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same kinds of social issues, but from a decidedly humorous perspective, the prolific writer Gerald Vizenor is noted for his linguistic tricksterism as well as for his large number of essays that deal directly with the political concerns he raises in his comic novels. As Tillett introduces readers to Vizenor's works, she alerts her audience to the importance of humor to all tribal groups. Vizenor, along with Canadian Native Thomas King, is without a doubt the best-known humorist among North American Native writers.

A student in search of a text that opens a door into the world of American Indian writing will not be disappointed with Tillett's book. Although to a great extent it duplicates the work of other encyclopedic reference sources, it commits no egregious errors and replicates no injurious stereotypes or clichés. The long road to a fuller, complex understanding of Native literature could as well begin here as anywhere. Other useful works for readers new to Native American literature include Joy Porter and Kenneth M. Roemer's *Cambridge Companion to Native American Literature* (2005), Robert Dale Parker's *The Invention of Native American Literature* (2003), and Andrew Wiget's *Handbook of Native American Literature* (1996).

Catherine Rainwater

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A Description of New Netherland/Adriaen van der Donck. Edited by Charles T. Gehring and William A. Starna, translated by Diederik Willem Goodhuys with a foreword by Russell Shorto. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. 240 pages. \$40.00 cloth; \$24.95 paper.

Charles Gehring and William Starna add to their formidable list of edited primary documents pertaining to the history of New Netherland with this valuable edition of Adriaen van der Donck's classic narrative, first published in 1655. Citing the "defective" character of the 1841 translation of the original document (reprinted unchanged as late as 1968, under Thomas O'Donnell's editorship), the editors and their skilled translator provide a substantial updating of a highly significant early American historical document (xvii). Van der Donck, as *schout* of the patroonship of Rensselaerswyck (a position that entailed responsibilities as a law enforcement officer and prosecuting attorney), came into regular contact with Iroquoian and Algonquian peoples from 1630 to 1647, and this edition of his *Description* renders van der Donck's highly insightful statements and opinions (not only regarding Native people) in clear, accessible prose. Additionally, Gehring and Starna include three chapters of van der Donck's *Description* that concern Native Americans (103–6), yet were unpublished until 1990, when Ada van Gastel published her translation of these chapters in the *William and Mary Quarterly*. The edition under review should be considered the new standard in the English language, superseding all previous efforts.

Readers of the *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* will be most interested in what the volume offers regarding the history of Native

Americans in what is now New York State. Van der Donck, the editors note, wrote in a “highly educated style, full of complex constructions, contemporary metaphors, and historical allusions” (xviii). Van der Donck’s literary abilities make *Description* a crucial snapshot of the texture of cross-cultural relations circa 1630 to 1647 in Rensselaerswyck. Although an ardent promoter of settlement and, ultimately, an advocate of colonialism, van der Donck clearly found himself engaged with Native people in a variety of contexts on a frequent basis. His rich observations (many direct, others gleaned from conversations with early “Christian” settlers or “old and wise” Native men [114, 110]) provide a vital window on the limited degree to which Dutch settler expansion and economic relations had affected the Native nations bordering Rensselaerswyck before 1649. The truncated character of Dutch colonization prior to 1647 appears most notably in van der Donck’s discussions of insubstantial Dutch inland movement and spatial awareness, minimal Dutch knowledge of Native languages, the absence of Native material dependency on European manufactured goods, Dutch lack of concern over the depletion of beaver populations through the fur trade, the negligible impact of the alcohol trade, and, among Iroquoians at least, the capacity of indigenous populations to recover from initial exposures to epidemic diseases.

