FACING EAST, OR LOOKING OUTWARD AND INWARD

Steven W. Hackel

Daniel K. Richter. *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001. x + 317 pp. Illustrations, maps, and index. $26.00 (cloth); $18.95 (paper).

Daniel K. Richter has written a superb and illuminating history of Indian life in the lands east of the Mississippi River from the Indians' first encounters with Europeans in the late fifteenth century through their forced removal in the nineteenth century. This book marks a departure in scope from Richter's earlier works, which have focused largely on the Northeast during the colonial era. Here, Richter has given us a book that is multi-regional in scope and adept at describing the advance of the frontier in its many forms from the perspective of a wide range of Native communities. Thus, the volume's title, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America*, reflects the book's perspective and embodies its author's unproblematic assumption that history looks different depending upon where you sit. While the perspective of *Facing East from Indian Country* is clearly revisionist, Richter's acceptance, at least rhetorically, of the frontier as ultimately westward moving remains traditional. What makes this book essential for scholars of American Indian history as well as those of Early America is Richter's masterful synthesis of secondary materials, his careful presentation and interpretation of primary sources, and his ability to portray the struggles of various peoples against abstract forces without ever losing sight of the individual and human side of his story. Readers will quickly grasp why *Facing East* was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in history and was awarded the 2001–2002 Louis Gottschalk Prize of the American Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies.

Facing East divides the history of relations between Indians and Europeans east of the Mississippi into distinct chronological periods, each of which was characterized by a particular form of inter-cultural relations. In the sixteenth century, Indians in eastern North America came into contact with Europeans but interacted with them only occasionally. According to Richter, this limited contact did not redirect life in Indian country but rather accelerated trends already manifest in Native society, namely, the gradual collapse of chiefdoms in the Southeast and the steady coalescence in the Northeast of smaller

Reviews in American History 31 (2003) 184–191

groups into larger communities. Most scholars have written that diseases introduced into Indian country by Europeans precipitated these population movements, but Richter asserts that they first originated in an agricultural revolution and environmental changes that long predated the arrival of Europeans in North America (pp. 35–6).

For Richter, it was not until the seventeenth century that Indian communities were truly redirected by the arrival of Europeans. With the establishment of permanent colonies of European settlers in Indian country, the economic, ecological, and epidemiological forces that together initiated, in Jim Merrell's oft-quoted phrase, "the Indians' New World," transformed Native communities. Richter convincingly shows that in eastern North America, in this New World of heightened trade, disease, and environmental change, "people were the scarcest resource of all" (p. 62). The result, predictably, was war, but not war between Indians and European settlers over land, but among Indians themselves to acquire "the *human* assets needed to build and maintain a viable community" (p. 62).

Having described in detail the abstract and impersonal material forces that "constrained the seventeenth-century Native World," Richter turns to an analysis of several seventeenth-century individuals who sought, in their own way, to live with Europeans (p. 69). Here Richter is at his absolute best, illuminating in new ways three of the most familiar figures of early American Indian history: Pocahontas, Kateri Tekakwitha, and King Philip. In a wonderfully complex and innovative discussion, Richter argues that all three found a similar solution to the problems created by the introduction of new and potent material forces: a controlled, managed, and equitable interaction with Europeans "on shared regional patches of ground rather than arm's-length contact across distant frontiers" (pp. 108–9). This is not a regional middle ground negotiated between large rival groups so much as a personal one occupied by discrete individuals. Significantly, these three were not Nativists trying to reverse history—such leaders would emerge only later, once Indians had been truly colonized—but rather individuals trying to maintain a status quo that had allowed their people to live with Europeans. Pocahontas, through adoption and marriage, brought Jamestown "into the Powhatan political universe"; Tekakwitha, through her migration to Kahnawake "recreated Native ties of kin and community in the shadow of French Montreal"; and King Philip, through his "exploitation of economic and political relationships that Massasoit [King Philip's father] had cultivated with the English," sought to advance the wealth and status of the Wampanoags (p. 109). Ultimately, all three failed, undone as they were by forces beyond their control, yet through these three Richter demonstrates the complexity of Indian responses to European settlement and the extent to which Indians as

much as the material forces unleashed by Europeans fashioned a "New World."

