

**UCLA**

**American Indian Culture and Research Journal**

**Title**

The Storied Landscape of Iroquoia: History, Conquest, and Memory in the Native Northeast. By Chad L. Anderson.

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8mj8r8pq>

**Journal**

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 45(1)

**ISSN**

0161-6463

**Author**

Mann, Barbara Alice

**Publication Date**

2021

**Copyright Information**

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

But *Satie on the Seine* is less of an exercise in historical fiction or a sequel to Vizenor's previous *Blue Ravens* (2014) than it is a radical testimony of witness. "The Nazi and Vichy expulsion of Jews can easily be compared to the federal policies of native removal, treaties of separatism, military atrocities, and the militia murders of natives in America," Basile declares (164), calling out parallel practices of racial and cultural dispossession in the "new" world and the old, as for example, his explicit linking of the Indian Removal Act of 1830 to the idea of "*lebensraum*," the Nazi rationalization of claims for "living space" used to dispossess and eventually extinguish millions throughout Europe.

Vizenor's work here is a kind of "spirit history," insisting upon throughlines of murderous intent and consequence. *Satie on the Seine* is an addition to an important direction of newer scholarship that is undertaking, as Philip Deloria has written, the crucial task of unburying and, in this case, reanimating "ghosts of history" that must not be allowed to recede into mere lingering—and fading—memory. This, for example, is the work undertaken by Claudio Saunt in his *Unworthy Republic* (2020), a painstakingly detailed account that demonstrates how the forced removal of Native nations from east of the Mississippi to Indian Territory in the West was a direct consequence of the greed-driven desire to expand slave labor camps necessary for cotton production in the South and thereby contributed to the two original sins, dispossession and slavery, that are indelible blots upon American history.

After the liberation of Paris, Satie's music, played by the woman in the blue scarf, returns to the quay by the Seine. Basile's chronicles will eventually be published by Crémieux's post-war Galerie Ghost Dance. In our own time of rising nationalism, the statelessness of increasing millions, and the seeming inexorable exploitation of our natural world, Vizenor/Basile's letters sound an insistent alarm that it is again and always a time to remember what it means to be inheritors of "the right of conscience to declare the horrors of colonial violence and racial separation in the world" (165).

Carol Miller

University of Minnesota

**The Storied Landscape of Iroquoia: History, Conquest, and Memory in the Native Northeast.** By Chad L. Anderson. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020. 268 pages. \$65.00 cloth and electronic.

From scholar Chad L. Anderson comes a raconteur's approach to a backdrop called Iroquoia Indigenously, but upstate New York Euro-styled. Beginning with early maps, especially the wildly disproportionate 1755 Mitchell Map, *The Storied Landscape of Iroquoia* positions the landscape of upstate New York as a unifying core weaving together stories of the dis/possession of the land. In a sort of tit-for-tat recital, the author pulls up major tales from the revolution through the nineteenth century, making an effort to balance Haudenosaunee and Euro-American tales and compare conflicting information when possible.

A brief recital of tradition drawn from the christianized David Cusick unfortunately lacks Indigenous nuance or grasp in chapter 1's presentation of Iroquoian creation and history. This chapter demonstrates the difficulties of relying too heavily on a single Westernized source, including erroneously presenting the missionary-imposed "Great Spirit" as genuinely Indigenous thought (41, 42) and writing off the very real, if very tall, Stone Giants as mythical (35, 36). To sort the Indigenous from the christianized today requires informed perspicacity as missionaries of the era like Samuel Kirkland and David Zeisberger, who trimmed and refashioned traditions they heard about into narratives useful for their proselytizing, did most of the scribbling. It is surprising that this chapter does not make use of the many studies of Iroquoian tradition published by Haudenosaunee scholars and revered traditionalists.

Chapter 2 tackles the realities of the built environment of the Haudenosaunee under the assault of the Clinton-Sullivan campaign of 1779, which destroyed sixty towns and all the housing, crops, and orchards of Iroquoia, after which coerced treaties transferred Haudenosaunee land to Euro-Americans. An orgy of animal murders ensued that especially targeted wolves and bears, and, with the aid of tree murders, disfigured the ecological balance that Indigenous people once had maintained.

In addressing the intense Euro-American projection of their own cruelty onto Indians (56), Anderson calls up examples such as New York Governor DeWitt Clinton's assertion that "[w]ar was the favorite pursuit" of the Six Nations (63) that portray the Euro-invader as the innocent victim. He follows this with Kaiiontwa'kon's (Cornplanter's) graphic correction of the record (77).

