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REVIEWS

Catlin and His Contemporaries: The Politics of Patronage. By Brian W. Dippie. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990. 620 pages. $50.00 cloth.

Catlin and His Contemporaries: The Politics of Patronage by Brian Dippie is a well-researched historical manuscript about two men's attempts to receive United States government funding for their arts and humanities projects from 1830 to 1873. The lengthy manuscript details the efforts of George Catlin and Henry Schoolcraft to acquire federal funding for their Indian projects.

Catlin requested money for the purchase of his Indian gallery of traditional tribal paintings. Schoolcraft sought federal funding to sustain a writing and publishing career that would make him the "Indian historian" to the Congress. This book outlines in great detail their struggles with each other, other Indian experts of the time, the citizens of the United States and Europe, and the United States Congress to find the financial and political support they sought.

As I read the book, I could not help but draw a parallel to today's art of grant writing and lobbying for federal monies. Many of Schoolcraft's skills would have made him a winning grant writer and lobbyist, and Catlin a loser. Dippie presents Schoolcraft as being at the right place at the right time, knowing how to approach Congress, understanding how Congress worked, and utilizing his previous knowledge of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to obtain funds. Catlin appeared to be the opposite of Schoolcraft. His requests for funding were always ill-timed, and his

outspokenness, especially about government Indian policy, conflicted with the Congress. He lacked knowledge about politics and lobbying and never succeeded in getting his proposal funded.

George Catlin was trained as a lawyer but rejected that profession to become an artist. He attempted to earn his living and support his family as a portrait painter, but he was not very successful. Sometime in 1832, he decided that he would become a painter of Indian portraits and present his work in an Indian gallery. From 1832 to 1836, Catlin traveled throughout Indian Country and painted what he witnessed. He recorded the faces of famous Indian leaders, their traditional dress, and their ceremonies. He visited Indian camps on the frontier, attended treaty signings, and watched traditional rituals. Everything he saw, he attempted to record in sketches that would later become paintings for his Indian gallery. Because Catlin was a romanticist and an idealist about the Indian peoples, he often romanticized his paintings to help the viewer see these noble people as he saw them. He left a historical record of many now-extinct tribes and portrayed them as they were in their natural surroundings.

Henry Schoolcraft, a government "lifer," was an Indian agent at Mackinau in 1833 for the Wisconsin Territory. He married an Indian woman who had been educated in Europe. He helped the government with the signing of numerous treaties for tribal cessions of Ottawa and Chippewa land. He was a practical man who felt that all Indians should become part of the melting pot in the United States, learn English, and adapt to the life-style of the dominant society. As an Indian agent, he had recorded and classified the languages, antiquities, and customs of the Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa tribes. In 1840, he was dismissed from his post as an Indian agent because of a change in political parties. Finding himself suddenly without a job, he decided to use all the information he had gained in Indian service to write a "Cyclopedia about the History of Indian Tribes." Now began his search for patronage.

Dippie's verbal sketches of these men illustrate several common threads between them. Both men established personal financial goals that involved the American Indians of the 1830s. One painted them as noble men and women; the other wrote "facts" as he perceived them about Indian tribes. Both men continued to seek private and federal funding for their work throughout their lives. Both looked to England as a source of patronage.

One succeeded in having the United States government publish six volumes of his Indian history. The other failed in his attempt to have his paintings bought by any government.

Catlin remained in Europe for thirty-one years. He exhibited his collection of Indian paintings and artifacts in both England and France, was a visitor to the courts of both countries, and had personal friends among the royalty. He sponsored groups of Indian dancers and entertained audiences with stories of his experiences among various Indian tribes. He traveled to South America to paint the Indians and added these paintings to his gallery. He tried many schemes and many times to sell his gallery of Indian paintings and artifacts to European governments as well as to the United States government but failed each time. All of his efforts left him a poor man with many debts. Catlin was a step away from debtors' prison when his collection finally was bought by a wealthy patron of the arts, Joseph Harrison of Philadelphia. Harrison bought the Indian gallery at a debtors' auction to satisfy Catlin's English debts and shipped the gallery back to the United States for storage.

All of Catlin's grand schemes for financial success with his Indian gallery failed. When he returned to the United States in 1871, he made one last attempt to sell the United States government his Indian gallery. He planned to use the money to pay his debts to Harrison and then place all of his paintings in the National Gallery of Art. Again the congressional bill failed, and Catlin died a frustrated man in 1872. He did not live to see his Indian gallery given to the Smithsonian Museum by Sarah Harrison in 1879.

