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Learning to Write "Indian": The Boarding-School Experience and American Indian Literature. By Amelia V. Katanski

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by indigenous peoples. There are no references or examples for these strong claims. Those familiar with the colonial history of indigenous peoples can make the logical leap to what this might mean: residential schools or regulations and policies outlawing traditional practices. Students, however, or readers new to this area may not be able to do this.

This compilation is an important contribution to the restorative justice literature, especially to the area of indigenous justice. Its strength is in its presentation of a diversity of indigenous voices: lawyers, elders, academics, and practitioners. There are also nonindigenous voices here, such as Rupert Ross, who worked and wrote about how a western legal system can be more responsive to the needs and traditions of indigenous communities, and Russel Barsh, who has studied and written about Native Americans for many years. The majority of articles and excerpts are by indigenous North Americans, but there are also perspectives from indigenous peoples from around the globe. This collection of voices calls for alternative ways of addressing justice concerns, with control and responsibility being within indigenous communities. In this way, the specific indigenous peoples can reestablish their culturally appropriate institutions for dealing with conflict and peacemaking. These authors collectively tell stories of a variety of healing paths that can inform the western paradigm.

*Brian Calliou*  
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**Learning to Write “Indian”: The Boarding-School Experience and American Indian Literature.** By Amelia V. Katanski. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005. 273 pages. \$24.95 cloth.

Around 1879, tens of thousands of young Native Americans were taken from their tribal homes and placed in boarding schools. Amelia V. Katanski's *Learning to Write “Indian”* documents how Native Americans and administrators represented the boarding school experience in literature. Boarding schools acted as a disciplinary apparatus intended to civilize Native Americans. Educators emphasized traditional Native cultures as primitive and urged Native Americans to abandon their culture in order to assimilate into the American cultural mainstream. In spite of the zealous efforts of Richard Henry Pratt and others to “domesticate” Native Americans into the ideologies of progress and social Darwinism, many Native American students developed a new sense of pan-Indian identity through their experiences in the boarding school. In *Learning to Write “Indian,”* Katanski documents how boarding schools became paradoxical sites of resistance.

Richard Henry Pratt, the founder of the first Indian boarding school at Carlisle, Pennsylvania in 1879, believed it was his moral mission to civilize Native Americans: “education and training for the young is our only sure way to relief from Indian complications and burdens” (Richard Henry Pratt, *Battlefield and Classroom*, 1964, 246). While Pratt has become a symbol of colonial authority, he nonetheless believed that Native Americans could acquire

the tools of American civilization in a time when many doubted that Native Americans could be “civilized.” For instance, Pratt questioned the ethnocentric doctrine supported by the US government that Native American youth should only be schooled for three years rather than eight (Pratt, 282). Katanski argues that Pratt and other administrators were unwittingly instrumental in developing a pan-Indian consciousness at boarding schools like Carlisle. Pratt erroneously believed that Native Americans ought to abandon their traditional ways in order to progress economically. He was unable to see that economic development and self-reliance do not preclude the development and maintenance of indigenous traditions. While Pratt viewed life on reservations as a modern form of segregation and sought for equal opportunities for Native Americans, he undermined the significance of tribal culture and adopted a policy of cultural genocide.

Pratt’s views continued into the twentieth century until Native Americans began to develop greater rights and autonomy from the US government. Native Americans became recognized as US citizens with the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, followed by the Meriam Report (1928), which condemned the boarding school policy because of its emphasis on uprooting tribal cultures. Ultimately, the report “advised Congress and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to abandon assimilation (Americanization) as a primary goal of education” (Lorraine Hale, *Native American Education: A Reference Handbook*, 2002, 27). Today, after the social upheavals of the 1960s, most tribes have worked toward developing Native-based curricula in schools on reservations and in tribally owned boarding schools. However, funding for education on reservations remains a persistent problem.

