

**Peter Nabokov, ed. *Native American Testimony: A Chronicle of Indian and White Relations from Prophecy to the Present*. (New York: Viking, 1991) 512 pp., \$25.00.**

This book's publication would be welcome at any time, but for readers to be able to read and study it in the quincentennial year (five hundred years after "discovery") underlies the importance of the subject—Native Americans testifying of the consequences of the Columbian voyage. It appears to this reader that this is a fine supplement to Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*.

It is a book that is naturally "must" reading for teachers and scholars in the areas of ethnic studies, but is also one that should be read and pondered over by members of all disciplines. On top of this, it should have an appeal to intelligent and aware general readers. The work should propel revisionist historians and writers of American history texts to "hear" the words of these Native Americans as a "chronicle of Indian-White Relations from prophecy to the Present, 1492-1992."

Readers are fortunate to have Peter Nabokov as their guide through the centuries. The impact on readers comes from the chronological arrangement. Moreover, the internal structure aids readers to establish relationships. The editor's introductory essays also aid readers in making the transitions from one era to the next and in making crystal clear the changing relationships between the two races, between the exploiters and those victimized by conquest.

The anthology is divided into two main parts: "First Encounter to Dispossession" and "Reservation to Resurgence." Within these major parts, the editor has arranged chapters with descriptive titles. An overview of the subjects reveals his fine arrangement of their sequence, and one is able to see the causal relationships for the format.

"Premonitions and Prophecies," the opening chapter, reveals within Indian lore the anticipation that various tribes had (through their writers and seers) of the arrival of the white Europeans. Chapters following deal with the events of the two races coming face to face, their exchanges, the whites' attempts at proselytizing the Native peoples into Christianity. Then come testimonies about their living beside one another, the resistance of the Native American tribes and nations to conquest by various European countries, and finally, the United States stealing land and justifying its duplicities by rationalizing its exploitations by political, social, and religious reliance upon the "doctrine" of Manifest Destiny.

The last chapter of Part One has a summary title, "The Nation's Hoop is Broken and Scattered." In it, representative voices speak: a Kiowa writes "The Buffalo Go," a Cochise "I Am Alone," Crazy Horse as an Oglala Sioux "I Have Spoken," and an Omaha speaks of "This Awful Loneliness."

Part Two continues the sad jeremiad. Discussed and examined are the "small islands," i.e., the reservations and deculturation attempts in "To Learn Another Way." With the "flood" of whites pouring onto the land and seizures continuing, governmental allotments of land to tribes, the stories of exploitation in giant proportions continued. Nabokov includes the protestations to this practice by Hopi Albert Yana. Further pages are devoted to the Pine Tree massacre in "The

Dead Did Not Return.” The most positive note sounded in the work is in “The Best and Brightest,” dealing with the Society of American Indians who delineated what could be the best for the Native Americans in the future. A founder of the Society, Gertrude S. Bonnin, is cited in her discussion of the seizures of land where oil was discovered.

For tribes, there appeared to be hope in the appointment of John Collier as chief of Indian Affairs. In his administration there was, however, a debate among the tribes on the New Deal plan for the reorganization of tribal governance.

Until N. Scott Momaday’s final words, the end chapters reveal events and situations which are in contrast to the “period of hope.” Robert Spott, in an angrily written section, points out the large number of deaths among Native Americans, many of which are hastened by poverty and disease, as well as inadequate medical facilities.

Governmental programs, such as those concerned with voluntary relocation, or those which suggested termination of land rights, continued the pain for many tribes. Often Native Americans who had moved to urban areas experienced alienation and deracination. It was quite natural then that there came a period when protests mounted, symbolized by the confrontations at the Wounded Knee area, the seizure of Alcatraz, and the increasing activity of militants in the American Indian Movement. These are recounted by narrators in the chapter, “Let’s Raise Some Hell.”

Other chapters detail the continuance of barriers to Native American advancement both in the “Lower 48” and in Alaska. A certain amount of empowerment over their destinies economically have come from monies from tribal bingo halls such as those in Connecticut and California. Respect for the Native American dead has increased so that many remains are reburied with proper traditional rites. Pride has been taken from the Mohawk confrontation with Quebec and Canadian authorities at OKA in the Akwesasne area in New York.

A final chapter deals with the future—one prophecy indicating the return of land to the tribes, and another narrator stating that one is not sure of the future. Nabokov has quite appropriately left the final word, (as it were) to N. Scott Momaday in a section, “Confronting Columbus Again.” Momaday reveals the thinking he has been doing about the quincentennial. He wonders whether to take part in THE celebration. He concludes that this is the time for Native Americans to teach non-Indians about the saving of the environment in view of the centuries—millenia—that tribes and nations have lived in harmony with the land. If this is done, he says, then there is something good about the celebration.

— Cortland P. Auser  
Yorktown Heights, New York