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The Columbia Guide to American Indian Literatures of the United States since 1945. Edited by Eric Cheyfitz.

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at Sugar Point. The book is a meditation on the horrors of war, as Vizenor also remembers the midwestern working-class soldiers at Sugar Point who lost their lives and others who “survived their wounds but were forever crippled mind and body by military conceit.”

*Brenda J. Child*  
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**The Columbia Guide to American Indian Literatures of the United States since 1945.** Edited by Eric Cheyfitz. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006. 448 pages. \$57.50 cloth.

Despite its ungainly title, this latest volume in Columbia University Press’s critical series *The Columbia Guides to Literature since 1945* deftly delivers a useful, relatively comprehensive overview of American Indian writing in the United States during this period. Editor Eric Cheyfitz brings together a talented cadre of scholars to produce a solidly researched, informative resource that can aid beginner and veteran alike. Billing itself as one of the first works to examine Native literatures in a postcolonial context, *The Columbia Guide to American Indian Literatures of the United States since 1945* seeks to provide the political, social, and historical backdrop often overlooked in Native American literary criticism and enrich our understanding of literary arts over the last half century.

Section 1 consists of a single article by Cheyfitz who, following critics such as Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, maintains that a working knowledge of US federal Indian law is essential to an understanding and appreciation of Native American studies. His long (120 pages), densely written piece is a valuable tool for practitioners in the field, distilling several centuries of Indian law and policy and sketching the connections between legal foundations and literary responses. His choice is particularly apt; not only is this knowledge crucial to a full understanding of the literature, but also the popularity and quantity of Native American literature seems to have followed trends in policy. Literary output increases during times when the US government pursues policies perceived as friendlier toward Native sovereignty. Conversely, fewer works find their way into print during those periods when the government has attempted to “break up the tribal mass” and force assimilation. Thus, the end of allotment and the rise of the Indian New Deal witnessed a “boomlet” in Native literature, from the plays of Lynn Riggs to the novels of D’Arcy McNickle and John Joseph Mathews. The post–World War II era of termination and relocation saw major publications dry up.

This last observation points out a problem with the periodization imposed by the Columbia series. The rich, prewar legacy mentioned above came too soon for inclusion in this volume. For the first twenty-three years of the period covered, there was a drought in published literature by American indigenes, although poetry fared somewhat better than its generic counterparts. It was not until the 1968 publication of *House Made of Dawn* by N. Scott Momaday,

ushering in the so-called Native American Literary Renaissance, that Native literature and Native American literary criticism began to bloom again. Contributors to the volume respond to the problem in different ways. Shari Huhndorf in her fine essay on drama and Cheyfitz in his introduction simply ignore the specified period and broadly discuss indigenous writing from its inception. Coauthors Arnold Krupat and Michael Elliott (on Native fiction) criticize the temporal limitation but abide by it, starting their discussion in 1968 with the aforementioned novel by Momaday. Others simply accept it without comment.

The five selections in section 2 survey different genres—fiction, poetry, drama, nonfiction, and autobiography—highlighting the political, cultural, and historical circumstances that shaped the works and delineating the connections and distinctions among a diverse selection of writers. Each piece should prove immensely helpful for teachers and readers alike. The discussions articulate common themes and literary strategies, and each entry includes a lengthy bibliography. Most noteworthy are Kimberly M. Blaeser's appendix to her essay on poetry—an exhaustive (though, as she notes, immediately outdated) compendium of poetry collections by Native authors—and Kendall Johnson's thorough list of autobiographical texts, both of which append handy, chronological guides to primary sources. Editor Cheyfitz also is to be commended for including David Murray's article on nonfiction. By employing the broadest definition of Native literature, he refuses to fracture the written production of the People, an approach argued for by critics as diverse as Penny Petrone and Jace Weaver.

Despite the quality of its component parts and some novelty in its approach, a volume like this is nothing new. The model is probably Andrew Wiget's 1994 *Handbook of Native American Literature*. Most recent is *The Cambridge Companion to Native American Literature*, edited by Joy Porter and Kenneth Roemer, published in 2005. Both contain historical context and genre essays. Unlike this present volume, however, these others also include entries on individual Native writers. This one is not as extensive as the Wiget, but neither is it as accident-prone as the Porter and Roemer (Cheyfitz and his contributors deserve praise for a meticulous job).

There are always trade-offs in volumes like this. Organizing the material by genre allows for an in-depth exploration of the literary landscape, and the contributors do a masterful job of analyzing the political and historical situation of these writers and their works. However, covering more than a half-century's output requires them to keep their eye trained on the bigger picture. This leaves little room for biographical sketches or specific information about particular tribal cultures, and readers looking for lengthy discussions of individual writers and their works will need to go elsewhere. Also, although the decision to focus on literature through the lens of US law and policy results in a cogent, highly informative study, the approach necessitates a literary field that is coextensive with US national boundaries, thereby ignoring the valuable contributions made by writers of Canadian First Nations (an omission that Blaeser points out with regret) and by tribal peoples south of the US border. (*The Columbia Guide to Asian-American Literature since 1945*,

edited by Guiyou Huang, covers Canadian and US writers, marking this as an editorial choice.)

The extraordinary acumen evident in Cheyfitz's introduction is, unfortunately, undercut by the overly prescriptive tenor of his criticism. His command of legal studies and its relationship to the primary literature is remarkably astute, but his review of American Indian literary criticism tends to undervalue other critics' contributions and overstate their weaknesses. Few could (or should) argue that an understanding of US federal Indian law is necessary to students of American Indian literature, but at times Cheyfitz implies that anything other than a postcolonial approach informed by legal studies is misguided or misinformed. By contrast, the other contributions, for example Elliott and Krupat's section on fiction, manage to explore the political dimensions without slighting the material's cultural or aesthetic aspects.

Any specialist in Native literature knows that persons who lack an adequate background not only in Native American cultures and history but also in the literature frequently teach it. This volume will be most useful to those who need that grounding—if they will pick it up and use it. Cheyfitz has assembled a well-informed, albeit small, group of critics, Native and non-Native (although the latter predominate), to produce a richly textured survey of the field.

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**Cultural Representation in Native America.** Edited by Andrew Jolivette. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2006. 192 pages. \$72.00 cloth; \$26.95 paper.

What do Barbie, beer, nuclear bombs, New Age shamans, and Creole identity have in common? The authors of this anthology address each of these topics to illuminate cultural representation both of and by American Indian communities. This collection consists of articles from scholars and community activists that draw on provocative contemporary issues to suggest new directions for the study of cultural representation. The introduction asserts that the anthology attempts to move away from the static representations and the essentialized discourse on American Indian people within the academy and in larger societal contexts (6). These articles strive to move beyond the scholarly discourse on representation of American Indian peoples that critiques stereotypic representations, particularly in literature, film, and popular culture, detailing the inaccurate and often harmful repercussions of these representations. Although the prevailing discourse has addressed how Indian people resisted the representations encompassed by images, the authors of this anthology redefine representation by opening the category up to include identity, political representation, religion, and oral and literary traditions, in addition to imagery.

The anthology makes a valuable contribution to American Indian Studies, not only because it redefines representation, but also because it sees