***JAST*, 2020; 54: 41-58**

Submitted: 08.09.2019

Accepted: 11.10.2020

ORCID# 0000-0002-1934-1548

Reinventing the Writing of American Indian History in the Twenty-First Century

Daniele Fiorentino

Abstract

Studying the history of American Indians today requires an interdisciplinary approach capable of considering both the native peoples' interaction with the Euroamericans and the internal processes occurring in each distinct population. Researching about American Indians implies an exercise in approximation. The practice of ethnohistory helps the scholar find the necessary perspective for a broad, yet punctual, diachronic and synchronic analysis. However, this approach, initiated in the twentieth century, further evolved as scholars started re-examining the ideological roots of some ethnohistorical studies. Recent scholarship has benefited also from the emergence of native historians and ethnohistorians who have contributed to provide their own reading of American Indian culture and history. Moreover, today scholars from different disciplines subscribe to it as the only possible approach to reach a proper understanding of American Indian history and culture.

Keywords: American Indians; ethnohistory; transnationalism; cultural identity

Yirmi Birinci Yüzyılda Kızılderili Tarihini Yeniden Keşfetmek

Öz

Günümüzde Kızılderili tarihi üzerine çalışmak Kızılderililerin Avrupalı Amerikalılarla etkileşimine ve her bir kabilenin kendi içsel süreçlerine disiplinlerarası bir yaklaşım gerektirir. Kızılderililer üzerine araştırma yapmak tahmin yürütme uygulamasını beraberinde getirir. Etnotarih yaklaşımı araştırmacıların ihtiyaç duydukları geniş odaklı ama net; artzamanlı ve eşzamanlı analizleri yapabilmelerini mümkün kılar. Yirminci yüzyılda ortaya çıkan bu yaklaşım, araştırmacılar etnotarih çalışmalarının ideolojik kökenlerini yeniden gözden geçirmeye başladıklarında, bir değişim sürecine girmiştir. Yakın tarihli çalışmalar yerli tarihçilerin ve Kızılderili Amerikalı kültür ve tarihine kendilerine has bir okuma getiren etnotarihçilerin ortaya çıkmasına katkı sağlamıştır. Bunun yanında, günümüzde, farklı disiplinlerden araştırmacılar Kızılderili Amerikalı tarih ve kültürünü doğru anlamayı mümkün kılan tek yaklaşım olarak bu yaklaşıma yönelmektedirler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kızılderili Amerikalıar, etnotarih, ulusaşırılık, kültürel kimlik

Thanks to the late twentieth century trends in cultural studies which also affected American Indian history, Native Americans were returned some of their "Indianness" and the possibility of narrating their culture and history on their own terms. Despite the process of acculturation, or maybe just because of it, that took place throughout the century and earlier, several native cultures have elaborated survival strategies which enabled them to retain certain traits of their identity while adjusting to the requirements of Anglo-American society to a certain extent. Historians, ethnohistorians, and anthropologists, in turn, devised new means of looking at cultures which enabled them to read American Indian history not only as a process of encounter, confrontation and survival. While adapting to the Euroamerican world they were forced to live in, American Indians renewed their sense of tribalism and traditional identity. At the same time, they devised new strategies

to deal with the federal government (Carlson 183). From this point of view, the seminal work by Philip Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (2004), has been instrumental in providing a new framework by which one can study and understand the process of adjustment devised by many individuals and many an Indian tribe. This was a way also to shed the stereotypes imposed upon them in about two centuries of white domination. To borrow from the title of Fergus Bordewich's book on American Indians at the end of the twentieth century: Native Americans reinvented themselves, and in this process managed to "kill the white man's Indian" (Berkhofer 148).

Deloria shows how Native Americans managed to adapt their customs to the necessities of an "American way of life" while preserving their "Indianness" (Deloria, *Indians* 218). Although they were pressed by a policy that intended to "Americanize" them, they adjusted to the new reality while preserving some of the aspects central to their own identity. It was a way of accommodating to the "needs of civilized life" (Washburn 233-34; Trachtenberg 41). Studying the history of American Indians today, therefore, requires an interdisciplinary approach capable of considering not only the native peoples' interaction with Euroamericans, but also the internal processes occurring in each distinct population. Researching about American Indians implies an exercise in approximation. But this approach has a long gestation. Begun toward the end of the nineteenth century and developed throughout the following one, it became viable especially after World War II, and further developed in the last quarter of the century. It is interesting to underline that scholars from different disciplines subscribe to it as the only possible approach to finally come close to a proper understanding of American Indian history and culture.

