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Indian, Native American, American Indian?[1]

Gülriz Büken and Meldan Tanrısal

What is an Indian? A Native American? An indigenous person? American Indian, First Nation, or Aboriginal? All these labels are used, but none is entirely correct. Who decides? "Are you a full blood? Half blood? Quarter blood?" The question of how much "Indian blood" you have—also called "blood quantum"—began with European contact. This colonial way of thinking continues when we keep defining ourselves by blood. What part of you is Native? Is it your head? Your heart? Maybe it's your thoughts. But it is not just your blood. We are the sum of all our parts. All human. One hundred percent. Fully Native.

Jolene Rickard, guest curator, and Gabrielle Tayac

Who is an Indian is perhaps best demonstrated by the National Museum of the American Indian opened on September 21, 2004 on the Mall in Washington D.C. "Celebrate this House of Happiness. The circle is complete. The reemergence of the Native people has come" were the words of Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, at the opening ceremony. This "House of Happiness," carved from Indian rock, two-thirds financed by Native Peoples—only one-third of the $219 million cost was federally funded—is "a beautiful building" that reflects the profound respect the Native peoples have for their land, their loyalty to their cultural roots and collective memory, and their self-assertive vision of the future nourished by their self-determination for recognition and empowerment in the contemporary mainstream culture, society and politics.[2] The majestic and overwhelming structure carved from Indian stone, stands out like a sandstone cliff next to the U.S. Capitol Building at 4th Street and Independence Avenue with its entrance to the East designed "to honor the native tradition of facing the rising sun. It is a monument erected to honor the First Americans, to pay tribute to ancestral heritage, to undertake "the breathtakingly ambitious task of telling the stories of Native peoples throughout the hemisphere and throughout time" (McMaster 184). It is the arch of triumph that epitomizes the indomitable will of the American Indians for survival as proclaimed by the Seminoles of Florida who fought back courageously against the removal policy of the US government and managed to remain in the Everglades and retain their traditional way of life: "We will never surrender; We will survive!"

It is a sacred ground where renewal and regeneration is realized with the

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2 See the website for the photographs of the Museum and the various works of art exhibited in the Museum http://usinfo.state.gov/photogallery/index.php?album/American_Indian. For detailed information about the permanent and online exhibitions see the website http://www.nmai.si.edu.

keen insight and vision of the coyote and the ingenuity of the trickster who can adapt to changing times and conditions. It is a place for Ceremony and Ritual Dance in remembrance of one's place in the Native Universe and thus for the reinvigoration of ceremonial life in Non-Native Universe. It is an educational center where the American Indian as well as the non-native younger generation and adults alike are offered the opportunity to find about who Native peoples were once upon a time and who the Native Americans are today. It is a Native place so designed as to meet the needs and the desire of the Native peoples of various tribes who "want to remove themselves from the category of cultural relics and, indeed, be seen and interpreted as peoples and cultures with a deep past that are very much alive today" (McMaster 17).

In "this new and very different museum [which] is far more than artifacts and galleries" one is exposed to "the Native perspective—in the Native voice." The anti-anthropological organization of the exhibitions and the initiative taken to design them on the knowledge shared by American Indian communities, tribal elders, and Native writers and scholars, subvert traditional curatorship. This "museum different," in the words of W. Richard West Jr., the Southern Cheyenne peace chief and the Founding Director of National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), has an architectural design which reflects the native aesthetics. Similarly, the materials used to bring to life the design, the permanent and the changing exhibitions and what is on display in the *Windows on Collections Exhibits* all define the "The Native Universe" which

> does not extend backward into the past, nor is it one marked by unrelenting suffering. We move backward and forward in time, mindful of history, but optimistic about the future. It has been gratifying for me and many others to have lived long enough to witness all the old stereotypes stood on their heads: Indians are not vanishing, we are multiplying; we are not stoic, but abound in humor and play. Our Universe is no longer defined by others, but by our own scholars, artists and seers. That power to define ourselves is enormously significant and liberating. (McMaster 88)

Our Universes, one of the three permanent exhibitions, exposes the native worldviews and spirituality articulated by native languages, daily lives, values, celebrations and art, reinstating that traditional knowledge and cultural heritage are what shapes their contemporary existence. In the millennium, in utter defiance of the "vanished race" demagogy, which was prevalent once upon a time, the American Indians are a part of the contemporary non-Native Universe as well.

