

HARTMUT LUTZ, *Contemporary Achievements. Contextualizing Canadian Aboriginal Literatures* (Augsburg: Wißner, 2015), 334pp.

The front cover of this outstanding collection shows a beadwork turtle designed by Annette Brauer with Canada's national symbol, the maple leaf, on its back. The animal here echoes Turtle Island, a term used by many native tribes such as the Anishinaabe and Iroquois to denote North America, and by extension texts such as Thomas King's *The Back of the Turtle*, and, more generally, well-known creation stories such as Beth Brant's Mohawk version "This is History," in which the earth is always shaped and built on the back of a turtle. The cover of *Contemporary Achievements* thus hints at the "Canadian cultural mosaic" and at the "Indigenous inhabitants on whose ancestral lands, Turtle Island, the beautiful mosaic was [...] based" (23). As such, this book does not exclusively study Canadian and Canadian Aboriginal histories and their relations. It also examines the role of the people and peoples who populate(d) Turtle Island and had an impact on its politics, cultures, literatures, academia, and knowledge in the context of Canada's multiculturalism policies, transnational relations and interactions with Europe and the United States. Most importantly, the "process of recognition and assertion of the Aboriginal presence in Canadian culture" (10). Celebrating these processes and achievements is Hartmut Lutz, whose expertise in American and Canadian Studies, and especially in Native American and First Nations scholarship, is reflected in the excellent compilation that is *Contemporary Achievements*. As a professor and guest professor at many distinguished universities in Germany, Canada, the United States, Poland, and Finland, among others, and with an extensive list of awards and publications, longstanding Indigenous Studies scholar and expert Hartmut Lutz delivers a major contribution not only to the SALC (Studies in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures) series, but to the interdisciplinary and challenging field of Indigenous Studies as a whole. The essays in this collection have all originally been published in a diverse range of internationally highly acclaimed journals and edited volumes. They have now been compiled into the edition at hand and have been organized into five thematic clusters all striving towards one major aim, namely to survey, contextualize, and give

credit and voice to Canadian Aboriginal authors and texts.

Lutz's introduction, entitled "About this book," addresses the history of the manuscript, gives thanks to colleagues and friends who have contributed in one way or another to the making of this volume, and provides a brief overview of the contents of the book.

"Surveys of Canadian Native Literatures," the first section of the volume, opens with an essay entitled "The Beginnings of Contemporary Aboriginal Literature in Canada 1967-72," which, at almost 50 pages, stands as the most extensive of all essays in this collection. The author acknowledges in his introduction the length and "pedestrian enumeration of [...] many little known texts" in this first chapter and advises those who may not be interested in this detailed account to skip to the next section (13). However overwhelming or dense this account may at times seem, Lutz introduces the reader to an important overview of the literary and cultural landscape of Canada from the 1960s onwards, acknowledging that the "morally repressive 1960s" (28) did "not grant Aboriginals" in Canada "the status of human subjects and contemporary citizens but define[d] and functionalise[d] them as usable objects" (26). Texts by Aboriginals as ways of "self-expression and autonomous articulation," denoted "[l]iterary [a]wakenings" (36-37), prominently form part of "Canadian Multicultural Literatures" ever since the late 1960s when First Nations people officially became Canadian citizens (87). Lutz argues that following the development of First Nations literatures until today, one realizes that today these texts "have moved far beyond the earlier accusations and laments written back to the colonizers" and are "reaching out to the world from a Fourth World perspective that is 'grounded' in Canada like no other" (104).

The second thematic cluster, "Peoples, Stories, and Places" discusses race, place, and space in Western Canadian Fiction; the relationship between land and people on several levels, going as far as the connection between geographic location and (ethnic or national) identity; and the Columbian Exchange, focusing on issues such as environmentalism and (neo)colonial ethics in historic and contemporary North America. Lutz negotiates the desire to belong to a certain place and the inability of many (Aboriginal) groups to achieve this goal. To illustrate his point, the author analyzes works by Laura Goodman

Salverson and Margaret Laurence, who both include “place and history as agents of identity formation” (113) in their novels. Moving even further, this section explores contemporary First Nations writing and the inevitable and inextricable link between, for example, Okanagan people and their soil, as demonstrated in the writing of Jeannette Armstrong. Land is dealt with as “a historical treasure and record” (118) and is tied to the stories that come from it in a way the author so fittingly titles “Land-Locked Indigeneity” (128).

