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American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

The Indians' New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal. By James H. Merrell.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/15s518z6>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 13(2)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Biolsi, Thomas

Publication Date

1989-03-01

DOI

10.17953

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ton Academy of Sciences 40:37–46) and the present reviewer's 1989 study of Blackfoot ethnobotany (*International Journal of American Linguistics* 55:361–372) to supplement the data given here.

But I do not wish to be harsh. Dictionary making is an exacting task requiring—to be done right—decades of work by many dozens of people. *Blackfoot Dictionary*, even with its flaws (many of them trivial from the point of view of an average user) is a major contribution to Blackfoot scholarship.

In summary, we have in this dictionary an exceedingly fine tool for daily use and continuing linguistic research. But this reviewer awaits with great eagerness a fuller, more polished version.

Allan R. Taylor
University of Colorado

The Indians' New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal. By James H. Merrell. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989. 381 pages + xv. \$32.50 Cloth.

This well-written book traces the history of the native peoples of the South Carolina piedmont from de Soto's expedition in 1540 to the generation of Catawbas who served as informants for anthropologists before World War II. Most of the material and analysis, however, concern the period of 1600 to 1850. It was during this period that these people were drawn into European trade and geopolitics, that they suffered severe depopulation as a result of epidemic diseases, that the "Catawba Nation" emerged, that a reservation was established and diminished, and that the Catawbas successfully avoided removal from South Carolina. The central organizing theme here is how culture engages historical change, and the author narrates historical events in terms of their repercussions for Catawba culture. An example of the kind of question to which Merrell consistently subjects his material is, "What happens when a people accustomed to choosing headmen from the ranks of its warriors finds that there are no more warriors?" (page 245). Do such historical changes deform a culture or "bankrupt" it (page 217)? The answers he gives clearly indicate the contrary; Merrell repeatedly finds cultural continuity in the face of historical change. Catawbas have always been real,

historical people—they have *never* been timeless or lived outside of history, even before European contact—but they also managed to preserve a “distinctive cultural landscape” (page 259) throughout the undeniably cataclysmic encounters with Europeans.

Thus, Merrell writes the history of European trade among these people. The Catawbias were drawn into trade for deer skins and slaves during the seventeenth century. The way of life of the Catawbias was certainly changed by trade, which introduced a “foreign technology” to which Indians became “addicted” (page 59). Firearms, for example, “undermined traditional modes of production” (page 38) by replacing native bows which had had great symbolic significance in native culture: “When an Indian transferred this devotion to a musket made by other hands, he lost something valuable, though difficult to measure” (page 39).

Because trade now provided necessities—particularly firearms, powder, and shot—it was no longer primarily a form of social cement between self-sufficient parties who had no reason to trade other than to establish social relations, as native trade had been. Now native groups competed for access to European traders, fought for captives and over hunting territory, and adopted the European art of “higgling” (page 61) and, we can assume, the European calculus of value. And yet there was continuity. Both hunting and taking captives were traditional modes of activity which articulated well with European trade, and production for trade did not replace subsistence production. What is more, production continued to be “rooted in ceremonies without which, natives believed, life was unthinkable” (page 37). In short, as Merrell concludes his discussion of trade, “European trade had triumphed; European civilization had not” (page 91).

The author finds a similar pattern of continuity in change in the formation of the “Catawba Nation” and the support of its leadership by South Carolina officials. By the mid-eighteenth century, a loose association of diverse piedmont Indian groups who had survived the earlier rounds of colonial contact were concentrated at the confluence of the Catawba River and Sugar Creek. In part refugee population and in part an association for mutual assistance, these groups were recognized as one by colonists. They gradually forged a “syncretic culture” (page 122) and symbols of a new “society” (page 111), as well as a political organization which could arrive at and express to outsiders a consensus. This political organization entailed an “eractasswa”—called

“king” (page 110) by the colonists—chosen from among the kin of former leaders by a council of representatives from the constituent groups.

As the “Nation” developed, part of the domestic authority of the eractasswa came to be based on external recognition from South Carolina. Military commissions, for example, were issued to the eractasswa and to lieutenants selected by him. By the mid-eighteenth century, “the documents were a necessary part of any Catawba’s credentials” among his own people (page 150). Furthermore, “by granting the priceless paper only to those tapped by an eractasswa, Charleston confirmed a ruler’s legitimacy and frustrated those who tried to acquire authority in some other way” (page 151).

