
Frank Kelderman. *Authorized Agents: Publication and Diplomacy in the Era of Indian Removal*. SUNY Press, 2019. 286 pp. ISBN: 9781438476179.

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Authorized Agents analyzes the relationship between Native American literature and Indian diplomacy in the nineteenth century from the Missouri River Valley to the Great Lakes. This meticulously researched literary history examines an array of Native American-authored texts produced in the context of Indian diplomacy in the era of removal by the settler-colonial United States. From 1820 to 1860, tribal leaders and intellectuals collaborated with coauthors, transcribers, and interpreters to address the impact of the crisis of forced removal and American imperialism on Indian peoples. The literatures of Indian diplomacy, like much early Native American literature published in English, were produced out of necessity to defend and protect Indian lands and lives, advocate for Indigenous sovereignty and autonomy, and participate in settler-colonial political institutions in the context of land theft and settler occupation. Kelderman's careful reading of literatures produced through the context of Indian-settler diplomacy demonstrates the power of Indian oratory and writing to represent Indigenous perspectives, persuade colonial agents, shift settler institutions, and appeal to US publics. Offering the term "authorized agents" to name Indian diplomats, writers, intellectuals, and tribal leaders who participated in an array of collaborative publication projects that brought Native perspectives of American imperialism into the public sphere, Kelderman's study of literature produced through Indian diplomacy pays due attention to a body of work that has been previously underexamined in the field of Native American literature.

Authorized Agents makes a significant contribution to critical debates in Native American and Indigenous studies regarding the relationships among Native people's agency, Indigenous sovereignty, and literary representation. Kelderman acknowledges that by the nineteenth century the figure of the Native diplomat had become a trope in the US public imaginary as "scenes of treaty-making had become a fixture of increasingly romanticized cultural narratives about US-Indian encounters... that popularized a distorted or even sanitized version of the colonial relations between Indian nations and the United States" (3). In the face of these popular cultural misrepresentations, Kelderman acknowledges how, in fact, Native diplomats bore "witness to the concerns of individual Indian nations and the state of intertribal relations, in ways that affirmed indigenous sovereignty" and launched "critiques of American institutions" (3). Kelderman illustrates that Native diplomats did not merely

participate in colonial institutions, but that they fundamentally shifted settler institutions by interjecting Native perspectives and challenging colonial assumptions. He argues that Indian writing and oratory produced through institutions of diplomacy are foundational to early Native American literatures in English.

The book's introduction, "Indian Removal and the Projects of Native American Writing," provides a thorough overview of historical and political contexts, theories, and concepts necessary for understanding Native American writing, both self-written and transcribed from oratory, produced during the Indian removal era. The four body chapters that follow trace the histories and legacies of publication projects produced by Indian diplomats and their interlocutors in tribally specific and intertribal negotiations for power and place. Complementing the book's text, readers will enjoy more than two dozen illustrations representing Native diplomats, handwritten letters, Native-made maps of Indian lands, and other helpful and fascinating archival documents.

The first chapter, "'Kindness and Firmness': Negotiating Empire in the Benjamin O'Fallon Delegation," details the historical and literary record of an 1821 delegation to Washington, D.C., overseen by Benjamin O'Fallon, the subagent at the Upper Missouri Indian agency. The delegation participants included nine Pawnee leaders and eight representatives from four other Native nations in the Missouri River Valley. Kelderman reads the transcribed oratory of Sharitarish (Chaui Pawnee) and Ongpatonga (Omaha) to show how they critique colonial ideas about civilization which attempted to justify settler expansion. Addressing the limitations of diplomacy for Indigenous peoples to retain their homelands, Kelderman explains how delegations to Washington constituted an alternative to US military force as federal agents sought to intimidate and subdue Indigenous leaders through displays of US hegemony and dominance. Nevertheless, the Upper Missouri delegates "brought indigenous forms of decision-making to bear on the formulation of Indian policy in Washington" (46). This chapter defines Kelderman's broadly useful key term, *authorized agent*, as "an indigenous representative whose words were read as expressions of indigenous perspectives within scenes of diplomacy" (62).

Chapter two, "'Our Wants and Our Wishes': Frontier Diplomacy and Removal in Sauk Writing and Oratory," traces Sauk literature that addresses the effects of settler encroachment and Indian removal in the 1830s and 1840s. This chapter shifts the scene of Indian diplomacy from Washington, D.C. to the "frontier," as Kelderman notes that "although delegations to Washington were a fixture in US-Indian relations, the routines

