

PLAYING AND NOTHING: EUROPEAN APPROPRIATIONS OF NATIVE  
AMERICAN CULTURES IN THE LATE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

A DISSERTATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF  
CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY  
AND TO THE COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE STUDIES  
OF STANFORD UNIVERSITY  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

German Valentinovich Dziebel

December 2005

©Copyright German V. Dziebel 2006  
All Rights Reserved



## **Abstract**

This dissertation investigates the multiple contexts and processes that shape the phenomenon of European Indianism, with particular attention to Eastern Europe and Russia. It critically reexamines several areas of scholarship that have shaped our understanding of Euro-American reenactment of Native American cultures in the light of ethnographic and historical research.

The research for this dissertation was conducted from 2000 to 2002 and in brief periods in 1998 and 1999. I engaged in participant observation at Indianist gatherings in Russia, Poland, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Belgium as well as in local libraries and archives. I was also a member of the Russian Indianist community in the late 1980s, and hence I have incorporated self-reflection and memory into my theory and methodology.

My analysis expands the discussion of European Indianism to recast Euro-American performance of North American tribal cultures more broadly as a general social, political and philosophical system grounded in researches and observations over Native American societies conducted by both non-natives and natives since the discovery of America. I identified several core thinkers in the Occidental (Indianist) tradition, namely Lewis H. Morgan, Ernest Thompson Seton, Charles Eastman, and John Collier, who constructed a coherent ideology of nature, society, and the individual underlying the Euro-American reenactment of Native American cultures. Spanning the frontier between Euro-American and indigenous populations, the Occidental tradition is as much a white (or black) as it is a native creation.

The production of aesthetic, economic, spiritual, sociological, and political knowledge of Native Americans has served both colonial and native interests

contributing to the construction of a symbolic system of political power operating in both domestic and international affairs. I argue that this system displays totalitarian characteristics and, therefore, can be, on the one hand, meaningfully compared to Communism and National Socialism, and, on the other, used to disclose the totalitarian nature of liberal capitalism.

## **Acknowledgments**

This dissertation would not be possible without those Europeans who invest their lifetime in the recreation of Native American cultures. My first thanks, therefore, go to all those Euro-Indians who I have had a pleasure of meeting and talking to over the past 20 years. My fieldwork in Europe was greatly facilitated and enriched by such Indianists as Wandering Spirit, Lone Wolf, Crazy Lynx, Great Baby Lynx, Standing Bear (among many others), Medicine Buffalo in Russia, Donatas Brandišauskas (Kekštas) in Lithuania, Lyubo White Horse, Dimiter Fox, and Ivo Little Hawk in Bulgaria, Marek Nowocień, Marek Maciołek, Leszek Michalik in Poland, and Bear Who Walks His Own Trail in Belgium, although it is hard for me to single out some people and leave out others.

America's First Nations should be thanked too, for it is precisely around their cultural heritage that the Euro-American efforts of reenactment, preservation and promotion revolve. My interactions with Native American intellectuals and students have never been easy, but my worldview has been shaped by many a native author and my graduate career benefited greatly from conversations/correspondence with Professors Vine Deloria, Robert Warrior, Matthew Snipp (who is a member of my dissertation committee), Bea Medicine, and Nimachia Hernandez. The class entitled "Playing Indian," which I taught at Stanford a few years ago, brought together several native students, who taught me no less than I could teach them.

The Department of Cultural and Social Anthropology of Stanford University deserves my very special thanks, for its continuing intellectual, emotional, and financial support. The members of my dissertation committee, Professors Sylvia Yanagisako, Ian

Hodder, Richard White and Matthew Snipp, were great as advisors and friends. I admire Sylvia's theoretical acuteness, Ian's intellectual scope, Richard's depth of knowledge of American history and Indian-White relations, and Matthew's wisdom and sobriety. I am also grateful to Carol Delaney, Paula Ebron, Jim Fox, Jeffrey Schnapp, Donald Brenneis, Christian Feest, Slawomir Kapralski, Eva Domanska, Anatol Shmelev, Sergei Kan, Andrei Znamenski, Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov, Susan Harding, and Shiho Satsuka for helping me, at different moments, with advice and assistance. My two quarters at the University of Chicago were illuminating due to Ray Fogelson, Terry Straus, Terry Turner, and Tom Dillehay. Alvah "Pardner" Hicks is my big friend, who invited me to California's Native American Church gatherings a couple of times. I appreciate his friendship and good old time frontier personality.

