautiful Places in the World," "Life Cycles," and "The Moon," all written beautifully in Mathews' style of prose. It is Snyder who writes and provides a deeper understanding of the tumult that those decades had upon the Osage people. For example, while Mathews writes about "How natural it was for primitive people to worship the moon," in narrative #20, titled "The Moon" (74), Snyder follows with a companion essay, "The Passing of Red Eagles" (75). This is not Snyder's attempt at Osage ecology. Rather this essay shares with the reader that "Three days after the preceding column ran ['The Moon' written by Mathews, dated May 13th, 1930], readers of the Pawhuska *Daily Journal-Capital* learned that the case of Ida Martin, a 'Pawnee farm woman' charged with selling wine to a party of fullblood Osages, had been submitted to a jury in the federal court" (75). Snyder continues to tell the darker history of the "Osage murders," a topic that Mathews was reluctant to write about. Snyder offers this: "Joe Red Eagle's death speaks volumes of the precarious period in which he lived. The 1920s and early 1930s were a violent and risky time to be a fullblood Osage" (77). Snyder would return to this topic in the last theme, entitled "Murder." Here, Snyder offers this important context, that Mathews was living overseas and that "One crucial fact has eluded writers covering the Osage murders: the victims were almost entirely of Mathews's own band, the Big Hill band, whose members mainly lived in the vicinity of Gray Horse Indian Village" (260). Thus, a fuller picture emerges, that Mathews was away from the community during the times of the Osage murders and that he would reluctantly write about them in other published works.

This monograph is an important contribution to the field of American Indian Studies because it brings attention to the writings of John Joseph Mathews. Alongside his fellow Indigenous intellectuals, McNickle and Deloria, all three represent the scholarly and literary achievements that create a deeper understanding of "tribalography," and the collective experiences of Indigenous peoples can be traced through their writings. Finally, the sharing of co-authorship by Snyder re-centers and gives primacy to the

work of Mathews, thus giving credit to Mathews and bringing his lesser-known writings to a new audience.

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