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Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, Lorene Sisquoc, eds.. *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006. Illustrations. xiii + 256 pp. $20.00, paper, ISBN 978-0-8032-9463-9.

Reviewed by Angela Tarango

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Commissioned by Patrick G. Bottiger (Florida Gulf Coast University)

Editors Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc introduce *Boarding School Blues* with traditional Native American stories focused on heroes and monsters as a means to reframe the boarding school experience. By using the motif of the traditional monster story, the editors assert: "Through their engagement with the monster they [Indian children] killed the concept of assimilation, which eventually gave way to cultural preservation through the use of some skills learned at boarding schools" (p. 3). Though this collected work of ten essays on the Native American boarding school experience covers a wide range of topics, its focus remains on the students, and the myriad ways that they took on the "monster."

While the stories and voices of the students are the heart of the essays, they are linked by the theme of power, and how it was used, subverted, and refashioned. The various authors focus narrowly on their subjects, and recount student experiences at such schools as Carlisle, Sherman, Rainy Mountain, and Rapid City. The majority of the essays focus on the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, the classic time period of boarding school studies. A few essays are wider in scope, such as a study of the experience of the indigenous people of Australia compared to that of Native Americans, and an overview of the boarding school experience in Scotland and England, and what that can tell historians about the Native American experience. For the most part, the essays revisit the field and touch on the common themes of resistance to assimilation, student life and empowerment, and government policy versus what actually occurred on the ground. They all address the constant negotiations for power within the boarding school experience by both the administrators of the schools and the children who attended them. In this way, these essays mirror many of the fine books that currently exist on boarding schools, such as works by David Wallace Adams, Michael C. Coleman, Clyde Ellis, Brenda Child, and K. Tsianina Lomawaima. In fact, the essays' authors often self-consciously acknowledge

these other scholars and their influence on the field.

While all of the essays in ***Boarding School Blues*** are well written and privilege the voices of Native American children, only a few step beyond current historiography. In one such essay, "The Man on the Bandstand at Carlisle Indian Industrial School," Jacqueline Fear-Segal takes on the mysterious editor of the weekly ***Indian Helper,*** a newsletter printed at the Carlisle Indian School. By exploring the editorials of the "Man on the Bandstand," Fear-Segal shows that he not only acted as an omniscient presence at the school, but also tried to dictate how students should live their lives as "model Indians." Oddly enough, Fear-Segal points out that the "Man on the Bandstand" was most likely a female instructor at the school. While this essay seeks to understand the lives of the students through interpreting the "Man on the Bandstand," it also is innovative in its analysis of the physical actions of the school's administrators, as well as their secretive, psychological actions. Fear-Segal's essay eerily invokes an Orwellian atmosphere at the Carlisle Indian School, one that the students did their best to survive.

Two other essays of note in this collection are "Through a Wide-Angle Lens" and "Indian Boarding Schools in Comparative Perspective." Both benefit from their authors comparative approach. In "Through a Wide-Angle Lens," Margaret Szasz explores how the English and Scottish boarding school systems fostered elitism among the children of the middle and upper classes, and compares it to the boarding schools that were operated by the Southeastern tribes, such as the Cherokee. Often populated by mixed-blood children of the elite, the more affluent Cherokee used these schools to train future leaders in a way that was very similar to the English and Scottish experiences. In "Indian Boarding Schools in Comparative Perspective," Margaret D. Jacobs compares the Native American boarding school experience with that of the Australian Aboriginals. Jacobs forcefully shows how both experiences were culturally destructive even though the children survived. This work is particularly useful for its comparisons of Australian and American boarding school experiences and governmental policies.

Boarding School Blues will be a great work to use in the classroom, because it provides analysis of several major interpretations of boarding school experiences in short, well-written essays. But those who are well versed in the field might find its themes repetitive. While ***Boarding School Blues*** includes a closing essay on the modern Native American boarding school and its role in the preservation of native cultures, an essay that explored new ways to approach the field of Native American boarding schools as a whole would have been more helpful. The question remains, where do scholars go from here? The two comparative approaches presented in the book suggest one new method for approaching the subject, but the reader is left with little else to foster innovation in the field.

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