Chapter 3 zeroes in on the multifarious stories of the "Painted Post"—an object of Euro-invader fascination that supposedly marked the grave of "Stuttering" John Montour, who was reputedly buried under the post as a casualty of the Revolution—except that in fact, Montour was alive and well till about 1830. The Montours are an important Seneca family, with their European surname descending through a French trapper. As most of the chapter's stories align around the increasingly untidy Euro-American myths about, and recreations of, the crumbling post, the inclusion of John Montour apparently is intended as the Indigenous aspect. However, a theme of balancing oral traditions, Indigenous and Euro-American, does not quite work here, because orality in Indigenous culture and orality in Western culture are very different things.

Here, the importance of truth-telling or lying matters. For Indigenous peoples, accuracy in oral tradition is a paramount consideration, but for Europeans, oral history is an invitation to lie as much as possible to flatter one's own pretensions. Westerners assumed (with many still assuming) that Indigenous orality is the equivalent of European-style tall tales, with DeWitt Clinton directly alleging that the Seneca "invented fabulous" stories for vanity's sake (122–23), but tradition is nothing of the sort. Intentional lying is an actual crime, with Vine Deloria Jr. noting that scouts who lied might even be executed (*Red Earth, White Lies*, 1997, 39). The central facts of an account must be accurate and unchanging, although nonessential details may shift about from speaker to speaker. Thus, the mutually contradictory and ever-meandering Euro-stories of the Painted Post become meaningless as their central facts change,

until the story becomes just another exercise in cultural appropriation. By the end of the chapter, I wondered why I bothered reading it all.

Moreover, John Montour is a hero only to Euro-Americans. He betrayed the Northwestern Indians, shifting sides to aid the American army in 1782 by leading Lenape scouts for the Revolutionaries out of Fort Pitt, a notorious staging ground for the most murderous of the militias. Importantly, Montour's mother was Lenape, a fact whose Indigenous point is typically lost on Westerners. Woodland identity flows through the mother, not the father. He was Lenape, then, and joined the deeply resented contingent of Lenape converts that had long sided with the invaders, not from sincere belief in Christianity, but because they had thought it would keep them safe. (It did not.)

Chapter 4 looks at another Euro-American projection, the styling of the Haudenosaunee as the "Romans of the Western World" who were collapsing into savagery under the weight of their own raiding (114). Anderson now pairs the christianized Cusick with Constantine Rafinesque, a complete scoundrel who pretended to be a naturalist while inventing the "*Walum Olum*" for the Lenape, replete with forged bark books. Cusick's *Sketches*, however, recorded actual Tuscarora tradition (explaining why his nation became the "center of Iroquoia's history," 138). Traditionally, one speaks of one's own traditions with authority, but of others' traditions with permission. This explains what puzzles Anderson: the two versions of the Jigonsaseh struggle reflect the different sides of a dispute over which woman held the title, one version from the then-sitting Seneca Jigonsaseh, Gähahno, and Cusick's version ("Caroline Parker," 140).

With its introduction of the Mound Builders, chapter 4 sets up Anderson's lengthy discussion of Joseph Smith's *Book of Mormon* in chapter 5. Joseph Smith's book cribbed significant content from Ethan Smith, whom Anderson mentions (169), and Solomon Spaulding, whom he does not. Although the Mound Builders were a people well known to actual tradition, fraught Euro-myth concocted them as a "lost race" murdered by the bloodthirsty Indians (115). To be sure, the tall priests were killed for their ongoing cruel corruption, with the Onondaga becoming renowned giant-killers. As Anderson shows, however, that genuine historical tradition was completely obscured by Euro-fantasy. Smith's fanciful story of lost Hebrews stumbling around America, in which the Indians become the "Ten Lost Tribes" *Found! Is* one of the more zany of the nineteenth-century Mound-Builder myths. I was puzzled that neither Fawn Brodie's nor Robert Silverberg's signature works on Smith and the Mound-Builder myth found their way into Anderson's bibliography, for they would have illuminated this discussion. As we welcome Anderson to the conversation, I suggest that he familiarize himself with the burgeoning modern ranks of Indigenous scholars and oral keepers writing on and talking of their traditions.

Barbara Alice Mann  
University of Toledo