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Review of *Native American Spirituality: A Critical Reader* Edited by Lee Irwin

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Native American Spirituality: A Critical Reader. Edited by Lee Irwin. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000. Notes, contributors, index. 334 pp. \$24.95 paper.

Lee Irwin, whose earlier writing has focused on Plains Indian visionary traditions, has gathered fourteen essays (including one of his own) that express current thinking about North American Indian religions. The authors include Indians, part-Indians and non-Indians, mostly trained anthropologists, and historians of religion.

They are all self-conscious about their scholarly mission: To what extent do they have the authority to represent Indian religious

practice and belief to non-Indian audiences? How should the history of religious persecution (of Indians by non-Indians) in the Americas frame the treatment of their subject matter? How can they incorporate Indian viewpoints through dialogue? How might they treat their subjects with respect? How can they represent the diversity of Indian traditions and avoid the projection of stereotypic images?

For some authors (Nez Perce/Mexican mestiza Inés Hernández-Ávila, for instance), the duties of community and ritual performance will not permit her betrayal of confidences: "We do not want the details of our life divulged in public" to suit the purposes of education, for New Age edification, for romanticization or commodification. The current "politics of recognition" and "post-colonial theory" work to stifle investigative writing about Indian religiousness, according to John Grim, who suggests that in such a context academics might even refuse invitations by Indians to attend their ceremonies, knowing how much damage attendance and reportage might bring. Christopher Ronwanièn:te Jocks (Mohawk/Brooklyn Irish) speaks of "unequal power relations" that limit "what *should* be taught" and "what *can* be taught" by Indians to outsiders. Indian religion is so imbedded in community and culture, he argues, that foreigners can appropriate only fragmentary (and thus relatively meaningless) data. Ronald L. Grimes recounts a cyberspace feud engendered by Vine Deloria Jr. and Sam Gill of the University of Colorado (and fueled by Grimes) on the following issues: "1. Should or should not European Americans be teaching courses on Native religions of North America? 2. If we should not, why not, and what would be the results of our deferral? 3. If we should, how best can we proceed?" Grimes is not ready to quit the field but proposes that one proceed with "humility, collegiality, and sensitivity."

The rest of the authors aver respect for their topics as well as for scholarly standards. A reader can learn much from their articles about the Omahas, Odawas, Ojibwas, Nahuas (Richard Haly's contribution bridges the imagi-

nary boundary between Mexican and United States Indian cultures), Cherokees, and Kiowas, as well as the Indian Shaker Church of northwestern California, pan-Indian Red Power traditionalism, and the 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act and its effects, including the recent repatriation of Indian cultural patrimony. Several pieces examine skillfully the interpenetrations of Christianity and traditional Indian religions.

This is a worthy, thought-provoking collection, well conceived and well edited. A word about “spirituality”: its semantic range in the volume replicates that of “religion” and therefore gains nothing by replacing the latter term.

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