Powhatans, Mohawks, and Wampanoags who lived after Pocahontas, Tekakwitha, and King Philip confronted a narrowing world delimited by increasingly powerful Europeans. Gradually, during the seventeenth century the "shared regional patches of ground" gave way, as Europeans laid claim to more Native lands, achieved military superiority over Native communities, and came to dictate the terms of cross-cultural trade. In this colonial world, Indian accommodation to European power became a necessity and largely the rule. Yet, even while they lived under European domination, Indians, according to Richter, resisted core changes by trying to adapt their "traditional ideals of human relationships based on reciprocity and mutual respect" to new circumstances (p. 111). This is not a new argument, but it is presented in *Facing East* with striking clarity and power. Richter's careful reading of Puritan transcriptions of Indian conversion narratives and English scribal records of Native diplomatic oratory captures the spoken and recorded words of Indians who lived through these years, and it reveals how Indians gave voice to their own cultural values even as they accommodated to European religious and political institutions and forms. Thus, while missionaries like John Eliot sought to lead Indian proselytes to testimonies rooted in "creedal belief" or "abstract faith," Natick men such as Monequassun emphasized in their conversion narratives the human connections they formed in the Praying Towns and their own sense that moving towards Christianity allowed them to extinguish the anger and transcend the discord that plagued their communities during the colonial era (p. 128). Similarly, while the English participated in elaborate protocols of Indian treaty councils to resolve specific pressing material issues, Mohawk political orators saw these ritualized gatherings as creating relationships between themselves and the English and as mobilizing European power rather than submitting to it.

While the accommodations of Indians and their communities brought relative peace to some Native groups in the late seventeenth century, Richter attributes a general peace in the Indian country of eastern North America to the great imperial realignment following King William's War (1689–1697) and Queen Anne's War ((1702–1713) and the lessons learned from the bloodshed in the decades between Metacom's War (1675–1677) and the Yamasee War (1715–1716). Richter argues that Indians throughout eastern North America adopted a "Modern Indian Politics" rooted in two beliefs: "direct military confrontation with European powers was suicidal" and "an accommodation that relied solely on a single European power was an almost equally certain path to extinction" (p. 164).

Scholars have long observed that Indians often sought to survive by keeping their options open and playing one imperial power off another. But

Richter complicates this story by suggesting just how much Indians and Europeans shared during the Long Peace of the eighteenth century. In the first decades of the eighteenth century, both Indians and Euroamericans were eager participants in the consumer revolution that remade much of British North America, as goods produced in Europe flooded into port cities and backwoods hamlets. During these decades of accelerating trade and irreversible incorporation into the world capitalist system, both Native and Euroamerican communities developed cleavages along class lines as well as deepening disparities of wealth. Native and Euroamerican societies were increasingly shaped by population movements that fostered ethnic and religious diversity. Yet, as Richter shows, for both Indians and Euroamericans, diversity bred neither toleration nor understanding: "Instead, diversity wrought an increasingly pervasive view that 'Indians' and 'Whites' were utterly different, and utterly incompatible, kinds of people who could never peacefully share the continent" (p. 180). The Long Peace, therefore, bred deadly animosities between Indians and Euroamericans. Ultimately, as a result, Indian and Euroamerican worlds collided rather than converged. For Richter, a crucial turning point in the history of Indians east of the Mississippi was the outbreak of the Seven Years' War and the defeat of France, which in turn led to the collapse of the "Modern Indian Politics," the persecution of Indians along the frontier, and the steady rise of Nativist leaders and Indian-haters like the Paxton Boys. Richter provides a dizzying and riveting tale, one in which the Revolutionary War and its horrific impact on American Indians appears almost as an anti-climax, given that the prosecution of the War for U.S. Independence and the drafting of the Treaty of Paris of 1783 were—at least in their destructiveness to Indian communities—predictable sequels to the Seven Years' War and the Treaty of Paris of 1763.

In composing this richly nuanced and thoroughly engrossing narrative, Richter has relied upon a massive accumulation of scholarship. For decades scholars from a number of related disciplines have been writing bits and pieces—as articles and books—of what now amounts to a New Indian History. In fashioning this new history, scholars have mined new sources of evidence, questioned old assumptions, and reexamined mountains of documents. Historians, ethnohistorians, and anthropologists have brought to this task a sensitivity about the limits of any examination rooted in non-Indian sources and a resolve to detect any Indian voices that may have gone unheard, buried under time's rubble or drowned out by ones more triumphant. Like emergency workers, these scholars have combed through the archives determined to leave no evidence behind that could further illuminate the Indian experience. And in a parallel development, scholars have been working diligently to improve our understanding of the regions of North America colonized and settled by Spain and France.

