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Gods Among Us: American Indian Masks. Edited by Ross Coates, with illustrations by Sarah Moore and Manley Dahkoshay.

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people of academia who have solid contact with their natural spirit. For it may be that both allegory and mythology are inadequate for explaining the lifestyle of a people who are, like a star or a robin, born into a situation of spiritual responses to a spiritual episode—a people who need only to sing and dance in order to be in balance with all the powers of the universe.

*Imagine Ourselves Richly* is a remarkable research effort (complete with thirty-two pages of bibliography and references). It reaches into the darkness of academia, locates a shadow, and brings it forth and identifies it as allegory. It reaches again into the darkness, locates a mythology, and, holding that myth up to the sunlight, identifies it as such. Then it reaches into the evening and brings forth a handful of stars and says to the world, "This is a star. That is an allegory. That other, myth."

Perhaps Vecsey has introduced the time for a new event—for those of us in academia who are original to this hemisphere to cease employing the word *myth* when we communicate the lessons and legends of our origin and our life, our survival and our peace. Perhaps we should function with the language that was given to each of our nations when Quon sang and danced and there appeared a beautiful place to dwell where dreams could be real: earth. Earth, that beautiful but injured little place where original natives can still *Imagine Ourselves Richly*.

(There is no date for this occurrence, but there is a time: when the warrior-spirits of the native nations rise up together to think the beautiful thoughts that produce rainbow dreams, sing sweetly with the breath of dawn and look across the good land with brother Sun's strength as a guide to our understanding.)

Darryl Wilson

**Gods Among Us: American Indian Masks.** Edited by Ross Coates, with illustrations by Sarah Moore and Manley Dahkoshay. San Diego: San Diego State University Publications in American Indian Studies, 1989. 116 pages. \$14.95 Paper.

*Gods Among Us* is an anthology of essays that address the tradition of mask making and use among several different American Indian cultures. The Great Plains, the Makah, the eastern

Cherokee, the Six Nations (Iroquois), the Navajo, the Pascola traditions of the Sonora Cahitan speakers, and the Apache are represented by essayists that include artists, anthropologists, a historian, and faculty members of the American Indian Studies Department at San Diego State University who came to this project, perhaps, from the more general point of view of cultural studies.

The volume is not a comprehensive study of masquerades among Native American Indians, since several significant traditions are left out, nor is there any attempt to offer an overview or synthesis of Native American masking traditions in more general terms. In the introduction, Ross Coates, the volume editor, suggests that the essays are tied together through their point of view that, historically, American Indian masking functioned to bring the sacred to a state of here-and-now; he also points out that masks continue to play that role today, hence the book's title, *Gods Among Us*. Indeed, most of the essayists focus their attention on contemporary mask rituals, but the approaches to their subjects vary so widely that the reader is hard-pressed to keep any threads of continuity in mind. The overriding theme of the collection is more accurately reflected in its enthusiastic and celebratory tone.

David Whitehorse leads the collection with an essay about Plains masquerades, framed in the interpretive paradigm of functional semiotics, claiming that masks may be categorized according to their representational, emotive, and disguise functions. This might have been an interesting framework to carry through the succeeding essays, but the concept is introduced and abandoned here. The strength of the essay lies in Whitehorse's personal observations and conversations among participants at contemporary Plains powwows. On the other hand, although he raises many interesting points, the essay could benefit from far more detailed research. Most of the historic/ethnographic data employed in the essay are attributed to Robert Lowie's *Indians of the Plains* and the popular writings of Thomas E. Mails.

Several of the other essays—among them Jeff Mauer on the Makah and Ross Coates on the Six Nations—also suffer from superficial research combined with far more informal observation and reflection. The worst offender is the series editor himself, Clifford E. Trafzer, whose dry reportage about the different characters represented among Navajo masks relies almost entirely on

Gladys Reichard, *Navajo Religion*, Berard Haile, *Head and Face Masks in Navajo Ceremonialism*, and Washington Mathews's account of the Night Chant. This all raises the question of the utility of the book; these particular essays offer no new research or interpretation but, instead, summarize well-known sources, often in affected prose. Perhaps the book was intended to serve as an undergraduate text. I, for one, would rather have my students read Reichard and then would expect them to offer up something like Trafzer's essay as a seminar paper.

Robert E. Wilmot, Phillip Greenfield, and James Griffin provide antidotes to these problems, however. Wilmot's essay about eastern Cherokee Booger masquerades is based on documentary sources but provides cogent and convincing interpretations without sentimentality. Griffin's essay might have ranged a little further with regard to the historical implications of Pascola masquerades and their relations (or not) to Iberian/Pre-Columbian traditions perhaps, but the descriptive analysis seems grounded in solid, firsthand research. Greenfield takes up the historical problem of Apache masquerades and does an admirable job dealing with their probable sources, but I wish he had been more definite about specific occasions of contemporary practice instead of resorting to idealizing characterizations. In general, however, all three essays will prove useful to student researchers.

The most disappointing aspect of the book is the lack of adequate illustrations. While it is possible to appreciate the line drawings of Sarah Moore and Manley Dahkoshay, which introduce each essay, they in no way substitute for photographs of actual specimens or, more to the point, photographs of masks in action. The utility of the volume would increase tenfold with a small portfolio of salient photographic illustrations. As it is, it would be difficult to justify *Gods Among Us* in a student reading list or a professional library. At best, there may be an audience for it among casual enthusiasts of American Indian culture, although they will find much of it dry reading.

*David W. Penney*

**United States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years.** By William T. Hagan. Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990. 336 pages. \$13.95 Paper.