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series of relationships and built communities at the interstices of their worlds. The Americans and later the Protestant missionaries simply brought one more variable to a complex web of social and economic variables.

Widder is most successful in his examination of the American side of this middle ground. The sources consulted are largely those from the missionaries themselves. In keeping with his goal of “emphasizing the important role played by the Métis” in the Great Lakes region’s history, the work is less successful (p. xiii). The tendency to see the region from a missionary perspective lends itself to the portrayal of the Métis world as a place “in between,” a space squeezed between dominating cultures with no real identity or permanence, rather than a place of richness and variety, a world of its own. While *Battle for the Soul* adds to our knowledge of Métis history, it does not move Great Lakes history away from its tendency to portray Indian and Euro-American groups as dominate, and Métis society as secondary—lost, possibly overwhelmed, and inconsequential.

Another group, Indian and Métis women, also appears secondary in the account, due in part to the nature of fur trade sources. The work gives the reader little feeling for women’s roles in the cultural negotiations that follow the missionaries’ arrival. Although Widder acknowledges the centrality of kinship in the fur trade community, Euro-American, Canadian, and Métis men arrange trade, see to children’s education, and make family decisions. This is a story of a male-dominated fur trade society. Although a few women (especially the prominent Métis trader Magdelaine Laframboise) appear in this story, they are connections in a male kinship network, vehicles for male aspirations. We learn little of women’s active participation in fur trade society and family decisions about religion and education outside their male relatives’ agenda.

Despite these objections, Widder’s work is an important addition to the neglected field of United States Métis history and to the role played by Evangelical Protestants in Indian and Euro-American relations. In the end, Widder explains, the evangelical missionaries’ attempts to “civilize” the Métis gave younger Métis tools that enabled them to retain their former world while incorporating into it new elements that helped them meet the challenges ahead on their own terms.

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Black Elk Lives: Conversations with the Black Elk Family. By Esther Black Elk DeSersa, Olivia Black Elk Pourier, Aaron DeSersa Jr., and Clifton DeSersa. Edited by Esther Black Elk DeSersa, Hilda Neihardt, and Lori Utecht. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000. 168 pages. \$25.00 cloth.

Perhaps more ink has been spent on Nicholas Black Elk than on any other American Indian. Ever since *Black Elk Speaks* began enjoying immense international popularity in the 1960s, countless books and articles have been written about the book as well as about Black Elk himself. Joseph Epes Brown’s

The Sacred Pipe (1953), Hilda Neihardt's *Black Elk and Flaming Rainbow* (1995), Raymond DeMallie's *The Sixth Grandfather* (1984), Michael F. Steltenkamp's *Black Elk: Holy Man of the Oglala* (1993), Clyde Holler's *Black Elk's Religion* (1995), Julian Rice's *Black Elk's Story* (1991), and the very recent *The Black Elk Reader* (2000), edited by Clyde Holler, are only some of the most famous works that focus on Nicholas Black Elk. If we add to these monographs to a list of the scholarly articles written on this topic, it becomes easy to appreciate the vast amount of academic research dedicated to Black Elk.

As with any phenomenon of this magnitude, the interpretations and perspectives offered by the different authors are far from uniform. Whereas some scholars view Black Elk as a pillar of traditional Lakota religion and defend Neihardt's work as credible, others argue that Black Elk abandoned the "old ways" in favor of Catholicism and consider *Black Elk Speaks* the fantasy of a romantic, non-Indian poet (Neihardt).

Coedited by John G. Neihardt's daughter, Hilda Neihardt, *Black Elk Lives* is the most recent work addressing this ongoing debate. However, *Black Elk Lives* is different from all other books on the topic published so far in at least one significant way: The main voices in this volume are not those of scholars arguing for the veracity of their interpretations, but those of Black Elk's own descendents. Until now, in fact, what Black Elk family members had to say was largely ignored. Occasionally, scholars would use an isolated quote from a family member to give credence to their position, but no comprehensive effort was undertaken to document Black Elk's legacy among his living descendents. *Black Elk Lives* parts with this tradition and allows members of the Black Elk family to speak their minds at length.