This brief essay tries to reconstruct the genesis of this approach which, although finding its prime roots in the theories of Franz Boas and Alfred Kroeber, achieved full status especially in the 1980s and 1990s thus preparing the ground for the study of American culture and history in the twenty-first century.

Between the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s, the debate over the writing of American Indian history took a new turn. Building on the interpretations provided especially by cultural anthropologists, ethnohistorians tried to open new paths by getting closer to the culture they studied in order to penetrate its thought-world, in Calvin Martin's

terms, and then provide readers with a comprehensible interpretation (Martin, *In the Spirit* 6). Such a strategy, however, risked projecting yet again a blurry image of American Indian history. It is hard, in fact, for any observer to do away with his/her own culture while being able at the same time to elaborate a framework for a world in which history takes on a different meaning where myth, language, narrative, time and material culture interact by juxtaposing. For this reason, the work of anthropologist Clifford Geertz becomes a useful instrument to re-elaborate the approach of Martin and the other ethnohistorians of the 1980s. Already in 1973, in fact, he had held that penetrating into the reality of another culture is not only impossible but unnecessary (Geertz 350). Some ethnohistorians of American Indian culture seemed to confirm this view when claiming that their task was to approach another culture reading through lenses capable of enabling the observer to focus better on the object of his/her study. What becomes important then, is to be aware of the degree of distortion such lenses can induce. It is important that the scholar becomes capable of projecting the world of the "other" as faithfully as possible onto a screen visible to anybody who is not part of the narrated world. At this point, it is possible but not necessarily certain, as claimed by some scholars of culture, that Natives can be understood in their own terms, although the image is not projected by them.

The scholarship of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century has benefited from the emergence of native historians and ethnohistorians who have contributed to provide their own reading of American Indian culture and history. This does not mean that theirs is "the correct interpretation," and that the survival of a Native narrative is possible only thanks to their work. Although often born within an Indian world, they were educated in Anglo-American universities and received an instruction that forced them to mediate between two worlds. In a way, they reached, from a different point of view the same cross-cultural line approached by "white" scholars. Speaking of American Indian education in the early twentieth century, Donald Fixico has underlined how teachers "failed to recognize the different logic of the Native American and the unique ethos of the American Indian mind." It was the Indian student in the end who had to reconcile the Indian mind and historical linear time (Fixico 84). Similarly, scholars such as Fixico and Deloria manage to resolve two different *weltanschaung* into an interpretation that shows clearly the strategies devised by American Indians for their cultural survival.

Ethnohistory has tried to come as close as possible to this goal by combining different disciplines such as archaeology, history and ethnology into a diachronic approach that attempts to reinterpret the historical event or the structure of a given society into a compounded whole. Although mediated by the scholar, oral tradition, therefore, has come to represent an essential instrument to unveil the mentality of a social group and to provide this group with a voice of its own. Ethnohistorians went different ways to achieve this goal. Many deemed it important to develop a framework which must then be adapted case by case. Accepting such an attempt as a valid step toward a re-evaluation of American Indian history also implies, however, that a real understanding of history cannot be accomplished, according to Geertz's reading, "by a drawing near, by an attempt to enter bodily into the world of particular savage tribes…," but "by a standing back, by the development of a general, closed, abstract, formalistic science of thought, a universal grammar of the intellect" (Geertz, *The Interpretation* 350-51).

Geertz's suggestive propositions are aimed at overcoming the limits of an ethnocentric view of "other cultures." His call is for a study of cultures that allows one to look through the "interfering glosses" that connect Euroamerican scholars to their subject of study and not behind them (Geertz, *Local* 44). Ethnohistory has been revisited with the help of cultural studies. This contributed to the development of an approach that makes use of different methodologies through the intratextual reading of diverse sources. Also, the scope of this methodology has become more complex. It is the culture as a whole in its multifarious expression to come under the inquiring eye of the scholar of cultures, who tends not to neglect any possible clue, from language to material culture, that can provide new answers to the many questions raised by a reality that remains external to the observer.

