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Author

Parmenter, Jon

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ver. It does affect our position in regard to the text. And I believe that we ought to hold our heads high with Craig Womack and Dan Littlefield in defending our reasons in doing so.

We ought equally to admit an important truth that Owens points out: "I think it is perhaps time to recognize that what we are calling Native American literature is represented largely, if not exclusively, by . . . privileged texts . . . and is created by those migrant or diasporic Natives who live lives of relatively privileged mobility and surplus pleasure" (p. 224). And Owens concedes that the lives of most American Indians are far, far removed from this privilege. Though I am just as guilty as anyone of writing to discover who I am, to discover what it means to be an American of mixed indigenous and foreign descent, perhaps we should all spend less time worrying about locating ourselves in order to find our Indianness. In the absence of the essentialist, US-government-dictated Certificate Degree of Indian Blood, I have found that who I "be"—to paraphrase Annette Arkekta—is as much if not more defined in traditional communities by what I do than from whom I am descended. "Being" Indian, in terms of action, means "giving." Maybe, just maybe, what we should focus on, if we dare to define ourselves in regard to these texts, to Native American literature, both creatively and critically, is what we *give* to communities on which the privilege of our careers and lives are based. Only when the words we use with power do that, only when they empower the communities in some way, can we say "Native American Literature" with any honesty at all. Owens's acknowledgement of the gap between the communities and the production and study of American Indian literatures is the gift that he comes bearing. But even though the gift is offered to us, it is one we must not keep to ourselves. It is one that by its very nature must be passed along.

Kimberly Roppolo

McLennan Community College

Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes. By Susan Sleeper-Smith. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001. 234 pages. \$45.00 cloth; \$18.95 paper.

Susan Sleeper-Smith's study of cross-cultural interaction in the western Great Lakes offers a fresh and intriguing perspective on how our understanding of Native American history continues to be obscured by stereotypes. Rejecting the myth that the only "genuine" Indian is a "primitive" Indian, she presents a well-documented and cogently argued case for Great Lakes Native persistence through creative accommodation and adaptation over a "continuous process of encounter with foreigners" (p. 3). Contending that women, kinship, and Catholicism shaped the dynamics of cross-cultural interaction in the Great Lakes region through the era of the American Civil War, the author offers a new and provocative interpretation that challenges not only the groundbreaking thesis of Richard White's *Middle Ground* (1991), but also much of the extant scholarship on Native women and Christian missions.

Sleeper-Smith focuses her attention on Illinewek, Miami, and Potawatomi women and the role their marriages with French men played in transforming the fur trade from an impersonal market-oriented process of exchange to a “socially accountable process” (p. 4). Relying on several emblematic case studies, she illustrates the ways in which the métis kin networks, syncretic lay Catholicism, and agricultural practices established by Native women and French men during the seventeenth century complicated the business of the fur trade and proved fundamental to the persistence of a distinct identity for indigenous people in the Great Lakes region for nearly two-hundred years. Emphasizing “accommodation” where other historians have seen “assimilation,” Sleeper-Smith samples an impressive range of nontraditional sources (including material culture, visual sources, inventories of trade goods, baptismal and marriage records) in order to reconstruct local indigenous identity formation and exchange strategies in the Great Lakes region. Additionally, her painstaking effort to tease out the role Native women played in these processes from biased, “top-down” (p. 4) archival sources that tend to emphasize the actions of their white husbands offers a model of sound ethnohistorical scholarship.

Marriages between Indian women and French men commenced soon after the beginning of the fur trade in the western Great Lakes, and represented the key to the variety of exchange processes encompassed in that business. A Native wife conferred on a French trader allied status, linguistic expertise, personal safety, and access to her kin network. Yet Sleeper-Smith points out that the Native women, especially those who converted to Catholicism, got something out of the bargain, too. Her reading of the evidence pertaining to Illinewek women in the late seventeenth century suggests that they leapt at the opportunity to replace abusive, polygamous traditional relationships (which included instances of gang rape) with the monogamy and Jesuit-backed social influence resulting from Catholic marriages with French traders. In making this argument, Sleeper-Smith offers a strikingly different interpretation of Great Lakes Native women’s interactions with Christian missions than that advanced by either Karen Anderson (*Chain Her By One Foot* [1991]) or Carol Devens (*Countering Colonization: Native American Women and Great Lakes Missions* [1992]). Eschewing the notion that Christianity was, by definition, “the means through which indigenous female autonomy was subverted” (p. 177 n.52), the author argues that the circumstances of the seventeenth-century fur trade enabled Native women converts to escape the limitations of both patrilineal indigenous society and patriarchal colonial society and to fashion a new, independent, and influential role for themselves.