Now, with great success, scholars are attempting to synthesize this new work, and the result is a fuller picture of how Indians experienced European exploration and expansion and a greater integration of Indian history into the larger narratives of the colonial era and the formation of the United States. In the past few years alone, in addition to Richter's *Facing East*, two other major overviews of early American Indian History have appeared: Colin G. Calloway's *New Worlds For All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America* (1997), and Karen O. Kupperman's *Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America* (2001). Like *New Worlds For All* and *Indians and English*, *Facing East* stands as a monument to the work of recent decades on Indian history and early America and a leading scholar's ability to make sense of it all.[1]

Synthetic studies reflect the current state of the historiography, and like the scholarship upon which it draws, the sections of *Facing East* that describe Indian-Spanish relations in the colonial Southeast are less developed than those concerning areas settled by France or England. Richter at times seems content to let Hernando de Soto's cruel rampage through the Southeast stand as representative of Spanish policies towards Indians. He gives a disproportionately small amount of attention to the Franciscan missions of colonial Florida, institutions that were arguably more important to his story than the wanderings of the cruel conquistador. Richter provides only a quick sense of the geographic breadth of the Spanish missions of Florida and the number of Indians Franciscans counted in them. He does not take us inside those communities to explore the motivations of any of the thousands of Indians who lived in and around them from their establishment in the 1570s through their destruction in the early 1700s.[2] Rather Richter observes that the Catholic missions of Florida were "broadly similar to the praying towns of New England and the *reserves* of New France," communities that Richter has so artfully described through the experiences of Tekakwitha and Monequassun (p. 161). While Richter mentions the creation of a "Republic of Indians" in New Spain and correctly observes that it initially kept Indians segregated institutionally within colonial society, he misses a larger point: the Republic of Indians granted Indians rights and obligations and familiarized them with Spanish religion, language, and law, and therefore it allowed for their eventual assimilation into the larger Spanish colonial society.

Richter's quick treatment of Florida and Spanish colonial systems matters, as does his underemphasizing of the fact that both French and Spanish colonial societies were by most measures far more inclusive of Indians than were the English. In deciding not to dwell on the inclusive nature of these other forms of colonization, Richter misses the opportunity to further highlight the tragedy that befell Indian peoples when England triumphed in the Seven Years' War. Richter rightly argues that this English imperial dominance of eastern North America undercut the "Modern Indian Politics" of the first

half of the eighteenth century, but he could have made more of the fact that after the conclusion of the Seven Years' War Indians in eastern North America were forced to confront a European power that, unlike France or Spain, had no real experience in or commitment to the incorporation of Natives into colonial society. For Indians not already overrun by settlers, the ultimate result of this Anglo-American ascendance in eastern North America would be the policy that came to be known as Indian Removal, which Richter suggests was tantamount to ethnic cleansing.

Facing East not only shows the strengths and weaknesses of much of the recent scholarship on Indian life in early America, but its chapters highlight the unevenness and spottiness of documentary records relating to Indian life in early America. Moreover, its opening chapter shows Richter's willingness to go beyond the limitations of a fragmentary documentary record to create an Indian perspective on European exploration of eastern North America. When Richter exhausts his evidence, when his sources run dry or become mute, when they fail to take him where he wants to lead his readers, he calls upon his own imagination and embarks on a well-informed and cautious speculation about how Indians who left no surviving records may have perceived and understood their early interactions with Europeans. To his great credit, Richter is clear about his method, writing early in Chapter 1—aptly titled "Imagining a Distant New World"—that "Documentary evidence illuminates the European cast of characters [at the moment of first contact], yet only imagination can put Indians in the foreground of these scenes" (p. 13). Thus, with that explanation, Richter proceeds to provide "imagined" scenes inspired by real historical events: the reaction of Newfoundland Natives to John Cabot and his crew's theft of their animal traps in 1497; the horror of a group of Mid-Atlantic Indians as they watch Giovanni de Verrazano's men abduct one of their children in 1524; and the Montaignais' sense that early French explorers' sea biscuits and wine were in fact blocks of wood and human blood. Richter also places us alongside de Soto as he treks through the Southeast and with Jacques Cartier as he explores the Gaspé Peninsula. Finally, at the end of Chapter 1, Richter returns us to Stadacona, Cofitachequi, and Cahokia in 1570, decades after the first European incursions into Indian country, and we see how Indians may have confronted a landscape now dead and depopulated.