If you are willing to go through the exhilarating experience of entering the Native Universes, and of adopting the Native vantage point to discover it, you hear the voice of Tatanka Yotanka (Sitting Bull), ringing in your ears telling the story

of the indigenous peoples of the Newfoundland in the pre- and post-contact times. Once upon a time what was, and what happened in the course of human events is articulated in Native wisdom and rhetoric:

> This land belongs to us, for the Great Spirit gave it to us when he put us here. We were free to come and go, and to live in our own way. But white men, who belong to another land, have come upon us, and are forcing us to live according to their ideas. That is injustice: we have never dreamed of making white men live as we live. The life of white man is slavery. They are prisoners in towns or farms. The life my people want is a life of freedom . . . Your soldiers made a mark like that in our country, and said that we must live there. They gave us meat but they took away our liberty . . . I would rather live in a tipi and go without meat when game is scarce than give up my privileges as a free Indian . . . They attacked our village, and we killed them all. What would you do if your home were attacked? You would stand up like a brave man and defend it. That is our story. I have spoken. (McMaster 88)

Our Lives, another permanent exhibition that focuses on contemporary lifestyles and their complex cultural identities as modern people, is the ultimate expose of survivance in manifold representations. It starts with the artistic demystification of the mythic Indian stereotypes. "Who the Indian is" as a living entity in the modern world negates all the traditionally validated fictitious, idealized, paradoxical and stereotypical images ingrained in the non-Native collective unconscious, the images based on mistaken identity and created by confusion and ethnocentricity. The Native peoples forcibly removed to reservations were stereotyped as the "vanishing Indian" who have come to the end of the trail in 1800s trademarked by the unauthentic staged photographs of Edward Curtis and as epitomized by the sculpture of Earl Frazer called *The End of the Trail*. However, the discrepancy between the "real 500 Nations" and the artificial images projected unto the real thing is laid bare in the exhibit. Met head-on with the scrutinizing gaze of the grinning *American Indian* (1970), wrapped in the American flag, by the late Fritz Scholder, the revolutionary initiator of the New Indian Art Movement and the doyenne of generations of American artists, serves as an overture to *Our Lives*. "At first, I resisted painting Indians but I realized I wanted to say some things . . . in 1967 I turned my attention to Indians. I had challenged and intimidated the non-Native, so called 'Indian experts' in Santa Fe . . . The subject matter was loaded—images that has never been seen. But these weren't things I imagined: I saw them," recalled Fritz Scholder. Borrowing stylistic elements from such contemporary art movements as Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art, blending

it with the Native voice of cynicism mixed with humor and protest, these somewhat unflattering portraits of contemporary Indians did not celebrate tribal heritage nor pay tribute to historical aesthetic traditions but they dramatized the harsh realities of the 20th century American Indian life.

The photograph of the Native American performance artist James Luna on display as an artifact at the Museum of Man in San Diego, and the lithograph of Hulleah Tsinijinie are manifestos of empowerment. Many artists choose performance art and the photography as their preferred conduit for political expression and by appropriating the media have generated a sovereign space—a territory created, propagated, and continually mediated by Native artists, authors and curators. Hulleah Tsinijinie reinstates the importance of the medium of photography as a meaningful artistic medium for empowerment through art:

> That was a beautiful day when the scales fell from my eyes and I first encountered photographic sovereignty. A beautiful day when I decided that I would take responsibility to reinterpret the images of Native peoples. My mind was ready, primed with stories of resistance and resilience, stories of survival. My views of these images are aborigionally based, an indigenous perspective, not a scientific Godly order, but philosophically Native. (qtd. in Fuller and Salvioni 34)

