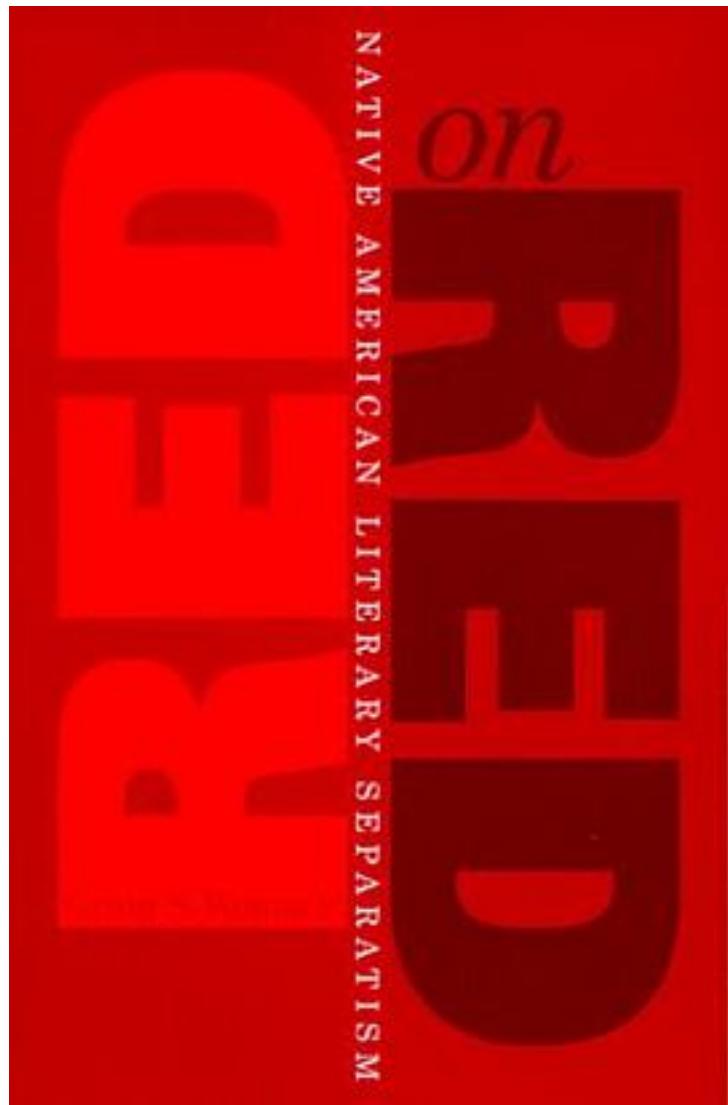


# Red on Red



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How can a square peg fit into a round hole? It can't. How can a door be unlocked with a pencil? It can't. How can Native literature be read applying conventional postmodern literary criticism? It can't. That is Craig Womack's argument in *Red on Red*. Indian communities have their own intellectual and cultural traditions that are well equipped to analyze Native literary production. These traditions should be the eyes through which the texts are viewed. To analyze a Native text with the methods currently dominant in the academy, according to the author, is like studying the stars with a magnifying glass. In an unconventional and piercingly humorous appeal, Womack creates a dialogue between essays on Native literature and fictional letters from Creek characters who comment on the essays. Through this conceit, Womack demonstrates an alternative approach to American Indian literature, with the letters serving as a "Creek chorus" that offers answers to the questions raised in his more traditional essays. Topics range from a comparison of contemporary oral versions of Creek stories and the translations of those stories dating back to the early twentieth century, to a queer reading of Cherokee author Lynn Riggs's play *The Cherokee Night*. Womack argues that the meaning of works by native peoples inevitably changes through evaluation by the dominant culture. *Red on Red* is a call for self-determination on the part of Native writers and a demonstration of an important new approach to studying Native works -- one that engages not only the literature, but also the community from which the work grew.

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