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experience of the United Houma and other of the “messier” unrecognized and perhaps *unrecognizable* tribes. How does the United Houma Nation define *tribe* for itself? What challenge does this definition offer to FAP’s definition? Such stories would reveal the core of the injustice of the US process, for the stories of these truly forgotten tribes are not those of “wannabes,” but they also fail to conform to the state’s definition. And the last is not true simply because the BAR applies the criteria differently—as, horrifyingly, Miller shows it did for the United Houma Nation. It is true because the process (and the definition of tribe being applied) is fundamentally flawed.

Miller admits that depicting only one of the four case-study tribes as unacknowledged does not fairly represent the numbers of tribes petitioning for acknowledgment today. Particularly, choosing the only tribe in California that has been acknowledged through the FAP gives a distorted picture. Yet perhaps it is in his depiction of congressional acknowledgment that I can grant him some latitude: Two of the four tribes portrayed in his book were acknowledged by Congress, and Miller depicts Congress as closer to offering Indian people justice than the BAR, which subjects its emphasis on doing justice to stiff definitions of what Indian peoples are supposed to be. One of Miller’s strongest critiques of acknowledgment, which surfaces in his description of both the Pasqua Yaquis and the Tiguas, is that only tribes with very powerful political allies in Congress and good senses of timing can gain that status.

Miller concludes that the federal acknowledgment process remains in effect today because it is useful to many US interest groups. The nation has an interest in not acknowledging the rights of tribal peoples—in part because gaming is offering Indian peoples a new impetus for coming out from underground, and the upsurge is overwhelming for both recognized Indians and non-Indians. Keeping tribes from being acknowledged is the actual *intent* of the process, as it always has been. Clifford’s “Identity in Mashpee” spells out the non-Indian side of this situation with his description of Cape Cod real estate politics. Miller (like Robert L. Bee before him) shows the Indian side: the FAP’s creation based on the input of recognized peoples concerned about the government having jurisdiction over Indianness, as well as the precariousness of the FAP’s own position and support in Washington.

Sara-Larus Tolley

Ishi’s Brain: In Search of America’s Last Wild Indian. By Orin Starn. New York: W. W. Norton, 2004. 352 pages. \$25.95 cloth.

In *Ishi’s Brain*, Orin Starn, an ethnographer at Duke University, shares his highly personal odyssey through the contested terrain that defines twenty-first-century anthropology. This is a compelling book about a compelling subject.

Like the author, I grew up in California and learned about Ishi—America’s “last wild Indian”—from Theodora Kroeber’s wildly popular book *Ishi in Two Worlds*, first published in 1964. Central to the tale was Theodora’s husband, Alfred Kroeber, the erudite New Yorker who became the first anthropologist to

teach at the University of California. When Phoebe Apperson Hearst (mother of publisher William Randolph Hearst) agreed to finance a new Museum of Anthropology in San Francisco, Kroeber became its first curator.

During the nineteenth century California's Indian population numbered in the hundreds of thousands, but when Kroeber came west, only 20,000 Native Californians survived. Like all anthropologists of his day, Kroeber saw the American Indian as doomed, and he scrambled to record the ancient customs and lifeways before they disappeared. Committed to make his new museum a Smithsonian-on-the-Bay, Kroeber scoured California for Indians who remembered the old tribal ways and spoke the ancient tongues. This aggressive program of "salvage ethnography" sought out "uncontaminated" Indians, those living free of Euro-American influences. Although he heard occasional rumors about a handful of still-wild Indians near Oroville, Kroeber—like most Californians—was skeptical.

Myth came to life on 9 August 1911. As dogs snarled, a slight brown man, confused and starving, crouched in a slaughterhouse corral near Oroville. The Indian's hair was hacked off and singed as a sign of mourning. His family had been murdered, or maybe they had starved. Although several assimilated Indians (and even Chinese speakers) were brought in, nobody could communicate with the stranger. Kroeber arranged to transport the man to San Francisco and assigned his visitor the name of "Ishi," the Yana word for "man" or "one of the people." At a press conference, Kroeber called Ishi the "most uncivilized, uncontaminated man in the world today," and he secured quarters for Ishi in the university museum, surrounded by the artifacts and bones of Indians who had died out. "Ishi received all the attention," writes historian Brian Dippie, that "would be lavished on a dinosaur that happened to stumble into a paleontologists' convention" (*The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy*, 1982, 208).

