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Alden T. Vaughan. *Transatlantic Encounters: American Indians in Britain, 1500-1776*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. xxv + 337 pp. \$50.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-86594-4.

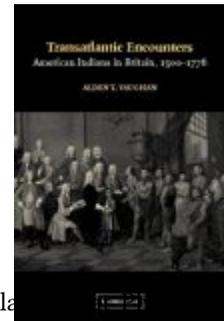
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Once a much-neglected subject of Atlantic history, North American Indians are receiving a recent spate of detailed studies from transatlantic perspectives.[1] Alden T. Vaughan's latest work, *Transatlantic Encounters: American Indians in Britain, 1500-1776*, focuses on those North American natives who journeyed to Britain before American independence. Although they were few in number (approximately 175 according to Vaughan) in comparison to the Europeans and Africans who traveled in the opposite direction or, for that matter, the Indians who traveled to Spain, Portugal, or France during the same period, Vaughan argues these men and women deserve more attention than historians have hitherto given them. He is right, and his case comes via a carefully constructed narrative of those Indian experiences that could be recovered.

The subject of American Indian visits is, of course, not new. Within the broadly interpreted field of the history of Britain and its empire, the visitors appear with some frequency. Key groups, such as the Iroquois visitors of 1710 or the Cherokee delegation of 1762, have received particular attention as opportunities to explore British imperial impulses at specific points in time.[2] The lives of some visitors, such as Samson Occom and Joseph Brant, have received book-length biographies. The most famous visitor, Pocahontas, has even endured a Disney movie. In consequence, the idea of American Indians as active participants in British history is becoming increasingly mainstream. Even that definer of orthodoxy, the new *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, includes individual biographies of at least a dozen American Indians. One of Vaughan's leading contributions is that he puts all of these visits between two covers, and so one finds Manteo, the Croatan who aided the colony at Roanoke, alongside the better documented and more celebrated Tisquan-

tum (Squanto), who played a similar role in the Plymouth Colony. But even this is not especially new. As Vaughan notes (p. xv), Carolyn Thomas Foreman attempted the same in *Indians Abroad* (1943)—although Vaughan's effort is easily the superior of the two in terms of comprehensiveness and analysis. Yet any lacking uniqueness should not deter scholars from diving into Vaughan's latest work or instructors from assigning relevant chapters to college students. Clearly written and benefiting from Vaughan's seasoned analysis, this book is a delight to read.

Chronologically structured, *Transatlantic Encounters* begins with the undoubtedly shocked and terrified Inuit captives from Baffin Island brought to England by Martin Frobisher in 1576 and concludes with the voluntary visit of the elegant and Western-educated Joseph Brant. For the most part, Vaughan is forced to rely on paltry sources. Only Samson Occom, the Presbyterian preacher who successfully toured Britain's churches in the 1760s to raise funds for an Indian charity school that would later become Dartmouth College, left behind an extensive personal account of his experiences. Thus, Vaughan turns almost entirely to the less-than-reliable accounts of the Europeans and colonists who recorded, with much bias and misinterpretation, the American Indians' intentions and experiences. This means diaries and private and official correspondence until the eighteenth century, when the growth of the newspaper and periodical press in Britain offered a chance to glimpse more popular responses. The sources' obvious limitations in determining native participants' perspectives is painfully regrettable as the reader follows Vaughan's noble efforts to wade through and assemble the meager, prejudicial documentation. At times one cannot help but to wonder if a more interdisciplinary approach would have been beneficial, particularly one that deployed some of the methods



of anthropology and ethnography that are increasingly found in studies of American Indians from this period.[3] Certainly it would have aided Vaughan's goal to "rescue them [Indians in Britain] from undeserved obscurity" (p. xvi) by allowing more nuanced assessments of these individuals' recorded behaviors.

