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Without Indians—or, rather, their imaginings of them—white Americans would hardly know how to define themselves. This well-researched and clearly written book offers biographical sketches of six men and four women who, writing about Native Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, seem to have done as much if not more to reimagine themselves.

The writers taken up include Charles Erskine Scott Wood, by turns Indian fighter, lawyer, and poet; George Bird Grinnell, Ph.D. paleontologist, publisher of Forest and Stream, conservationist, behind-the-scenes activist in Indian affairs, and self-trained ethnographer; Walter Mc Clintock, rich boy, lantern-slide lecturer, co-author of a monumentally unsuccessful opera about Indians, and prolific photographer; Mary Roberts Rinehart, famous for her mystery novels but on occasion a powerful advocate for Indian interests in Washington; Frank Bird Linderman, sometime trapper, miner, anti-immigrant and anti-feminist politician, a prime mover in the creation of the Rocky Boy reservation; Charles Fletcher Lummis, who began his career as foremost interpreter and chief publicist of the Southwest (the term is his coinage) by walking from Cincinnati to Los Angeles to become editor of the L.A. Times; George Wharton James, a disgraced Methodist preacher who advocated vegetarianism, nasal breathing, and same-sex nudity, an intrusive and often disrespectful photographer of Native people and their ceremonies as well as a self-fashioned expert on their arts and crafts; Mary Austin, novelist, essayist, and playwright, an enthusiast of desert places, a dedicated feminist and activist for Native rights and preservation of Native arts and crafts; Anna Ickes, Republican state legislator, amateur archaeologist and, as wife of FDR’s Secretary of the Interior, persistent advocate for Indian peoples and their cultures; Mabel Dodge Luhan, salonnière in New York, Paris, and finally Taos, luring there a host of artists, writers, and intellectuals she sought to interest in Native life and culture, including D. H. Lawrence, Willa Cather, Robinson Jeffers, and John Collier.

In their writings and public lectures, these ten “humanized” Indians, it is claimed, and so contributed to the reforms John Collier achieved with the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. Smith admits the connection cannot be proved, and what she means by “humanize” is insufficiently defined. Though many of her subjects knew each other and some even collaborated politically, and though typically they tended to feel alienated from modernism as well as modern society, valuing traditional Indian cultures for their supposed superiori-
ties, they still seem a somewhat miscellaneous group. Because their writings claim more attention than almost anything else they did in the public sphere, this book could well have given more attention to what they actually wrote. Perhaps its readers will be encouraged to do so, given the vividness and interest of these sometimes strange, often fascinating lives.

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