of Indian diplomacy more typically took place in Indian country," for example, in Indian agency offices and intertribal councils (74). This chapter expands the literary archive of Sauk and Meskwaki removal after the Black Hawk War (1832) by examining the most famous Sauk text from this period, *Life of Ma-ka-ta-me-she-kia-kiak* (1833), alongside the writings and oratory of the civil chief Keokuk and the tribal leader Hardfish. Black Hawk produced his as-told-to autobiography in collaboration with editor John Barton Patterson and interpreter Antoine LeClaire, and the publications of Keokuk and Hardfish also were produced with the aid of textual collaborators. Kelderman's comparison of these publications considers transcribed Native oratory as a form of Native American literature in English and "offers a new perspective on the question of indigenous agency and representation as it played out in the history of removal" (75). Whereas Black Hawk's bestselling autobiography offers his perspective on the war and critiques the settler-colonial treaty system, Keokuk is often read as an assimilationist. Kelderman explains that Keokuk developed "a pessimistic view of staving off settler expansion" because, during visits to Washington, D.C., he witnessed the growing settler population and military might of the US and consequently became convinced that his people must form an alliance with the Americans (79). However, Keokuk also intervened in colonial institutions through his oratory and "sought to change the conditions of interaction with the United States" by suggesting that councils "be held in Sauk political space, on their own terms" (83). Keokuk's publication projects attempted to bring negotiations with his primary interlocutor, William Clark, the superintendent of Indian Affairs in St. Louis, "into a mixed indigenous-settler public sphere, in which his oratory carried tribal authorization and resisted being co-opted by the agenda of the settler state" (84). Kelderman makes a case for Keokuk's agency, however constricted by the colonial logics of the treaty system: "Keokuk's diplomatic efforts sought to continue an existing mode of social and economic organization that was rooted in the traditions of Sauk life. No matter how compromised they were, his textual collaborations asserted a Sauk political voice within the networks of the colonial government" (110). Finally, Kelderman addresses intratribal conflict and disagreement by reviewing tribal leader Hardfish's public challenges to Keokuk's policies and chiefdom which fomented a faction of Sauk-Meskwaki people against Keokuk and the other civil chiefs.

Chapter three, "'The Blessings Which We Are Now Enjoying': Peter Pitchlynn and the Literature of Choctaw Nation-Building," examines the significance of writing and literature to the creation of the Choctaw Nation with a focus on diplomat and educator Peter Pitchlynn. Pitchlynn conducted a survey of Choctaw lands in Indian Territory and wrote a report that defended Choctaw land claims and also mediated between

Choctaw leadership and colonial government and religious groups to advocate for public education for Choctaws. Significantly, Kelderman does not shy away from complex issues of race and class as he addresses the fact that Pitchlynn's Choctaw nation-building rhetoric "buried the social and cultural differences that existed" within the Choctaw Nation, including Pitchlynn's denial of the privileges of education to lower-class Choctaws or to the enslaved African Americans who lived in Choctaw Nation—more than 100 of whom were enslaved by Pitchlynn himself (147). Kelderman engages postcolonial theorists including Homi K. Bhabha and Frantz Fanon to examine the complexities of identity and agency in seemingly assimilationist or otherwise problematic colonized subjects such as Pitchlynn who, Kelderman asserts, "constructed the project of 'civilization' as a form of Choctaw exceptionalism vis-à-vis other Indian nations—a rhetoric of nation-building that hinged on a form of colonial mimicry" (152).

Followed by a brief Afterword, the fourth and penultimate chapter, "Rewriting the Native Diplomat: Community and Authority in Ojibwe Letters," reads Ojibwe literature from 1827 to 1860 to argue that published representations of Native leaders and councils became "a means to assert indigenous sovereignty within transnational cultures of diplomacy and philanthropy" (29). In the face of popular US culture that sanitized the figure of the Indian diplomat as "an emblem of American nationalism and empire," this chapter examines Ojibwe writing and oratory that "complicated the representation of tribal political authority in American literary culture, reasserting the political value of Indian diplomacy in a new publication landscape" (168). Kelderman reads poetry, autobiography, pamphlets, and speeches published by Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, Peter Jones, and George Copway who carved out a place in the American literature canon where the figure of the Native diplomat represented the political voice of Indigenous peoples.

Authorized Agents contributes to a trend in Native American literature scholarship that seeks to broaden the nineteenth-century canon, in part by reassessing what counts as literature. Perhaps due to the conventional understanding of an author as one who writes, authors such as William Apess and Elias Boudinot "have long stood in for the full breadth of Indian nations that bore the brunt of removal policy in the nineteenth century" (213). Consequently, with the notable exception of Black Hawk's as-told-to autobiography, the production projects of Native authors who created works through collaboration with translators, editors, transcribers, and other collaborators have been critically underrepresented. However, as Kelderman argues, the transcription of Indian oratory is a central part of the origin story of what we call Native American literature today. Therefore, *Authorized Agents* extends critical conversations about the

fundamentally collaborative nature of early Native American literatures in English, including work by scholars such as Andrew Newman and Birgit Brander Rasmussen, who examine how early Native American literatures hinged on collaborative forms of writing; Matt Cohen, who discusses Indian diplomacy as publication events characterized by cross-cultural interaction; Eric Cheyfitz, who explores collaboratively written American Indian literatures produced through a range of situations from cooperation to coercion; Arnold Krupat, who developed seminal work on collaboratively written American Indian autobiography; and Lisa Brooks, Phillip H. Round, and James H. Cox, who address the links between Indigenous publication and Indian diplomacy.

Kelderman's impressive first monograph deftly navigates the paradox of Native American literary representation during the era of Indian removal by recognizing the limitations of Native authors' anti-colonial agency and also asserting the power of their publication projects' literary representations of Indigenous peoples as political actors rather than pitiable victims or romanticized "noble savages." Kelderman engages organization theory's concept of a project to coin the term *indigenous publication projects*, "mediated forms of indigenous representation that are produced with non-Native collaborators, which take place in institutional and diplomatic networks but also intervene in them" to "construct indigenous counter-discourses within colonial scenes of interaction" and emphasize "the strategic agency of Native authors who navigated diplomatic publics within government and civil society" (12). In its assertion that agency "should not be seen as simply an abstract human capacity for action but as a negotiation between the structural and the situational," Kelderman's *Authorized Agents* is useful for understanding the significance of literary representation and agency of Native writers and orators in the context of settler colonialism (24).

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