Other recent works on the boarding school experience have addressed similar themes. *Away from Home: American Indian Boarding School Experiences* documents Native American perceptions of the first off-reservation Indian boarding school in Carlisle as well as perceptions of other boarding schools. Margaret L. Archuleta, Brenda J. Child, and K. Tsianina Lomawaima state that “Indian boarding schools were key components in the process of cultural genocide against Native cultures, and were designed to physically, ideologically, and emotionally remove Indian children from their families, homes, and tribal affiliations” (Heard Museum, *Away from Home: American Indian Boarding School Experiences*, 2000, 19). Some Native American youth were forcibly removed from reservations and placed in boarding schools, while others sought out the boarding school experience because there were no other educational opportunities available. Some Native American youth even built their own schools and often had to deal with limited supplies and inadequate instruction: “academic instruction was largely remedial and restricted to the lower grades” (Heard Museum, 31). Ironically, even though boarding schools were sites of oppression, they were often one of the main employers for Native Americans in the twentieth century (Heard Museum, 35). In addition to experiencing a sense of cultural dislocation in boarding schools, many Native American students were subjected to physical and sexual abuse.

Katanski addresses the multilayered complexity of the boarding school phenomenon by emphasizing diverse accounts of the boarding school,

such as Francis La Flesche's *The Middle Five* and Zitkala-Ša's portrayal of her experience at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. Katanski, as a non-Native scholar, feels that there is an intellectual and moral imperative "for non-Native scholars to acknowledge and understand the Indian boarding schools and their legacy" (xii). Her insights illustrate that boarding schools produced different results than boarding school administrators and educators predicted. Boarding schools became a place where Native American students united in their rebellion against the genocidal values of Eurocentric bureaucrats and educators: "Learning to write 'Indian' . . . refers to the boarding schools as generators of a pan-tribal identity, where students from different tribes met one another, recognized shared values and experiences of injustice crossing the boundaries of tribal nations, and developed a sense of themselves as 'Indian' that did not cancel out their tribal affiliation but cultivated instead . . . a repertoire of identities" (7).

In her analysis of boarding schools, Katanski not only acknowledges the psychological impact of their genocidal policies, but she also documents how Native American boarding school students subverted the social evolutionary thought of boarding school educators and administrators. She refers to Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller* (1981) and emphasizes the figure of Yellow Woman, a symbol of traditional Laguna storytelling and of the hybrid construction of identity exemplified by the boarding school experience. Katanski also addresses the works of Zitkala-Ša and Francis La Flesche in order to undermine the notion that these works represent the views of fully assimilated Native Americans.

Katanski contends that Carlisle's student newspaper, *Indian Helper*, acted as a means of domesticating the Indian by controlling the rhetoric that Native American youth produced. In the case of La Flesche's *The Middle Five* and Zitkala-Ša's autobiographical essays, Katanski argues that even though Pratt touted these works as representative of acculturation, both of these works have much more complex and hybrid views than Pratt imagines. Lastly, Katanski addresses representations of the boarding school in the works of contemporary Native American authors such as Luci Tapahonso, N. Scott Momaday, Hanay Geigomah, and Leslie Marmon Silko in order to show how the boarding school often acted as a site of pan-tribal resistance to colonial authority in spite of the genocidal objectives of administrators like Pratt.

One drawback to Katanski's analysis of the boarding school experience is her lack of emphasis on how different perspectives concerning boarding schools exist within Native communities. An excellent addition to her analysis would be a discussion of how learning to write "Indian" has doubtless been interpreted differently by Native Americans with diverse ideological perspectives. For instance, Katanski contends: "By learning to write 'Indian,' American Indian writers have found a way to bear witness to the legacy of the schools, claim their languages, land, rights, and stories, and pass a rich literary legacy to the next generation" (221). Even though Native American communities developed a pan-Indian sense of unity because of their resistance to colonial oppression, it is well known that contending representations of Native American identity exist within Native American communities. An inquisitive reader might ask: Is there one rich literary legacy left by Native