Nevertheless, *Transatlantic Encounters* is a rich narrative of fascinating characters. Their experiences highlight the diversity in British colonization efforts and treatments of native peoples. Violence was common during the sixteenth and much of the seventeenth centuries, as European sailors readily kidnapped, enslaved, physically assaulted, killed and callously used the natives they encountered for their own purposes. Some were deemed useful tools, who could enhance an Englishman's prestige or wealth as a living artifact of his American travels or as an aid for future colonizing endeavors. Disease and wounds stemming from initial capture took the lives of many of these visitors, but others survived and became allied to English interests in America. During the eighteenth century, Vaughan explains, visits became more formal and voluntary, although there were still exceptions. Much of this resulted from the decreasingly ad hoc nature of empire building, as such formal and accountable organizations as the Board of Trade replaced the likes of Walter Raleigh. Many of these visitors arrived as recognized heads of state, and they were treated accordingly—entertained by the elite, testifying before government committees, and granted royal audiences and comfortable accommodation. For their colonial and British sponsors, successful visits could mean personal prestige, native allies and the government's confidence. As Vaughan describes, a visit could mean much the same for the Indians, who regularly portrayed themselves upon return as key links between their people and the militarily powerful and materially rich British. It is no surprise that some of Britain's greatest allies in eighteenth-century North America were Cherokee and Iroquois visitors.

Considering its chronological and geographic breadth, *Transatlantic Encounters* is bound to draw specific criticisms from specialists, particularly in those well-trodden areas where Vaughan makes a number of summary judgments. He largely underplays the long-term significance of Christian missions, calling religion "a handmaiden of colonial diplomacy" (p. 150) and summarily declaring that this was the primary reason for the formation for the Society of the Propagation of the Gospel, the missionary wing of the Church of England. He also explains British reluctance to host Indian delega-

tions after the Seven Years War as born out of decreased interest of the government, which believed they were not worth the "the cost and inconvenience" (p. 175). Yet this was a period when the British government was spending unprecedented sums establishing an imperial civil service in Indian country, led by William Johnson and John Stuart, and attempting to usurp Indian affairs from the control of colonial governments. Moreover, Vaughan dismisses any wider British sophistication when it came to perceiving and discussing the visitors. He concludes that "unlike Britain's imperial officials, who knew each American visitor's tribal affiliation and what it implied about numbers of warriors or volume of trade, the public was oblivious to such matters" (p. 241). Although Vaughan's label may be potentially true of earlier visits, by the middle of the eighteenth century the newspapers and magazines he sometimes uses were packed full of tables, charts, maps and commentary about American Indians as editors sought to satisfy the demands of their readers. An array of captivity narratives detailing the individual cultures and practices also flooded the reading market.[4] Londoners still made fools of themselves as late as 1762 when they flocked to see the Cherokee visitors in public places, but plenty of commentators published articles in the press lamenting such behavior and debating the merits of current policies toward the Cherokee. This lack of greater attention to change over time in wider British attitudes or the visits' impact on British culture is lamentable. Yet all of these small criticisms are heavily outweighed by Vaughan's commendable achievement of collecting and vibrantly retelling these stories in such a way as to continually highlight the diversity of these encounters, in which American Indian visitors acted as agents, captives, showpieces, and ambassadors.

#### Notes

[1]. For example, see especially Laura Stevens, *The Poor Indians: British Missionaries, Native Americans, and Colonial Sensibility* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Troy Bickham, *Savages Within the Empire: Representations of American Indians in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); and Tim Fulford, *Romantic Indians: Native Americans, British Literature, and Transatlantic Culture, 1756-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[2]. For example, see Eric Hinderaker, "The 'Four Indian Kings' and the Imaginative Construction of the First British Empire," *William and Mary Quarterly* 53 (1996): 487-526, and John Oliphant, "The Cherokee Embassy to

London, 1762," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 27 (1999): 1-26.

[3]. For just a few recent examples, see Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000); Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University

Press, 2001); Theda Perdue, *Mixed Blood Indians: Racial Construction in the Early South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005); and Nancy Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[4]. See Linda Colley, *Captives* (London: Pimlico, 2003), 154-164.

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