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**Author**

Norcini, Marilyn

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**Wild Men: Ishi and Kroeber in the Wilderness of Modern America.** By Douglas Cazaux Sackman. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. 384 pages. \$24.95 cloth; \$12.95 paper.

Interdisciplinary scholars continue to bring fresh perspectives to familiar stories in the humanities and social sciences. Douglas Sackman, an environmental and Western historian, offers us a retelling of the classic story of the encounter of Ishi, a survivor of the Yahi people, and Alfred Kroeber, a salvage anthropologist at the University of California. Their brief and extraordinary relationship (1911–16) raises a number of issues about the concept of wilderness in modern America that have not been addressed in earlier publications (Theodora Kroeber, *Ishi in Two Worlds: A Biography of the Last Wild Indian in North America*, 1961; Robert F. Heizer and Theodora Kroeber, *Ishi, the Last Yahi: A Documentary History*, 1979; Karl Kroeber and Clifton Kroeber, eds., *Ishi in Three Centuries*, 2003; Orin Starn, *Ishi's Brain: In Search of America's Last "Wild" Indian*, 2004) and film (*Ishi, the Last of His Tribe*, directed by Robert Ellis Miller, 1978; *American Experience: Ishi the Last Yahi*, directed by Jed Riffe and Pamela Roberts, 1992). As the latest contribution to the Oxford University Press series on New Narratives in American History, *Wild Men* reveals the conflicting cultural systems of knowledge toward nature. In the experiences of Ishi, nature is the ancestral homeland of the Yahi people—an interconnected environment that they are a part of and know in detail. To modern urban men such as Kroeber, nature is a pristine wilderness—a place to seek revitalization and health from the stress of modern life.

The book opens with two chapters that contrast the education, health, and work of Ishi and Kroeber. Chapter 1 interprets three worlds of the Yahi through stories about Wahganupa, their ancestral land: creation (traditional narratives of Cottontail Rabbit, Grizzly Bear, and Lizard); genocide (Gold Rush, cattle ranches, reservations, and Indian bounties); and survival (hidden villages and traditional subsistence methods adapted to new resources). Ishi, “the last of the Yahi,” was discovered in Oroville in 1911. He was taken into police custody and later transported by train and ferry boat to Kroeber at the University of California in San Francisco, a boomtown recovering from the 1906 earthquake and fire. For several years, Ishi worked as a janitor and interpreter and lived at the university museum. He adapted well to urban life (civilization) and was admired for his perfect health by medical doctors. As the last living Yahi, he became a source of ethnographic information about Yahi ancestral lands, Native architecture, language, crafts, and hunting practices. Kroeber and other salvage anthropologists recorded his cultural knowledge in order to preserve a scientific record of indigenous people in California.

In contrast to Ishi's model health and rural upbringing in the mountain valleys of northern California, Kroeber was born and raised in the urban environments of New Jersey and New York City. He was taught by a German tutor, and his knowledge of the world came primarily from books and urban outings. To Kroeber, Central Park was nature. His parents were concerned about their son's delicate health and consulted a doctor who recommended a “nature cure” to remedy Alfred's “constitutional frailty” (61). In 1888 at the

age of twelve, Alfred and his mother took a train into the countryside to seek health from Connecticut farmlands and Adirondack Mountains. His health was so improved that he was enrolled in a Connecticut country boarding school. Those happy, youthful years in the country (wilderness) created a lasting impression of freedom and independence in Kroeber—a sentiment that he retained through his ethnographic fieldwork in rural areas, far away from responsibilities of urban university life. At the age of sixteen, Kroeber returned to his home in New York City, revitalized and in good health, and enrolled at Columbia University.

After taking classes from Franz Boas, Kroeber changed his major from English to anthropology. Like other Boasian-trained ethnologists, Kroeber's academic and museum career was grounded in salvage anthropology—a moral commitment to the documentation and preservation of North American indigenous languages and cultures that were endangered in the modern era. After Kroeber's productive interviews with the Inuit (brought by Robert Peary to the American Museum of Natural History), Boas arranged a museum job for him at the California Academy of Sciences in 1900. His work was to curate ethnographic collections and conduct fieldwork with California tribes (for example, the Yurok). Later, with the financial support of Phoebe Apperson Hearst, Kroeber was hired by the University of California in San Francisco where he and his students worked on a systematic mapping of California tribes. Although material culture research and teaching was his livelihood, Kroeber was happiest when he was away from the city interacting with indigenous people in wilderness places.