Yet such reality is part of a world-system that must be taken into account. To an extent this represents the basis of the work done by Fixico and Deloria at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Deloria's attention to the cultural traits that result from the combinations of the acculturation process, enables him to add yet another perspective to the articulated reading suggested by ethnohistorians twenty years earlier. An ethnocentric history has informed the reading of historical sources for too long. Introducing an anthropological approach into history has enabled historians to read the material relative to cultures in a synchronic perspective, thus helping history overcome misconceptions

and misunderstandings generated by its linear, diachronic approach to change and persistence within a given culture. In the study of cultural encounter this strategy proved especially productive. From James Axtell's and Bruce Trigger's work in the 1980s to Richard White's, Daniel Richter's and Jill Lepore's studies of contact on the old Northwest frontier, ethnohistorians of the late twentieth century managed to provide a new understanding of Native American culture. They focused on the transformation of native identity over time especially because of the encounter and exchange with the newly arrived populations from across the Atlantic. The changes introduced in their world by the arrival of newcomers did not have to do just with contact, trade and war, but also with a profound transformation of the environment. Already by the end of the seventeenth century the American natural world was not anymore what it had been until the arrival of the Europeans. This phenomenon represented a true ecological revolution, as illustrated by William Cronon and Mark David Spence.

Moreover, White, Richter and Lepore highlight how what took place in colonial history was a true process of acculturation that contributed also to the shaping of an American identity. In 2001, Richter actually went even further with the publication of his *Facing East from Indian Country*. Not only did he highlight once again the ability many Indian tribes showed in adjusting to the new conditions created by the settlement of Europeans in North America, but also how they participated in creating a new way of life in colonial times. The alternative in the end, was not, as held by many historians until the mid-twentieth century, between disappearance and assimilation. What happened was very different from this simplistic option: the resilience of American Indians showed through the history of their exchange with European colonists and later with Americans.

Encounter and conflict played a role in the construction of a new American identity which defined itself often in opposition to native cultures or by absorbing them into a general tale of confrontation and acculturation. As evidenced by Phillip Deloria in his *Playing Indian*: "Savage Indians served Americans as oppositional figures against whom one might imagine a civilized national Self. Coded as freedom, however, wild Indianness proved equally attractive…" (Deloria, *Playing* 3). But confrontation, war and resistance also contributed to a new definition of Indian identity forced to readjust continuously to the pressures of white encroachment. If through war and violence European

colonists construed their being American in opposition to the European heritage on the one hand, and to the reality of the presence of American Indians on the other, the Indians themselves built their own new self in the confrontation with European invaders (Lepore 126; Slotkin 143). Jill Lepore summarizes this concept in the closing of her essay on the relevance of the first military confrontations in the story of European-Indian relations in North America, *The Name of War*: "King Philip's War, in all its reincarnations, also traces shifting conceptions of Indian identity – from tribal allegiances to campaigns for political sovereignty to Pan-Indianism, and, today, to struggles for cultural survival and political recognition" (Lepore 240).

In this sense acculturation worked in the proper sense used by ethnohistorians: a culture adapts its own structure to the impulses coming from another culture with which it has come into contact. Acculturation, therefore, is exactly the process taking place in the United States since its foundation and does not work only in one direction. It is a two-way process that has enabled the conquered culture to acquire the instruments of the dominant culture necessary for survival. Survival in this case does not mean merely staying alive but consists also of a redefinition of the self and of one's own world according to the new needs of an intercultural, one might say global, interaction. Therefore, in studying indigenous cultures and change, one must be aware of their transitional character; a transition which is not a movement from a traditional state to an assimilated one but a moment of a cultural process that is indigenous. In other words, as proved by many an American Indian tribe, acculturation is not the equivalent of assimilation.

As Gary Anderson clearly puts it when speaking about contact in the Midwest, while acculturation was possible between whites and Dakotas, both societies showed an inner strength that made assimilation impossible. Anderson himself and James Axtell show the relevance of this theoretical framework in their histories of Indian-white relations. In the process, the older structure at the base of Indian societies adapted to the new situation brought by contact (Anderson x; Axtell, *The Invasion* 7-8). Michael Harkin has interpreted this process as representing a juncture between two existing conditions that are not fixed in time, where "the event marks but does not cause in itself a 'rupture' between two synchronic states; this rupture is a function of the states themselves and their difference" (Harkin 101). It is what Marshall Sahlins calls the "structure of the conjuncture." Such a definition provides a useful tool

for the interpretation of modes of acculturation. Sahlins explains it as a "…set of historical relationships that at once reproduce the traditional cultural categories and give them new values out of the pragmatic context" (Sahlins 125). Sahlins' suggestion is that a culture transforms to reproduce itself. An example of this is provided by the transformations of the kinship system and of tribal relations in Lakota culture after the Allotment Law of 1887. Family structures progressively readjusted, although painfully, without ever adopting the dominant Euro-American model or assimilating, which was instead the wish of the reformers who imposed such an "event" on the Indian tribal structure (Fiorentino 135-37).