There were other symbolic bases of legitimation drawn from the colonists: “A man who called his people together by beating a British drum and, once they were assembled, raised a British flag over the council’s proceedings was announcing, in language none could misconstrue, his close friendship with a powerful people” (page 152). Yet, while a “colonial blessing was certainly a significant addition to Catawba authority,” Merrell insists, “it was not a complete break with the past” (page 157). A military commission was given only to an eractasswa chosen by the council and to men chosen by the eractasswa in conformity with native custom; no colonial governor ever challenged the decision of the council. Furthermore, the eractasswa did not use his authority or his influence with colonial officials for personal gain or to exercise political power beyond that limited amount allocated to him in the traditional culture; he used his position “to look out for his people” (page 152). He could, for example, use his authority as recognized by the colony to see to the investigation and punishment by Catawbans of Catawbans accused of offenses against colonists, or to obtain needed goods for distribution to the people.

There were also cases in which the Catawbans purposely changed just enough so that they would not have to change: they accommodated. In the 1760s they sent one of their young men to the College of William and Mary, “not because they wanted to embrace an alien way of life, but because they hoped to avoid it. An educated Indian could strengthen rather than weaken the barrier between peoples, for he would have the tools to serve as a messenger across the cultural frontier” (page 241). In 1754 the

“Nation” executed one of its own warriors who, while intoxicated, had killed a colonist’s child, “a punishment that violated the [native] rules excusing acts committed under the influence of alcohol. Such a dramatic departure from traditional practice helped Indians accumulate the stock of good will that, on other occasions, permitted them to have their own way in tracking down and punishing Catawba offenders who had committed crimes against colonists (page 158).

What comes through in this book is the continuing cultural integrity of the Catawba through history; they kept “intact the core of their ancient culture” (page 271). There are some places in the book, however, where the application of this generalization makes for a less than convincing interpretation of events. The reader is told, for example, that during the drought of the 1750s when colonists survived by switching from corn to wheat, the Catawbas could not so adapt because they were “wedded to practices that had had generations of success . . .” (page 141). Neither would the Catawbas increase their hide production if it meant leaving the meat to rot, which was not their way: “In both the fields and woods, then, Catawbas could no more forsake traditional ways than they could command settlers to turn back or the skies to bring rain” (page 141). Are these the same native realists who in 1754 executed one of their own to accommodate the colonists and to preserve their political and legal autonomy?

A reader who is interested in such things as social differentiation among Indian people during contact—for example, the development of inequality between men or between men and women, factionalism between “traditionalists” and “progressives,” or the appearance of new kinds of political power based on opportunities emerging from the colonial political economy—will not find description of it here. One is left wondering in this regard if the Catawbas, who are presented as sharing an essentially unified culture and as internally undifferentiated by class or interest, are a special case in the colonial encounter in North America and, for that matter, globally. The reader would like to know if the Catawbas’ experience as related here is a function of their peculiarities in history. Or is the narrative a function of a different—and, would the author argue, better?—reading of the historical record?

Beyond the occasional reliance on rigid cultural determinism, and the (not always supported or supportable) presumptions of

internal harmony and cultural persistence, however, this is a readable and sensitive—and, at times, admittedly speculative because of the limits imposed by sources—account of history from the Catawbas' point of view. It is at its strongest in laying out the myriad changes faced by the Catawbas and in depicting how Catawbas may have understood, and how they responded to, those changes.

Thomas Biolsi
Washington University

American Women Writing Fiction. Edited by Mickey Pearlman. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1989. 236 pages. \$20.00 Cloth. \$10.00 Paper.

Mickey Pearlman's expertise is in the field of writing by and about women, with special attention to Muriel Spark, Tillie Olsen, and the themes of mothers and daughters in contemporary literature. A doctoral graduate of City University of New York, she takes an approach that is strongly political and social, and in *American Women Writing Fiction* she has assembled a collection of original essays by mostly CUNY and other New York City academic critics addressed to a central question: what happens to the standards of American literature when fiction is written by women rather than men? The political and social nature of the question becomes clear when Pearlman reminds us that it has been men who have established the standards. This tension gives her book an immediately militant edge. Not that such an interest disqualifies itself as scholarship—but one must always be careful that pointing out such once unapparent but now obvious conditions in which literature is made does not wind up being the sole contribution.

The best of Pearlman's contributors use her thesis as a starting point rather than a pre-ordained conclusion; and with the helpful addition of primary and secondary bibliographies for each author studied, *American Women Writing Fiction* stands as an important resource for our understanding of how women writers are producing works within the aesthetic (and not just political and social) conditions of our age.