Chal's life assumes a different direction. He returns to the Osage with no direction or purpose in his ife, drawn to his home largely by default. Where Chal drifts into the "drunken haze" that typified life in Osage County in the 1920s, Mathews returned to apply his training in the administration of the tribe's mineral estate, serving as an Osage tribal councilman and a spokesperson for Indian rights. Where Mathews found solace and purpose in rural Osage County, Chal returns to Kihekah in search of success in business, only to witness the rapid deterioration of the city and its commerce during the depression. The reader is left to determine the outcome of Chal's life, for Mathews prefers to leave him dreaming of distinction as a lawyer and orator, an indication perhaps that the author remained hopeful that others of similar circumstance might discover purpose and satisfaction in their lives just as he did.

In *Sundown,* Mathews employs the lyrical style he introduced in *Wakonta* and previews his moving descriptions of the natural environment of the Osage reservation found in *Talking to the Moon.* Interspersed throughout the book are narrative comments on the traditional life of the Osage people, a topic for which Mathews gained significant notice with the publication of his opus narrative history, *The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters.* Mathews blends these elements into a novel that is effortless to read yet quietly unsettling in the seemingly unresolvable issues that confront Chal Windzer in the course of his life.

In commenting on the life of an individual with joint cultural membership, Mathews uses Challenge Windzer to transcend the usual superficiality associated with the issues of identity crisis and cultural alienation, to produce an intensely personal character study of considerable depth. For students of American Indian cultural change, *Sundown* is required reading. This reviewer would recommend it to a general audience as a powerful novel that is certain to leave the reader with much to think about.

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The Plains Cree: Warriors, Traders and Diplomats, 1790 to 1870. By John S. Milloy. Manitoba Studies in Native History, 4. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1988. 159 pages. $24.95 Cloth.

John Milloy's intent is to tell the Cree side of Plains history. Contemporary native people view themselves as tribal nations and their pasts as independent, active endeavors to satisfy self-defined needs. Milloy's book admirably serves such a balanced account. It is lucidly constructed, unencumbered by jargon, theoretical asides, or embellishments. Its only flaws come from the effort to make the book accessible to a wider audience than specialist scholars. This dulls conceptual clarity and exactness in his application of terms like *nation, diplomacy,* and *authority.* It also exaggerates the substantive cohesiveness of historical Plains Cree and minimizes the intrusiveness of external constraints on their autonomy. I will return to this later.

Milloy's sources and his use of them deserve comment. There are no Indian voices heard in his telling of the story, in spite of his intentions. He depends on published and archival reports of white participants in the fur trade and its chroniclers. There are reports of battles not witnessed by the authors, of councils not attended by them, and other hearsay evidence. For the late seventeenth and much of the eighteenth centuries, there are numerous gaps in the record, some of them several decades long. And, of course, those geographic areas remote from white locales of activity go unobserved. Milloy is not given to interpolating events. Still, when information is lacking, he does not avoid surmise, particularly concerning Cree consensus in formulating trade policy, making alliances, and defending interests. What is missing is Indian testimony on the past. It may be recovered, but with lengthy fieldwork, as Moore has done (*The Cheyenne Nation,* 1987). From rich evidence assembled, Moore judges that "Cheyenne oral history is more complete, more precise, and more correct than European sources" (p. 121). In the case of the Cree, oral history would surely solve many puzzles about demography, interband connections, tribal unity, and so on. Paradoxically, Milloy's intention to give the Cree version of the period displays how unsatisfying it can be to rely exclusively on archival materials.

Milloy divides Plains Cree history into three "eras," each corresponding to a different mode of trade, diplomacy, and alliance. In turn, "a paramount motive for war" (p. xv) dominated each era. Wars of migration, lasting until roughly 1810, were followed by "horse wars." Then from about 1850 until their confinement in restricted territories in the 1870s, the Cree fought for access to diminishing buffalo herds. The chronology resembles that of D.

G. Mandelbaum in his standard 1940 monograph, *The Plains Cree* (Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, vol. 37, part 2). Milloy, however, examines in detail topics skirted by Mandelbaum, notably alternating phases of hostility and accord between Cree and Blackfoot, and participation of the Cree in Indian-dominated trade networks.

