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The Indian Chief as Tragic Hero: Native Resistance and the Literatures of America, from Moctezuma to Tecumseh. By Gordon M. Sayre. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005. 368 pages. $55.00 cloth; $22.50 paper.

Sympathy for Indians has to be the most unshakable element of colonial discourse in the United States, the one dearest to the hearts of so many even when they aren't quite aware of it. Believing in the moral value of feeling badly about the death and dispossession of Indians is a condition of being American. Scholars in a number of fields, history and literary criticism especially, commonly take that sympathy at face value: white people sympathized, which demonstrates that they were sincere, and that's pretty much all you need to say about the matter. Sympathy is more often than not left as a matter of individual belief and feeling. That elaborate and pervasive feelings were so fundamental to US political culture and colonial policy and so similar to the operation of sympathy in other, concurrent imperialisms receives little or no attention. White people felt badly: it makes us all look better.

Accounting for the authenticity of what white people felt, and wrote, about Native people is a principal concern of Sayre's book, although here sympathy is filtered through tragedy, both as a literary form and, Sayre argues, as an explanation for historical events (that is, the death and dispossession of Indians). Following up on his *Les Sauvages Americains: Representations of Native Americans in French and English Colonial Literature* (1997), in this book Sayre concentrates on narratives about what he calls the tragic Indian chief that appeared in the early nineteenth century. His tragic Indians include Moctezuma, Metacom, Pontiac, Logan, and Tecumseh, with additional chapters on French accounts of the 1729 Natchez Massacre and Spanish accounts of the 1680 Pueblo Revolt. Quoting Aristotle's *Poetics*, Sayre notes that tragedy evokes pity and fear in the audience, "pity . . . by unmerited misfortune, fear by the misfortune of a man like ourselves." In Indian chief narratives, he argues, tragic catharsis expresses whites' "ideological ambivalence" about colonization (3). He also argues that tragedy provides a means of "[a]nalyzing the resistance of Native Americans to colonization" (5). Ultimately, besides the ideological ambivalence, Sayre offers that the tragic Indian chief narratives also demonstrate the "intercultural" nature of colonial experience for all parties involved.

It seems not to have occurred to Sayre that the concept of tragedy might be ideologically charged to begin with when associated with indigenous people and therefore in need of some investigation, rather than a plausible explanation of historical fact. Despite all the details of literary history, this is not a book that deals with the historical and political context or effects of the representations. The book is mainly concerned with white people and their feelings about Indians despite professions of interest in "Indian voice." Although Sayre presents his work as a departure from previous scholarship on the representation of Indians, it's not particularly different in its framing or assumptions, even if its analysis is much more dense. The book can be seen in relation to those on images of Indians stretching back to Roy Harvey Pearce's

Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind (1953) and Robert F. Berkhofer Jr.'s *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (1978), continuing through to more recent works establishing the place of Indians in the "construction" of American national identity, such as Lucy Maddox's *Removals: Nineteenth Century American Literature and the Politics of Indian Affairs* (1991), Susan Scheckel's *The Insistence of the Indian: Race and Nationalism in Nineteenth Century American Culture* (1998), and Joshua David Bellin's *The Demon of the Continent: Indians and the Shaping of American Literature* (2001). Although the book ostensibly addresses Canadian, Mexican, and American nationalism, the first two are so lightly sketched as to be tangential to the focus on the United States.

Sayre seems to want to humanize the "encounter" so that these tragic Indian chiefs have some connection to real emotion, although it appears that emotion mainly belonged to whites. He's quite fixated on the notion of the eyewitness (the term he uses), the person who has actually seen and interacted with the Indian chief in question and written something down about it. It's not necessarily the accuracy of knowledge about Native practices or beliefs in these eyewitness accounts that Sayre emphasizes, although he refers to anything written at any moment in time about Native people as "ethnography," but rather the quality of the white person's emotional response to this or that tragic Indian chief. He observes of the soldier Robert Rogers's characterization of Pontiac in his play, *Ponteach, or the Savages of America: A Tragedy* (1765) that "Ponteach's genuinely heroic figure arises, I believe, from the fact that Rogers was there. He met Pontiac and fought against his rebels, and his play bears the mark of this experience" (19). This "I believe" bespeaks a particular problem in this book. Sayre wants to write about what can't be known historically, and the only evidence he offers to support this belief is literary interpretation. Perhaps that's why he deploys a phalanx of "could haves," "would haves," and "might have beens" to advance his arguments.

