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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*

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**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

argues that to recover the Choctaw perspective, historians must move away from the victimization narratives so common in the field and return instead to the power of oral traditions, the memory of language, and the perspective of the people themselves. In this way removal emerges as a central experience in the people's history rather than as an end point for one period, the pre-removal era, and a beginning point for another, the postremoval era. The importance of such a repositioning of removal is significant, but a number of historiographical and methodological weaknesses in the book merit consideration as well.

Although Akers deplores racial paradigms, she nonetheless trains her historiographical criticism on "white" historians, particularly Angie Debo's and Grant Foreman's early work on Choctaws and Richard White's more recent *Roots of Dependency* (1983). Debo and Foreman, like many scholars of their era, held fast to notions of progress that pitted the robust civilization of Anglo America against first people who were in danger of disappearing. Akers exposes links between the assumptions that informed this early work and White's more recent use of dependency theory, and the result is a provocative and important historiographical argument about the colonialist nature of Native historiography.

The problem is that Akers leaves untouched recent ethnohistorical work that scholars have undertaken to explicate Choctaw history. Her discussion of the 1785 Treaty of Hopewell, which formalized the relationship between the Choctaws and the United States, for example, focuses on the negotiations as sowing "the seeds of conquest" without ever really asking what the negotiations and the resulting treaty meant to the Choctaws who had assembled in the snow to exchange their fire with that of the United States (13). In Greg O'Brien's article "The Conqueror Meets the Unconquered: Negotiating Cultural Boundaries on the Post-Revolutionary Southern Frontier" (*Journal of Southern History* 67 [2001]: 39–72), he addressed US expansionist aims but also explored why the prophet Taboca painted himself white and waved a white wing over the US commissioners to bring peace to the council ground. Recent books such as my own *Searching for the Bright Path* (1999) and O'Brien's *Choctaws in a Revolutionary Age, 1750–1830* (2002) also attempt to use the Choctaw language to open up their historical perspective, to draw upon recorded oral history, and to match Choctaw kinship, gender, political, and cosmological practices to broader interpretive questions about the nature of cultural change and persistence. Although Akers touches on many of the same questions, her failure to engage such recent revisionist work leaves her to posit solutions to an older set of historiographical and methodological problems. Her charge that historians have failed to explore the Choctaw side of things rings hollow.

Akers's advocacy of using oral history and linguistic approaches takes her argument into novel and important directions. A memory recorded in 1992 of the Choctaws' 1811 meeting with Tecumseh, for example, reveals the role of a prophet in persuading warriors not to make common cause with the Shawnee leader. Her linguistic analysis of the interpenetration of matrilineal values, kinship, and language likewise brings a fresh approach to uncovering

the elusive persistence of the clans. A stronger engagement with recent critical scholarship on oral history, such as Elizabeth Tonkin's *Narrating Our Pasts* (1992), or with scholars like Georges Sioui, Deborah Doxtator, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, and Donald Fixico who have commented on the practice of writing indigenous history would only enhance such methodologically unique contributions.

Too often historians have positioned removal as either the end or the beginning of a particular phase of first people's history. For Choctaws, however, Akers shows that such was clearly not the case. The first Choctaws made their way to what became known as Indian Territory in the 1810s as they searched for new hunting grounds. Others followed, so that by the time the federal government began pressing Choctaws to remove, they had a good knowledge of the lay of the land and of the presence of other first nations. After the tragedy of removal, Choctaws struggled to make a life in Indian Territory—the "Land of Death" named in the book's title—against settlers as well as Osages, Quapaws, and Caddos. Their isolation forced them to look to Creeks, Cherokees, and Chickasaws for help, and as a result, intertribal relations in Indian Territory moved well beyond what they had known in the South. At the same time, acculturative pressures split the society. Akers points to a wide division between traditional Choctaws and those she characterizes as assimilated. The two groups disagreed over the place of kinship in their society, the customary roles of men and women, the structures of government, and the degree to which they would be tied to the market economy. Tensions boiled over in 1860 when, as among the Cherokees and Creeks, the American Civil War became a Choctaw one as well.

