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time period. It should, therefore, be acquired by any library which claims to have holdings in Indian history as well as by individual scholars.

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**The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture.** By Walter L. Williams. Boston: Beacon Press, 1986. 344 pp. \$21.95 Cloth.

Walter Williams has written a provocative book on a challenging subject that is bound to cause controversy. Williams, a gay ethnohistorian, has undertaken extensive fieldwork among American Indians to analyze the berdache tradition. He challenges older research that minimizes the sexual lives of berdache Indians, or that views them as mere transvestites. Williams convincingly asserts that many—not all—Indian cultures provided a third gender possibility, a “man-woman” with male genitalia who adopted women’s economic and sexual roles. The berdache was not merely a gay Indian man, but a distinct personality who performed important spiritual and community functions. Often berdache married important men, but they sometimes took serial lovers. The husbands and lovers of berdache were not regarded as gay or in any way abnormal since they took the active male role in anal sex. Oral sex was practiced in some tribes, but anal intercourse appears to have been the usual sex act of the berdache.

In aboriginal times berdache were not only well accepted in native society, but revered for their power and spirit connections. Moreover, contemporary berdache carry on the ancient androgynous traditions of their forebears. Before the appearance of Europeans, training for the berdache life began at an early age. Parents dressed their young sons in women’s garb if they manifested effeminate characteristics. Then the young berdache would begin training in women’s tasks and perhaps religious duties as well. The emergence of female traits in young boys was not a matter of parental concern but rejoicing, for berdache were thought to be powerful beings who could bless their families with good luck, status, and riches.

According to Williams, Indians regarded berdache personality traits as an expression of individual spirit that was allowed to develop untrammelled. Indian communities did not interfere with anything so personal as gender roles and sexuality. Perhaps, but when Williams tells the reader of prepubescent children who are dressed as girls, encouraged to take on female behavior, and even to make public declarations of their future gender identity, it is difficult to believe that the element of family and community persuasion is entirely absent. Some readers will find it very difficult to accept the case of an eight-year old boy's parentally approved sexual encounter with a forty-year-old man as an example of childhood free will (p. 99). There can be little doubt that Indian societies provided a wide range of sanctioned sexual behavior, but it seems evident that familial and social pressure could influence the sexual choices of immature children. According to Williams' evidence, however, unlike contemporary Anglo-American society, Indian parents would have been likely to push their sons toward a berdache life and its attendant power and status.

Not surprisingly, Christian missionaries and government bureaucrats were appalled at the existence of the "abominable sin," as homosexual relations were quaintly termed. Catholic and Protestant clerics as well as secular authorities could agree on the necessity of eradicating what they viewed as unnatural sex among the Indians. But try as they might to suppress unorthodox sexuality, berdache traditions persisted among many tribesmen, particularly where native religious traditions remained strong. However, on many reservations new religious and social norms vitiated native cultures and some Indians adopted Anglo and Hispanic homophobic views. Thus some contemporary Indians—berdache, gay, and straight—have become victims and perpetrators of anti-gay and anti-berdache behavior.

While the traditional berdache should not be strictly equated with modern gay men the two contemporary groups have much in common. Both have had to struggle against harsh treatment from representatives of religious, social, and sexual orthodoxy. Gay historians have found much to admire in the berdache tradition because Indian society seemed to generously accept alternative sexual behavior. At the same time, some Indians found the gay scene in major cities like Minneapolis and San Francisco more supportive and invigorating than reservation life. Accordingly, gay urban Indians have borrowed some of the tactics of the

larger gay community just as non-Indians have found in the berdache a basis for gay pride. One of the results has been the founding of Gay American Indians, a San Francisco-based support group that provides community service and lecturers.

While Williams concentrates on berdache and gay Indian men, he also devotes some attention to non-Indians and lesbian Indians whom he styles amazons. With little evidence to rely on, these chapters are the least satisfactory in the book. The comparison of cowboys with pirates and the assertion that many—perhaps most—cowboys led the gay life on the long cattle drives is not convincing. The chapter on amazons is suggestive, but—as the author points out—this subject needs more thorough attention. Williams hopes that a lesbian will take up this task so that she can have the advantage of open communications that he enjoyed with berdache Indians.

In sum, Williams has written an important pioneering study that will be of interest to a diverse audience including berdache, gay, and straight Indians, the gay community, ethnohistorians, historians of sex, and sex researchers. His analysis will not satisfy all of his readers, but that is to be expected. More importantly, Williams has opened a discussion on a fundamental aspect of the human experience and shown how even the most intimate behavior has been influenced by the European conquest of the Americas. He has also demonstrated the vitality of traditions that the new colonizers were attempting to wipe out. Finally, Williams has drawn our attention to the flexibility of human sexuality by showing us that behavior is not dictated by immutable natural instincts, but shaped by cultural norms and individual predilections.

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**Native Americans in the Twentieth Century.** By James S. Olson and Raymond Wilson. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986. 248 pp. \$29.95 Cloth. \$9.95 Paper.

Despite its brevity and somewhat misleading title (the initial third of the book traces historical developments before the 20th century), this is an excellent survey of Indian/white relations, its central focus is on Native American efforts to protect their cultural