

NATIVE AMERICAN AND INDIGENOUS STUDIES

INTRODUCTION

This thematic issue is the outcome of the international conference “Aboriginal North America and Europe: Strengthening Connections” that was held on November 11–13th, 2016 at the Faculty of English, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland.

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The following eight articles have been written by Polish and European scholars and they cover a relatively broad range of topics in the field of Native American Indigenous Studies. The majority of them focus on the issue of the representation of Native American cultures and languages in Europe and the United States, both historically and contemporarily. The first article offers a re-interpretation of the role of the Catholic Church in the colonization of Indigenous tribes in California, while the two final articles concern the issue of intellectual and cultural sovereignty, and discuss the presence of Indigenous knowledges and methods in education and the Native American food sovereignty movement.

The first article, “Junípero Serra’s canonization or Eurocentric epistemic heteronomy” by Grzegorz Welizarowicz, assesses the recent canonization of Junípero Serra, Spanish Franciscan missionary and founder of the California mission system. The author situates the rise of Serra’s legend within the historical context of California’s “fantasy heritage”. At the centre of Welizarowicz’s analysis is a document written by Serra which the Church took

as “the priest’s passport to sainthood”. He argues that the document inaugurated the epistemic and social divides in California and, consequently, paved the way to the Indigenous genocide in the mission.

The second article, “American Indian languages in the eyes of 17th-century French and British missionaries” by Marcin Kilarski, examines 17th-century descriptions of Algonquian and Iroquoian languages by French and British missionaries as well as their subsequent reinterpretations. Using selected studies, the author discusses their analysis of the sound systems, morphology, syntax, and lexicon of the Montagnais, Massachusett, and Huron languages. Moreover, the author offers an examination of the reception of early missionary accounts in European scholarship, focusing on the role they played in the shaping of the notion of ‘primitive’ languages and their speakers in the 18th and 19th centuries. He further considers the impressionistic nature of evaluations of phonetic, lexical, and grammatical properties in terms of complexity and richness vs. poverty. He argues that even though these accounts were preliminary in their character, they frequently provided detailed and insightful representations of unfamiliar languages, and that it was in fact the changing theoretical and ideological contexts that influenced the reception of the linguistic examples, which resulted in interpretations that were often contradictory to those originally intended.

The next article analyzes the representation of Plains Indian culture in film. In “Relics of the unseen presence: Evocations of European avant-garde film in Bruce Baillie’s *Mass for the Dakota Sioux* (1964) and *Quixote* (1965)” Kornelia Boczkowska analyzes the two works of Bruce Baillie as examples of post-war avant-garde cinema. She discusses the ways in which the two films celebrate Native American Indian culture by challenging the concept of the American landscape and incorporating conventions traditionally associated with European avant-garde cinema.

The next two articles deal with the cultural appropriation of Native American cultures and images in Europe. The first one, “The Red and the Black: Images of American Indians in the Italian political landscape” by Giorgio Mariani, offers an interesting perspective on the continuing presence of Native Americans in the Italian popular imagination and political culture, both on the Left and the Right of the political spectrum. The author shows how they have adopted and adapted certain real or invented features of American Indian culture and history to promote their own ideas and values, and presents the specific Italian contributions to the use of some well-established stereotypes.

The second article dealing with the cultural appropriation of Native American cultures in Europe is “Polish Indian hobbyists and cultural appropriation” by Elżbieta Wilczyńska. On the basis of a survey conducted during her visit to the 40th Gathering of the Polish-American Indian Friends

Movement (PAIFM) in the summer of 2016, as well as her observations from the event, the author offers a detailed history of the Movement in Poland and its connection with the history of “playing Indian” in the United States and Europe. In the main section of the article, she positions PAIFM, and particularly the activities observed during the Gathering of Indian enthusiasts, as examples of different types of cultural appropriation, and explores the many consequences resulting from such a classification.

The next article, “Processes of survival and resistance: Indigenous soldiers in the Great War in Joseph Boyden’s *Three day road* and Gerard Vizenor’s *Blue ravens*” by Brygida Gasztold, focuses on the literary representation of Native American responses to war. The author discusses two strategies of survival presented in Boyden’s and Vizenor’s novels, which enable the protagonists to process, understand, and overcome the trauma of war through the lens of Vizenor’s concept of survivance.

The above article considers the representation of Indigenous perspectives in a novel by Joseph Boyden – an author of disputable First Nations heritage, and Gerard Vizenor – an Anishinaabe writer and scholar, thereby bridging the first, major part of the issue that deals with the representation of Native American cultures by non-Indigenous authors, with the last two contributions that deal with Indigenous perspectives in education and food sovereignty.

The first of these, “Let them be heard: Bringing the Native American experience closer in teaching” by Edyta Wood, explores the theoretical frameworks of American Indian scholars and educators who demonstrate the necessity of using teaching methods that expose colonization and show the fundamental Native concepts that should be incorporated in the pedagogies concerning Indigenous people. She discusses Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy’s (Lumbee scholar and educator) Tribal Critical Race Theory and offers suggestions for implementing this framework in the classroom.

The issue closes with the article “Transnationalism as a decolonizing strategy? ‘Trans-indigenism’ and Native American food sovereignty” by Zuzanna Buchowska. The author examines how Indigenous communities in the United States have been engaging in trans-Indigenous cooperation in their struggle for food sovereignty. She specifically looks at the discourse of the Indigenous Farming Conference held in Maplelag, at the White Earth Reservation in northern Minnesota. She considers how it creates a space for Indigenous knowledge production and validation through the use of Indigenous methods without the need to adhere to Western scientific paradigms, recovers pre-colonial maps and routes distorted by the formation of nation states, and fosters novel sites for trans-indigenous cooperation and approaches to law.

In summary, the issue comprises a fairly broad spectrum of research in Native American Indigenous studies, and offers a variety of perspectives on the

role of the Catholic Church in the colonization process in North America, the representation of Indigenous people and their cultures by missionaries in North America, Indian hobbyists in Poland, as well as in American avant-garde film and Italian politics. As such, it showcases not only selected European research in Native American studies, but it also furthers the discussion on past and current perspectives of Native American cultures and identities in Europe and in the Euro-American imagination. Moreover, the issue contributes to the discussion on the importance of Indigenous perspectives in literature, education and social movements.

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