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**Author**

Boxberger, Daniel L.

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collection ends with a woman's memories of her child who drowned. In "Swimming Upstream," Brant draws a parallel between the woman's longing for her child and a salmon's relentless search for its home to spawn and create a new generation. As the woman watches a salmon struggling and bleeding from pushing against barriers in its path, she sees her son and emotionally struggles, along with the salmon, to reach the place of rest. For the salmon, it is a physical place, but for the characters in *Food and Spirits*, it is primarily an emotional, psychic place that they struggle to find. And, in the searchings of these characters, all readers can find a moving portrayal of personal and universal themes.

*Nancy Bonvillain*

New School for Social Research

**Essays in North American Indian History.** Edited by Michael J. Gillis. Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., 1990. 237 pages. \$24.95 paper.

This book is composed of sixteen essays on American Indian history, all of which have appeared previously. As the editor states in the preface, the works were chosen with his students in mind. The book is divided into five sections—"Beginnings," "Belief," "Exchange," "Conflict," and "Perceptions"—and a conclusion, and is designed to serve as a coherent set of readings for a course in American Indian history. Each essay is accompanied by a short introduction written by the editor and a reference to the original source of the publication. This latter information is important, because the editor, for ease of reading, has omitted the footnotes and reference citations that appeared in the originals. With the reference, the serious student can check the sources the authors utilized to construct their arguments. The essays include the writings of some of the foremost historians and ethnohistorians in the country (e.g., James Axtell, Alfred Crosby, James Ronda, Bruce Trigger, and Richard White) and therefore are representative of much of the current thought in American Indian studies.

Each of the sections, except the conclusion, contains three essays that deal with specific aspects of the general subject. For a text intended for a course in American Indian history, however, the essays seem overly weighted towards the East Coast and northern Great Plains. There is, for example, only one essay each

about the California and Southwest culture areas and none representing the Northwest Coast, Great Basin, Plateau, or Alaska. One could argue that most of the history of American Indians, at least the history of American Indian and Euro-American interaction, transpired on the East Coast and Great Plains, but that would suggest that the experiences of the native people west of the Rocky Mountains was unimportant. What, for example, of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, probably the broadest sweeping piece of Indian legislation in the history of the United States? What of the fishing rights cases of the Plateau and Northwest Coast, which set the precedent for cases concerning treaty interpretation and natural resource use by Native Americans throughout the continent? Perhaps it is not fair to list such specific examples, because there are literally hundreds that could be mentioned, but the point is that the essays in this book are overly biased towards the East. Personally, I would prefer a text with more of a geographical balance. In addition, with the exception of Vine Deloria's essay on the reburial issue, there is little mention of contemporary issues or even issues of the twentieth century. Although one section deals specifically with conflict as subject matter, many of the other essays also are concerned with issues of warfare and other types of conflict, giving one the impression that conflict has dominated native and Euro-American interaction.

This, of course, brings to mind the question, What do we want our students to learn from a course in Native American history? Most university students will never have the opportunity to work with native people, so what is it about the Native American experience that is important for the educated class of American society to know? As the instructor of an anthropology course entitled "Indians of North America," I have wrestled with this question. Recently, I have abandoned the traditional anthropological route of dealing with the standard ethnographies and "traditional culture" and instead have infused my course with a healthy dose of the history of Native American political economy, including overviews of Indian policy and the role of Native Americans in a developing North American economy. This latter issue, of course, necessitates a discussion of such topics as the role of the *encomienda* system, the fur trade, the settlement of the West, and the contemporary issues of federal acknowledgment and resource use and control.

In the past, my Indian course drew between 150 and 400 students per quarter and was one of the most popular courses in

my university. However, I was faced with the realization that my students were not getting the message that the experience of Native Americans can teach us all regardless of our particular ethnic background. As a result, I have cut the size of my classes and have made the course content much more interactive than was possible with a student count in the hundreds. Now I start with Felix Cohen's premise that Native Americans are the "miner's canary" of American society and then elaborate on social issues that touch everyone's life. My students work with primary sources and attempt a variety of learning modes in order not only to learn about native people but to relate their studies in some way to their own background and experience. I think the transformation has been successful, and the students think so, too. I do not believe that this approach ignores the responsibility we have as academics to relate knowledge of native societies; rather, it has enhanced that responsibility. For students, knowledge that relates to their own life is particularly meaningful. If this means that some understanding of native people is retained along with that knowledge, then I have done my job. But what do these reflexive comments have to do with the text under review here?

Texts are, by their very nature, a starting point. Unfortunately, students often accept a text as not only the beginning but also the end point of course material. In most courses, the majority of students never go beyond the text content; it constitutes the totality of their experience with the literature. (We will not discuss the fact that a significant number of students never read the text.)

Despite the criticism mentioned above, editor Gillis has done a fine job of bringing together essays that discuss some of the salient issues in Native American studies. Of course, it then becomes the responsibility of the individual instructor to motivate the students to go beyond what the text provides. The serious scholar would want to refer to the originals of the essays that appear in this volume, but for the student, this book provides an excellent starting point to explore the role of Native Americans in United States history.

*Daniel L. Boxberger*  
Western Washington University