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## Book Review: History's Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century

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*History's Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century.* By Steven Conn. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. xii + 276 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.00 cloth, \$22.50 paper.

In this polished work of intellectual history, Steven Conn charts a series of trajectories in European American approaches to conceiving of Native Americans during the nineteenth century. He does this through four interior chapters on images of Indians in American art, the study of Indian languages, archaeology, and the emergence of anthropology. These are framed by two chapters that introduce and amplify the book's general theme of "Native Americans and the problem of history."

Conn advances two distinct arguments about the place of Indians in Americans' historical consciousness. The first is that there was a shift from the early nineteenth century when figures like Charles Bird King and James Fenimore Cooper could find a place for Indians in American history to the late nineteenth century when the process of severing Indians from history reached completion in the work of figures like John Wesley Powell and Frederick Jackson Turner. The second argument is that the study of Native Americans was central to the development of Americans' approach to and consciousness of history more generally.

In developing the first line of argument, Conn discusses several related transitions—from cyclical to linear time, eloquence to silence, literature (and the Bible) to science, ethnology to anthropology, the particular to the general, amateurism to professionalism, and the historical to the cultural—all of which are related to the broader trajectory by which Indians were removed from history. Conn's discussion of these shifts is generally persuasive, though Americans' consciousness of a substantial Indian presence in history was always so attenuated (or, in the case of archaeologists investigating the "Mound Builders," actively dismissive of the actual history of existing Indian people) and the idea of Indians' inevitable vanishing so pervasive that one is left with the impression of far more continuity than change over the century's course.

Conn's second argument offers the intriguing proposition that Americans' thinking about Indians in the nineteenth century led them to ask a series of questions about history itself, making it possible, he suggests, for Americans to "define history apart from myth." Unfortunately, however, Conn never really develops this argument, and it remains difficult to see how questions about Native Americans had a major impact on the contours of American historical consciousness and the practice of history in the ways he indicates. Conn rightly observes that the "very notion of American progress was . . . dependent on Indian decline," though this would appear to owe more to ideological necessity than to an open-ended process of questioning and investigation.

Overall, *History's Shadow* is significant less for the larger arguments about history it proposes than for the middle-level trajectories it charts through highly contextualized and informative discussions of the many ways in which European Americans thought about Native Americans. In this way, it is a valuable contribution to the scholarly literature on European American representations of Indians.

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