Finally, I wish to thank the Wenner-Gren Foundation for its financial support of my fieldwork in Europe. Without it, this work would have remained a piece of dry memories. The Department of Cultural and Social Anthropology, the Mellon Foundation, and the Center for Russian and East European Studies have provided additional financial support for my field forays. Funding from the New Democracy Program and from the Department of Cultural and Social Anthropology made my education at Stanford possible in the first place. But the stage for my academic career was set many years ago by my grandmother, Olga Fedorovna Vikulova, who planted the most durable seeds into my initially-not-too-inquisitive mind. This work is my belated tribute to her.

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
a. The Lure of the Book: From Dante to the New World.....	1
b. European Indianism in a Nutshell.....	5
c. Overview of Published, Written and Visual Materials on Euro-American Indianism.....	15
d. Indianism and the <i>Zeitgeist</i> .....	24
 <b>Chapter One: Theory and Methodology</b> .....	 32
a. Methods, Memories, and Meditations: Looking Back at Adolescence, Fieldwork, and the Discipline of Anthropology.....	32
b. A Clash of Concepts: post-colonialism vs. hypercolonialism, Orientalism vs. Occidentalism, borderlands vs. frontiers, hybridity vs. tricksterity, globalization vs. repatriation, nation-state and diaspora vs. tribe, transnationalism vs. transculturation, transmigration vs. transmogrification.....	52
c. Problems with the Extant and Potential Interpretations of Indianism: A Critique of Philip Deloria.....	70
d. Wisdom Sits in Races: Elaborating a Theoretical Understanding	
e. of the Phenomenon of “Playing Indian”.....	84
f. Secular and Religious Political Power.....	85
g. Playing Indian Always Occurs as Resistance to Domination.....	89
 <b>Chapter Two: Colonial Experiences of Indian Captivity, Urban Indian Masquerades,         and the Captivating Appeal of Juvenile Literature</b> .....	 96
Introduction: An Epitaph to Sat-Okh, or White Feather.....	96
a. A Reinterpretation of the Boston Tea Party: Sir William Johnson and the Mohawks.....	107
b. The Importance of the Captivity Tradition for the Evolution of “Playing Indian”.....	116
c. The Religious Significance of “Playing Indian”.....	131
d. Stalking With Stories: The Lure of Orality and the Tribal Ways of Representation.....	139
e. Mimesis vs. Poiesis	
 <b>Chapter Three: Americanizing the White Man: From American Boy Scouts to Russian         Indianists</b> .....	 148
Introduction: Bear Who Walks His Own Trail Tells Me about Boy Scouts.....	148
a. Thompson Seton’s Boy Scout Project.....	149
b. Charles Eastman’s Politics as Playing Indian.....	156

