

*Linthead Stomp: The Creation of Country Music in the Piedmont South.* By Patrick Huber. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008. Pp. xxi, 401.)

In the past ten years, country music scholarship has focused on reassessing the Malone thesis; that is, revising the narrative of country music first published by Bill C. Malone, in his iconic *Country Music U.S.A.* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968). Patrick Huber's *Linthead Stomp* follows that wealth of books. Contrary to Malone, Huber claims a greater influence for Piedmont musicians on country music in general. He also asserts that the music was a product not of rural areas (although rural cultures would still influence the sound of the music), but of the industrial mechanisms that dominated the South in the 1920s. Because Piedmont textile mills dominated the industrial South, Huber argues, the music produced there became the core of what were early versions of country music, and was a profound influence on the country music that later followed.

Country music scholars typically focus on biographies of musicians to identify the personal and cultural roots that made the music possible. Huber is no different, focusing on the biographies of five musicians: Fiddlin' John Carson, Charlie Poole, Dave McCarn, and Howard and Dorsey Dixon (the Dixon Brothers). To document those musicians, he moves beyond liner notes and discographies to examine a substantial number of newspapers, private collections (most notably Archie Green's interviews with Dorsey Dixon), government documentaries (census records are a core part of the book), and a substantial number of oral interviews with surviving relatives (Dave McCarn's son, Johnny, for instance) to form his conclusions.

Those conclusions may surprise some. Contrary to Carson autobiographer Gene Wiggins (*Fiddlin' Georgia Crazy*, [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987]), who portrayed Fiddlin' John as a mountaineer who stumbled on fame and fortune, for example, Huber argues that Carson consciously used modern industrial practices, especially new media like radio and records, to build his career, making him more of a musical entrepreneur than a hillbilly just off the farm. Charlie Poole's ability to perform a broad range of musical styles newly available allowed him to integrate those sounds with his experiences in the textile mills or, more accurately, his desire to avoid them. "Cotton Mill Colics," a specialty of Dave McCarn's, entered into the musical protest vernacular that followed textile workers out on strike in the 1920s and 1930s while Dorsey Dixon's tragic ballads, such as "Wreck on the Highway," questioned whether this new world of music, media, and

mills was worth the cost to families and religious values, an ironic song for a group of men who all struggled with depression, alcoholism, and unemployment.

If one were to read only the text, one might question Huber's 1942 date for the end of Piedmont influence on hillbilly music. Proof for that assertion lies more in his substantial appendix A where Huber identifies 128 artists who were both textile mill workers and musicians between 1923 and 1942. The lack of gender analysis in the book, except for one section in the McCarn chapter where Huber probes his lyrical analysis of flapper values, is troubling. His focus on men without understanding how music made them manly is one flaw in the book. Another is the lack of discussion about women, especially Moonshine Kate who was Fiddlin' John Carson's daughter, and their role in this new musical world. Still, *Linthead Stomp* is a good book that should be a part of any book collection, particularly for Huber's focus on the Southern industrial relations that made the music possible.

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*Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography, 1827-1863.* By Maureen Konkle. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004. Pp. viii, 367.)

A paradigm shift in Native American Studies, Maureen Konkle's *Writing Indian Nations* focuses on Native agency while attending to treaties and court opinions. Although provocative, its treatment of law, most notably the Supreme Court opinion *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, succumbs to generalizations that dispense with Native resistance. Konkle casts John Marshall as a rhetorician having his cake and eating it too, and as a mouthpiece for the United States (17, 18). Marshall is no doubt the former, but to accuse him of the latter is to assume too much. Konkle criticizes Marshall for making the "double-judgment" to concede Native autonomy while insisting on racial difference, and for resituating Cherokees in anachronistic moments in history (17-18). Her point is well-taken. She fails to cite Marshall, however, suggesting a lack of close reading and reliance on postcolonial talking-points; she also fails to show how Marshall "made use of sympathy . . . to further ensure the legitimacy of the United States' claim to authority over land" (18). "If the Courts were permitted to indulge their sympathies," Marshall says, "a case better calculated to excite them can surely be imagined" (*Cherokee*

*Nation*, 15). The conditional phrase “if the Courts were permitted to indulge their sympathies” implies that courts are not permitted to do so. Rather than employ sympathy, Marshall eschews it.

