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ever, this symbol “may gesture upward, outward, and back toward the natural world in which the traditionalists find their own best path” (p. 155). It is no surprise that some sacred symbols are similar, but the fact that the Church of the Immaculate Conception attracts more non-Natives than Natives to its Sunday services suggests that it is the Native people who are giving, and non-Natives receiving.

The difficulties of interpreting Native/Christian symbol systems occasioned my favorite anecdote from the book, found in “Nahuas and National Culture: A Contest of Appropriations.” While observing Nahua ritual, Richard Haly disregarded the Christian prayers, such as the “Our Father,” when he was recording. But upon coming outside after a ritual, his host, don Pedro, extended his arm toward the sun, saying he would see Haly tomorrow, early, when “Our Father Dios appears” (p. 170). At that moment and gesture, it dawned on Haly that “the ‘Our Father’ had another interpretation, one as thoroughly Nahua as I had previously imagined it to be thoroughly Christian.” He uncloaks “the ethnocentric ‘invisibility’ of this religious practice” (p. 170). His eyes now more acute, he sees how rituals make the Nahua community, and how, in the rituals of the feeding of the saints, ritual becomes production. The saints are the embodiment and the rituals of the place. People working together to celebrate the saints is the ritual. “Ritual is work” (p. 165). The celebration is synonymous with community membership and tied in a sacred way to a certain place. All community members “feed the saints” by working for and participating in traditional community religious festivals and feasts.

A more painful occurrence of ethnocentrism is mentioned in “Mediations of the Spirits,” where Ines Hernandez-Avila chronicles a grievous loss. R. Gordon Wasson’s recording of the Mazatec elder Maria Sabina in ritual destroyed the sacred relationship between her and the “little children,” the sacred mushrooms she used (p. 21). Wasson’s publication brought hippies from the north to ingest the “flesh of the gods” with no regard for correctness or tradition, and Maria Sabina felt their power decline (p. 23). If it had not been for the foreigners, she asserts, “the saint children would have kept their power” (p. 21). Hernandez-Avila asks hard questions: “Does ‘extinction’ inevitably follow ‘discovery’? When is the cost too high?” She quotes Paula Gunn Allen saying, “Preserving tradition with the sacrifice of its living bearers seems at best reasonless, at worst blasphemous” (p. 22).

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Natives and Newcomers: The Cultural Origins of North America. By James Axtell. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. 418 pages. \$59.95 cloth; \$24.95 paper.

Anyone interested in the history of contact between Native Americans and European explorers, settlers, and missionaries in what is today the eastern United States ought to know James Axtell’s work. For nearly thirty years Axtell

has written on themes of acculturation and adaptation on both sides of the contact experience. The fifteen essays collected here, all of which have appeared in previous edited collections and some of which have been slightly revised, reflect the customary wit and grace with which Axtell writes and the insight and mastery of sources he brings to his work. That said, does this collection of essays—all but three of which were published before 1992—make a new contribution to the field?

Axtell sets *Natives and Newcomers* against books like Jack Weatherford's *Indian Givers: How the Indians of the Americas Transformed the World* (1988) and Colin Calloway's *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America* (1997). Such books, Axtell asserts, tend to overgeneralize and to follow a scattershot approach to their subjects while forsaking the importance of rigorous chronology and chains of causation. The essays in *Natives and Newcomers* are the antidote and follow a roughly chronological approach to the subject. The essays are grouped around topics like contact, trade, conversion, conflicts, and consequences. While categories like these accord with the sequences of contact history, they hardly stand in stark contrast to either Weatherford's or, more particularly, Calloway's approaches to the same topic. In addition, while Axtell brings to life sources and stories about Native peoples from the shores of Newfoundland to the keys of La Florida, he speaks as generally of Indians and their history as any other author in search of an adequate synthesis of early contact history. If the essays bring to the fore important questions about the nature and direction of acculturation, they also lack the depth and heft of conclusions based on more focused monographic research.

The foundations on which authors build broad studies like *Natives and Newcomers* are always open to question. In this case, Axtell relies too often on race to underpin his consideration of both Natives and settlers. The essays are peppered with references to "whites," and those settlers who were adopted into or fled to join Native societies are called "white Indians." By the same token, Indians make history as "brown-skinned Americans" and "burnt umber" people (p. 20, p. 285). The use of skin color to define the actors in this story is inappropriate because the author seeks to privilege questions of culture and learned behavior.

Axtell's use of racial language underscores a basic problem of perspective. He concedes in one essay that ideas of race came with Europeans and were only slowly imbibed and internalized by Native people. If a basic assumption in the author's interpretation of contact rests squarely on European's racialized view of the world, how deeply can he penetrate the Native societies he seeks to study? The problem pops up when Axtell characterizes Natives' pre-contact experience with other people as somewhat limited because, he asserts, they had met only other "Indian peoples." Indian peoples, as a construct, did not exist before Columbus stumbled into the New World. What did exist were societies bound and cut in a thousand ways by kinship, cosmology, and special senses of place. When race stands as a standard category of analysis, such Native concepts of identity and belonging find little room to reach the light of the written page.

The basic perspective of the essays works to bend interactions between Natives and newcomers toward a more refined understanding of how the newcomers came out at the end of the contact experience. Axtell makes an important distinction between adaptive changes that resulted from settlers copying Native behaviors like warfare tactics or borrowing things like snowshoes and corn and negative changes which occurred among the settlers simply because the Natives stood in their way. Adaptive changes were important, but, he argues, only insofar as they enabled settlers to defeat their Native opponents. Negative changes were far more crucial because in the existence of the Other settlers defined for themselves new notions of savagery and civility and adopted the "fortress mentality" that drives American foreign policy to this day.

For the most part *Natives and Newcomers* works well as it was intended, as an introductory text to undergraduates and interested readers that gathers some of Axtell's best essays in a more convenient format. The omission of a serious consideration of disease and its impact on postcontact America stands as the only strike against the book's comprehensiveness. Axtell's sequential approach to the phases of contact history works well as an interpretive guide to putting the postcontact history of the eastern seaboard into perspective, but a reconfigured collection of essays can only go so far. Training such a history on an understanding of the settler societies that evolved out of the contact experience is useful, but nations like the Iroquois, Narragansett, Cherokee, and Creek ought to merit more pride of place than as "the largest and most persistent obstacles the colonists had to overcome" in a story as important as this (p. ix).

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Privileging the Past: Reconstructing History in Northwest Coast Art. By Judith Ostrowitz. Seattle: University of Washington Press; Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999. 264 pages. \$35.00 cloth.

Judith Ostrowitz's *Privileging the Past: Reconstructing History in Northwest Coast Art* is one of the most welcome additions to the newer generation of literature on style and practice in contemporary Native American art. While this volume assumes a place of major importance among a body of recent publications that examine the way Native artists contend with the global influence of Western markets and cultural forces, it exceeds many of the given boundaries that have long characterized that area of scholarship by establishing several new directions for discourse. Ostrowitz accomplishes this by posing precisely the question that has lain unexposed throughout the history of this research: Why has formal conservatism persisted as a characteristic of certain living art forms, in this case, those created by a highly regarded group of Northwest Coast artists? Moreover, what does this kind of visual continuity with the past signify, how does it function, and what are its consequences for the way this