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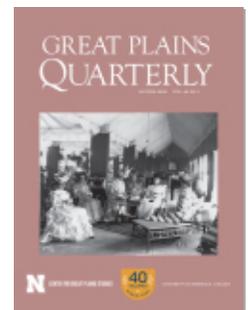
Mark Twain among the Indians and Other Indigenous People by
Kerry Driscoll (review)

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Book Reviews

Mark Twain among the Indians and Other Indigenous People.

By Kerry Driscoll. Oakland: University of California Press, 2018. ix + 420 pp. Figures, notes, bibliography, index. \$95.00, cloth.

It is hard to forgive Mark Twain for claiming that the American Indian was “nothing but a poor filthy, naked scurvy vagabond, whom to exterminate were a charity to the Creator’s worthier insects and reptiles which he oppresses.” Twain wasn’t always quite so insensitive. But unlike his attitudes toward African Americans, his thinking about Native Americans never fully evolved. It has also received surprisingly little attention. So the time is ripe for Kerry Driscoll’s monumental study of *Mark Twain among the Indians and Other Indigenous People*. Driscoll has amassed a large body of materials in which Twain says something, anything, about Indigenous peoples. Her goal is, she says, “neither to defend nor to defame” Twain, but simply to present the information. In that, she largely succeeds.

Nevertheless, she could have been a bit more careful with terminology and with some claims. She repeats derogatory terms like *rapacious* and especially *savage* somewhat indiscriminately. (She refers, for instance, to Twain’s “fascination with native spirituality—and its incongruous relation to the savage violence of Indian behavior” [225].) And she has a tendency to refer to white settlers as innocent. (Innocent from whose perspective?) Nor does she question such Twainian imputations such as that

American Indians preferred to avoid cleanliness. (They did not. It was white settlers who were more likely to reek.)

I could also have used less of the meticulous tracking of possible sources of fictional characters—admittedly a favorite pastime of Twain aficionados. In hailing these and other influences, Driscoll has to resort to such locutions as “likely heard” or “seem to have influenced.” Yet even if direct causality is debatable, she does provide a wealth of information that suggests some of the temper of the times.

Driscoll also offers some compelling insights. The discussion of “The Noble Red Man” is particularly acute. Twain produced this most vitriolic of his writings about Native Americans (it’s the source of my opening quotation) in 1870, when Lakota leaders, including the Oglala Red Cloud (Maḥpíya Lúta) and the Brulé Spotted Tail (Siṅté Glešká), were negotiating a treaty on the East Coast, with much fanfare in the press. They garnered enthusiastic acclaim in metropolitan newspapers such as the *New York Times*, but a more dismissive, even derisive, response in regional papers such as Twain’s own *Buffalo Morning Express*, as Driscoll richly elucidates. Twain was no fan of Noble Indians, and at a time when their nobility was much touted, he was not shy about trying to debunk it.

Driscoll is also to be praised for her nearly exhaustive scrutiny of Twain’s published work, as well as his drafts and unpublished letters, having scoured archives from Connecticut to California. In sum, despite its digressions and unevenness in tone, *Mark Twain among the*

Indians and Other Indigenous People will be the definitive resource for those seeking to track Twain's attitudes toward Indigenous peoples.

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All My Relatives: Exploring Lakota Ontology, Belief, and Ritual.

By David C. Posthumus. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018. vii + 266 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, references, index. \$55.00, cloth.

In *All My Relatives*, author David Posthumus explores Lakota belief, ritual, and ontology through the Indigenous perspectives of Ella Deloria, Vine Deloria Jr., Albert White Hat, and other academic sources relating to Lakota spirituality. Posthumus digs deep into Lakota culture and history, bridging these perspectives with the philosophies and symbolism of Lakota ethnography. He draws upon Lakota mythology, ceremony, visions, and ritual in his reevaluation of animism and the role it plays within Lakota relational ontology. Posthumus utilizes Lakota historical texts, field interviews with Lakota elders, and documented lived experiences of the Lakota to discover and define Lakota phenomenology. Vine Deloria Jr. states, "Indians consider their own individual experiences, the accumulated wisdom of the community that has been gathered by previous generations, their dreams, visions and prophecies, and any information's received from birds, animals, and plants as data that must be arranged, evaluated and understood as a unified body of knowledge" (66). It is this vast body of Lakota knowledge from which the author draws upon for the inspiration and background of this superb read.

Posthumus's inclusion of Lakota narratives and perspectives gives the reader a look into the culture, spirituality, and beliefs of the Siouan people from a nonwesternized theoretical framework. By inviting the reader to view it from a Native lens, Posthumus adds richness and integrity to the background and history of the Lakota people. Posthumus states, "Both subjective and collective experience, along with practical adaptability, are at the very core of Lakota and other tribal worldviews" (33). *All My Relatives* provides us with a look into the core beliefs and practices of the Lakota people from an ontological view as well as an ethnographic one. Posthumus's firm grasp of Lakota history and culture adds clarity and historical significance to text, which is vital to understanding the Lakota people, their beliefs, and their rituals.

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The Homesteaders: From Confederation to the Great War.

By Sandra Rollings-Magnusson. Regina: University of Regina Press, 2018. xi + 175 pp. Figures, endnotes, bibliography. \$39.95 CDN \$29.95 USD, paper.

It was a Saskatchewan success story. Six years after entering confederation as a province, Saskatchewan's population almost doubled, making it the third most populous province in Canada. The reason for the dramatic growth was settlers—lots of them. More people applied for homesteads in western Canada in the first decade of the twentieth century than during the entire previous century. In fact, for the years 1906 through 1911, three out of every five