Kroeber declared that Ishi was the intellectual and physical equal of any white American. All that separated him from mainstream America were the innumerable generations of education Ishi had missed. "Ishi himself is no nearer the 'missing link' or any other antecedent form of human life than we are," Kroeber argued. "But in what his environment, his associates, and his puny native civilization have made him he represents a stage through which our ancestors passed thousands of years ago" (quoted in Frederick E. Hoxie, *The Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880–1920*, 1984, 142).

During the next five years Ishi spent countless hours with anthropologists, who recorded and transcribed Yahi oral tradition. Ishi tutored linguists in his difficult language and eventually led Kroeber back to his rocky Mill Creek homeland to show him where his people had spent their last pathetic days. In *Ishi's Brain*, Orin Starn recreates this pilgrimage, taking his readers on a modern-day odyssey to Wowunupo Mu Tetna ("Grizzly Bear's Hiding Place"), the recently rediscovered (but still secret) hideout where Ishi and his small band of survivors had concealed themselves for decades.

While on sabbatical in 1915 and 1916, Kroeber learned that Ishi was dying of tuberculosis, and Kroeber directed that Yahi burial customs should be followed closely: The body should be touched and handled as little as

possible, then be cremated on an out-of-doors funeral pyre. The ashes were to be buried in a funerary urn, the closest available equivalent to the burial basket and rock cairn used in Yahi burial rites. Kroeber was in New York City when Ishi died, and he instructed his California colleagues to adhere to earlier burial plans: “[I] insist on it as my personal wish.” Although he would permit the casting of a plaster death mask, he strongly objected to an autopsy for fear that it “would resolve itself into a general dissection. Please shut it down.” In uncharacteristically strong language Kroeber wrote, “As to disposal of the body, I must ask you as my personal representative to yield nothing at all under any circumstances. If there is any talk about the interests of science, say for me that science can go to hell” (quoted in Theodora Kroeber, *Ishi in Two Worlds*, 1964, 234).

But Kroeber was too late. He learned by mail that “a simple autopsy was performed and that the brain was preserved,” after which Ishi’s body was embalmed. In his coffin the anthropologists laid Ishi’s bow and quiver filled with arrows, several pieces of dentalia, some dried venison and acorn meal, fire-making equipment, and a small quantity of tobacco. They accompanied the body to Olivet Memorial Park near San Francisco, where everything was cremated and the ashes were placed in a Santa Clara Pueblo pottery jar with the inscription: “Ishi, the last Yahi Indian, died March 25, 1916” (*Ishi in Two Worlds*, 235).

Thanks largely to Theodora Kroeber’s *Ishi in Two Worlds*, the world learned the touching story of the gentle Yahi refugee and Professor Kroeber, the benevolent and insightful anthropologist. Today we know that the “Ishi story” is considerably more complicated, and this story is well told in *Ishi’s Brain*.

Ishi and Kroeber lived in a time when the potentials of science trumped the ethics of science. But beginning perhaps with Vine Deloria Jr.’s *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1969) and culminating in the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990, Native people articulated their mistrust and anger at the scientific enterprise that targeted Indian people. For the first time, Native and non-Native people alike began asking hard questions about what actually resided in the museum collections of America. Given this climate of mistrust and the popularity of *Ishi in Two Worlds*, it was inevitable that some would recall the words “a simple autopsy was performed and . . . the brain was preserved.” Preserved in what sense? Was Ishi’s brain “placed in a preservative” for immediate study and subsequently cremated? Or do these words imply that Ishi’s brain was “preserved” in the sense of “saved for posterity?”

Starn became involved when he learned that the Butte County Native American Cultural Committee was seeking to repatriate Ishi’s cremated remains. Starn met with the group’s leader, Art Angle (Maidu), who had never read *Ishi in Two Worlds* and did not share Theodora Kroeber’s rendering of Ishi as frail, childlike, and helpless. To Angle, Ishi was “big and strong, even oversized . . . a figure of will and action, a shaman ministering . . . with a complex traditional system of stones, water, and reflected sunlight” (93). At first Angle questioned Starn’s motives, but he still shared a persistent Maidu rumor that Ishi’s brain had been removed and pickled: “It was a freak thing and people paid to see it” (94). Starn wondered if the oral tradition could

possibly be true and, after considerable give-and-take, Angle and Starn formed an uneasy alliance.

Starn joined a number of tribal and academic scholars in exploring the question of "Ishi's brain." Letters to museum officials requesting information on the subject were invariably returned with denials of knowledge or possession. Then, while working through the archives of the University of California's Bancroft Library, Starn stumbled onto the smoking gun—a Wells Fargo and Company Express receipt dated 5 January 1917 that verified shipment of Ishi's brain, wrapped in brown-paper packaging, to the US National Museum in Washington, DC. Shockingly, after expressing his outrage over the autopsy, Kroeber had donated Ishi's brain to the Smithsonian Institution six months later. "Kroeber must have cooled down," Starn suggests; he "probably felt that nothing more could be done. Kroeber was always an assiduous cultivator of professional contacts" (160).