In the preface, Hilda Neihardt, perhaps mindful of the criticism leveled against her father, makes it abundantly clear that the topics on which the chapters are centered were chosen entirely by the family members. Neihardt also explicitly states that the editing was kept to a bare minimum; whenever possible the conversations between the editors and authors were transcribed literally, and drafts of the manuscript were submitted to the Black Elks for correction. What could potentially be one of the main criticisms directed against this book—the fact that only some of Black Elk's descendents are among the authors (two granddaughters and three great-grandsons)—is explained by the editors on the grounds that "practical considerations of time and space have made it necessary to concentrate on those with whom we have been in close contact over the years" (p. x).

Black Elk Lives is a collection of conversations on myriad topics, including anecdotes about Nicholas Black Elk; daily life experiences of various Black Elk family members; the meaning of Lakota identity; the political and economic conditions on the Pine Ridge Reservation; family history; storytelling; tales from Vietnam and Wounded Knee; the impact of the American Indian Movement; old Lakota customs ranging from food preparation to games; Catholicism; and Lakota traditionalism and religious syncretism. Particularly interesting is a debate over the practice of sharing Lakota spirituality with non-Indians. The lack of consensus among the Black Elks makes it clear that this is a very sensitive topic likely to appear in any future discussion of Lakota religion.

Stylistically, *Black Elk Lives* is faithful to its premise and does not attempt to alter significantly the peculiar brand of English spoken by some of the authors. Also, little effort is wasted trying to keep an even rhythm or exclude from the text elements of the conversation that may appear irrelevant to any broader issue. Throughout the book, the authors move from serious issues to casual conversation and back to serious issues in a constant alternation of tones and topics. The end result leaves the reader feeling like she/he is a guest sitting in the Black Elks' living room.

One of the most interesting aspects of *Black Elk Lives* is the fact that, contrary to most other scholarly texts about Black Elk, it does not try to present a coherent, uniform picture to the reader; rather, it embraces ambiguities and contradictions. The book unequivocally shows the wide difference of opinions among the Black Elk family members, and does not attempt to portray some as the "true" carriers of Nicholas Black Elk's legacy at the expense of the others. Instead, *Black Elk Lives* shows that some of the Black Elks are faithful Catholics while others reject Catholicism with more than a little animosity, and some believe that Lakota religion should not be shared with outsiders while others state that it should. Rather than presenting a monolithic front, the Black Elks come across as flesh-and-blood individuals possessing the range of different experiences, personal preferences, and idiosyncrasies that one would expect among real people.

Admirably, the same will to show complexity and the refusal to oversimplify issues for the sake of presenting a clear argument also pervades the way in which Nicholas Black Elk is presented. This is a significant point of departure from the works of most scholars and authors who write about Black Elk. Most of them, in fact, so adamantly argue that Black Elk was a devout Catholic or a staunch traditionalist that they often present only one side of the story. Some even go so far as to completely ignore Black Elk's words if they somehow contradict their own portrayal of the man. William K. Powers's article "When Black Elk Speaks, Everybody Listens" (Religion in Native North America, ed. Christopher Vesecey) as well as Steltenkamp's and Steinmetz's contributions to *The Black Elk Reader* are classic examples of this kind of one-sided argument. *Black Elk Lives* does not pigeonhole Black Elk, portraying him as a flat character in order to fit the author's agenda. In this text, the reader will not find any forceful attempt to establish once and for all that Black Elk was one thing or another. Rather than making a precise argument about Nicholas Black Elk, *Black Elk Lives* presents the recollections of family members showing different sides of their ancestor.

The reader looking for a definite answer about what Black Elk believed will probably be disappointed. However, those willing to accept complexity will find in *Black Elk Lives* a great source of information about Lakota culture in general, and about the Black Elk family in particular. Although far from revolutionary, and at least in some parts stylistically less than engaging, *Black Elk Lives* is an intriguing, original contribution to the scholarship on Nicholas Black Elk.

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