

indigenous communities in the Upper Great Lakes region with “Métis.” The emphasis on hybridity rather than Métis peoplehood in both administrative and scholarly categories leaves the concept of “Métis” conceptually open for others to use for their own ends. Not surprisingly, this has been occurring with increasing frequency in Canada. This tendency has been compounded by the fact that the Canadian constitution recognizes three categories of indigenous peoples: First Nation, Inuit and Métis. Despite their lack of connection to the historic Métis Nation, individuals of mixed indigenous ancestry who do not readily fit into one of these categories, or have been marginalized in various ways by colonization, have adopted the term “Métis.” Respecting the right of these individuals and groups to define themselves as indigenous is one thing; their appropriation of Métis peoplehood is quite another. As Andersen bluntly puts it: “Métis is not a soup kitchen for indigenous individuals and communities disenfranchised in various ways by the Canadian state” (24). Indeed, it is hard to imagine the same kind of appropriation being undertaken with such abandon towards any other group of indigenous people, or being met with such benign acceptance.

“Metis”: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood strikes at the heart of what it truly means to be Métis in Canada. It is a powerful, timely, and cogently articulated work that should be required reading for everyone who writes about, engages with, or is simply curious about the Métis. The Métis truly do know who they are. It’s about time the rest of us got on board and accepted this fact.

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Native American Whalers and the World: Indigenous Encounters and the Contingency of Race. By Nancy Shoemaker. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015. 320 pages. \$34.95 cloth.

American Indian history is undergoing a “maritime turn.” Over the past two years, important books have refuted scholarly and popular perceptions of North America’s indigenous inhabitants as landlocked peoples, including Joshua Reid’s *The Sea Is My Country: The Maritime World of the Makahs* (2015), Andrew Lipman’s *The Saltwater Frontier: Indians and the Contest for the American Coast*, (2015), and Jace Weaver’s *The Red Atlantic: American Indigenes and the Making of the Modern World, 1000–1927* (2014). Nancy Shoemaker enlarges this robust new wave of scholarship with her book *Native American Whalers and the World: Indigenous Encounters and the Contingency of Race*. Drawing on the records of “over 600 Native Americans who collectively went on several thousand voyages” (18), Shoemaker explores the United States whaling industry from the vantage points of its American Indian mariners. At its heart, this superb book contends that the stories of nineteenth-century Native American seafarers have much to tell us about the complicated, fragile, and malleable discourses of race at home and abroad.

Shoemaker is explicit throughout *Native American Whalers and the World* that she is hardly the first historian to understand racial categories to be circumstantial relations rather than embodied traits. As she points out, "Scholars have long recognized that race is not embedded in the body but a fiction" (195). Her contributions to this ongoing and timely work are to foreground a population of little-known cosmopolitans—namely, Native American mariners who traveled the world's oceans for years at a time—and to allow their biographies to expose the blistering contradictions of racial ideologies. Shoemaker's meticulous assembly of these testimonials is the book's greatest strength. *Native American Whalers and the World* showcases hard-won primary documents from most of New England's maritime collections, together with rich archival material from New Zealand and Fiji. The cogent organization of this disparate array of sources testifies to the author's erudition.

Shoemaker distributes these discoveries across the book's four parts, which represent the sites where ethnic taxonomies shaped the experiences of Native American seafarers: the ship, the beach, islands, and the reservation. The first section, "The Ship," describes the means by which Native whalers found employment, ascended shipboard hierarchies, and attempted to make a living in this perilous industry. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, a majority New England's whaling ships had at least one Native American crewman aboard. Although that number dropped as the decades wore on, American Indian sailors frequently rendered years of shipboard experience into coveted positions as officers. Even so, few ever attained the rank of captain.