Richter's creative reenactments of these important moments of early contact are believable because he has provided a context that allows the reader to grasp the outlines of Native culture and life during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But clearly, Richter has crossed a line, much in the same way that John Demos and Inga Clendinnen have at times called upon their own informed imaginations to offer vivid and evocative renderings of the inner and emotional worlds of Natives.[3] While Richter succeeds brilliantly

with his creative reenactments, his is a technique not to be emulated widely. For, in the hands of the less skilled and the less restrained, imaginative speculation can produce the worst type of Indian history, the brand that a generation of scholars like Richter has worked so assiduously to displace, one in which Indians and their actions are nothing more than a reflection of the authors' or observers' fears and obsessions. Fortunately, Richter has not taken us back to this earlier historiography; rather, he has set a new standard for synthetic studies of the history of Indians of eastern North America, one in which the contours of life are so well articulated that one can readily imagine how these earliest encounters between Indians and Europeans unfolded and may have been understood by Indians. Moreover, while Richter has, it seems, written a work whose opening chapter departs in important and noteworthy ways from standard historical methods, all subsequent chapters and the Epilogue join extensive excerpts from primary sources with careful scholarly contextualization and elaboration. Both Richter and Harvard University Press are to be praised for the unusual extent to which *Facing East* presents so many lengthy quotations and extensive excerpts from the documentary record.

As Richter suggests, *Facing East*, in attempting "to capture something of how the past might have looked if we could observe it from Indian country," is very much his attempt to reorient "our perspective on the continent's past" (p. 9). Richter achieves this reorientation by placing us early in his study within Indian communities that were themselves gradually incorporated into the Spanish, French, or English realms. However, because it is so skillfully managed, that exercise in reorientation reveals the incongruity of Richter's acceptance of what he readily admits towards the end of his book is a problematic conceptualization of the American colonial frontier as a line or process that moved east to west. Richter's narrative shows that material forces and colonial and imperial pressures impinged upon Indians from all directions and that Indians in the interior of eastern North America during the early decades of the eighteenth century found security only because they were surrounded by a "ring of competing imperial powers" (p. 187). As Richter shows, it was only after the English victory in the Seven Years' War that there appeared in North America a frontier line that seemed to advance east to west, which in turn gave rise to the erroneous belief among Americans that it was first settlers from Europe and then pioneers from the United States who pushed the frontier and Indians westwards. Richter's ready evocation of this Anglocentric conceptualization of the frontier, therefore, seems at odds with his multi-national, polyvocal, and kaleidoscopic rendering of early America. For, as Richter shows, during the colonial period, Indians, no matter where they resided, faced not just eastward, but rather increasingly outward in all directions, in anticipation of new changes and challenges. And ultimately, as Richter so memorably reveals, Indians often looked inward, as they

sought ways to incorporate these changes and challenges into older worlds of understanding.

Steven W. Hackel, Department of History, Oregon State University, is the author of *Children of Coyote, Missionaries of St. Francis: Indian-Spanish Relations in Colonial California, 1769–1850* (forthcoming from Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture) and is currently working on a biography of Father Junípero Serra, the Franciscan missionary who oversaw the creation of Catholic missions in Alta California.

1. Alan Taylor's *American Colonies* (2001) is the most ambitious and comprehensive synthetic overview of North American colonial history to date taking as its focus the formation of colonies and empires in North America. Natives are indispensable to Taylor's narrative, but, unlike in Calloway's, Kupperman's, or Richter's, they do not always occupy center stage. What sets *Facing East* apart from other synthetic studies of Early American Indian history is its use of sources, its chronological organization, and its focus on relations between Indians and the English, French, and Spanish in the area east of the Mississippi.

2. Particularly illuminating studies of Spanish Florida and its Franciscan missions are Amy Turner Bushnell, *Situado and Sabana: Spain's Support System for the Presidio and Mission Provinces of Florida* (1994); Bushnell, "Patricio De Hinachuba: Defender of the Word of God, The Crown of the King, and the Little Children of Ivitachuco," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 3:3 (1979): 1–21; John E. Worth, *The Struggle for the Georgia Coast: An Eighteenth Century Spanish Retrospective on Guale and Mocama* (1995); John H. Hann, *Apalachee: The Land between the Rivers* (1988); and Jerald L. Milanich, *Laboring in the Fields of the Lord: Spanish Missions and Southeastern Indians* (1999).

3. John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family History from Early America* (1994); Inga Clendinnen, *True Stories* (2000).