Following up on the new lead, Starn contacted repatriation officials at the National Museum of Natural History, who confirmed that Ishi's brain was still preserved in the "Wet Collection" at Suitland, Maryland, the massive offsite storage facility that serves the Smithsonian Institution's various museums. Starn accompanied the members of the Maidu delegation to view the brain and helped them document their repatriation claim. Competing claims soon came from the Redding Rancheria and the Pitt River tribe (two groups with Yana descendants) and from Robert Martin, a real estate broker in Sacramento who claimed his grandfather was Yahi (which would make him Ishi's closest living relative).

Starn chronicles the conflicts and tensions inherent in the resulting repatriation process candidly, pointing up the difficulties within the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990) proceedings. The author avoids stereotypes and emphasizes the nuanced views of the American Indian pasts that emerged in the process. We see the reluctance and resentment of Native people required to share with strangers the intimate details of their lives and their beliefs. We encounter the lingering resentment and mistrust of the "anthros" over past actions and present motivations. We experience the sometimes unpleasant intertribal disputes over conflicting claims for disputed remains and sacred objects. We sense the anger of those who see anthropology museums as stonewalling the legally mandated repatriation process. We hear of bitter curators, forced to dismantle "their" museum collections, one expressing his view of repatriation as the postmodern equivalent of book burning. We see the frustration of repatriation officers as they balance competing claims, trying to comply with the complex legal mandates that govern the repatriation process.

In the end, Ishi's brain and the cremated remains from Olivet were ultimately buried in an undisclosed location by members of the Redding Rancheria and the Pitt River tribe. Although the journeys of the physical remains are now complete, Indians and non-Indians alike will long discuss the implications of Ishi, "America's last 'wild' Indian." Starn's *Ishi's Brain* provides a useful road map to guide that discussion. Despite a blizzard of detail, Starn's book is fast paced and well written. In places it reads like a thriller. Whereas

some might resent the author's self-insertion into the story, I do not. For me, Professor Starn's autobiographical, first-person tone sets the tone for an honest, introspective narrative.

Starn is fairly critical of Theodora Kroeber. While researching *Ishi's Brain*, he double-checked the facts and judged Theodora's account to be wanting: "She made up details and parts of the story in order to tell the story she wanted to and add to the pathos" (106). Although he credits Theodora for shining much-needed light on the atrocities committed against Indian people, Starn suggests that Theodora's love for her husband, Alfred, led her to fabricate details and spin the story to favor her late husband: "Whether consciously or not, Theodora . . . molded the story to her own agenda, leaving out the fuller, more complex truth" (106).

Ishi's Brain likewise draws attention to the repatriation process and the conditions of nineteenth-century anthropology that culminated in the 1990 legislation. The Department of Anthropology at Berkeley (founded by Kroeber) has issued a statement describing the relationships surrounding Ishi as "complex and contradictory." Some department members defend Kroeber's actions, emphasizing the comfortable living quarters in the museum, the health care that likely prolonged his life, and the "genuine affection" Kroeber and the others displayed for their Yana visitor. They also emphasize Ishi's desire to pass along and preserve information about his language and culture. But other faculty members are critical of Kroeber, wondering why he elected to "objectify a friend." Anthropology's ongoing self-critique sometimes admits the discipline's former links to colonialism and acknowledges the recent redistribution of power. Modern anthropologists reject as spurious the concept of the "ethnographic present" that inspired ethnographers like Kroeber to search for "uncontaminated Indians" and to ignore those who were not (quotes from the May 1999 newsletter of the American Anthropological Association). In *Ishi's Brain*, Orin Starn illustrates the degree to which Indian-academic relationships have evolved over the past century and how controversial that relationship remains today.

David Hurst Thomas

American Museum of Natural History

Living in the Land of Death: The Choctaw Nation, 1830–1860. By Donna L. Akers. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2004. 202 pages. \$24.95 paper.

In *Living in the Land of Death* historian Donna L. Akers seeks to redress a number of offenses committed by non-Native academics in the name of writing Native history. She takes to task "white scholars, especially those reared in upper-middle-class families," who have distorted the truth of the past in service to a myth of American history that privileges the expansion of the nation-state over the miseries of those who lost their land and their sovereignty (148). Drawing upon her friends and family in the Choctaw Nation, Akers