The Museum is a declaration of survivance and empowerment in its own right; it bears witness to the culmination of the efforts of Native Peoples to rip open the cocoon of the imposed-on stereotypes manufactured for them by the non-Natives for convenience sake and hitherto unrecognized tribal/Indian identity, and to represent themselves as they are: American Indians existing on the land of the plenty, clinging staunchly to their cultural heritage and Indianness in contemporary America despite the demagogies about their traumatic existence caught between two worlds. Hose Barreiro points out that "Many times the media superficially portrays Native Americans as in between two worlds or that once a Native American enters the modern world, he ceases to be identified as a Native person" (McMaster 232) which is not the case. As Nora Naranjo—Morse, the artist asserts: "To be perfectly honest, the 'Natives living in two worlds' is becoming a cliché . . . —I'm creating my life and that's empowering—my work is a reflection of this empowerment" (qtd. in Sweet et. al. 99).

Cultural identity for Native peoples is the composite of the unique cultural heritages and trickster-like adaptability to the changing times and societal and economic demands of the contemporary world at the same time retaining one's attachment to his or her roots. Expressed succinctly by contemporary American scholars identity is a complex issue:

> As indigenous peoples of the Americas, our identity is defined and expressed—tribally, collectively, individually—in numerous ways . . . For all of us cultural identity serves as a foundation for constructing a life that makes sense in a complex world . . . Our identities as indigenous peoples are complex and multifaceted. As we continue to face many difficult, social, political, economic, racial, and environmental issues, our relationships to our families, clans, tribes, and nations anchor us. (McMaster 86)

This is a museum of the Native people, by the Native people and for the Native people. The Museum is an undeniable evidence of the assertion of the unalienable natural rights of humankind for life, liberty and property. For the younger generations yet to shoulder the responsibility of sustaining survivance, the Museum is a School for learning once one embarks on the journey into the Native Universe: the exhibitions and the Museum itself stand for the Indian facts articulated by Jolene Rickard, the guest curator and Cynthia Chavez and Gabrielle Tayac, the NMAI curators :

> We are not just survivors; we are the architects of our own survivance. We carry our ancient philosophies into an ever-changing modern world. We work hard to remain Native in circumstances that sometimes challenge or threaten our survival. OUR LIVES is about our stories of survivance, but it belongs to anyone who has fought extermination, discrimination, stereotyping. (McMaster 204)

Unfortunately, Turkish people do not have the chance to visit any of these museums, yet there is a fascination for Native Americans throughout Turkey. Interest in Native American culture and literature, papers presented at domestic and international conferences and publications by Turkish academicians in this field goes back to 1995 when a slide lecture presentation, titled "Who is an Indian?" was given at Turkish American Association (TAA) by Dr. Gülriz Büken as a part of the monthly lectures organized by the American Studies Association of Turkey. Thus introduced to Native American Studies, enthusiasm to specialize in the field was triggered and furthered by the efforts of Dr. Meldan Tanrısal who was affiliated with the University of New Mexico for her Fulbright in the spring of 1993. On 19th December of the same year, the Native American Study Group held its first meeting organized by Dr. Meldan Tanrısal. Its initial activity was the first two-day seminar on Native Americans organized by ASAT in co-operation with Ege University and held in Izmir on April 10 – 11, 1995. The papers presented by the members of the Native American Study Group were: "Native American History" by Dr. Ali Taşcıoğlu, "Mother and Child Relationship in the Novels of Louis Erdrich" by Dr. Meldan Tanrısal and "Who is an Indian?: Responses by the American and Native American Artists" by Dr. Gülriz

Büken. The panel entitled "Native Americans: Religion, Medicine and Music" was held on May 20, 1996 at TAA; the panelists were Dr. Beliz Taşcıoğlu and Ece Perçinler. Two graduate student members, Tuba Geyikler Terci and Ece Perçinler presented papers titled "Gerry Nanapush as a Trickster Figure in the Novels of Louis Erdrich" and "Survival in the Novels of Louis Erdrich" respectively at the 26th annual ASAT Conference that was held in Antalya in 2001. Dr. Beliz Taşcıoğlu, and Dr. Meldan Tanrısal, presented papers which dealt with the concept and role of women in Native American culture on March 9, 2004 at TAA in celebration of Women`s Day.