Although colonizers' emotional responses to the "plight" of Indians may have taken the form of sentimental stereotypes, Sayre argues, these emotional responses should not be discounted as inauthentic. "Colonizers recognized . . . their responsibility for [Indian] deaths but summoned up complex responses to assuage or dismiss this responsibility," he writes. There was predominantly "a sense of precious melancholy about the death of the Indians" (4). This precious melancholy is real and significant, Sayre maintains: in fact, he has felt it himself. "I can recognize the manipulative strategies of the 1970s public service ad that featured an actor in Plains Indian regalia weeping at the sight of roadside litter," he writes, "but I still cannot stop myself from crying when I see it on TV" (5). One wonders why it is that literary critics feel compelled to make unself-conscious confessions of sincere feeling for dead Indians a part of their scholarly apparatus. That habit in itself demonstrates that sympathy for Indians must be analyzed historically and politically before any useful attention can be paid to "Indian voice."

Finally, this precious melancholy, and the tragic Indian chief who embodies it, is "anticolonial," a concept Sayre uses quite loosely (9). According to Sayre, for example, Korczak Ziolkowski's monument to Crazy

Horse exemplifies "[t]he most compelling form of anticolonial protest in imperial society," because it mimics Mount Rushmore, although he admits that the thing doesn't do much for Lakota people (33). The concept of "anticolonial" suggests a conscious repudiation of colonial authority, which one would think has something to do with recognizing the political claims of Indian people historically and in the present and with taking some action in accordance with that belief. It's only possible to conceive of contemplating the Crazy Horse monument as anticolonial if one accepts the narrative laid out in every tragic Indian story extant as an accurate account of history: that Indians had no viable political claims to autonomy (they didn't form real nations) and were doomed by world history to be utterly destroyed by white civilization (they were savages), and also only if one also believes that it was a lucky thing that sympathetic whites' liberal beneficence made Indians US citizens, which solves the problems of history altogether. Only then can "anti-colonial" be conceived of in so passive and apolitical a fashion.

Sayre's discussion of white melancholy and tragic Indian chief narratives is explanatory mainly of the current state of historicist criticism of American literature. What it says to American Indian studies is that the same hoary ideas about Indians—Indians are "tragic"; the sincere feelings of white individuals for Indians are merely that, sincere feelings; and that Indians were properly made citizens of the United States, which compensates for past horrors—remain key assumptions in the scholarship. It will probably be a long time before the current concerns of American Indian studies with the history of colonization and decolonization can ever be fully recognized in the criticism of American literature, in which the legacies of liberal imperialism still determine how writing by and about Native people is read and understood.

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Light on the Path: The Anthropology and History of the Southeastern Indians. Edited by Thomas J. Pluckhahn and Robbie Franklyn Etheridge. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006. 283 pages. $60.00 cloth; $34.95 paper.

Although Charles Hudson's position as the elder statesman of Southeastern Indian studies has long been established, *Light on the Path* shows just how far his influence has reached. This festschrift, prepared from papers presented at a daylong symposium organized in Hudson's honor, shows his significance as a scholar, mentor, and methodologist. Hudson's influence is notable in the works and lives of his students, who, as it turns out, comprise a substantial number of the scholars working in this area today. Hudson's various legacies are the focus of the volume.

Primary among Hudson's contributions is his work reconstructing the culture histories of the Native peoples of the Southeast. The significance of this legacy lies in the fact that Native peoples of the southeastern United States have experienced countless tragedies at the hands of European explorers,