

studies. Considering the rich details, personal perspectives, and legal and political information, this will be considered a major book in the long history of scholarship on peyote and the Native American Church.

Dennis Wiedman

Florida International University

Ancestral Mounds: Vitality and Volatility of Native America. By Jay Miller. Foreword by Alfred Berryhill. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015. 218 pages. \$55.00 cloth; \$55.00 electronic.

Myriad earthen constructions, including mounds of various forms and geometric earthworks, are spread across the heart of our continent. As “new” Americans pushed west from the original colonies after the revolution, these constructions inspired awe, but also concern: they stood as testaments to indigenous ingenuity and their long-term presence in the land settlers were taking for their own. Mounds are thus entwined in the colonial project of building America, a legacy that continues, which gives much importance to the aims of this book. In *Ancestral Mounds*, Jay Miller sets out to deconstruct static views of the mounds of the Eastern United States and to provide a new understanding of these features informed by firsthand accounts of mound building among indigenous communities today.

In the face of “American progress” these constructions became subject to destruction, not only by physical decimation of many mounds, but also by misinformed theorizing that denied their origin with indigenous peoples, largely in the form of the Mound Builder Myth. This popular, highly regarded myth posited that a white race (“mound builders”) built the mounds and American Indians came after, killing this white race. President Andrew Jackson referenced this myth in regard to the Indian Removal Act in his first annual message to Congress on December 8, 1830. Scholars did not debunk it until Cyrus Thomas’s 1894 report on the Bureau of Ethnology’s mound explorations, but scholarly debunking hardly stopped the circulation of theories denying that American Indians built mounds. Today one can find a wide variety of such theories—a simple internet search will make this clear, be it mound builders who were aliens, giants, or from Atlantis. Sadly, such ideas can find wider audiences than scholarly studies of mounds, most of which are done by archaeologists.

Why are such speculative theories, such “fantastic” ideas, so popular? Although this is not directly under consideration in Miller’s book, his work makes an imperative intervention on this point. Archaeologists typically approach mounds as static features that are only of and in the past. In contrast, although speculative theories of mound building are completely erroneous, many of them do offer a dynamic view of mounds: that is, mounds remain important in today’s “fantastic” systems—as ongoing communications from aliens to people on earth, for instance. In *Ancestral Mounds*, Miller emphasizes how continuity is also key to the real story of the mounds of the Eastern United States. If such dynamism is integrated into archaeological and other

scholarly studies of mounds, perhaps these real stories will become more compelling to the broader public, and we may hope theories that perpetuate colonial legacies, and deny that indigenous peoples built mounds, will wane in popularity. Miller's premise, then, and his call for scholars to seriously consider that mounds should not be seen as inert, are indeed important.

Throughout the book, Miller's linguistic interpretations offer excellent insights into mounds, and clearly the book was intensively researched. The central argument of *Ancestral Mounds* establishing his story of dynamic mounds lies in the themes of "vitality and volatility" of the book's subtitle. Miller argues that mounds are microcosms of the earth and that they inhere a dynamic duality. They are made of an all-embracing vitality enhanced in essential ways by rituals, song, and dance and also features of heft that hold the volatile world safely in place. They are both full of vitalizing power and anchors of an unsteady world. As *Ancestral Mounds* explores it, this duality is a new, stimulating frame for understanding mounds and is a significant contribution of the book.

Unfortunately, from whom and/or where Miller came to understand this duality is a bit confusing. Part of this confusion stems from the unique writing and organizational style Miller uses, shifting from past to present tense while using only a few, very flowing headings. This was clearly done to shift the way we think about the material, and while the intention was good, the effect is the book is hard to follow at times. In earlier chapters, it is hard to decipher when an idea presented was actually informed by contemporary indigenous peoples involved in mound building. Certainly, respecting the need to keep sacred knowledge secret may be contributing to this, but masking the voice of the indigenous people from whom Miller learned about the dynamism of mounds could not have been the only solution.

Ancestral Mounds begins with a promise of a new understanding of mounds informed by contemporary indigenous mound-building practices. The first few pages offer tantalizing hints for what it seems is going to constitute the main content of the book, such as learning about removed indigenous peoples making return pilgrimages to mounds in the Southeast, and indigenous peoples actively remantling mounds in Oklahoma today. However, obvious presentation of this material occurs only in the book's penultimate chapter. The bulk of the book is composed not of groundbreaking understandings of mounds from contemporary indigenous peoples, but of culture history, critical responses to archaeological works, and summaries of ethnohistoric accounts from white explorers, settlers, and government agents in the Southeast. Miller's presentation of these materials is solid, but not new or transformative.

It would be hard to end this review without mention of an irony that Miller himself somewhat acknowledges in a note in chapter 5. As an archaeologist, I found hard to digest that while the book relies heavily on archaeology throughout, nonetheless denigrations of archaeology are met at nearly every turn. I do not say this as a reactionary defender of archaeology. Rather, I agree that in a deep, fundamental way, archaeology has much to improve on, especially how we engage, or fail to engage, with contemporary indigenous peoples; and moreover, that we must recognize continuity in order to avoid homogenizing and placing North America's past into the "savage slot"

(Charles Cobb offers an important discussion of this tendency in archaeology in a 2005 *American Anthropologist* article). However, if authors declare they are going to “take mound study out of the limiting clutches of archaeologists,” then they should deliver on that promise. I was most open to loosening my “clutch,” but in the end, I was left waiting.

While Miller succeeds in raising really interesting points about the continuity and dual, spiritual, needs filled by mound building, the way the book is arranged and, more pressingly, the sparseness of original, deep ethnographic material, makes it so the book does not deliver the transformative punch I expected when I started reading it. I do still recommend that archaeologists and other scholars interested in the mounds of the Eastern United States read this book, because its strengths and limitations provide opportunities to think about how we perceive and study mounds, what we have been missing, and how we can go forward in research in new ways.

Meghan C. L. Howey
University of New Hampshire

The Beginning and End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native America. By Sarah Deer. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015. 207 pages. \$80.50 cloth; \$22.95 paper.

Sexual violence is arguably one of the most pressing human rights issues of the twenty-first century. Yet relatively few scholars write and theorize about the sexual violence experienced by Native women. *The Beginning and End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native America* is an important indigenous feminist text confronting a disturbing legacy of rape of Native women in the United States, one that is both historical and contemporary. The statistics are telling: one in three Native women will be raped in their lifetime and Native women are more than 2.5 times as likely than other women to be raped or sexually assaulted, particularly by non-Native men. Native women have the highest incidence of sexual assault of any group of women in the United States today.

While many might call this an epidemic, Sarah Deer purposefully avoids doing so because framing rape as an “epidemic” depoliticizes and separates rape from the US government’s history of violence towards tribal nations in general, and Native women in particular. Instead, Deer persuasively argues that rape is a fundamental element of colonization, and an ongoing historical reality of the treatment of Native women that has been embedded in federal policy and legitimized in federal and Supreme Court decisions. As Deer explores the relationship between Native women surviving colonization and surviving rape, she makes her case that rape is a metaphor for colonialism, drawing an analogy between indigenous peoples’ historical experience with settlers as exploitative and riddled with colonial intrusions of their lands and resources, and Native women’s experiences of colonialism over time as invasion of their bodies.