When US whaling vessels stopped at Pacific ports to resupply, repair their ships, and recruit new crewmembers, Native American mariners encountered indigenous peoples. The book's second section, "The Beach," traces the ways that such confrontations destabilize "cultural encounter narratives" in which civilized, white, Christian seafarers experienced contact with primitive, dark-skinned savages. As Shoemaker puts it, "That Indians were both on shore and on the ship confounded the racial category 'Indian' with unacknowledged complexity and unresolved contradictions" (79).

Through desertions and shipwrecks, a handful of Native American sailors built new lives as beachcombers on islands far from their homeland. Their stories animate the book's third part, "Islands." The life of John Sparr, a Florida Seminole who left an American whaling ship in Fiji during the mid-1840s, offers one of several intriguing case studies of this phenomenon. Although Sparr's American Indian identity was widely acknowledged by foreign castaways and native Fijians alike, when making diplomatic and economic alliances Sparr appealed to the typically white and colonial characteristics of his US origins. As Shoemaker notes, "Ironically, [Sparr] may have more stridently identified as American the farther he moved away from North America" (144).

Irony also dwells at the heart of the book's fourth section, "The Reservation." Here, Shoemaker describes the repressive conditions of settler colonialism in the northeastern United States, demonstrating "how native New Englanders' lives at home contrasted completely with their experiences abroad" (8). She shows how white authors and policymakers literally wrote Native American maritime labor out of history by portraying Indian communities as degraded, inept at self-governance, and incapable of

social betterment. As a result, the integral contributions of American Indian whalers have, until now, remained invisible.

On the whole, *Native American Whalers and the World* is a rigorous exercise in transforming margins into centerpieces. In each of the book's sections, Shoemaker finds insights among "the doodles, sentimental sailor song lyrics, aborted letters . . . and birthday observances" occluded by typical portrayals of the whaling industry (1). This attentiveness to the clues that inhabit edges and reside between lines gives the book its revelatory power. In addition to probing historiographical and archival boundaries, Shoemaker knows her limits. As she remarks early on, "I wish this project could accommodate the perspectives of everybody and truly study the dynamics of race, nation, and indigeneity in all their complexities, but that would be overwhelming. Having a single group of people at the center raises larger issues applicable to all those involved but in a manageable way" (17). Such provisos are refreshingly humble for an academic text.

Despite this book's many virtues, there are occasional missed opportunities among its pages. One of the challenges for authors of empirically rich history is to translate their "thick descriptions" into transportable concepts that can be used by scholars of other regions, temporalities, and fields. Through its very framework, based on maritime geographies, *Native American Whalers and the World* generates multiple avenues for exploring the social production of space. Yet Shoemaker could have been more forthcoming about how the fraught relationships among spatial mobility, race, and freedom that she so skillfully chronicles could be used as models for other studies.

Other potential affinities lie just beyond the book's conceptual horizons. Shoemaker's exploration of the intricate politics of race in shipboard settings that have been studied more frequently for their class dynamics displays a profound, yet unacknowledged, kinship with the work of the subaltern studies school. While South Asian "Indians" with distinct historical experiences are at the heart of this influential trend in postcolonial scholarship, both approaches are deeply attuned to how class inversions are intertwined, and dramatically shaped by, racial role reversals. Native American history, much like its Indian counterpart, has done much to expose the contradictions that haunt colonial projects. Students of empire would do well to heed the crucial, and related, lessons that both fields have generated.

Caveats aside, *Native American Whalers and the World* is a formidable book with crucial insights to contribute to critical race studies, maritime history, Native American history, nineteenth-century US history, and a host of other fields. As if having one brand-new text in circulation was not enough to verify Shoemaker's scholarly vitality, in 2014 she also published an edited volume, *Living with Whales: Documents and Oral Histories of Native New England Whaling Industry*. This collection of vivid primary sources on Native American involvement in the region's whaling history substantially augments and enhances the achievements of the book under review here. In classroom settings and beyond, the two texts could function in tandem to offer profound insights into the emerging subfield of Native American maritime history.

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