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America together. Through their changing Indian policies, British, Dutch, French, Spanish, and Russian settlers established unique regional colonies out of the chaos engendered by contact. Indians, thus, not only are at the center of early America, they also help to *center* early American history.

Taylor's synthesis represents, then, an important milestone for early American Indian history. Notwithstanding his repeated use of the "low counters" in pre-Columbian population estimates, his inability to reconcile discussions of the Bering Strait with Native oral traditions, and his failure to introduce cultural relativism into his discussion of ritualized human sacrifice and torture, Taylor's narrative will quickly compete with or replace other surveys of early America; it could even provide a useful survey of colonial Indian-white relations despite five chapters without any strictly Indian content. While one might wonder whether the achievements of Indian history have come at the expense of others—there are no exclusive chapters, for example, on women, workers, or African Americans—Taylor has issued an important corrective to generations of intellectual disregard and neglect. For its synthetic brilliance and accessibility, *American Colonies* will likely become the defining historical narrative of early America.

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American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice, and Ecocriticism: The Middle Place. By Joni Adamson. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001. 213 pages. \$46.00 cloth; \$19.95 paper.

This book promises much, but, in the end, delivers very little of positive value. This seems due, at least in large part, to the fact that its author, University of Arizona assistant professor Joni Adamson, does not appear to be especially conversant with—or is unwilling to honestly confront—either the literary or the activist contexts she purports to address. In either event, her focus in terms of literature is so constricted as to be distortive, all but nonexistent where the realities of activism are concerned. Overall, it seems as if she has done nothing so much as polish up the notes she uses to teach her lower division undergraduate literature and writing courses, added a few anecdotal observations about the teaching experience (pp. 89–93), then topped things off with observations contrasting the beauty of purple owl clover to the malignant townhouse sprawl of Tucson (pp. 5–6).

The result is confused, confusing, often trite, and always a very long way from the comprehensive examination of "how mainstream conceptions of 'wilderness' and 'nature' create blind spots in the environmental movement" Adamson says at the outset she will deliver (p. xix). Still less does she produce anything resembling a coherent articulation of how environmentalism might reconceptualize itself by assimilating American Indian understandings and priorities—a process she repeatedly refers to as establishing a "middle place" (p. xvii)—in order to foster "concrete social and environmental change" (p.

xix). The scope of her textual analyses is so circumscribed that she fails as well in her stated goal of providing an “orientation to a literature that is more theoretically, multiculturally, and ecologically informed” than that currently holding sway in mainstream circles (p. xx).

It’s not that there are no bright spots. Adamson develops a decidedly partial but nonetheless rather well-honed description of the arrogance and flagrant racism infecting the outlook of the late Edward Abbey (see esp. p. 45). As an alternative, or possibly an antidote, she offers the vision of Acoma poet Simon J. Ortiz, presenting it with a wonderful blend of insight and sensitivity (pp. 51–76). Yet the deficiencies which riddle Adamson’s analytical approach can first be discerned in her juxtaposition of Abbey’s work with that of Ortiz’s. For starters, consideration of Abbey’s writerly output does not go beyond the essays collected in *Desert Solitaire*—the man published a dozen other books, after all—while a much broader range of Ortiz’s material is referenced. And, while pains are taken to situate Ortiz’s holistic thinking on the relationality of humans and nature squarely within his own people’s spiritual tradition, that of Abbey is treated much more ambiguously, in a manner concerned with his attitudes rather than their source.

The disparity seems initially quite peculiar, since the archetype upon which Abbey bases his perception of the separation of humanity from nature is hardly obscure. On the contrary, it will be found on the very first page of Genesis and is shared to one or another extent by virtually everyone who was raised in a Judeo-Christian society. This last perhaps accounts for Adamson’s unbalanced handling of the two writers. Acknowledging the true magnitude, character, and sociocultural implications of the conceptual gulf dividing Abbey’s standpoint from Ortiz’s would have in a sense been self-defeating for her, devoted as she is to an “I’m ok, you’re ok” sort of multiculturalism in which all points of view can be reconciled merely by “communicating,” adopting “appropriate reading strategies,” and attaining thereby an “intercultural understanding” that converts “contested terrain [into] common ground” (pp. xvii–xviii, xix).

