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The Colonial Construction of Indian Country: Native American Literatures and Federal Indian Law. By Eric Cheyfitz. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2023, 198 pages. $108.00 hardcover; $27.00 paperback; $27.00 e-book.

Cheyfitz has published this volume as a follow-up to an earlier work published by Columbia University, "The (Post)colonial Construction of Indian Country: US American Indian Literatures and Federal Indian Law." In the introduction to his current book, he describes his choice to remove the term *postcolonial* from the title, stating that, "in light of settler colonialism (see chapter four), I no longer think the *post-* applies, even in its parenthetical form, meant to ironize it in the first place" (2). Such critical reflection of the terms *colonialism* and *postcolonialism* structures many parts of the book (especially chapters one, four, and five) and much of Cheyfitz's argument about Native American literature. That is, Cheyfitz's thesis relies on the fact that past, current, and future federal Indian law is reliant on the structures of dispossession, exploitation, exclusion, and the logic of elimination in settler colonialism. Cheyfitz's thesis proposes that, to understand Native American literature, a reader must know the history of federal Indian laws and policies (13). That is to say, Native writers who take up telling Native stories are always writing within the context of the effects, both immediate and latent, of federal Indian law.

This book is part of a series called "Indigenous Americas," of which Robert Warrior is the series editor. It is the latest addition in a long line of critical texts about Indigenous peoples, the colonial laws that affect their communities, and the literature written by Indigenous peoples about their history and their stories. This book is written with college students and well-read Native literary audiences in mind. Although knowledge of US federal Indian law is not necessary to read this book, a familiarity will significantly assist the reader in enjoying and following the connections that Cheyfitz creates throughout the text.

The book is structured into six chapters, with the first chapter, "The Colonial Construction of Indian Country," providing a brief overview of the laws, policies, and, what is most important, the Supreme Court cases that have become the context in which American Indian authors think, write, and share stories. As such, the first chapter provides a political, legal, and cultural context that the United States federal government uses to attempt to dictate who American Indians are, how these unique polities should operate, and what are the appropriate religious, cultural, and familial lives that American Indians should live. However, as Cheyfitz notes, resistance to these invasive policies by American Indians is traditional (43). This chapter sets the tone for how Cheyfitz analyzes Native American literature and his directive to others who engage in such analysis—to understand the shared story, you must know the legal stories. Although Cheyfitz offers an essential and interesting paradigm for understanding American Indian authors and their subsequent novels, readers of this book should be aware of the scholars who are included and excluded from this work.

Moreover, scholars should read with a critical eye Cheyfitz's discussions about blood quantum and community belonging, issues he takes up in chapters two and three, "The Colonization of Native Identity through Biologic" and "Collaborative Identities." Regarding chapter two, Cheyfitz addresses the complex and divisive issue of blood quantum throughout the history of the Cherokee people (more broadly speaking, all of the "Five Civilized Tribes"—Cherokee, Choctaw, Muscogee, Seminole, and Chickasaw). As Cheyfitz desires to engage in a more nuanced discussion surrounding the question "Who is an Indian?" (80), I believe the lack of inclusion of Cherokee scholars creates a gap in knowledge and literature. The inclusion of the voices of Cherokee scholars like Clint Carroll, Julie Reed, Kirby Brown, Daniel Heath Justice, Jeff Corntassel, as well as many others, would have made the discussion around the history of Cherokee life, politics, literature, and governance far more compelling. In addition, while discussing the complicated histories and nuances of blood quantum, slavery, and descendant status in the case of Cherokees, Cheyfitz fails to mention a 2017 amendment to the Stigler Act that removed blood quantum requirements for all of the "Five Civilized Tribes"—or that the act originally required blood quantum *only* in the case of those five tribes. By not including this recent history of the Cherokee people, Cheyfitz misses an opportunity to discuss the complications that CBID cards and federal impositions placed on Indigenous nations regarding community belonging and the question posed in chapter two, "What is an Indian?" (135).

Throughout chapter three, "Collaborative Identities," Cheyfitz offers a critical analysis of the terms *half-blood* and *full-blood* in the novel *Cogewa: The Half-Blood*. Throughout this chapter, he engages in interesting and at times troubling discussions surrounding identity, belonging, and adoption, especially regarding Black Elk and Mary Jemison. As Cheyfitz takes us through the story of Cogewa, he offers insights into the racialized and gendered experiences of Cogewa, Julia, and Mary. He explores how cultural competencies are essential to Indigenous identity and belonging, stating that "what matters here is not blood but behavior" (118). However, he misses an opportunity to take up the stories of adoption that frame the beginning of the chapter, the termination and relocation policies in the United States, and Indigenous reconnection, which federal Indian law can complicate.

Chapter five considers how unique Indigenous epistemologies of tricksters and the importance of community color the writings of American Indian authors. Chapter five also outlines how the deconstruction of Euro-American epistemology is employed in the writings of many American Indian authors, setting the stage for the literary analysis of Gerald Vizenor's *Bearheart: The Heirship Chronicles* in chapter six. Here, Cheyfitz is at his best when drawing direct connections between US federal Indian law and Native literature.

Throughout chapter six, Cheyfitz also considers the differing and at times competing vectors of oral and written traditions of stories, stating, "Colonialism has skewed traditional thought, not thwarted it, precisely because the traditional is dynamic, adopting without necessarily adapting" (198). The insight of tradition being dynamic is reflective of current literature within Indigenous communities as they work with the two faces of Janus to maintain their sovereignty and self-determination while engaging in political changes. That is, one face may look like acculturation or assimilation while in actuality it is hiding the other face, which upholds culture, language, and land-base through sovereignty and self-determination—or, as Cheyfitz would say, the construction of the myths of Native peoples as colonized and Native peoples' deconstruction of that myth. When tradition is appropriately viewed as dynamic, articulations and enactments of self-determination can flourish. Indeed, he ends the book by acknowledging the two faces of Janus by stating, "Within an Indigenous cultural context, we can understand US federal law as the myth of Native conquest and Native literature as the deconstruction of that myth" (198).

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