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We Had a Little Real Estate Problem: The Unheralded Story of Native Americans and Comedy. By Kliph Nesteroff.

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culture, and specific Native cultures, as well as quests for economic security at the individual and family level. *Staging Indigeneity* joins a rich body of scholarship in American Indian studies, anthropology, cultural studies, geography, law, and cultural history on films, music, drama, rodeos and Wild West shows, expositions, rhetoric and lectures, and tourism in anthropology and cultural geography.

Drawing on postmodern studies for her historical and contemporary analysis, Phillips's use of existing knowledge is, curiously, highly selective by intention. Simultaneously, the author asserts paradigmatic independence by redefining and broadening a very concise concept that appears in a 1970 *American Anthropologist* article in which Jacob Gruber described late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century anthropological methodology as "salvage ethnography." As a historian of anthropology, in this case I find the category "salvage tourism" to be forced. To term these outdoor dramas "salvage" is unconvincing, as the book's analyses did not reveal that the communities were saving ethnographically authentic information for posterity. Rather, the outdoor drama organizers were producing narratives that were the opposite of foundational anthropology's goals for observational accuracy. The *Tecumseh!* production's lack of interest in Shawnee consultancy is a case in point. For this reader, Phillips's choice of term obfuscated complex cultural and social processes that she repeatedly highlighted in her study, leaving me wishing the author had invented an entirely new term to characterize this interesting category of community-based tourism and the fascinating paradoxes that she so eloquently explores. Ultimately, *Staging Indigeneity* is an excellent study of conquest or settler tourism and how three local communities have used for their own benefit, and continue to use, the idea of the "real" Indian created in the guise of nineteenth-century social progress.

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**We Had a Little Real Estate Problem: The Unheralded Story of Native Americans and Comedy.** By Kliph Nesteroff. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2021. 336 pages. \$27.00 cloth; \$17.00 paper; \$39.99 audio CD; \$12.99 electronic.

Native comedy is happening everywhere: on the back of a flatbed truck, in the middle of the desert, at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and this year on television screens in the homes of millions of Americans. Yet until now, that story has not been told. Kliph Nesteroff, a Canadian comedy writer and the author of *We Had a Little Real Estate Problem: The Unheralded Story of Native Americans and Comedy*, has become an authority on the history of Native American comedy. In the last two decades, scholars have explored the significance of Native representation in media ranging from silent films to other visual culture, especially how it shapes perceptions of Native peoples. Arguing that Native people should control and articulate their own narrative, Nesteroff engages these same issues through Native comedy. Although the text features a few First Nations comics from Canada, it prominently focuses on Native

American comics and their experiences in the United States. The book's title pays homage to the late, great comedian Charlie Hill (Oneida), who in his *Tonight Show* debut declared, "My people are from Wisconsin. We used to be from New York. We had a little real estate problem."

Known as the critically acclaimed author of *The Comedians: Drunks, Thieves, Scoundrels and the History of American Comedy*, Nesteroff has written a compelling page-turner that gets at the heart of issues of Native representation and Native artists challenging the miseducation of America. One of the most impactful contributions is Nesteroff's ability to center Native voices and particularly Native critique. Structurally, the text provides nearly fifty chapters, some of which are short vignettes that highlight Indian country's established and up-and-coming comedy talent. Methodologically, *We Had a Little Real Estate Problem* draws from dozens of interviews, secondary sources, and several hundred archival newspapers. While not a trained historian, Nesteroff deftly weaves in historical context and engages topics such as termination, the American Indian Movement, activism at Standing Rock, and US Indian boarding schools and Canadian residential schools.

Nesteroff's historical analysis of Native performance begins with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Shows in the late 1800s, highlighting Chauncey Yellow Robe's argument that these shows were nothing short of "degrading, demoralizing and degenerating" (10). Nesteroff examines vaudeville in the early twentieth century and then takes a deep dive into the life of comedian Will Rogers (Cherokee), whose Native heritage was often downplayed or erased. Nesteroff's attention to Indian policy details the family's forced removal to Indian Territory and how the Dawes General Allotment Act singlehandedly destroyed the Rogers family's successful ranching empire. Historical moments like these shaped Will Rogers's sense of justice, commentary on federal hypocrisy, and his successful comedy career.