The Cree on the Plains were not always in conflict with tribes of the Blackfoot Confederacy, as is widely believed. The Cree, who had been middlemen in the fur trade since the mid-seventeenth century, supported the Blackfoot migration to the Rockies in the West as they themselves gradually abandoned the woodland habitat for full-time Plains nomadism. They supplied European goods, especially weapons, which the Blackfoot used in their territorial struggles with the Snake, Flathead, and Kootenai. Until the late 1770s, when the Hudson's Bay Company built posts along the Saskatchewan River branches, the Cree had been the principal vendors of arms. Only when the Blackfoot began to receive guns directly, and were acquiring horses from the Gros Ventre in the south, did the basis for Cree-Blackfoot mutual dependence crumble. Starting in 1806, increasing armed clashes showed a new rivalry between the two nations. The Cree—part of them—chose to live on the Plains and hunt buffalo, and they now required horses themselves. As Milloy describes it, an insurmountable enmity between the Cree and the Gros Ventre—trading allies to the Blackfoot—cost the Cree their erstwhile partners. There were, after this rupture, occasional attempts to resume peaceful relations between the two. None of them durably restored former bonds.

One thing is certain about the northern Plains during the time period Milloy covers: It was a region of continuous, sometimes bewildering change. It could happen that a band of Cree would be at war with one Blackfoot band, at the same time that the Cree chief was exchanging gestures of peace with another segment of the Blackfoot Confederacy, only to be followed by a reversal of alliances the following season. Or the Assiniboine—long-time friends of the Cree—might join the latter in raids against the Sioux (enemies of the Mandan), while at the same time Assiniboine parties plundered a Mandan village with which the Cree maintained peaceful trade relations.

Mandelbaum did not document the vacillating quality of Plains intertribal relations as Milloy has done. Also, he did not appreci-

ate the commercial audacity of native traders. Milloy's "macro-historical" approach illuminates "an Indian side of the fur trade era, a [P]lains world of Indian creation that absorbs Europeans and their technology as another part of aboriginal environment" (p. viii). Cree middlemen energetically defended their position, from which they profited handsomely at both ends, European and Blackfoot. Nearly all Plains tribes, Cree included, mounted blockades to preserve or increase advantage. Contrast Mandelbaum's view, which depicts the Cree suffering, as early as 1740, "economic subservience."

In the early nineteenth century, growing Cree demand for horses led them to visit Mandan trading villages along the Missouri River. For a time they joined a loose Mandan-centered, multitribal alliance against the expanding Sioux. The Mandan presided over an enterprise that "operated, at least partially, on an Indian schedule of prices, structured by Indian demands and values, which were not those of the white traders" (p. 49). But the delicate balance did not last—neither the overall Mandan enterprise, nor the Cree position within it. The Cree, former middlemen, themselves became caught in the middle between Europeans, who set the prices for guns, and Mandan, who fixed prices for horses on a different scale. None of the strategies adopted by the Cree helped their situation; they attempted to renege their debts to European traders, and also stepped up their raids on other tribes for horses, not excluding the Mandan. Mandan dominance was itself weakened and then broken by encroaching Europeans. Just like the earlier situation on the Saskatchewan River, a westward expansion of trading posts made white goods directly available to remote Indian groups; it was the American fur companies at work now. Finally, decisively, epidemics of smallpox obliterated the village Mandan as a tribe by 1837.

Competition for horses was bound up in rivalry over buffalo among Plains tribes. The cause of this was a dramatic rise in the number of buffalo hides exported by the Hudson's Bay Company and American companies in the mid-nineteenth century. By the late 1850s the Cree seemed to recognize the ominous thinning of herds, but they were powerless to stop the process. They could not halt the proliferation of posts or block incursions of métis hunters; nor did they successfully expand to the west at the expense of Blackfoot tribes. A climactic military defeat by the Blackfoot in 1870 was followed the next year by Cree assent to a treaty

with the Dominion government that restricted them to a definite range. The buffalo wars were over, and the buffalo fur trade defunct; the Cree would soon be confined on reserves.

Throughout a recital of raids, battles, trade expeditions, and peace parleys, Milloy rejects deterministic explanations of change. He is equally wary of making direct causes out of environment/ecology, technology, or mere culture contact. The use of European weapons did no more than determine "the length of casualty lists" (p. 120), for instance. The Cree (and other nations) made decisions in a premeditated manner, informed by *Indian* values. "The Cree did not," Milloy says, "become unthinking pawns in the trader's race for trade and empire" (p. 106). Indians followed their own initiative, faced each new crisis by independently selecting among options. Milloy seeks to give tribal nations their due, and thereby goes against the grain of current political-economic theory which underscores the irresistible power of expanding capitalism to corrupt and disintegrate indigenous cultures. There is a related difficulty with his estimate of Cree independence and autonomy. There is no gainsaying that the Cree acted according to perceived interests. Milloy's assertion, though, that they did so "largely untainted by European influences" (pp. 103–104) is misleading.