In chapter 3, Yana material culture and modern adaptations to new materials are discussed, along with a history of attempts to find and document survivors and artifacts of primitive California tribes by Thomas T. Waterman, who was trained and supervised by Kroeber. The exciting discovery of Ishi in Oroville—a “wild man,” an antithesis of a civilized, modern man—is described by Waterman and contemporary newspaper accounts that marveled at his aboriginality in body, dress, and possessions.

Communication between Ishi and the anthropologists was facilitated by word lists of the northern Yana and a Native interpreter, Sam Batwi—an acculturated man whom Ishi regarded with suspicion because of his modern suit and incessant questions to please his white patrons.

Photographs of Ishi in chapters 4 and 5 illustrate the insatiable curiosity of the public for information about primitive people in an era of technological change (for example, the image of Ishi behind the wheel of a car). The author makes the argument that, contrary to public expectations about “wild men,” Ishi quickly adapted to the unfamiliar situations of urban life. He had his own opinions about what he encountered in San Francisco and carefully chose his friends. Ishi delighted in riding trolleys, playing with children, and eating new foods such as ice cream. Working with university anthropologists and the latest technology, Ishi recorded hours of traditional Yahi stories on wax cylinder phonographs, demonstrated traditional ways for an ethnographic film, and educated museum visitors about Indian crafts through demonstrations. Ishi was a natural survivor—in the wilderness of his homelands or urban civilization.

Chapter 6 situates Ishi within the broader public sensibilities toward nature in early-twentieth-century American culture. Here the author's strengths as an environmental historian are evident and persuasive. Sackman creates his central argument—the dynamic tension between modernity (such as technological progress through hydroelectric dam projects) and conservation (preservation of wilderness areas from development). The goals of conservationists were to preserve the environment, protect natural resources, and provide access to nature (for example, wilderness walks, such as the Sierra Club trip with Ishi). The popularity of joining environmental organizations and establishing national parks and monuments (for example, Yosemite) partially explain the fascination with Ishi. Seen in this light, salvage anthropology as exemplified by Kroeber's study of Ishi was a conservation project—ensuring a cultural connection between the peoples of California and nature.

Chapter 7 introduces the phenomenon of white “nature men” who went “back to nature” in order to live free from the burdens of civilization. To preservationists, Ishi symbolized a nature man from the untamed wilderness—a remnant of our former free, primitive selves. The desire to answer “the call of the wild” was also strong in Kroeber. In the summer of 1914, he planned a scientific expedition to Ishi's homelands near Mount Lassen. From Sackman's research into Kroeber's archives (Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley), field photographs, and newspaper accounts, the expedition was evidently a mix of science and a nature cure. It was partly an anthropological study of traditional subsistence strategies (such as a staged Yahi deer hunt with Ishi) and a wilderness holiday for Kroeber (Ishi wanted to stay in the city). In a role reversal of observer and observed, photographs show a contented anthropologist sitting naked by a river (Kroeber as nature man) while Ishi (civilized man) looks at the scene from a distance. This inversion illustrates the ambivalent attitudes toward a sense of place in nature—wilderness versus homelands, rural versus urban.

The final chapters address Ishi's death from tuberculosis in 1916 and the treatment of his physical remains by medical and scientific professions. Although an earlier study analyzes the disposition of Ishi's brain (Starn, 2004), *Wild Men* highlights the preservationist actions of taking a death mask of the last Yahi and Kroeber's conflicted feelings about Ishi and anthropology. Like other indigenous people taken to American museums for study, Ishi died from tuberculosis at the university museum in 1916. At the time, Kroeber was away in New York City finishing his book on California tribes and did not return for the funeral. Almost fifty years after Ishi's death and following the death of her husband in 1960, Kroeber's second wife Theodora wrote the first biography of Ishi (Kroeber, 1961).

In conclusion, *Wild Men* offers a new environmental interpretation of a classic story in the history of anthropology. It is recommended reading for undergraduate classes in interdisciplinary studies—anthropology, American studies, cultural studies, indigenous studies, museum studies, and public history.

Marilyn Norcini  
University of Pennsylvania