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European expansion. Those “Natives” who wound up in Oklahoma had elected to participate in traditional ways. They retained their language and at least some elements of culture well into the twentieth century. However, they are not the only descendants of those who lived in the woods, called *wilde* by the Dutch, who became emblematic of “Native” life. As early as the 1630s some of these Natives chose a different path. Those who settled down to farm were lost from view and no longer identified as Indians. The process of becoming today’s Americans may have taken different routes over the centuries, but the results are much the same. This volume contains glimmerings of once vital cultures whose last speakers only recently were absorbed into that vaguely ethnic *mélange* that typifies the United States of America.

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Medicine Bundle: Indian Sacred Performance and American Literatures, 1824–1932. By Joshua David Bellin. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008. 272 pages. \$55.00 cloth.

Ostensibly concerned with a series of case studies and display texts from the century between the Indian Removal period and the New Deal–Collier Bureau of Indian Affairs, Joshua Bellin’s *Medicine Bundle* actually addresses a deeper, more profound subject: the intercultural construction and performance of Indian identities. Bellin’s overarching goal in *Medicine Bundle* is to “put to rest the lingering notion that tradition and innovation were (if not absolutely opposed) recognizable extremes on a continuum of Indian answers to colonialism.” Such a simplistic approach is unproductive because it fails to account for many aspects of early Indian writing: “the diversity of responses in any Indian group, the limitations of identifying Indian responses to Euro-American terms solely in Euro-American terms, and, finally, the flexible and fugitive nature of traditionalism, which could be achieved through accommodation as surely as through anything else” (119).

Medicine Bundle is dedicated to illustrating the creative strategies by means of which both Indians and non-Indians exploited the resources of the other to create performative identities that advanced their individual and community interests. Arguing that “there is no absolute difference between the performance of medicine by Indians and by whites,” Bellin uses the term *medicine bundle* as a metaphor for “the bringing together of diverse medicine acts, all of which derive their form and power through contact with their others” (9). The book is divided into three chapters, each of which deploys deconstructive analysis to demonstrate the ways in which the Subject employs the objects, rhetoric, and/or frame of the other to augment his or her own agency.

The first chapter focuses on George Catlin as artist-entrepreneur by locating him in the context of antebellum America’s preoccupation with “the vanishing Indian” as the pretext for the emergence of the “Indian medicine show” and the ethnological enterprise, arguing that “one does not need to

choose between Catlin the sympathizer or swindler, advocate or advertiser” (33). Bellin insists that albeit in an incomplete and distorted way, Indian medicine does exist in Catlin’s intercultural performance, not as a simple act of appropriation but as an incorporation that has left discernable traces. Although positioning himself as the necessary inheritor of the *okipa* ceremony of vanishing Mandan, the archetypal intercultural representative, Catlin exposes the limits of his ignorance of the *okipa* and then bears witness to the continuing resistance and vitality of Mandan culture. Bellin also acknowledges that “there is no question that the *okipa*, the [pipestone] quarry, the dance, and other manifestations of Indian medicine had an autonomous existence beyond Catlin’s observational or representational powers—this was, again precisely his trouble—[but] it is impossible to gauge whether Catlin’s representations of Indian medicine are authentic with respect to some stable, essential other they seek to represent” (73). The question of authenticity in representation is at the heart of the book; Bellin begins by assuming with James Clifford that any act of representation is fundamentally “mis-re-presentation” and all authenticity is relational. All of this is conventional enough as new historicism, deconstruction, or critical anthropology, and the chapter, though insightful, is more rich than it is deep in insight.