As an illustration, one may consider a way that traders meddled in Indian affairs. As a focus of redistribution, a "chief" was intermediary between his followers and the post; chiefs negotiated seasonal exchanges. But the Hudson's Bay Company, for one, could make or break leaders. According to Mandelbaum, the trader had but to favor those who were "peaceful," and so disqualify "the aggressive troublesome warriors." It is unrealistic to imagine that Cree autonomy would not be compromised by the Indians' client status, itself engineered by persistent indebtedness.

A related set of difficulties arises with employing the term *nation* to describe the Cree. Milloy acknowledges that the notion of tribe, in established usage, is a clumsy tool. It designates aggregates with indistinct boundaries and memberships. Moreover, the implication of ethnic homogeneity contained in the older term *tribe* does not fit the Plains Cree. According to Mandelbaum, by the end of the eighteenth century "the Cree became an amalgam of many different tribal stocks." Not only Ojibwa and (Siouan-speaking) Assiniboine, but also Athabaskans, Blackfoot and Sioux—putative foes of the Cree—took up residence in

Cree bands. Whoever the Cree were that made trade and military policy, they were no ethnically or linguistically uniform people. This is one reason for replacing the old term *tribe* with *tribal nation*.

Just as the Plains Cree were an ethnic mix, they were not so politically cohesive as the term *nation* conveys, even at the band level. Band members were not inalienably attached to their particular chief, whose informal authority rested on his prestige and generosity. A band camped together only during the most seasonable months of the year. There was no supra-band political machinery; even a popular and secure chief could not commit members of other bands to, say, an agreement reached between his own and some specific segment of the Blackfoot Confederacy. Multiband undertakings, especially during the turbulent years of the buffalo wars, were time-consuming to promote, and most often disintegrated before realization. Large councils attended by many notable chiefs were a late contact phenomenon, and these were usually presided over by white dignitaries.

A last matter. Milloy says that Cree traders, raiders and peacemakers were "in essence agents of a single societal demand working within an exterior tribal system, which induced the inflow of convertible material" (p. 80). Goods and deeds were converted into status and rewards. Granted the existence of a system of rank and prestige on the Plains that had political and economic implications, it is too great a leap to designate a collection of such agents a nation. Conventionally, the idea of nation involves tangible institutions of governance that are formally structured. In the past, especially before the treaties, the Cree had no corporate or corporeal reality. Parenthetically, Milloy makes similar conceptual lumpings elsewhere. For instance, he chooses to include as an alliance "coincidental activity by two parties, who may not have been formally allied, who took parallel action against a third" (p. xvii).

There are persuasive theoretical and analytical reasons for keeping distinctions between social or political forms. It is no theoretical advance to substitute for one vague term, *tribe*, another equally imprecise one, *nation*.

I think that the expression *Cree tribal nation* is a fiction. This does not mean that it is a trivial, inconsequential one. When applied to present-day Cree, the idea of nation is both convenient and useful; it identifies a distinctive group of people embracing

a definite political and economic program. Nations in this sense exist in the constructive imaginings of native peoples, and also in those of the observers of them.

It doubtless fits the historical facts best to think of the indigenous (and contact) Plains as an ethnological field, grading off into other large fields, without distinct boundaries. A historiographic construct of tribal nation which names an entity that has consensus of will to formulate policy of trade and war, pursue diplomacy, and enforce executive decisions is a reification. Contemporary Cree are something more than an ethnic category; the pressure they bring to bear on provincial and national governments testifies to this. Contextually, to speak of them as a tribal nation makes sense. It is a different matter, however, to call the Cree in the days of chiefs Piapot and Poundmaker a nation.

To summarize, Milloy's book on Plains Cree history evades conceptual matters that attract the more analytically minded. Terminological issues, consequently, intrude themselves here and there. Nevertheless, the interest of reaching a broad readership is appropriately served by these lapses.

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Early Prehistoric Agriculture in the American Southwest. By W. H. Wills. Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press, 1988. 196 pages. $27.50 Cloth.

W. H. Wills's objective is to explain why and how hunter-gatherers in the American Southwest expanded their wild food diets about three thousand years ago to include domesticated maize, beans, and squash. Archeologists have usually interpreted the transition from foraging to food production in the greater Southwest as a historical event, e.g., innovation diffusion or migration or a process of gradual familiarization. Perhaps Meso-American farmers and their new and improved plants drifted northward through a moist, arable "highland corridor" from Mexico to southeastern Arizona and west-central New Mexico. Or, on the other hand, maybe small groups of conservative hunter-gatherers remained casual users of maize for several millenia following its introduction circa 6000–5600 B.P. at Bat Cave in