

BOOK REVIEWS

*The Name of War:
King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity*

Jill Lepore

New York: Knopf, 1999. 337 pp. Illus., maps. \$42 cloth.

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To question the carnivalesque mood is a graceless role ... But the alternative is to participate in the postmodern carnival without understanding its rules, implications, origins or consequences ... understand the rules governing the exchange between the modern West, the postmodern West, and the versions of the primitive they have created or endorsed ... to make impossible innocent reenactments of the dramas of us and them that have been staged and restaged in the modern West's encounters with primitive Others.

Marianna Torgovnick
*Gone Primitive: Savage
Intellects, Modern Lives*
(1990, 41)

I PUT OFF READING Jill Lepore's much acclaimed *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity*, even though I had heard it was well written, which it is. I was afraid that this would be an "innocent reenactment." Lepore, in her telling of 'Indian wars,' is turning blood into ink and delving into the rules that governed this exchange. It is a study of King Philip's (Metacom's) War, fought by Wampanoag,

Nipmuck, Pocumtuks, Narragansetts, and Abenaki Algonquians against New Englanders allied with Pequot, Mohegan, and Mohawks. The war was triggered in 1675 after three Wampanoag men were hung for the death of John Sassamon. Metacom was killed in 1676, and there were a number of deaths on both sides, along with loss of property. Lepore's writing reflects a new school of revisionist history, and, characteristically, it reads well as literature.

What made me hesitate to read this book was its topic: war. However, spring was beginning to take hold along the Fraser River, so I felt I was ready. Given the war waging in Kosovo and the peace treaty making in British Columbia, *The Name of War* is relevant and can tell us something about our postmodern condition. It is "a story about war, and how people write about it" (ix). Lepore's retelling of the conflicts between Algonquians and New Englanders, through analysis of published accounts and literary documents created by New Englanders (the story being recast, for instance, in the forms of theatre and monuments), is about more than war stories. It is also about the negotiations of colonization, the resulting uneven clash of cultures, uncertain com-

petition between new/old/hybrid, and fears released by transmuting identities. The bloody and wordy events carry forward and reverberate. "Wounds and words – the injuries and their interpretations cannot be separated, the acts of war generate acts of narration, and that both types of acts are often joined in a common purpose: defining the geographical, political, cultural, and sometimes racial and national boundaries between people (x).

But what does American history have to say to our postmodern identities this side of the Rockies? There is a lingering myth that British Columbia coastal history and identity did not begin until after 1750 (with the Russians) or after 1793 (with Captain Vancouver) and that the Interior was not discovered until after Simon Fraser's party charted it in 1806. If this is erasure then it is attributable, perhaps, to a history without ears for First Nations orality. Native history has been silenced by an erected "western stage front" that presents an idyllic and romantic past and that is privileged by a history defined almost exclusively through colonial filters. One aspect of BC identity is war, but what do we know of war in British Columbia? Compared to what has been written concerning the armed conflicts in eastern Canada, such as the Iroquois and Huron wars (now made famous by the movie *Black Robe*), and Métis warfare at Red River and Batoche, little has been written on what occurred in British Columbia. Father Adrian Gabriel Morice (in *Historical Essays on British Columbia*, ed. J. Friesen and H.K. Ralston, 1976, 9) wrote that at Chinlac (*Chunlac*), at the confluence of the Stuart and Nechako Rivers, in 1745 the Chilcotin raided the Lower Carrier camp. Khadintel (*Canadiendell*), chief at

Chunlac, avenged the attacks by Khalhpan (*Khalhban*). War stories tell much about a people. A secondary effect of the treaty process in British Columbia is compiling documentation that shows that traditional land use was based equally on access to rich resources and on war.

Lepore's subject is post-contact cross-cultural conflicts:

The colonists' dilemma between peacefully degenerating into barbarians or fighting like savages: wage the war, and win it, by whatever means necessary, and then write about it, to win it again. The first would be a victory of wounds, the second a victory of words. Even if they inflicted on the Indians as much cruelty as the Spanish had, New Englanders could distance themselves from that cruelty in the words they used to write about it, the same way the English had when writing about the Irish. (11)

If the roots of war creep somewhere between justice and tyranny, then its fruits fall somewhere between history and myth. *The Name of War* is about a specific war, demarcated by time and space, but it is also more than that because it is a retelling of the roots of colonial wars and American identity. The face of war remains human. A slightly critical gaze into the eyes of the past reveals our own eyes. The voice of war holds the same resonance over 300 years later. Lepore's point is that the language of war is constantly shifting, as the similarities/differences of aggressors and victims are negotiated. According to Lepore, "words are at the center of the encounter between the Old World and the New, between the European 'self' and the Native American 'other'" (xiv). The

security of American identity faltered amidst the colonizing English (more civilized than the Spanish), the English who were afraid of becoming savage (i.e., becoming Indian), the formation of an American identity that took into account an Indian past, and an American identity that was a product of the melting pot.