“Catholicism and the fur trade,” according to the author, “encouraged the formation and perpetuation of matrifocal households” (p. 30) during the seventeenth century, which were capable of producing rich agricultural surpluses. This abiding concern for agricultural production sustained the Native population of the Great Lakes region through the ups and downs of the fur trade economy: it offered a key means of adaptation and survival during the ongoing changes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Miami and Potawatomi wives of French fur traders worked out mutually beneficial rela-

tionships with the garrison population of French forts after 1680, selling their agricultural surplus to the soldiers, and incorporating the officers as fictive kin through Catholic godparenting. Although the influx of English troops and traders after the 1760 conquest of Canada altered these arrangements (owing to the newcomers' steadfast resistance to recognize the significance of Catholic kin networks), the agricultural orientation of western Great Lakes Native villages enabled them to resist domination. They allied with Pontiac in 1763, and maintained a neutral stance during the American Revolutionary War. After 1783, the Algonquians of the western Great Lakes absorbed a number of Native refugees from the Ohio Valley and prepared to confront the aggressively expansionist American republic.

The final three chapters, covering the nineteenth century, are the most interesting and challenging of the entire book. Sleeper-Smith skillfully explodes the popular nineteenth-century perception that Native Americans were agriculturally incompetent as mere propaganda designed to facilitate the appropriation of Indian land. Presenting compelling evidence of large and extensive Potawatomi fields (which sustained permanent, large villages) Sleeper-Smith demonstrates that the Native people of the western Great Lakes were willing and able to live alongside an agriculturally oriented American nation. Yet she takes this innovative perspective one step further by showing how powerful stereotypes of Native people as "savage hunters" meant that even firsthand observation by some Americans of sedentary agrarian Potawatomi villages during the 1820s did nothing to affect this persistent image of Native peoples as obstacles to the advancement of American civilization. After 1820, the United States federal government increased pressure on the Indians of the western Great Lakes to relocate west of the Mississippi River, but they continued to employ kinship, Catholicism, agriculture, and the fur trade to stave off these efforts to engross their land.

Sleeper-Smith describes a variety of creative adaptations employed by western Great Lakes Native people to resist removal. Initially, their firm stance in negotiations enabled them to get higher prices for lands they chose to cede, and to retain title to selected cessions. An 1828 federal treaty with the Potawatomis, for example, set aside approximately five million acres, encompassing nineteen different reservations. Village headmen by this time had supplanted the role of female catechizers in promoting a syncretic Catholic/indigenous spirituality, which enabled them to enlist the support of Catholic clergymen and sympathetic attorneys. As a result, the 1832 Chicago treaty permitted Catholic Potawatomis to remain on their lands "on account of their religion" (p. 106). This success proved fleeting, however, as it exposed the Catholic Potawatomis to both intense anti-Catholic Nativist sentiment, as well as escalating racism during the 1840s and 1850s. At this point, Sleeper-Smith contends that many of the Native people of the western Great Lakes consciously chose, as an adaptive strategy, to erect "façades of whiteness" (p. 115) to mask their indigenous, or racially mixed ancestry.

Although careful to note that the construction of whiteness by Native people "consigned successive generations to hiding in plain view" (p. 116), Sleeper-Smith portrays this innovation as one more example of indigenous

agency in the face of an oppressive dominant culture. However, the evidence she presents in support of this view is rather limited: the adopted captive Frances Slocum “outing” herself as white in 1835 to protect her village from forced removal, and an effort by several Native groups to showcase their “prosperity” with elaborate homes and improved lands. The latter effort actually further antagonized many white settlers, who did not regard the presence of Native people better off than themselves as particularly appealing. This aspect of Sleeper-Smith’s argument is not wholly convincing, especially given the federal revocation of the tribal status of the Miamis of Indiana in 1897 (whose efforts to “pass” as white evidently worked all too well). Her discussion of the Native villages of southwestern Michigan electing to retreat to less-desirable marsh- and swamplands, and to engage in a still-profitable trade in black raccoon pelts, better illustrates the concept of “hiding in plain view” as a constructive strategy of Native persistence in the nineteenth century.

This is an important book that deserves wide readership. Those with interests in Native American gender and religious history will find much of value, and the author also provides an important corrective to the myth of the Old Northwest as an Anglo-Saxon-dominated haven of “frontier farm families” (p. 161) by demonstrating that it was a place where people regularly crossed racial boundaries. Sleeper-Smith’s advocacy of a persistent yet adaptive Native identity is provocative and persuasive. Furthermore, her innovative thinking goes right to the heart of many contemporary conversations about issues of race and mixed ancestry in Native society.

Jon Parmenter

St. Lawrence University

James Anderson Slover, Minister to the Cherokees: A Civil War Autobiography. Edited by Barbara Cloud. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001. 212 pages. \$47.50 cloth.

The issues of factionalism, Christian missionaries, and Cherokee participation in the Civil War have been central to scholarship of nineteenth-century Cherokee history. In this book, Barbara Cloud presents a combination of these in the autobiography of James Anderson Slover. The journey west during the nineteenth century was usually associated with the desire for a better life. James Anderson Slover was included among those who made that amazing journey.

Cloud emphasizes the three themes of the economic tribulations of pioneer societies, the role of missionaries in Indian territory, and Indian participation in the Civil War. First, Slover’s experiences of being swept up in the wave of westward migration and the ensuing adventures are the main focus of the book. His participation in some of the major historical events of nineteenth century Indian history illuminate the cultural barriers faced by missionaries. Second, as the issue of slavery caused a split among the Baptist Church, Slover recounts his main point of contention as the issue of immer-