

**Talking Back: Native Women and the Making of the Early South.** By Alejandra Dubcovsky. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2023. 280 pages. \$38.00 hardcover.

Alejandra Dubcovsky's book *Talking Back: Native Women and the Making of the Early South* explores Spanish archives, in which she turns up the volume of women's voices and influence in the Spanish colonies within Florida and the present-day southeastern United States. Relying on archives written by men, Dubcovsky reads between the lines in the archives, following close mentions of women in the South who were property owners, slaves, mothers, and, above all, influencers. The author aims to show "the centrality of Black and Native women to colonial articulations of power and control, as well to the gendered, racialized, and very real limits of both" (75). This is to say, despite the violence and marginalization these women faced based on their race and sex, they were influential to the Spanish colonies through their work within towns and villages, as well as the influence they had over men.

Dubcovsky's book is the latest in an impressive line of books that bring readers' attention to the actions of women in the Native South. It joins its place alongside Brooke Bauer's *Becoming Catawba: Catawba Indian Women and Nation-Building, 1540–1840* (2022), Daniel Usner's *Native American Women and the Burdens of Southern History* (2023), and, less obvious in the title, Elizabeth Ellis' *The Great Power of Small Nations: Indigenous Diplomacy in the Gulf South* (2022). As Dubcovsky notes on page 196, "Confronting historical silence is never easy, especially when other voices clutter the archive." Dubcovsky challenges and interrogates the archive to reveal how Black, Native, and Spanish women of the early South saw themselves and how they were seen by Spanish society.

In the introduction, Dubcovsky begins with a 1627 mistranslation of the story of Eve in Spanish and Temuca. By highlighting how Temuca's understanding of Eve is not wrapped up in sin or misdeed but is one of power and influence, she sets the stage for the rest of the book. Divided into two parts, "The Land of Women" and "Fighting Women," she highlights how it is only through giving women's voices in the early South a microphone that we can fully understand life inside and outside the borders of the Spanish colonies from 1627 through 1710. In the first part, "The Land of Women," Dubcovsky follows the stories of an *Yndia Chicatam*, the dangers of Native kidnapping and subsequent enslavement, and how women navigated the missionaries and villages to improve their lives. In the second part, "Fighting Women," Dubcovsky explores the robust soundscape of their lives, power, and influence over daily life in the Spanish colonies. Throughout this section, Dubcovsky focuses on how Native, Black, and Spanish women used their voices. From screaming and wailing during battles and sieges to revealing the plans of military spies and their letters and demands for financial relief from the Spanish crown. The "noisy women" in part two tell their stories

and are essential to the narrations that men provide about these battles, sieges, and the aftermath.

The book's major historical intervention is in language recovery that, in turn, allows insight into the attitudes and experiences of Native women. Dubcovsky challenges readers to move beyond English translations and English archives by utilizing multi-lingual archival materials that include Spanish, English, and Timucua. She provides translations and weaves Spanish words into the text in ways that are approachable for monolingual English speakers while avoiding flattening the voices, words, and names found within the archives.

In the epilogue, Dubcovsky draws an important connection between the gendered violence that Native women faced in the early South and the continuation of that violence in the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) epidemic. Despite drawing this connection, Dubcovsky seems to leave Native peoples in the archives. The author could have strengthened the link between the Indigenous peoples discussed in the book and their known and possible living descendants. While many of the polities no longer exist, individuals often migrated, transformed, or merged with or into new configurations. Making this explicit is important to combat Indigenous erasure and to combat narratives of extinction. For example, the Talimali Band of Apalachee migrated to Louisiana after 1763, and their descendants still live there. In addition, an appendix of the many polities would have been helpful for readers unfamiliar with the period or the specific nations.

The monograph is approachable to the general public, academic scholars, and university students. Dubcovsky provides an important introduction to an archival methodology that follows the sparse mentions of women; through this work, she is able to reveal how archives can help us learn about the lives of Black and Native women. Moreover, Dubcovsky provides an inroad for further work on women's history in the early South through archival materials.

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