An excellent example of such a process is also provided by Richard White in his comparative ethnohistory of the Choctaw, Pawnee and Navajo Indians: *The Roots of Dependency* (1983). White analyzes the process of acculturation these tribes went through after contact using the family and the kinship system as the major focus of his study on change. Cultural and ecological factors contributed to the transformation of the economy of Choctaw society, contends the author, forcing a change on the family structure. Yet, Choctaw identity survived and the same goes for the Navajos. The decline of the Pawnees, instead, came with direct and violent confrontation first with the Sioux, and later with white Americans (White 110-111; 238-249). In the interpretation of such social changes the centrality of culture is always relevant and, with it, the importance of myth as a clue to understanding the American Indian perception of reality.

According to Robin Ridington in his essay on the thought-world of the Fox and Chickadee, both mythical stories and stories of life events, in Indian thinking, are true since they describe personal experience. Their truths are thus complementary (Ridington 128-135). In Indian eyes, myth and reality are one and part of the same experience. Historians must accept them both. Richard Drinnon does something similar, echoing Ridington's claim by holding that: "With our objectified time, we historians have hidden the cyclical world of myth under our linear writings and have thereby robbed tribal people of their reality," i.e. of their mythical time (Drinnon 106-113). Myth transcends time, and the need to bring back to linear time any construction of the human mind is actually a modern European and Euro-American practice. As contended by Calvin Martin in his *In the Spirit of the Earth* (1992), we would need a reconceptualization of history and of the

passing of time as conceived by European thinkers. Myth is a symbolic product of an unconscious archetype. People who live in mythical time are able to participate in an event only when it is integrated in their own re-experiencing of myth. These interpretations follow the path traced by Mircea Eliade in his work on myth and history, especially his 1949's volume *Le mythe de l'éternel retour, archétypes et répétition,* in which the cyclical pattern of time relies on the re-actualization of myth through ritual, since myth reveals the way in which a reality came into existence. Actually, as held by Claude Lévi-Strauss, myth indeed transcends time inasmuch as it constitutes a permanent structure which is at the same time in history and outside it (Lévi-Strauss 234-35). An event, or as in the case of American Indian tribes, a government policy or social pressure, is assimilated in the culture once it becomes part of the historical narrative. The historical narrative is then integrated once it merges within a given social group to create "…a collective historical consciousness and practice" (Harkin 101-102). Historical narratives and myths must be analyzed closely, as claimed by Lévi-Strauss, on their own terms as symbolically informed by the culture (Lévi-Strauss 235). The ethnohistorian should then turn to the word and the language, the expressions of a given culture, as essential constituent forms of myth and narrative (Krupat 116-18).

From this perspective, Joane Nagel's definition of ethnic renewal falls perfectly within the analysis of acculturation and continuous adaptation of cultures that cannot be seen as independent immutable entities. Nagel writes that ethnic renewal is: "The process whereby new ethnic identities, communities, and cultures are built or rebuilt out of historical social and symbolic systems" (Nagel 10). Ethnic renewal can thus be a rational choice or a consequence of a series of events (whether introduced voluntarily or accidentally in a given culture) which can have survival imports as well as a political meaning. In his accurate analysis of American Indian Law, Frank Pommersheim underlines how the drive initiated in the late twentieth century for a revision and strengthening of Law concerning tribes and individuals at the federal and tribal level, is part of a more general "intense cultural renewal and spiritual rebirth" (Pommersheim 194). This has to do with specific legal rules as much as with politics. It entails a restitution of collective empowerment to individual tribes. Philosophically, such ethnic renaissance is an act of the will that adapts existing structures to the necessities of time and space. Therefore, an individual or a group

of people who choose new or renewed models of behaviour, which embrace certain cultural traits, are responding to an external conjuncture that drives them to redefine themselves and some of the cultural aspects characterizing their group (Nagel 23-28).