Dippie presents Schoolcraft as an example of success in the politics of patronage. Because Schoolcraft was a government employee, he knew how the government, especially the Bureau of Indian Affairs, worked. He used that knowledge to secure a small grant from the bureau in 1847. He wrote a proposal suggesting that he collect data, census information, and statistics about the Indian tribes and then prepare a written report for Congress. He used this opportunity to develop 348 needs assessment questionnaires that he sent to all the Indian agents and demanded their cooperation in providing the information. Of course, the material collected from this assessment became the data for his congressional reports and later his book. Schoolcraft used his needs assessment technique to provide statistical data to the Congress for ten years. Each year he was able to obtain sufficient funding from

Congress to continue his project and support his family. Schoolcraft also had the skills needed to block other people like Catlin, Bartlett, Squier, Stanley, and Eastman from receiving federal money for their arts and humanities projects.

Using his patronage skills, Schoolcraft was successful in having the government publish for him a six-volume series of statistics and census information concerning the Indian tribes of the United States. He was skillful enough to make the project last for ten years, from 1848 to 1858. In contrast, neither Catlin nor his family were able to convince the United States government to buy his two collections of North and South American Indian paintings. He and his family never received government support.

Dippie includes material about several other writers, researchers, and artists of this period who concentrated on Indian studies. Each person was involved with either Catlin or Schoolcraft as a friend or foe or both in the patronage game. Eastman, an army officer, illustrated at least three of Schoolcraft's volumes and was considered by some critics a better painter than Catlin. Stanley, another painter of Indian people, was inspired by Catlin and traveled the Northwest to paint Indians. He put together a gallery, loaned it to the Smithsonian and tried to sell the gallery to the United States government. Before he was successful, all of his paintings were burned in the Smithsonian fire of 1865. Bartlett requested government funds to publish his research, survey, and maps of the Southwest as they related to the Indian tribes of Arizona, New Mexico, and California. Squier, a journalist, approached Indian studies through archeology and wanted government support to publish his findings. It appears that both Catlin and Schoolcraft saw these men as threats to them and as obstacles in obtaining their personal goals of patronage.

Dippie has written a well-researched, scholarly manuscript about government support for the arts and humanities in the 1800s. He did his homework carefully and traced his theme of politics and patronage through many primary sources. He approaches his subject in chronological order, which helps the reader move through the masses of information. He uses Catlin and Schoolcraft as his major characters and demonstrates his theme of patronage through their actions. His clever use of these two historical people serves as the thread to connect all the other people, dates, and events he presents in his lengthy manuscript.

One of the major strengths of this book is the excellent reference materials presented in the notes and bibliography. Many times I found myself turning to the back of the book to look for the original sources and noting that I wanted to read the sources to obtain more information about a specific event. Because of Dippie's careful research, other researchers in Indian studies will be able to use this book and many of the references for other studies.

Leona M. Zastrow
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Educational Planning for Individuals and Communities

Mother Earth Spirituality: Native American Paths to Healing Ourselves and Our World. By Ed McGaa, Eagle Man. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990. 232 pages. $14.95 paper.

Blending elements of the modern ecological movement with traditional Plains Indian beliefs and practices, McGaa has produced what will be appreciated as a religious primer or guide to worship. "Religion for the Twenty-first Century" might then be an additional subtitle for a volume testifying to a religious movement that is alive, creative, and thriving.

So powerful has been the public presence of Christian missionizing that the casual observer may overlook the presence in the West (Euro-America) of alternate traditions, contrary to Christianity and critical of its morality. In this alternate perspective, American Indians (and kindred peoples) become exemplary; their very existence testifies to the possibility of a mode of life embodying the truly human (non-Christian) virtues. In this fashion, American Indians become a "chosen people" who will guide the confused, self- and planet-destructive people of the West into a new world (superior to the New Jerusalem).

McGaa's text is divided into four major parts, titled "Water," "Earth," "Air," and "Fire." That four-part division was first enunciated by Empedocles, a fifth-century (B.C.E.) Greek philosopher. The book's use of this division is testimony to the rapprochement that has been developing between Indian and non-Christian Western traditions. (True, the four-part division was incorporated within the cosmological system of medieval