Small wonder the author omits mentioning the markedly different conclusions reached by American Indian Movement (AIM) leader Russell Means in his much-reprinted essay “For the World to Live, Europe Must Die: Fighting Words on the Future of Mother Earth” (appended to his autobiographical *Where White Men Fear to Tread*, St. Martin’s, 1996). The fact is that AIM itself is mentioned nowhere in Adamson’s book. Nor, despite their obvious centrality to her topic, is any other Native North American activist group aside from the Dinéh Alliance (pp. 32, 52, 74, 76–7, 129). Instead, readers are offered lengthy elaborations upon the fictionalized hypotheses advanced by several *nonactivist* Native authors about how social and environmental movements “should” be organized—cross-culturally, of course—as if they had thereby invented the political equivalent of a wheel (see, e.g., pp. 85, 175–7).

Utterly eclipsed in Adamson’s rendering is the fact that a number of important indigenous activist/writers—Means, not least, but also the poet and recording artist John Trudell (whose several CD’s since 1985 include *aka Graffiti Man* as well as a book, *Stick Man*, Inanout, 1994) and

poet/essayist/conceptual artist Jimmie Durham (*Columbus Day*, West End, 1983; *A Certain Lack of Coherence*, Kala, 1993), and a score of others—have struggled valiantly to translate such ideas into practice, thus equipping themselves with a far greater wealth of insight and experience in these matters than any of the writers the author selected to represent Native North America (the sole exception is Winona LaDuke, mentioned in passing on p. 129).

There is either a woeful ignorance of Native rights politics at work here, or Adamson's is an exercise in deliberate obfuscation, a clear indication as to which can be gleaned from Adamson's tendency to deal with environmental activism in much the same way she does the Indian variety. On this front, the only organizations mentioned are the Sierra Club and the Environmental Defense Fund (pp. 25, 77). Although both groups certainly qualify as "mainstream," they share little in common with the brand of radicalism inspired by Adamson's exemplar of environmentalist literature, Edward Abbey. Here, the motive underlying the author's narrowness of focus is again obvious. Had she cast even a sidelong glance at Abbey's other books—far and away the most influential of which is *The Monkeywrench Gang* (Dream Garden, 1975, 1985)—reference to Earth First!, whose "rednecks for the wilderness" comprised unquestionably the most "Abbeyite" of all environmentalists, would have been unavoidable.

Bringing up Earth First!, however, would have necessitated Adamson's departing from the sharply constricted—sanitized?—literary axis by which she represents environmentalism—a line running from John James Audubon through John Muir and ending in the Abbey of *Desert Solitaire*—to deal with the likes of Dave Foreman (*Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkey Wrenching*, Ned Ludd, 1987; *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior*, Crown, 1991), and "Miss Anthropy" himself, Christopher Manes (*Green Rage*, Little, Brown, 1990). Dealing with those authors would have compelled her to confront the implications of Abbeyism, not merely in terms of its instigator's personally privileged arrogance, but in its more significant relationship to what Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier have called "ecofascism" (*Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience*, AK, 1995). On that basis, Adamson might have positioned herself to accord their proper meanings to such virulent Abbeyist manifestations of anti-Indianism as former Greenpeace hanger-on Paul Watson's ongoing campaign against the resumption of traditional Makah whaling (see Robert Sullivan, *A Whale Hunt*, Scribner, 2000).

As with the earlier-mentioned "man in nature vs. man apart from nature" dichotomy, fascism and antifascism form a far more deep-set and intractable polarity than Adamson is willing to admit, since it is not in the least susceptible to being "reconciled" through a process of "communication," intercultural or otherwise (Watson, in fact, can lay claim to being something of a media expert). In such circumstances, as Means' neglected essay points out, "healing" can begin only when the negative pole has been eliminated. Adamson's response to this inconvenient reality is consistent: she simply ignores it, leaving the Abbeyist variant of Earth First! as unmentioned as she did AIM. Indeed, her depiction of environmental politics is so vacuous that it misses altogether the ascendance within Earth First! itself, beginning in the late

1980s, of a faction associated with the late Judi Bari which ultimately supplanted hardline Abbeyism in favor of something resembling the multiculturalist stance the author advocates (e.g., Susan Zakin, *Coyotes and Town Dogs: Earth First! and the Environmental Movement*, Viking, 1993; Judi Bari, *Timber Wars*, Common Courage, 1994).

At a more purely textual level, Adamson bandies about terms like “environmental racism” (pp. xv–xvi, 76, 132, 168, 175) without ever referencing such cornerstone works on the topic as Robert D. Bullard’s *Confronting Environmental Racism* (South End, 1993) and Al Gedicks’ *The New Resource Wars: Native and Environmental Struggles Against Multinational Corporations* (South End, 1993), or key thinkers like Vandana Shiva (*Monocultures of the Mind*, Zed, 1993) and Kirkpatrick Sale (*Dwellers in the Land*, New Society, 1991).