This skillfully structured war of words is set in four parts. In the first part of the book, Lepore exposes the language of war, focusing on the dominant methodological practices of linguistics and documents. The cultural roots, tensions, and literary conventions of war are attacked. Writings about Philip's war flourished in the eight years after 1675 (twenty-one published accounts, not one of which was Algonquian). Resistance has produced alternative versions of the war.

In part two, Philip's war is examined as mostly English misinterpretations of Algonquians. As well as Lepore's explanations for Algonquian defences against incursions of colonialism, I would posit that Algonquians were equally provoked by English materialism and stinginess. The war is explained through various combinations of religion, politics, and language, and it begs the unanswered question: was this a holy war? Read and you can be the judge.

Part three introduces bondage into the discussion of war. To the already diverse collection of source materials is added the captivity narrative. What it meant to be "captivated" by Algonquians depended on gender and race. Transfixed by war are, among other things, social categories and boundaries; for instance, "praying Indians" became "preying Indians." Both English and Algonquian paranoia treated such cultural mediators as Algonquians who could read and write English as bridges

to be burned, prisoners to be enslaved. Interestingly, Englishmen who could read and write Algonquian were not treated this way, perhaps because their social status was not suspect.

The final part of the book throws back the veils of war to reveal issues regarding memory, reminding readers that battles, victories, and defeats are not simply products of a moment in time but continue to resonate in each re-telling. War stories are recast for/by conquest cultures. Stories, like objects of war, are worn to adorn and denigrate.

If Algonquians have the rich oral tradition of King Philip, then Lepore has not tapped more than a pedestrian view of how they saw things. Reading Lepore with the blue sky in Hope (city of peace), British Columbia, gave me the strength to seek some meaning in this history for here and now. Overall, the writing in this book wavers between history and prose, though it is not as extreme as what Linda Hutcheon, in *The Politics of Postmodernism* (1989), defines as historiographic metafiction (e.g., Rudy Wiebe's *The Temptations of Big Bear* [1973]). An interesting rhetorical device used by Lepore is repetition. She tells a story, for instance about the captivity and return of Mary Rowlandson and the amnesty of James Printer, from several different perspectives. This repetition serves to reinforce her arguments from multiple perspectives, which avoids becoming too much of an annoyance. While Philip's War is placed into a larger legal context, with a sketch of the international legal debates of de Las Casas and Sepúlveda, North American politics are unaccounted for. Reading New England history could have been made stronger, for instance, by at least referencing what was happening in New France, which would have been readily available to Lepore in the *Jesuit Relations*.

With impressive endnotes, *The Name of War and the Origins of American*

Identity is well worth reading. The subject matter is both relevant and interesting.

The True Spirit and Original Intent of Treaty 7

Treaty 7 Elders and Tribal Council with Walter Hildebrandt,
Sarah Carter, and Dorothy First Rider

Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press,
1996. 408 pp. Illus, maps. \$19.95 paper.

By Kenichi Matsui

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IN 1991, THE TREATY 7 TRIBAL Council of southern Alberta began extensively collecting elders' oral accounts concerning their ancestors' "true spirit and original intent" in signing the 1877 agreement. Adding interviews of elders collected in the 1970s, this significant effort enabled *The True Spirit and Original Intent of Treaty 7* to provide the voices of nearly ninety elders from the Blood Tribe and the Peigan, Siksika (Blackfoot), Stoney, and Tsuu T'ina (Sarcee) Nations. The elders of these First Nations have passed on the memories of the treaty-making process to their people for more than a century. Now they have decided to publicize their voices for the education of their youths and non-Indian people. The elders and the tribal council believe that the elders' accounts should be an important part of our understanding of treaty-making history in Canada.

In the book, the elders' voices are fragmented according to topics, but they all persistently indicate that their ancestors never meant to surrender their land by signing Treaty 7. The elders contend that it was a sacred alliance of peace with the government

of Canada and other First Nations peoples. The Blackfoot call Treaty 7 *istsist aohkotspi*, translated in this book as "the time when we made a sacred alliance" (4). The Native leaders who signed the treaty believed that their people would benefit politically and economically from making peace because it would secure their physical, cultural, and spiritual survival after the disappearance of the buffalo. It would also bring alternative ways of life with new farming technology, medical care, and education. They initially welcomed the newcomers, being willing to share the land for harvesting crops. However, as Red Crow, a prominent leader at the treaty negotiation, stated clearly to government commissioners in 1877, the land was not for sale because "it was put there by the Creator for the Indians' benefit and use" (114).

The testimony of the elders also indicates that poor communication led the First Nations and the government to interpret the treaty differently. The problems translators had in attempting to explain the Western legal concept of land surrender made it more difficult for First Nations peoples to comprehend what treaty commis-