
Eniko Sepsi, Judit Nagy, Miklos Vassanyi and Janos Kenyeres, eds. *Indigenous Perspectives of North America*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014. 527 pp.

<http://www.cambridgescholars.com/indigenous-perspectives-of-north-america>

On opening *Indigenous Perspectives of North America*, I had hoped to encounter essays written by indigenous scholars describing their perspectives on North American history, art and culture, as the title would seem to indicate. This, I fear, is not the case, and the title is a bit of a misnomer.

What this volume *does* offer the reader is thirty-five research papers on Native American matters, written in English, French and Spanish, by specialists based in Central Europe and North America. It is divided into four sections. The first, titled “Wider Perspectives”, is characterized as including articles which are more general in scope. The following four sections are single-topic essays on matters related to Indigenous issues. Section 2 focuses on representations of indigenous people and groups in cinema, fine art, and literature, while the third section looks at issues of culture and identity. The fourth and final section analyzes topics linked to history and Indigenous-related policy.

In a collection of this type, there are inevitably variations in the quality of the essays presented. Some, however, are well worth reading. In the “Wider Perspectives” section of the book, in his essay “Between Relativism and Romanticism: Traditional Ecological Knowledge as Social Critique”, Nathan Kowalsky tackles the complex question of Indigenous knowledge of (and practices related to) the conservation of the environment. He argues that TEK, the inelegant acronym by which traditional ecological knowledge is designated in the discourse of Canadian conservation management, should be understood as social critique. He takes the bold step of proposing that the radical environmental perspective known as primitivism should be viewed as a basis to critique certain aspects of contemporary Canadian life. One may not agree with all of Kowalsky’s conclusions, but he sets them forth with intelligence, even-handedness, and scholarly verve. Helmut Lutz, in “Aboriginal Literatures in Canada: Multiculturalism and Fourth World Decolonization”, sets forth in admirably clear and lucid prose a history of aboriginal literatures in Canada in the context of both government policy and of critical perspectives such as postcolonial theory and Fourth World thought. Lutz’s close readings of aboriginal texts are particularly insightful and sensitive. Agustin Cadena, in “Representaciones del mundo indigena en la literatura mexicana del siglo XX”, offers a useful overview of representations of indigeneity in twentieth-century Mexican literature, though why this is included in the first section rather than in the following one dedicated to representations of indigenous peoples in literature is perplexing. An interesting aspect of this essay is its exploration of the porous and permeable boundaries between ethnographic writing and the literary.

In the following section of the book, other essays stand out, such as Katalin Kurtosi’s nicely interdisciplinary “Indians and their Art: Emily Carr’s Imagery in Painting and in Writing,” and Emma Sanchez Montanes’s excellent study of representations of

indigenous people in the accounts of the Malespina expedition at the end of the eighteenth century. The last part of the book, with its comparatist perspective, is particularly interesting, with special mention for Daryana Maximova's comparative analysis of indigenous policy in northern Canada and northern Russia and Tivadar Palagyi's study of multilingualism and indigenous identities among the Houma Indians of Louisiana and the Russophone Turks of Moldavia.

In conclusion: there is much to praise about this volume. Its interdisciplinary approach, and its cosmopolitan, multilingual character, are genuinely valuable. This review began, however, by expressing disappointment that the volume does not deliver what the title promises: aboriginal perspectives of North America, and this is the book's main failing. *Aboriginal Perspectives of North America* would have gained immeasurably by including essays from indigenous authors; so far as this critic can tell from the biographical notes at the end of the volume, not a single one of the contributors is from an indigenous background.

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