Van der Donck’s ambivalent attitude toward Native Americans, so typical of many of their early observers, shines through clearly in this edition. At times he appears to represent a Native voice quite faithfully, especially when recording Native statements that amounted to intelligence on the terrain and resources of the colony, or that advocated Native ideas and priorities vis-à-vis those of the settler population. Ultimately, however, van der Donck’s text must be read as a colonial document, a promotional tract that portrays Native people as the crucial (albeit naked, non-Christian, uneducated, “dirty,” sexually promiscuous, “simple and ignorant” [96], ungoverned, and destined to “melt away” [73]) population to be “discovered” by the Dutch, thereby conferring the vital status of “first Christians and discoverers” on the latter against all rival claimants (4). Van der Donck’s stylized “Conversation between a Dutch Patriot and a New Netherlander” that concludes *Description* even contains the statement (doubtless intended to overcome skepticism at home about emigration to New Netherland) that the “aborigines” (in this instance, he was referring to the nations of the Lower Hudson Valley in the aftermath of Kieft’s War), far from being “testy and powerful neighbors,” then did “not amount to very much; they can now see for themselves that their doings matter very little” (134).

Van der Donck’s objectives notwithstanding, his *Description* still tells us a great deal about the extensive involvement of Native people in the lives of Rensselaerswyck settlers. The editors elected to drop the proto-Victorian character of the 1841 translation, and we learn, among other things, that the “vulgar” Dutch name for the breech clouts worn by Native men was *clootlap*, or “balls cover” (79, 163n5), Native hunters feared anal penetration by lizards when “asleep in the woods” (62), and the persistent historical myth of the lack of Dutch sexual interest in Native women must be retired (75, 88). Although van der Donck rarely distinguished between Iroquoian and Algonquian peoples, preferring to cast his comments regarding Native people in general

terms, the editors perform a signal scholarly service in identifying likely instances of specific references to Iroquoian or Algonquian cultural features in *Description*.

Side-by-side reading of *Description*'s extended treatment "Of the Manners and Extraordinary Qualities of the Original Natives of New Netherland" with the same section in the 1968 edition, though not attempted by Gehring and Starna, yields some noteworthy discrepancies. Though only three pages longer than the 1968 version employing the 1841 translation, the 2009 edition replaces much of the turgid prose found in the earlier versions with more felicitous and clear language. Cases in point would be the inclusion of van der Donck's original phrase "*buyten de pot pist*" (85), or "pisses outside the pot" (165n17), in reference to sexual infidelity as a rationale for divorce among Native couples, and his comment on Native women's premium on sexual satisfaction as a condition of premarital cohabitation (86). Nevertheless, the 2009 translation drops language present in the 1968 edition regarding the permanence of male Dutch settlers' relationships with Native women (75; cf. 73 in 1968 edition), minimizes demographic estimates regarding the number of families and persons per longhousehold (82; cf. 80 in 1968 edition), waters down van der Donck's stated opinion on the integrity of Native marriages (84; cf. 82 in 1968 edition), and in one instance completely reverses the tenor of van der Donck's statement on the impact of the Dutch on Native people. In the 2009 edition, van der Donck states that after spending time in the presence of the Dutch, Native people "can become quite clever," whereas the 1968 edition represents Native people as more "cunning and deceitful" as a result of exposure to New Netherland settlers (96, 94).

This edition of van der Donck's description should propel its original author into the canon of early American narratives. It is a necessary addition to any serious research library and will be of special interest to scholars of the northeastern Native nations. Finally, I would be remiss if I did not conclude this review with a special note of recognition to Charles Gehring for his lifetime of work with the New Netherland Project at the New York State Library. His monumental effort to translate and publish early sources pertaining to New Netherland will pay dividends to scholars for many generations to come.

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The Headpots of Northeast Arkansas and Southern Pemiscot County, Missouri. By James F. Cherry. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2009. 384 pages. \$59.95 cloth.

The spectacular and enigmatic headpots found in the central Mississippi River valley have fascinated professional archaeologists and the public since the first was discovered in the late 1800s. Nearly all have been found in what is now northeastern Arkansas and southeastern Missouri, but a handful are from western Tennessee, southern Indiana, and southwestern Kentucky.