Ned Blackhawk has evidenced the misunderstandings emerging from a unilateral observation of American Indian history and encounter:

> As in much of US history, encounters with contemporary Native people tend to disturb others' expectations, and Indians remain among the least understood Americans. As many have suggested, 'Indian' is a cultural category of such densities and incongruity of meaning that it has become arguably the most 'empty signifier' in the discursive field of America's racial classifications. Accordingly, many have attempted to abandon the loaded, constraining meanings found within this powerful category, as 'Native American,' 'First Nation,' and 'Native' intermix with Columbus' famous mistake. (Blackhawk 272)

The characterization of Indians by Euro-American culture is highlighted by Philip Deloria. He argues that basically the image of the Indian and its significance is frozen in time and serves the purposes of "Anglo" culture that has cancelled Native cultures from the process of modernization whereas Indians have instead entered both the twentieth and twenty-first centuries along with other Americans. Actually they participate entirely in the transformation of an integrated society and a globalized world, but this is consciously or unconsciously ignored by Anglo-Americans (Deloria, *Indians* 107, 140-146). Studies of specific tribes and cultures made in the early twenty-first century prove how American Indian history is an integral part of American, Atlantic, and world history. Pekka Amalainen's book The *Comanche Empire* and Katharine Bjork's *Prairie Imperialists*, place American Indian history into a transnational context and demonstrate how the transformation of indigenous cultures and the tribal system have changed also the course of American and international history (Bjork 9). Along the lines of the historiography of the early twentieth century which has drawn a direct line between the domestic colonial empire the U.S. stretched across the continent especially in the nineteenth century and the later island empire over Puerto Rico, Hawaii, the Philippines and other Pacific

islands, Bjork reconnects American imperialism in its development from a continental dominion to an overseas empire. She does so by concentrating on the careers of three officers of the American army who best represent the large number of soldiers that in different ways served the purpose of American expansion overseas. As in the case of the American invasion of Indian country, the American expansion overseas contributed to change the organization and identity of native peoples as much as it imposed a transformation on the attitudes of the conquering society.

A decade earlier several historians confronted the issue of what, in the late 1970s, Robert Berkhofer called *The White Man's Indian*. Research on the Indian, invented or constructed by white Euro-Americans, became significant at a time when individual natives and tribes revamped the practice of claiming back their land rights and cultural identity and a new generation of American Indian scholars was coming of age. Several significant volumes once again dealt with the construction of an "American identity" based on the opposition, absorption or negation of indigenous people. At the same time, a group of young scholars and writers, born to Indian or inter-ethnic families, began working on the puzzle of reconstructing the several native identities still extant in the country.

The Invented Indian edited by James Clifton, and *Dressing in Feathers* edited by S. Elizabeth Bird, tackle the issue of how, over two centuries of popular and scholarly fiction, the United States constructed an image of the native that mainly served the purpose of defining an American identity. This was separate both from its European origins and its continental reality, and yet made use of both to build a new identity capable of defining an "American." The Indians in turn, succeeded, at least in part, to build their own narrative and an image that could be appealing to the outside (i.e. the world external to their families and tribal allegiances). Thus, they contributed to create another invented Indian, as underlined by Clifton:

> In our contemporary world no well-organized, highly committed interest group with major political, economic, and other goals can survive, much less prosper, without a distinctive set of images of sufficient allure to sustain solidarity, invigorate potential supporters, beguile power-holders, captivate opinion makers, disarm adversaries, and mystify

> the masses. Over the past half century, the New Indian Ring – in all its permutations, combinations and subdivisions – has successfully accomplished the invention of just such a set of collective representations. (Clifton 18)

Clifton's approach may seem farfetched. Yet, American Indians who have managed to integrate into American society at large and find sympathetic responses in professional and cultural circles in America, make use of instruments they have refined in the process of acculturation. Thus, it has been necessary for them to appropriate the tools of the majority of the culture if not the dominant elite.