Akers characterizes the traditionalists as in favor of cultural continuity and the assimilationists as in favor of cultural change. But her notion of culture is too underdeveloped to bear the weight of such an interpretation, for it is never totally clear what Akers means by Choctaw culture. She lauds its flexibility, resilience, and uniqueness, and at one point she concedes that Choctaws' "inherent cultural flexibility . . . allowed gradual changes to be imported without endangering the survival of core beliefs" (26–27). But she also asserts that assimilated Choctaws fit "neither in Choctaw nor in white culture" (127). How a culture can be adaptable for some Choctaws and simultaneously closed to others is unclear. More to the point, when Akers proposes that "if one lived like a Choctaw, acted like a Choctaw, and spoke Choctaw, then one was included in the community of Choctaw people" (xix), one wonders who the arbiter of Choctawness is. Is identity something both essential and coterminous with culture or something more ephemeral and born of a process of contestation and consensus?

Such are the questions that have been preoccupying ethnohistorians for the last decade or so. Whereas *Living in the Land of Death* makes a contribution in terms of resituating removal as a central experience in the lives of first people and Akers's use of interviews and linguistic analysis does point toward a potentially new kind of scholarship that students of Native history have been moving toward for a while, the book fails to engage recent ethnohistorical scholarship, cultural studies, and writing on indigenous methods of history. We are

left with a well-written book that is suitable for both scholars and students and that raises interesting and useful questions. But at the same time it is important to acknowledge the book's historiographical and methodological limitations.

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**Murder on the Reservation: American Indian Crime Fiction.** By Ray B. Browne. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press/Popular Press, 2004. 289 pages. \$65.00 cloth; \$19.95 paper.

In his introduction to *Murder on the Reservation: American Indian Crime Fiction*, Ray Browne outlines the purpose of his study: to analyze and evaluate the authors' individual works and to describe how they comment, if they do, on race relations in the United States. Browne focuses on the work of fifteen authors: Tony Hillerman, Jean Hager, Jake Page, Aimee and David Thurlo, Dana Stabenow, Louis Owens (whom Browne calls one of the most promising authors, apparently unaware of Owens's death in 2002), Peter Bowen, Margaret Coel, James Doss, Mardi Oakley Medawar, J. F. Trainor, Thomas Perry, Robert Westbrook, and Laura Baker.

Browne analyzes the literature from four angles and devotes a chapter to each. The Making of the Author provides background information about each of the book's authors. Cultural Background and Development, the most extensive chapter, discusses the cultural background of the Indian characters who appear in each author's work. Chapter three is titled Protagonists, Associates, and Development; chapter four is Literary Achievements. In chapter five, Realities and Implications, Browne offers conclusions about the genre and speculates about its direction. An appendix includes transcripts of mail interviews with ten of the authors, and an extensive reference page and a useful index will aid readers who want to delve deeper into crime fiction that features Indian characters.

As a professor emeritus of popular culture and the editor of the Ray and Pat Browne Book Series, which focuses on popular culture, Browne is a strong proponent of that culture, arguing that "popular culture is the force that pulls prejudices and attitudes, though slowly, onto the level field of democracy" (25). Browne says that as an element of popular culture, crime fiction stimulates "the imagination about the possibility of leveling the cultural playing field through upheaval" (3). He suggests reasons for the popularity of crime fiction: "In addition to providing new fields and human actions in which to present life in different and exotic ways, crime fiction is an economical form of physical and cultural tourism, a trip to exotic societies and a meeting with strange people and ways of life, with exposure to but safety from danger" (8).

Although some readers may be uneasy about Browne's endorsement of cultural tourism, he defends the potential of ethnic crime fiction to "correct misconceptions or ignorance about people different from those the reader knows" (6). He argues that "increasingly, authors of ethnic crime fiction are