c.	Humanism and Citizenship: Taking Indiansim to a Higher Political Level...	163
d.	From Soviet “Young Pioneers” to Indian “Old Men:” A Sketch of History and Structure of the Russian Indianist Community.....	165
	Indianists and the Young Pioneers.....	165
	The Division into Tribes.....	186
	The Indian Nicknames.....	192
	The Internal Structure and Steps in the Development of the Community.....	201
	The Age Structure of the Community.....	207
e.	The Indianists’ Pursuit Field: Knowledge, Practical Skills, and the Colonization of Space.....	212
f.	Alexander Vaschenko and the Indianists.....	215
<b>Chapter Four: Making ‘Reds’ of the Indians:</b>		
	Collier, Cohen, and White Feather.....	223
a.	National Socialism and the Indian New Deal: A Paradoxical Connection....	223
b.	Felix Cohen and Bookish Socialism.....	241
c.	Marxism and Native Americans.....	245
d.	Labor vs. Woodcraft, Revolution vs. Recapitulation.....	252
e.	Indianism and Rural Socialism.....	255
f.	The Blue Rock Commune.....	258
g.	Communism, National Socialism, Liberal Capitalism, and Indianism as Social Movements.....	274
<b>Chapter Five: Re-Desiring the Producer: Childhood, Family, Kinship, and Gender in Indianism.....</b>		
		282
	Introduction: Chainsaw, Rubber Indians, and Detective Novels.....	282
a.	The Ontogenesis of an Indianist.....	286
b.	Indianists’ Familial Crisis.....	287
c.	Reincarnation and Repression.....	293
d.	Indian Sign Language and the Euro-American Unconscious.....	303
e.	Cultural Appropriation and Psychoanalytical Transfer.....	306
f.	The Gordian Knot vs. the Oedipus Bundle: Two Alternate Visions of Desire.....	311
g.	Indianizing the Human Family: Morgan and Parker.....	316
h.	“Cultural Transvestism”.....	321
<b>Chapter Six: Re-Producing the Consumer: Wild West Shows, Red Power, and Russian Commandos.....</b>		
		327
a.	Seductive Chiefs: Native Americans Playing Indian at Wild West Shows....	327
b.	Ecstatic Children: Young Europeans Escaping Europe in Order to Live among Indians.....	339
c.	Dennis Banks Runs Into His Own “Children”.....	360

d. The Silence of the Wolves: “Indians” Helping Christians in a Holy War Against Islam.....	366
e. Tribal Being and Tribal Nothing: American Indians in the American Army.....	382
<b>Chapter Seven: Indianism as Humanism: A Trajectory of Human Nature.....</b>	<b>390</b>
Introduction: From the Deep Woods to Civilization: The “Crimean Experiment” and First Americans.....	390
a. First European Approaches to the Humanity of the Indians.....	396
b. “I am an Indian... Somehow”.....	408
c. The Way of Ikće Wićaša.....	414
d. The Double Self-Identity.....	418
<b>Chapter Eight: Indianists and Academic Anthropology.....</b>	<b>431</b>
Introduction: Dandelion Asks Me about Indian Books.....	431
a. Dances with Books: Big Friend and the Production of Indian Expertise.....	431
b. Russian Winter Counts: Medicine Buffalo’s Synthesis of Indianism and Anthropology.....	438
c. Indianists and the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography in St. Petersburg.....	441
d. Indianists and the Department of Ethnography and Physical Anthropology of the Leningrad State University.....	447
e. An Indianological Tradition in American Anthropology: Connections with Indianism. Part I.....	457
f. An Indianological Tradition in American Anthropology: Connections with Indianism. Part II – Leszek Michalik’s Romance with Clark Wissler.....	459
g. The Indian Book as an Object and as a Sign.....	469
<b>Chapter Nine: Indianism, Nationalism, and Indigenism:     An Uneasy Resemblance.....</b>	<b>480</b>
a. The Long Journey of Kagagi, or Black Raven.....	480
b. A Path Between the Declaration of War against the Exploiters of Lakota Spirituality and the Russian Declaration of the Red Way (or How I Almost Influenced the Course of Events in My Field Community).....	486
c. Indianism, Indigenism and Advocacy for Leonard Peltier.....	493
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>507</b>
<b>Notes.....</b>	<b>510</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>553</b>

May the sacred smoke  
Infuse you, my mind.  
Inside myself,  
May it wipe away the white pest.  
Deep in my heart,  
Stifle the feeble whisper of fear.  
Deep in my bosom,  
Give the strong voice to the Red Power.

**An Indianist Purification Song**

Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach, im meinem Brust,  
Die eine will sich von der andern trennen.

**Johann Wolfgang von Goethe "Faust"**

