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Leah Dilworth. *Imagining Indians in the Southwest: Persistent Visions of a Primitive Past.*

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Jesse T. Zanavich

Leah Dilworth examines the various ways in which Native American culture was misunderstood and thus misrepresented to the American public from the 1880s to the 1920s. Dilworth argues that the expanding tourist industry, which was spearheaded by the Fred Harvey Company and the Santa Fe Railroad, created a distorted public perception of Native Americans. This problem was exacerbated by biased scholarly attempts to understand Native American culture. Initially, Native Americans were primarily viewed as culturally-backward, disturbing people with very few redeemable characteristics. Native Americans were simply a group of people who would eventually assimilate or be destroyed by a vastly superior culture (European based culture). Eventually, American society idealized Native American culture and admired their adherence to a simpler, freer existence. But throughout this evolution in ideology, Native Americans were always viewed as primitive people and their culture was never understood by the American society.

The first chapter, entitled “Representing the Hopi Snake Dance,” describes how the Hopi Snake Dance was misunderstood and trivialized. Dilworth explains that tourist promotional information portrayed the Hopi Snake Dance in an oriental way, and scholarly accounts of the Hopi Snake Dance were a culmination of disgust and fascination. Smokis, who were white people dressed as Native Americans, would reenact the Hopi Snake Dance and various other rituals. According to Dilworth, “As much as the Smoki rhetoric emphasized the authenticity and seriousness of their performances they did not show respect for Hopi beliefs or cosmology, and the performances were, in fact, comic turns; as respectable members of the business elite, the Smokis played at being inferior savages” (74). Dilworth also notes that illustrations of the Hopi Snake Dance frequently exclude the Native American and were portrayed as if they were in a museum or shopping catalogue. Native American clothing and accessories were presented similarly to mainstream American consumer goods. Dilworth feels this trivialized Native Americans and portrayed them as nearing extinction. In this chapter, Dilworth provides convincing evidence and interesting interpretations on various aspects of the Hopi Snake Dance. Perhaps the most striking evidence are firsthand accounts by various ethnographers that blatantly show striking bias with underlying indignation.

The second chapter, entitled “Discovering Indians in Fred Harvey’s Southwest,” examines how the Fred Harvey Company created a booming tourist industry that

exploited Native Americans. Dilworth argues that Native Americans were basically portrayed as novelty items. The Fred Harvey Company tours were meant to (among one of many commercial goals) inform the tourist about the native crafts, which would then create a demand for them. The goal was simple: create demand and then satisfy the demand. According to Dilworth, "Representing Indians as living ruins made them seem unquestionably authentic and marvelous; rather than having lived through history, they emerged directly from a misty, idealized past" (103). The Fred Harvey Company (also the Santa Fe Railway) was the primary culprit in creating a vicious cycle. Ethnic tourism continued to destroy Native American culture, which then created further demand to see it before it disappeared. According to Dilworth, "To continue the function, ethnic tourism... has had to maintain a constant Indian disappearing act . . . for the past one hundred years tourists have been hurrying to the region to see authentic Indian culture before it disappears" (122). Dilworth also explains that the Fred Harvey Company portrayed Indians in various degrees. Apache were portrayed as the worst and most hostile, but Dilworth does not venture into discussing the history behind this viewpoint. The Apache were not sedentary and were staunch enemies of the United States government. They had the deserving reputation as being the government's biggest threat to security and had a long history of rebelling (most notably under the leadership of Geronimo) against attempted government control. These factors contributed to the Apache being viewed as the least civilized of all Native American groups by mainstream society (Waldman 161). Dilworth refrains from even rudimentary historical summations.

The third chapter, entitled "The Spectacle of Indian Artisanal Labor," explains the growth in demand for Native American craft objects. Dilworth explains that Indians changed their product and quality to meet demand for the goods. Dilworth also explains that Americans felt they could learn a great deal simply from crafts. Dilworth never states the blatant futility of this exchange but it is readily apparent. Indians are producing goods and changing patterns specifically for white consumers while white consumers are attempting to learn about Native American culture from the crafts. It is essentially impossible to fully understand native culture through the tourist industry.

The fourth chapter, entitled "Modernism, Primitivism, and the American Rhythm," examines the incorporation of Native American influence into the arts. According to Dilworth, "Indians did not seem to suffer from the mind-body dualism that many modernists complained was the legacy of the American Puritan tradition. Rather, the primitive mind and body functioned harmoniously with each other and with nature" (196). Dilworth argues that Americans idealized Native American society as a reaction to their own perceived mundane, complex society. Thus, Americans have a flawed admiration of Native American culture. Their admiration is based primarily on fascination and devoid of respect.

Dilworth's book does little to actually inform the reader about Native

Americans. Instead, it highlights the grave misconceptions and unfair prejudices that mainstream America had of Native Americans. In this regard, she does an exemplary job, for example, illustrating how the Fred Harvey Company tours were grossly commercialized, and the paraphernalia perpetuated a flawed view of Native Americans. Souvenir playing cards, which were produced by the Fred Harvey Company, portrayed the Indians as subdued, civilized (particularly in regard to their artistic skills) savages (Wiegle 121). Dilworth skillfully documents the growth of the Native American craft market. She explains how Native Americans began incorporating non-traditional Native American practices to meet growing demand (Davis 122). One should look elsewhere for historical background regarding Native Americans. But, Dilworth succeeds in examining the evolving image of Native Americans, which remains deeply flawed.

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