The second chapter turns attention to Catherine Brown, the Cherokee convert, who was the poster child of the Brainerd mission system and whose 1824 *Memoir* was a bestseller. This chapter is the most compelling because, in explicit contrast to essentialist critics who would tie Indian cultural identity to some specific, clearly recognizable element such as language, land, blood, or religion, Bellin argues through the example of Brown, often held up as a model of assimilation and deculturation, that one way to survive individually and advance one’s community as “Indian” was to create new identities through the imitation of the dominant culture. Central to Bellin’s argument is the fact that Brown was a woman. The mission *Memoir* takes as a sign of Brown’s conversion was her setting aside of Native costume and ornament and taking up weaving (the prescribed women’s work of the mission’s “civilizing” program) and Western-style women’s dress. Bellin differs from other modern critics who agree with the Missionary Board in seeing this transformation as a straightforward sign of Brown’s successful acculturation to the dominant bourgeois Euro-American gender roles. Instead, he reads it as a subversive performance of Cherokee matriarchal power in the late pre-Removal period, when Cherokee men were consolidating the political power of patriarchy and installing it in a tribal constitution. Bellin argues that Brown, like Beloved Woman Nancy Ward, used “the acceptable discourse of Christian domesticity to tap a gendered authority denied her by that very discourse,” and in doing so she recovered an earlier matriarchal “traditional” power (119). In the end his argument turns on an understanding of Cherokee women’s “sacred power to make the world anew” that is so vague it can be stretched to cover almost any circumstance (118). Bellin is not disingenuous, however, in acknowledging that his is a peculiar interpretation; everywhere that a less cautious writer might offer conclusions, Bellin is careful to cast his observations as suggestions: “If, under these circumstances, submission to the will of a heavenly Father would have seemed all too

familiar to Brown, such submission might also have seemed a means of freeing herself from her earthly father's sway" (119). Bellin's reading of Brown and her *Memoir* is as intriguing as it is counterintuitive, and it will compel scholars to read such narratives less conventionally and more critically.

The third chapter links the Ghost Dance and Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show as phenomena that helped Indian people create an intertribal identity by incorporating the very aspects of the dominant culture that they were responding to. Here Bellin returns to the notion of tradition, not as an inventory of attributes to be preserved or, in the case of acculturation programs, repressed, but as a quality of phenomena that emerges in performance. As *gender* served as the broad covering term that, when deconstructed, made possible a creative reading of Brown's *Memoir*, so in this chapter *vision* serves as such a covering term, enabling both innovation and tradition, and providing the opportunity for rereading both terms. Here Bellin focuses on two bodies of texts, Luther Standing Bear's several biographical narratives and *Black Elk Speaks* and its associated texts. Standing Bear, he concludes, came to understand that Indian reality, now "no longer defined by ontological distance from the white world, . . . consists both in the self-conscious act of racial identification and [like Bellin's Catherine Brown] in the determination to use his imitative powers on behalf of his people" (168). Least satisfying is his discussion of Black Elk and *Black Elk Speaks*. Bellin carefully surveys the critical field that sustains the dialogue over this central text in modern American Indian studies, pausing to affirm that "one will never recover Black Elk" through the personal testimonies and interview material in works like *The Sixth Grandfather*, "if by this one means recovering a stable entity that exists outside the intercultural matrix in which Black Elk's narrative was and is received." Too true, but then based precisely on the testimonies of Black Elk's daughter, Lucy, Bellin reads Black Elk's Catholicism as simply one of "many kinds of medicine in his bag" (185).

Bellin's conclusion is that "we cannot go back to the world we used to live in [presumably the world of 'real, authentic' Indians imagined in a kind of precontact cultural integrity] but must re-member the medicine man as a central figure [perhaps the central figure] in a world of emergent, intercultural performance" (195). In principle one agrees, but Bellin's steady focus on intercultural performance risks obscuring the fact that he acknowledged in discussing Catlin that "there is no question that . . . manifestations of Indian medicine ha[ve] an autonomous existence," and that some forms of Indian medicine have evolved beyond the power of unsanctioned persons, both Indian and non-Indian to observe, represent, or resignify them (73). One does not have to concede any essentialist notion of Indian identity or imagined precontact cultural integrity to acknowledge that not all performances are intercultural. However, that would be another, different book. Within the scope of interest he has defined for himself, Bellin has produced some very insightful, challenging readings, of value not only for American Indian studies but also for American literary and popular culture studies.

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