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To Marry an Indian: The Marriage of Harriett Gold and Elias Boudinot in Letters, 1823–1839. Edited by Theresa Strouth Gaul. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005. 222 pages. \$55.00 cloth; \$21.95 paper.

In 1825, Harriett Gold, a nineteen-year-old white woman from a prominent Connecticut family, announced to her relatives that she intended to marry a Cherokee Indian. The shock triggered a flurry of heated letters, letters that contemporary scholars can cull for insights into, among other things, Jacksonian-era attitudes concerning white-Indian relations, anxieties over miscegenation, and the tension between Christian love and racial hierarchy. Although her suitor, Elias Boudinot, was fair skinned, English speaking, relatively prosperous, and a committed Christian, and although Harriett's family grudgingly came to reconcile themselves to the couple's wishes, the controversy surrounding the marriage led to the closing of Cornwall's Foreign Mission School, the very institution that brought Harriett and Elias together. In 1826, Harriett followed her husband to the Cherokee Nation, where he became an important political figure and editor of the first American Indian newspaper, the bilingual *Cherokee Phoenix*. A longtime and outspoken opponent of Indian Removal, he nonetheless came to believe that President Jackson and the white people of Georgia would, despite any Supreme Court rulings favorable to the Cherokee Nation, dispossess his people of their land. Hoping to secure the best possible future for the Cherokee people, he signed the infamous Treaty of New Echota in December of 1835, which ceded Cherokee land to Georgia. In August of 1836, shortly after bearing her sixth child, Harriett died from an unspecified illness. Elias was assassinated in 1839, following the Trail of Tears. The marriage of Harriett Gold and Elias Boudinot was a kind of microcosm of early-nineteenth-century Indian-white dynamics, with their interracial marriage as likely to be embraced by Euro-Americans as the presence of the Cherokee Nation was tolerated by white Georgians.

Theresa Strouth Gaul's *To Marry an Indian* traces Harriett and Elias's marriage through a remarkable epistolary exchange spanning more than a decade. Gaul divides her study of the letters into two groups: letters circulated in Connecticut between 1823 and 1826, when Harriett and her family debated the implications of the marriage for their community and family (unfortunately, letters that passed between Harriett and Elias during their courtship have not survived), and letters written between 1827 and 1839, sent from the couple's residence in the Cherokee Nation to relatives in Connecticut, often cowritten by Harriett and Elias. In elegant prose, Gaul unpacks these letters and offers several suggestions, among them: (1) interracial marriage tests the boundaries of racial and national identity, (2) white women—far more than white men—function to stabilize whiteness as a racial identity, (3) Elias's goal of becoming a Christian patriarch was mitigated by his racial status as an Indian, (4) letters are uniquely suited to reveal the insights of those individuals and groups who historically have had unequal access to more elite literary forms, (5) letters can function as sites of contestation, and (6) letters can function as sites of negotiation and even resistance.

Gaul's book will be of interest to scholars who study the role of assimilation, acculturation, and miscegenation in the history of the United States, especially with reference to Indian-white relations. Her book is also of value to scholars of gender, in particular those who study the impact of race and religion on gender norms. And her book will be a welcome contribution to the emerging study of letter writing as a genre and practice—as her thoroughly annotated reconstructions of these epistolary exchanges make clear, there is still a great deal that scholars can learn about the form, materiality, and cultural function of letters. But scholars of Cherokee history, especially those interested in the period of Indian Removal, will likely be the ones most grateful that Gaul wrote this book. Indeed, Elias Boudinot is one of the most controversial political figures in the history of the Cherokee Nation, and any study that brings us closer to understanding him—his personal, filial, and religious history, his mind-set, worldview, and political and personal goals—will help us better understand why he came to oppose Principal Chief John Ross and cast his lot with the Ridge or Treaty Party. Elias came to believe that the Cherokee Nation was divided between the “lovers of the people” and the “lovers of the land,” and this belief led him to sign the Treaty of New Echota. In a letter, Elias wrote:

I see nothing but certain death, and at the West a probable way of escape. I cannot hesitate. Whether it is right and justifiable on the part of the United States that the Cherokees should be removed, is not now the question. That it is right for the Cherokees to save themselves from destruction, bears no question in my opinion; and such is the dictate of wisdom and sound reason. (61)

It is significant that the signing of the infamous treaty took place in Elias's own home, and it is important to remember that white Georgians had made a practice of murdering Cherokee Indians.

