Essays by Reuben Snake, Owana Mc Lester-Greenfield, Adeline Wanatee, Michael Husband and Gary Koerselman, Joseph Hraba, and Donald Graham explore the problems of assimilation, urban relocation, and Indian education from the Native-American perspective and constitute a more unified segment of the book than do the earlier selections. A selected bibliography on the Indian in Iowa, compiled by Gretchen Bataille, rounds out the volume.

The unevenness of The Worlds Between Two Rivers suggests something of the uncertainty of purpose that continues to plague American Indian Studies, or the "Indian biz," as an Osage friend of this writer refers to it. It is still unclear whether Native American Studies should be academic or activist in its final orientation, and thus far a productive balance between these two equally desirable ends has proven elusive. However, the discipline is young, and the amount of scholarship and debate it has already generated bodes well for its future. Meanwhile, The Worlds Between Two Rivers reflects the relative strengths and weaknesses of the discipline at this stage of its evolution.

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Elaine Goodale Eastman was a white woman from the East who decided early in her life that her "mission" was to educate the Sioux Indians of the Dakotas. The memoirs, published in 1978, were written in the thirties from notes and diaries kept by the writer from 1885-1891. Thus, there are three distinct periods of time the contemporary reader must consider. By 1978 standards, Eastman is a sympathetic, if somewhat naive, young woman. Placing her within the context of the late 1900's, however, the reader finds that she was extraordinary in her compassion for the understanding of native life. One must accept as a given that Elaine Goodale, as a product of her times, believed first in educating, Christianizing, and Americanizing the Indians. Beyond this, however, she was not shy about criticizing the government as "indifferent or inefficient." She once wrote to a Congressman, "Perhaps on no subject does the average Congressman display a more whole-souled, confiding and self-gratulatory ignorance than upon the Indian question." Unlike most of those who accepted assignments in the outposts reluctantly, she went willingly and against the recommendations of those around her. Once there, she learned the Sioux dialect, participated in the daily life of "her people," and ministered to the physical as well as the spiritual and mental health of the children.
This book is an easily read account of frontier life told from the point of view of a young woman who went against the tide of her times in many ways. In both her attitude toward the Indians--she admits that the stories she sent back East were "propaganda" for the Indians--and her attitude toward what she could do as a woman, she was an exceptional person. Male officers and government officials were repeatedly shocked by her travels unarmed with groups of Indians and her utter lack of fear living with the Sioux. If there had been other whites as aware as she of the Indians' humanity, the tragedy of Wounded Knee and the greater tragedies of stolen land and betrayal could have been averted.

Writing in retrospect, Goodale makes the difficulties of her life appear easily confronted; she comes across as calm and understanding, easily able to endure hardship and oppression. But writing about a period of time forty years earlier and having had time to reflect upon her experiences, she may indeed have romanticized some of the accounts. This cannot be known, but certainly her memoirs communicate a view that is absent from military accounts; her memories are closer to those of Black Elk. Indeed, Elaine Goodale's description of Wounded Knee sounds much like that written in Black Elk Speaks: "Women and children were scattered along a distance of two miles from the scene of the encounter." Thus, Goodale's book is one which confirms what Indian oral and written traditions have tried to convince us of--that government promises were not kept; that rations were slow in coming, if they came at all; that Indian people were arbitrarily assigned "American" names; and that the last decades of the nineteenth century were years of suffering and frustration for Indian people as well as for those dedicated to helping them survive.

Elaine Goodale is also remarkable in her attitude toward herself as a woman. Not only was she unorthodox in her choice of a career in the Sioux territory, she accepted with resignation having given up her career to become a wife and mother whose pleasures after marriage were "vicarious ones," enjoyed only through her husband's books, travels, and lectures. This woman braved many "frontiers," and her enemies were not the "savages" described in many historical accounts of the period. In her attempts to educate the children of the Sioux Nations, she did battle with the "negligence and apathy of Congress and the public" and confronted the notions of what was "woman's work" and "feminine." The experiences of Elaine Goodale Eastman are essential reading to understand that the story of the frontier was not just the story of trappers, hunters, and settler families. Also on that frontier were brave women such as Elaine Goodale and Laura Tileston, women whose convictions were strong enough to lead them into the uncharted territory to do what they believed to be right.

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