On the whole, the sheer detachment of Adamson’s book from the movement it purports to inform militates strongly against its utility in instructional settings. That detachment includes the localized contexts she quite correctly insists are most appropriate to learning (pp. 93–97, 112–115)—without so much as a hint that the late Paulo Freire, among others, made the same case thirty years ago (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Herder and Herder, 1973). Similarly, the intercultural methodology she calls for (pp. 97–101) has been described elsewhere, and far more thoroughly, by educational theorists like Peter McLaren (*Revolutionary Multiculturalism: Pedagogies of Dissent for the New Millennium*, Westview, 1997). Moreover, the not infrequent shots Adamson aims at the vanities of scientism are taken with no reference to writers like Vine Deloria, Jr., who refined the very critique she deploys (*God Is Red*, Grosset & Dunlap, 1973; *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence*, Harper & Row, 1978; *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact*, Scribner, 1995). Without seeking to “valorize academicism” (pp. 93, 96), it seems fair to observe that attribution is not the least important obligation attending scholarship.

A fundamental problem with her material is that even when Adamson is doing what she presumably does best—literary criticism—the bulk of her effort is bound up in explaining what the Native writers she treats have already explained by virtue of writing their poems and novels. If “ecocriticism” is to serve a useful purpose, it will be in connecting the views expressed through fiction to those articulated in nonfiction and, more importantly, to tangible political phenomena Adamson conspicuously avoids. In fact, she resolutely refuses even to get the first part right. By inserting herself into the Native fictive discourse in the hallowed role of “interpreter”—otherwise known as the “Great White Expert”—she substitutes her own voice for those of the authors she “analyses,” thus duplicating a transgression she rightly ascribes to Edward Abbey (p. 45).

The outcome, given all that has been said above, is predictable. Although claiming to gaze, along with Muscogee poet Joy Harjo, into “the terrifying abyss of genocide and loss” (pp. 124–7, 165), for example, Adamson somehow manages to conclude—as Harjo neither would nor could—that a viable resistance strategy may be discerned in training Navajo teenagers to work for the Peabody Coal Company (pp. 49–50). That this approach is roughly the equivalent of arguing that an appropriate response to the Nazi genocide might

have been for Jews to seek employment with I. G. Farben seems not to have occurred to her, a matter demonstrating rather graphically the extent to which she is divorced from the meaning of her own words.

A still more egregious abuse of her sources will be found in Adamson's spending two full chapters "embracing" Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* (pp. 128–179), with all its elaborate explication of the theme that armed insurrection is increasingly a liberatory imperative, only to conclude that the reappearance of "gun control [as] a 'hot-button' issue" in American electoral politics is one of the most "promising" developments in recent memory (pp. 178–179). *This*, after a section wherein the virtues of the continuing struggle waged by the EZLN in Chiapas have been extolled at length, albeit, and tellingly, Adamson endeavors to assign the Zapatistas' success to their innovative use of communications technology rather than weaponry (pp. 126–138). Suffice it to observe here—as is made clear in every study of the Chiapas uprising published to date, *none* of them cited by Adamson—that without their initial resort to arms, the subsequent dexterity with which the Zapatistas have availed themselves of the internet would be irrelevant (see John Ross, *War from the Roots*, Common Courage, 1995; *The War Against Oblivion*, Common Courage, 2000).

American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice, and Ecocriticism is studded with comparable inversions of both fact and indigenous sensibility. Adamson's performance reeks of the NIMBY (not in my backyard) mentality—a perverse form of American exceptionalism manifested through insistence that the harsh requirements of revolutionary social change are applicable everywhere but here, in the proverbial belly of the beast—for which liberal Euro-Americans have been long and deservedly notorious. Ultimately, the transparently cooptive nature of her "interpretive" process, if it may be called that, is intellectually integral to the "neocolonial alchemy" Eduardo Galeano once described in its more material dimension as embodying a figurative transformation of "gold into scrap metal" (*The Open Veins of Latin America*, Monthly Review, 1973, p.12). Her book thus fulfils a function diametrically opposed to its author's pretensions, reinforcing and in palpable ways completing the hegemony it ostensibly rejects.

A volume of the sort Joni Adamson says in her introduction she's written is very much needed. Hopefully, someone will shortly undertake to write it.

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Briefcase Warriors: Stories for the Stage. By E. Donald Two-Rivers. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001. 287 pages. \$27.95 cloth.

Briefcase Warriors: Stories for the Stage is a collection of six American Indian plays by E. Donald Two-Rivers (Anishinaabe). Two-Rivers comments in the preface, "It seems that any time there is an Indian character in a play, he always has to be this quiet presence or else a violence freak. You know, I'm getting tired of