For those interested in educational materials for undergraduate courses in United States history, cultural studies, or Native American studies, *To Marry an Indian* would be a good book to consider—the letters themselves read like a poignant epistolary novel, a compelling one at that, and as professors and their teaching assistants know too well, finding a book that students will actually want to read is a perennial challenge. For graduate students and academics, *To Marry an Indian* is a gold mine of primary source materials. Gaul has done an excellent job of reconstructing these letters and providing detailed annotations. Specialists in gender analysis and students of racial construction would do well to tap this book for a case study. And scholars of Indian identity, especially those interested in the conjunction of Cherokee and Christian identities, would do well to examine Elias's story.

Gaul's *To Marry an Indian*, however, is frustrating as well as enlightening. Her insights are often stunning, but they are likewise often less than satisfying because she never follows up with a sustained analysis. In a book of 222 pages, Gaul devotes fewer than seventy to her own prose; these comprise the book's introduction. As fine as that introduction is, her reader cannot help feeling

that hidden in this slim output there are at least a dozen dormant articles, if not chapters for a book-length work, just waiting for Gaul to write them. Her prose is elegant, her insights are pointed, and she leaves her reader wanting more. Also, although she does a good job citing the pertinent scholarship on epistolary practices, miscegenation, and Cherokee studies, she fails to make use of the scholarship on “whiteness”—the two principal works being David R. Roediger’s *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (1991) and Matthew Frye Jacobson’s *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (1998). This oversight is regrettable because a discussion of the nature and function of nineteenth-century Euro-American constructions and categories of whiteness would strengthen Gaul’s analysis of the controversy over Harriett and Elias’s marriage, not to mention shed light on the violence that “white” Georgians visited upon the Cherokee people. These criticisms aside, anyone interested in epistolary practices, miscegenation, or Cherokee studies will find *To Marry an Indian* a valuable read.

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The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative. By Thomas King. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005. 172 pages. \$24.95 cloth.

“The truth about stories is that that’s all that we are,” Thomas King writes in his new book about how people, especially Natives, create themselves, their self-understanding, and their universe through storytelling. More than an analysis of the function and nature of storytelling, both oral and written, *The Truth about Stories* is a compelling collection of thought-provoking anecdotes from King’s own experience.

This brief memoir, which earned King one of Canada’s highest literary honors, the Trillium Award, features engaging, humorous stories that explore his identity and self-concept as a “mixedblood” Indian. King tells how others have perceived him in the past, showing how people’s ideas of Indianness are often constructions and myths drawn from popular culture, such as Western movies, TV shows, and dime novels; canonical literature like James Fenimore Cooper; the photographs of Edward Sheriff Curtis (who kept boxes of Indian paraphernalia at hand in case the Native subject didn’t look “Indian” enough); and other sources producing simulacra such as Rousseau’s Noble Savage, the vanishing Indian, or the whooping, savage Indian on the warpath. He explains that even Natives themselves are not immune from this influence of the “invented Indian” and relates with some irony how, in the 1970s, it was crucial to exhibit “Indian” signifiers. The focus of the book is not just King’s personal experience—he considers issues of identity politics and racism relevant to North American Indians generally, as well as sexism, consumerism, and environmentalism.

In some ways *The Truth about Stories* is an odd book because of its genesis as an oral communication coupled with its grand scope. Most of the volume