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Review of "Destroying Dogma: Vine Deloria Jr. and His Influence on American Society." Edited by Steve Pavlik and Daniel R. Wildcat

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BOOK REVIEWS

Destroying Dogma: Vine Deloria Jr. and His Influence on American Society. Edited by Steve Pavlik and Daniel R. Wildcat. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2006. xvi + 224 pp. Photographs, figures, tables, notes, bibliography. \$28.95 paper.

Here is a fine collection of eight essays on American Indian topics by friends and former students of Vine Deloria Jr. (Dakota/Lakota), the towering figure of our era among American Indian scholars and writers. While some contributions are more *about* Deloria's work than others, the whole collection is intended to demonstrate his influence on the thinking of scholars writing in American Indian studies today instead of merely placarding his prominence. Rather than simply praising Deloria, the volume continues his work. Anyone interested in the state of discourse in American Indian studies would benefit greatly from reading its contents. Most of the essays cover a discrete portion of the wide array of disciplinary topics to which Deloria himself paid attention, although the contribution by David Wilkins (Lumbee) usefully attempts to cover the greater breadth of Deloria's work.

The collection includes essays on the place of American Indian religious practice in the legal landscape of the "free exercise" clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and a lucid piece that pushes beyond Deloria's own critique of the contested dialectic of evolution versus creationism and his own preference for Indian traditions about origins. Tom Holm (Creek/Cherokee) builds on Deloria's own critique of contemporary Indian leadership to press for a more traditional Indian community style. Nicholas Peroff adds a critical discussion of what he calls "complexity theory," apply-

ing it to the Menominees. Richard Wheelock (Oneida) critiques the "American story" as a mythic narrative that has affected and continues its powerful influence on U.S. Indian policy.

The finest studies of this very good set are the final two, Wilkins's on the breadth of Deloria's achievement, and the piece by Daniel Wildcat (Yuchi/Muscogee) masterfully pressing Deloria's concern for the notion of spatiality as essential in distinguishing Native from Euro-American cultures. More than just a review of spatiality, the essay actually addresses Deloria's work as the first coherent attempt at piecing together an indigenizing (American Indian) philosophy. Wilkins's essay, surveying the vast majority of Deloria's writings and public speeches, outlines the plethora of concrete recommendations that emerged from Deloria's brilliant career: recommendations to white Americans in their attempts to understand Indian peoples and in their search for correctives to consumerist excesses; and recommendations to Indian people themselves for healing the brokenness of five hundred years of colonization and conquest.

The collection includes a previously unpublished plenary address delivered by Deloria at the 2002 Western Social Science Association annual conference in Albuquerque, as well as short prefaces and an introduction by Philip Deloria and each of the two editors. *Destroying Dogma* would indeed be a prime text for any course in American Indian studies.

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