

*âtalôhkana nêsta tipâcimôwina Cree Legends and Narratives from the West Coast of James Bay* is a worthy addition to the publications of oral Cree texts, in the tradition of Leonard Bloomfield, Freda Ahenekeew and H.C. Wolfart. It is of great value for ethnologists, linguists and, last but not least, the communities themselves. It can be read for entertainment, but also used for educational purposes. Its solid production (hardcover, acid-free paper) is a material guaranteed for its use by future generations of Cree speakers and their students.

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Gleach, Frederic W., *Powhatan's World and Colonial Virginia. A Conflict of Cultures*. Lincoln, Nebraska: The University Press, 1997, pp. xvii, 241.

In this, his first book, Frederic W. Gleach offers a comprehensive reinterpretation of the founding of the Virginia colony in the 17th century and its relations with the region's Native peoples, prominent among which were the Powhatans. Although the book covers the 17th-century history of the colony in general, the author shows a special interest in the conflicts which erupted between the two groups. His thesis, so well indicated in the title of the book, is that the dominant theme in Powhatan-English relations was cultural difference, hence misunderstanding and conflict. Each side grouped the other into prefabricated cultural compartments and therefore expected them to act a certain way. However, both parties, but especially the English failed to recognize the role the other expected them to play, resulting in a great deal of tension, sporadic incidents of violence for much of the first half of the 17th century, and the "corrective coups" of 1622 and 1644.

Gleach does not use the terminology, his approach is undeniably substantivist. From the outset he tells the reader "My emphasis is on the role of world-view in the construction of history" (xii) and on two occasions he takes the issue with "universal economic rationality" (9) and the modern scholar's "rational, economic Everyman" (201). In his first chapter, he does an excellent job of drawing the contours of the Powhatan world-view, through a technique he refers to as "controlled speculation" or "controlled

comparison" (12-13): using inferences from ethnographic studies on related Algonquian peoples to augment and fill in, where possible, the rather incomplete English record. His second chapter briefly outlines the English approach to colonization. Through both these chapters Gleach is concerned only with setting the cultural ground work for his later interpretations and these should therefore not be construed as attempts at complete ethnographic analyses. Nonetheless, while Gleach's reconstruction of the Powhatan *mentalité* is impressive for its detail and thoughtfulness, his treatment of the English is brief and insufficient. Moreover, this reviewer at least, finds questionable his assertion that the English of the day viewed wealth and its successful acquisition as signs of God's favour and therefore as perfectly acceptable, Christian behaviour.

While Gleach is certainly not the first to apply such a culturally-informed approach to the history of colonial Virginia and the Powhatans, he has gone much farther than other authors in reinterpreting the principal events. For instance, according to him, Smith's captivity may have been one large ritual through which Smith and the English colony were admitted into the Powhatan universe. In this view, the famed "rescue" of Smith by Pocahontas was the climactic and final step in the ritual, symbolizing the rebirth of Smith as an "Anglo-Powhatan" and the admission of the colony (114-120). The English were to be permitted in the Powhatan world provided they traded with the Powhatans and confined themselves to the Jamestown settlement. Smith and the English, of course, did not understand this and continued to explore the rivers and establish outposts in the interior. When, argues Gleach, in a single day in 1622 the Powhatans annihilated more than three-hundred and twenty colonists in the outlying settlements, but left Jamestown untouched, this was not an attempt at complete extermination, as the English and subsequent scholars have maintained. Rather it was a corrective measure designed to restore the balance of power, and teach an unruly tributary to live within the bounds established by Powhatan in 1608 (154-158).

If the book's interpretations are both sophisticated and bold, these may be attributed as much to the author's creativity and knowledge as to the sparseness of the evidence. The simple fact of the matter is that for most of the period the evidentiary record is so meagre as to support several different interpretations, *and* much speculation. Thus while Gleach's reconstruction of this period is exceptionally well done, it may be fair to say that of the two sides of "controlled speculation" the latter has played a greater role than one would like. Still if some degree of speculation and uncertainty is unavoidable, it is undoubtedly preferable to dismissing the study of this subject as impossible.

Equally forgivable, but a problem which can be rectified is the author's seeming confusion over postmodern and modern theories of knowledge. Like many other writers influenced by postmodernism, Gleach falls into a common logical inconsistency. On the one hand he is willing to admit primary *and* secondary sources (i.e., scholarly works) that each "carries its own biases and represents a particular construction of reality" (10), and similarly that events gain "significance in terms of... [their]... meanings within... cultural schemes" (11), suggesting a belief that culture always constitutes, constructs and gives meaning to knowledge. On the other hand, he continually speaks of *reconstructing*, *representing*, or *reproducing* past meanings and events, following the time-honoured creed that the same can be faithfully *reconstructed* and not just *constructed*, in the present. Either he must admit that our knowledge of the past, (the present), and especially the Other is created in the present according to scholarly and cultural conventions, or that accurate knowledge free from the constitutive influences of culture is readily attainable. One cannot have it both ways.

In conclusion, the book is extremely well researched, written and thought-out. It is indexed, followed by an extensive bibliography, and framed by an introduction and conclusion which clearly spell out the main argument. Lastly, while most of the sources in this book are not new, the author's approach and refreshing interpretations result in a welcome contribution to the literature on the Powhatans and colonial Virginia, and may suggest a new technique for the study of intercultural encounters, especially in cases where evidence is scarce. This is a commendable first book.

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Harris, Cole: *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essay on Colonialism and Geographical Change*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997, ISBN 0-7748-0588-9 Cloth CDN\$ 65.00.

Cole Harris' *The Resettlement of British Columbia* is a welcome work by a highly regarded Canadian scholar. This collection of essays, many of which have appeared published in other places, traces in a broad chronological fashion European colonization of what today is known as British Columbia. This work is very much a reflective examination of Harris' work