A similar problem, but in reverse fashion, is the one underlined by Devon Mihesuah in the special issue of *Indian Quarterly* of 1996, and later in the anthology of essays, *Natives and Academics,* written by Native Americans and based on the journal's special issue. In her perceptive introduction to the book, Mihesuah, highlights the many misunderstandings that ensue from the obstinate approach taken by many non-Indian academics who rely more on written sources than on oral histories gathered among the members of different American Indian cultures. What is consequently passed on to readers, and to new generations of scholars, is a "fictional" account that is not much sounder than the recollections of several individual members of a tribe, for example, of their tribal history and collective past. Mihesuah contends that scholars of American Indian history do not take into proper account family stories or other oral traditions because they consider them not "scientifically" reliable, their reconstruction of tribal histories is often heavily influenced by documents that actually provide just one side of the story. Therefore, to reconstruct the Indian past, and to provide a "more objective" account of American Indian history, scholars "…can only strive for accuracy by scrutinizing all available data, by incorporating the accounts and interpretations of the participants and descendants of the participants - both Indian and non-Indian - into their analyses, and by holding their pro- or anti-Indian biases in check" (Mihesuah 5).

This, of course, raises a point in case when speaking about American Indian revivalism and the persistence of tradition. Some obvious questions arise: how Indian are American Indian revivalism and survival? Is there a degree of American Indianness that can be defined and measured? What researches and published histories and

analyses of American Indian culture should do, holds Mihesuah, is to use a degree of fairness and intellectual honesty able to recognize the importance of American Indian voices in the construction of their histories, without foregoing, at the same time, the important contribution given by non-Indian scholars to the understanding of Native American cultures. A redefinition of American Indian Studies should go along with the process of regeneration and renewal of single communities, in an attempt to comprehend their actual understanding of themselves and their culture. "American Indian history," as noted by Donald Fixico, "is not just one history of all Indian people. Actually it is a field of many tribal histories, complicated by the relations with the United States" (Fixico 32).

In a way, what some of the American Indian historians claim is a restitution of their histories to individual tribes. Fixico argues there should be an ethic concern informing the chosen approach to the subject of research. He insists, as others do, that oral history should be an important means of reconstructing American Indian stories (Fixico 94). As mentioned by Fixico, some historians and ethnohistorians began doing so in the 1970s. Scholars such as Wilcomb Washburn, Jack Forbes and William Jennings claimed a degree of fairness in conducting such research and the possibility of listening better to what Indians themselves have to say. There are different ways of doing so. Ethnohistorians tried by combining a synthesis of diachronic and synchronic analyses, through which they could read the available written sources with an "anthropologist's eye." In the early twenty-first century, historians have revived the practice of concentrating their analyses on individual tribes with the additional asset of a better contextualization in space and time which places American Indian histories within the larger framework of international and transnational relations and acculturation processes. Amalainen's book The *Comanche Empire* has contributed a great deal toward the rewriting of American Indian history, the same goes for Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz's *The Great Sioux Nation: Sitting in Judgment on America* and Theda Perdue's *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears*.

However, one of the problems in researching and writing American Indian history is the scarcity of sources. Traditionally, this field of history has been monopolized by the history of Indian-White relations, often a history of US policy toward the Indians. There are cases of studies that manage to balance the information coming from

documents written mostly by white males, with information coming from the tribes or from individuals who have inherited tribal stories from their ancestors. But overall, many essays on American Indian history are still written from a Eurocentric point of view, sometimes unconsciously. The problem of sources can be solved to an extent through excavation findings and artifacts, in order to reconstruct the most distant past. This kind of material enables the student of American Indian history to bypass the mediation of Euroamerican interpretations. This is the case also with oral tradition and interviews on the present state of Indian culture and society. In a way they can take into account the "American Indian point of view." But once again there is a problem of perspective. Most of these interviews and oral histories are conducted by white ethnographers and practitioners, although lately the number of American Indians who have joined Euroamerican scholars in this work has increased. In reading this material, caution must be used when considering the degree of intervention by the transcribers who have their own agenda be they of European or Indigenous descent.

In order to understand the people studied and their history, the researchers have to delve into the cultures using different tools. It is important to investigate their conception of the self, the structure of their societies, and the events that affected them. It is necessary to listen to their voices that convey stories of the many people composing American Indian identity. It is imperative to always consider another point of observation. This can be achieved by a progressive approximation to that reality obtainable by always considering the dynamic relationship between the researcher and the people he/she comes in contact. It is also important to overcome the limit of assigning the American Indians a time and space that is peculiar to Euroamerican culture. The realities of American Indian people are not necessarily contained in linear time, nor are their stories part of a larger history of humankind as conceived by Europeans. Moreover, scholars should always be aware, as Geertz would have put it, of the difference between self-knowledge/self-perception and other-knowledge/other-perception conceiving first of what we are in order to better approach and understand the cultures we study (Geertz, *Local* 182). To an extent this flaw has been remedied recently by an increasing number of American Indian scholars. Their ability to make their cultures speak in their name is helping these people survive. However, to be a Native of North America is not enough to make a researcher a better interpreter of a given culture. They also should