*Cherokee Nation* reached the court on a Cherokee motion for a subpoena and an injunction restraining Georgia from enforcing laws within Cherokee territory. Konkle never mentions the motion or the relief Cherokees sought. Her claim that “Cherokees hired William Wirt . . . to force the Court to come to a decision” implies non-Natives did all the work. However, a bill signed by John Ross, arguing that Cherokees are a distinct state, suggests otherwise. This bill maintains that Cherokees “were the occupants and owners of the territory in which they now reside, before the first approach of the white men of Europe” (*Cherokee Nation*, 3). It chronicles U.S.-Cherokee relations, particularly as they pertain to land ownership, and contests Eurocentric rights of discovery whereby explorers claimed entitlement to Indian lands. It highlights the absurdity of these “rights” and almost ridicules explorers for “look[ing] upon the face of that coast without even landing on any part of it” (*ibid.*, 4). The implication: explorers were too cowardly to chance the shoreline but haughty enough to declare themselves masters over it.

Konkle misses an opportunity to show Cherokees appropriating European historical narratives, since she never mentions this bill. Not until the end of her discussion of *Cherokee Nation* does Konkle acknowledge the court’s holding that it had no jurisdiction as “Cherokees were neither foreigners nor citizens” (22). She does not expound on this holding except to say, “Despite the importance of *Cherokee Nation* in succeeding years, the immediate effect of the ruling was only to delay a decision on the status of Native[s]” (21-22). Yet this holding is momentous. Marshall’s claim of lack of jurisdiction is bound up with his claim that Indians constitute domestic dependent nations, which is, perhaps, bound up with colonizing ideology.

Konkle never addresses how Marshall “punts” by interpreting Article III, Section II of the Constitution such that the term “domestic dependent nations” appears in dicta. Konkle should note legal rationales for the label “domestic dependent nations” and not rely on trite statements like this: “The chief justice’s concept of ‘domestic dependent nations’ . . . attempted to reconcile the principles of U.S. government with the necessity of colonial control” (20). Konkle is right about what is happening on a grand scale, but a more scrupulous analysis would attend to what is happening on a micro scale—to what is happening, for instance, to the Cherokees’ bill.

This bill asserts that “great progress has been made by the Cherokees in civilization” and that Cherokees “have established a constitution and form of government, the leading features of which they have borrowed from . . . the United States” (*Cherokee Nation*, 3). Why underscore American standards of civilization? Are the Cherokees playing into the myth of the dying Native? They allege that if the court does not interfere, they must “surrender their lands in exchange for others in the western wilds of this continent, which would be to seal, at once, the doom of their civilization, Christianity, and national existence,” “surrender their national sovereignty, their property, rights and liberties, guaranteed as these now are by so many treaties,” or “arm themselves in defense of these sacred rights, and fall sword in hand, on the graves of their fathers” (*ibid.*, 10-11). The Cherokees might be, to borrow a term from Henry Louis Gates, “signifyin’.” Konkle ignores this possibility and focuses on Marshall’s oppression, implying that Cherokees were pathetic, passive recipients of U.S. coercion when really they engaged in aggressive legal battles that exposed inconsistencies in Western historiography.

To be fair, Konkle considers Cherokee agency elsewhere; she examines Elias Boudinot as a “Cherokee spokesman” who insists that Natives “be understood as authoritative about their own knowledge” (50). She shows how Boudinot, like the author(s) of the Cherokee bill, “reject[ed] racial difference,” claimed “history and therefore political equality for [Natives],” and refuted “whites’ knowledge about [Natives] as politically self-interested misrepresentations” (51). Konkle overlooks Cherokee agency in her treatment of *Cherokee Nation* but seems committed to it here. This disjuncture is ironic and distracting in light of her overall argument—that historians have underestimated Cherokee resistance.

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*American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier.* By Patrick Griffin. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007. Pp. 368.)

Patrick Griffin’s *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier* challenges us to reconsider the parameters of the American Revolution. In this study of the American backcountry, Griffin ably demonstrates that between 1763 and 1795 Ohio Valley settlers contended with Indians and British or American governments over the meanings of sovereignty and social obligation. Theirs was a violent and chaotic Hobbesian world,