Section three, “Indians and Germans,” opens with a fascinating essay about an already well-known concept, or phenomenon, coined by the author, namely “German Indianthusiasm,” and its relation to “anti-Semitism, aggressive ethnocentrism, [and] explicit racism” (157). German Indianthusiasm, or, the German obsession with and romanticizing of the “Indian,” has been a central idea in Lutz’s scholarship for many years, mostly due to the irony that lies behind the German “yearning for all things Indian” (159) and the simultaneous “demoniz[ing], [...] dispossessing and relocating” of Indigenous peoples (160). Lutz convincingly argues that Indianthusiasm in Germany stems from a desire to “identify with the victims of history, rather than with [...] historical victimizers” (161); he explores and negotiates why this phenomenon is so much more prominent in Germany than in other European countries, given the history and development of the German Reich, the (first) Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, the Second World War and German nationalism, Germania and the Nibelungenlied as “foundational fiction” of a “German(ic) ideology” with “national character” (166-67), and Karl May’s novels as “ideological props for German imperialism” (168). More recent decades have shown that Aboriginal texts from Canada are being incorporated more and more into German scholarship, addressing the German obsession and identification with and marketing exploitations of the “iconographical construct” of the “Indian” (191). Following the first visits of Indigenous North Americans to Germany, Indianthusiasm took off, stereotyping in the process the “Indian” as the noble savage (194), the “ideal icon” (198) for marketing and advertising (e.g. Sylvester Long/Buffalo Child, Helmut Walking Eagle [198-200]), and a commodity that “satisfies escapist and narcissist dreams,” a sort of “Ersatzbefriedigung” (203-04).

Section four then deals with “Métis and Others,” and opens with an essay that, in comparison to the rest of the texts, is widely interspersed with long footnotes on terminology and background information about Métis histories and literatures. While this at times makes for a slightly choppy read, the importance of this chapter is undeniable and shows the reader just how much Métis people have moved “From Invisibility to International Interaction” (207). Only during the late twentieth century were Métis artists and activists able to make themselves heard (again) on both sides of the Atlantic (219); since then, several works (many of them dealing with Métis leader Louis Riel and his influence) have made it into German scholarship, and Lutz expects many more in the future which will “eventually help us in Europe to overcome the inadequate inventions of the past and grow more aware of the contemporary Métis as our cousins across the sea” (221).

The following two essays in this section center on Howard Adams and Sandra Cisneros, providing for an excellent transnational account and reading of both authors and their respective Métis and Chicana “autobiographies,” which open up a “trans-ethnic historical and literary dimension, focusing on [two groups] who are both Turtle Islanders and Europeans, both Indigenous and colonial at the same time” (241). Lutz explores the liminality of these two groups, the parallels and differences that arise in their colonial histories, terminologies, languages, geographies, demographics, religions, and nationalisms, and specifically analyzes works by Adams and Cisneros to show the dimensions of “el otro lado” or “the other side” (253)—the US and Canadian borders in Adams, and the US and Mexican borders in Cisneros. Lutz offers an important reading of the “dialogism[s]” (259) in both authors’ works, stressing the border-life struggle of not being able to be “both, and more,” but rather having to resort to “neither-nor” (259).

The last and shortest of Lutz’s sections, entitled “Inuit and Others,” tells the story of a group of eight Inuit travelers from Labrador who came to Europe but died of smallpox within a short period of time. While not much else is known about their stay, one of them, Abraham, left a diary which was later translated from his native language into English, providing us with a largely overlooked but intriguing and important source of and for

Inuit histories. As is common for Indigenous tribes in North America, the primary source of literatures are autobiographies, and while “Inuit people share a particularly rich, albeit comparatively recent autobiographical tradition” (278), Abraham’s diary and the story of the Labrador travelers was ahead of its time as it was written decades before autobiographies started being published in Canada. As such, it stands out among the few works Lutz discusses in the context of Inuit people.

With *Contemporary Achievements: Contextualizing Canadian Aboriginal Literatures*, Hartmut Lutz has added a major contribution to the field of Indigenous Studies which, for its variety of topics and approaches to important concerns in the context of Canadian Ab-

original literatures, makes for an indispensable read for both experts and beginners of the field. The collection could have benefitted from a comprehensive conclusion, some final remarks, or a short outlook, which would have provided even more depth to what is already a rich and impressive volume. Hartmut Lutz bears witness to both historic and ongoing struggles for Aboriginal Canadian peoples and their literatures and cultures, and opens the reader’s eyes to the transnational dimensions of Indigenous Studies and the contexts of their (neo)colonial situations, which will hopefully continue to move “From Challenges to Achievements” (9).

Wien

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