be aware of the position they occupy within their nation and within academia, since they are the bearers of yet another form of American Indian survival. However, in this case acculturation gives American Indian scholars the possibility of returning a voice to their people. It is important, though, to be aware that one's descent is not one's right to gratuitously reconstruct the history and experience of his/her own people. A scientific approach and scholarly analysis must remain the guiding principle for anybody who approaches an object of study and this is true also for those who write American Indian history.

Works Cited

Anderson, Gary C. *Kinsmen of Another Kind: Dakota-White Relations in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1650-1862*. University of Nebraska P, 1984.

Axtell, James. *The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America*. Oxford University P, 1981.

---. *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America*. Oxford University P, 1985.

Berkhofer, Robert F. *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian, from Columbus to the Present*, Vintage Books, 1979.

Bird, Elizabeth, editor. *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture*. Westview P, 1996.

Blackhawk, Ned. *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West*. Harvard University P, 2006.

Bordewich, Fergus M. *Killing the White Man's Indian: Reinventing Native Americans at the End of the Twentieth Century*. Doubleday, 1996.

Carlson, Paul H. *The Plains Indians*. A&M University P, 1998.

Clifton, James, editor. *The Invented Indian: Cultural Fictions and Government Policies*. Transaction Publishers, 1990.

Cronon, William. *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*. Hill and Wang, 1983.

Deloria, Philip J. *Indians in Unexpected Places*, University P of Kansas, 2004.

---. *Playing Indian*. Yale University P, 1998.

Drinnon, Richard. *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building*. University of Minnesota P, 1980.

Eliade, Mircea. *Le mythe de l'éternel retour, archétypes et répétition*. Gallimard, 1949.

---. *Myth and Reality*. Librairie Plon, 1958.

Fiorentino, Daniele. *Gli indiani Sioux da Wounded al New Deal.* Bonacci, 1991.

Fixico, Donald L. *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World: American Indian Studies and Traditional Knowledge*. Routledge, 2003.

---, editor. *Rethinking American Indian History*. University of New Mexico P, 1997.

---. *The Invasion of Indian Country in the Twentieth Century: American Capitalism and Tribal Natural Resources*. University Press of Colorado, 1998.

Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books, 1973.

---. *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretative Anthropology*. Basic Books, 1983.

Harkin, Michael. "History, Narrative and Temporality: Examples from the Northwest Coast," *Ethnohistory*, vol. 35, no. 2, 1988, pp. 99-130.

Krupat, Arnold. *Ethnocriticism: Ethnography, History, Literature*. University of California P, 1992.

Lepore, Jill. *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity*. Knopf, 1998.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Anthropologie Structurale*. Librairie Plon, 1958.

Martin, Calvin, editor. *The American Indian and the Problem of History*. Oxford University P, 1987.

---. *In the Spirit of the Earth: Rethinking History and Time*. Johns Hopkins University P, 1992.

Mihesuah, Devon A. *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing About American Indians* University of Nebraska P, 1998.

Nagel, Joane. *American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power and the Resurgence of Identity and Culture*. Oxford University P, 1996.

Pommersheim, Frank. *Braid of Feathers: American Indian Law and Contemporary Tribal Life.* University of California P, 1995.

Richter, Daniel K. *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America*. Harvard University P, 2001.

Ridington, Robin. "Fox and Chickadee," *The American Indian and the Problem of History*, edited by Calvin Martin. Oxford University P, 1987, pp. 128-135.

Sahlins, Marshall. *Islands of History*. University of Chicago P, 1985.

Slotkin, Richard, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860*. HarperPerennial, 1973.

Spence, Mark D. *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks*. Oxford University P, 1999.

Trachtenberg, Alan. *Shades of Hiawatha: Staging Indians, Making Americans: 1880-1930*. Hill and Wang, 2004.

Trigger, Bruce. *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered*. McGill-Queen's University P, 1985.

Washburn, Wilcomb E. *The Indian in America*. Harper & Row, 1975.

White Richard. *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos*. University of Nebraska P, 1983.