Almost all of the comedians featured were directly inspired by the legendary comic Charlie Hill, or by a comedian he influenced. In many ways, *We Had a Little Real Estate Problem* is a love letter to Hill, which weaves his life story throughout. Nesteroff covers Hill's start in New York theater and his timely move to Los Angeles. Hill cut his teeth in the burgeoning comedy club scene, becoming a regular at the Comedy Store, and rose to prominence alongside contemporaries like David Letterman and Robin Williams. Hill's television debut was on *The Richard Pryor Show* in 1977 and he became the first and only Native American comedian on Johnny Carson's *The Tonight Show* a year later.

A major overall argument establishes that Native people assert agency in the roles that they choose and the jokes that they write. Nesteroff examines the moments when Native performers felt they had to acquiesce and, most prominently, when they refused. For example, Hill had to push against stereotypes throughout his career. He recalled that on a skit from *The Big Show*, "They wanted me to come out of the shower wearing a loincloth. I said 'You know, my old man was in the service during the war. Let me wear a uniform and be a regular guy in this and change the jokes around.' They let me do that" (174). Hill regularly refused clichéd tropes and maintaining these standards sometimes meant turning down bigger jobs. Hill's daughter Nasbah remembers that he had a chance to play a very large, but stereotypical part in a major movie, but

“he wouldn’t be able to live with himself” if he did. Hill maintained, “No way, I’ll never sell out my people” (191).

A new generation of Native comics are performing on their own terms. For instance, when offered the opportunity to create a piece for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the 1491s group saw it as a way to counteract bleak and depressing narratives about Native Americans. As Ryan Redcorn affirmed this stance, “the 1491s want to showcase the upside generally ignored by the media” (194). *Between Two Knees* was praised by theater critics and it played to sold-out crowds, but it was also polarizing—the audience either loved or hated it, with among the latter being those who felt uncomfortable with the mirror presented. Ultimately, the 1491s were elated, feeling that they had accomplished their goal.

Deanna M.A.D of the Ladies of Native Comedy asserts, “There’s very little visibility when it comes to Native people, and we are very rarely given the space to talk for ourselves” (233). So it is transformative when Native comics and performers can tell their stories. *We Had a Little Real Estate Problem* chronicles this history while capturing a pivotal historical moment. As filmmaker Sterlin Harjo asserts, “We’re entering a really amazing period” (245). The release of the book coincides with the debut of *Rutherford Falls*, a sitcom led by showrunner Sierra Teller Ornelas, the most successful Native comedy writer in the industry. This year also brought the critically acclaimed comedy *Reservation Dogs*, which boasts an entirely Native writers’ room as well as all Native directors and lead actors, and next year will include the forthcoming *Spirit Rangers*, an animated series. Native comedians and artists are taking control of the narrative and telling their stories.

As one would expect from a comedy writer, the text is funny and punchy. On the popularity of midcentury cowboy and Indian westerns and *Davy Crockett*, Nesteroff writes, “Conformist children across the country hoarded coonskin hats as they enthusiastically re-created genocide during recess” (93). *We Had a Little Real Estate Problem* is a welcome text for courses on both contemporary and historical Native issues. It is especially relevant for discussions on Native American performance, (mis)representation, biography, media and art. It can be read and taught alongside Michelle Raheja’s *Reservation Reelism*, Shari Huhndorf’s *Going Native*, and Philip Deloria’s *Playing Indian* and *Indians in Unexpected Places*.

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**When I Remember I See Red: American Indian Art and Activism in California.** Edited by Frank LePena, Mark Dean Johnson, and Kristina Perea Gilmore. Sacramento: Crocker Art Museum and Oakland: University of California Press, 2019. 176 pages. \$50 cloth.

This sumptuously illustrated catalog and the Crocker Art Museum’s glorious exhibition for which it stands are eminent introductions to the astonishing range of