Other than the numerous academic articles published by members of the Native American Study Group, several books on Native Americans have been translated by some members. Among them are: *Touch the Earth: Self-Portrait of Indian Existence* by T.C. McLuhan was published by İmge Kitabevi in 1994 as *Yeryüzüne Dokun: Kızılderili Gözüyle Kızılderili Benliği* and *Indians of the United States* by Clark Wissler was published by the same printing house in 1996 as *Kızılderililerin Tarihi.* Both books were translated by Ece Soydam. Tuba Geyikler Terci translated Charles Eastman's *Indian Boyhood*, under the title *Kızılderilinin Çocukluğu* which was also published by İmge Kitabevi in 2002.

In *JAST*'s first special issue on Native Americans published in the Fall of 1998 (Number 8) themes such as stereotyping, expression and preservation of cultural/native identity, problematic of alcoholism and mixed blood existence were explored through art, cultural artifacts, traditions and literature. In this second special issue on Native Americans (Number 26), major themes dealt with in depth range from reconstruction, self discovery and cultural recovery to cultural empowerment through literary creations and the Native American search for alternate life ways which honor past tradition that form the groundwork for viable present practices. The essays also address to a number of issues raised by the ongoing Native American Literary Renaissance—the core of the effort to create a meaningful cultural integrity and distinctive literary expression, one that transcends a long history of catastrophe.

How after 5000 years of near-genocidal suppression do an indigenous people best express a vibrant consciousness of their circumstances? How well does the effort to establish cultural authenticity and literary sovereignty build on past tradition of story telling—oral, pictorial and written? Does literary expression contribute to self-determination, retraditionalization, decolonization and to the ongoing resistance to internal colonialism and domestic imperialism experienced today by Native people in the US?

This issue of *JAST* on Native Americans explores a wide spectrum of subjects on Native Americans. "Culturalism and Its Discontentents: An Essay Review on Davis Treuer's *Native American Fiction: A User's Manual,*" Arnold Krupat's survey of literary works, emphasizes continuance and survivance in these and criticizes David Treuer's book *Native American Fiction: A User's Manual*.

John Donaldson's "Re-inscribing Ancient Connections, Following New Trajectories in Native American Literature: William Sanders' *The Ballad of Billy Badass and the Rose of Turkestan*" also examines the works of well-established Native American authors. The article concentrates on the Cherokee writer William Sanders' science fiction novel *The Ballad of Billy Badass and the Rose of Turkestan* which seeks to establish connections between the lives of modern Indians and the ancient wisdom of their ancestors even going as far back as the people of Central Asia.

In the third article "Trickster Orthodoxy? Deceptive Appearances in Louise Erdrich's *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*," Michel Feith examines the trickster both with a theoretical approach and a literary approach by analyzing Louise Erdrich's *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse.*

João De Mancelos in his essay "When the Beasts Spoke: The Ecopoetics of Joy Harjo," on the other hand, studies examples from Joy Harjo's poetry which voice the poet's protest against the destruction of the environment by using three different strategies.

In her article "Collecting Myaamiaki: An Exploration of Indigenous Space through Things," as a Miami Nichole Prescott emphasizes the importance of artifacts for the Native cultures. Whether it be a pipe or an ancestor's remains, these tangible pieces represent their past and help them to define their present. In spite of the cultural violence perpetuated upon them by the dominant culture, these artifacts remind the Native peoples that the chain is unbroken.

The last article "Contemporary Native American Education Issues in the United States: A Year in Review" is by Willard Sakiestewa Gilbert. As the past president of the National Indian Education Association, he relates the major problems in contemporary Native American education. He points out that if nothing is done to prevent language loss by the year 2050 only twenty Native American languages will remain out of the three hundred languages that existed pre-contact with the Europeans. The article also states the collective efforts made to help Native students achieve academic parity and success.

The common theme of these essays is survivance. The peoples of the world need to learn how to maintain individual integrity, how to revive and nourish one's cultural heritage, how to secure social and cultural sovereignty as well as empowerment and how to sustain their survivance against globalization.

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