

### **Editorial**

To pay tribute to the Native American Discussion Group which has been active within the umbrella of the American Studies Association of Turkey since 1994, and which has thus reached its fifth year of existence, this issue is devoted to Native American Studies. Each author of the six articles takes up a different aspect of Native American culture, to discuss issues Native Americans are confronted with today. The overall picture emerging is that, whether they are urbanized or elect to live among their own, the Native Americans currently face problems. These articles demonstrate once more how contact with the mainstream, far from obliterating cultural identity only serves to exacerbate it, while being of mixed blood creates confusion and a sense of displacement in both cultures. The only respite seems to be resistance and protest through artistic creation, whether craft or “high” art. Following a centuries-old way of life, while observing a cult whose birth preceded monotheistic religions, appears to be another solution, however quixotic.

The authors have generally used the terms “Native American” and “Indian” interchangeably. Whatever the geographical boundaries of “American Studies,” a topic of debate at present within American Studies, this issue has crossed the border and included Canada—an understanding that, perhaps, goes without saying.

In an age when environmentalism is such a major issue, it is only apt that this should touch Native Americans as well, although perhaps not in the sense as conventionally understood. In the first article, “American Indians and Environmentalism: The Problematics of the Land Ethic Stereotype,” Lee Schweninger examines how mainstream Americans have always regarded the Native Americans as born environmentalists and guardians of the land. This stereotyped image is being perpetuated today, writes the author, through publications and Hollywood films, influencing both Natives and non-Natives in different ways.

Is there a way out from the stereotyping and imposition of an alien culture? Cath Oberholtzer, in “A Thorny Identification: Rosebuds as Symbol of Native Identity,” focusses on artifacts of the Cree of the James Bay region of subarctic Canada and examines the pervasiveness of roses in the floral imagery of these artifacts. She argues that this imagery is a symbolic code signaling identity and reflecting cultural exchanges. Roses and rosebuds in particular, although existent in conventional European iconography, for the Natives signified an allegorical expression of their own culture, both collective and individual.

Meldan Tanrısal, in a descriptive article entitled “The Hopi Kachina Cult: Religion and Ritual as Elements of Cultural Identity Preservation,” discusses how the Hopi have been able to preserve their identity and culture through the Kachina cult. Ritual performances and ceremonies have sustained a way of life, which acquired the spiritual strength to withstand never-ending assaults by Euro-Americans.

Discussing works of art such as paintings, sculpture, and mix-media installations done by contemporary Native American artists, Gülriz Büken in “Native American Artists’ Use of Irony in Works Restating the Past,” also a descriptive article, demonstrates how these artists utilize irony to critique past Euro-American behavior. They deconstruct clichéd versions of

historical events and images of personalities, advances the author, to correct “entrenched misconceptions.”

The next two articles take up two novels that are not so well-known to tackle issues that are crucial in present-day Native American life. In “The Perils of Native American Urbanization and Alcoholism in Janet Campbell Hale’s *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture*,” the 1985 novel recounting “a woman’s tribulative adaptation to university life and cross-cultural social relationships,” Frederick Hale discusses the difficulties of urban migrant adaptation and especially alcoholism among Native Americans.

Mary M. Mackie in “Status, Mixedbloods, and Community in Thomas King’s *Medicine River*” finds King’s 1989 novel “a complex, intricately woven story about belonging and coming home,” dealing with issues relating specifically to the First Nations people in Canada. The author engages in a debate on “how mixedbloods fit into either Indian or white culture and the function of community in the life of the indigenous people.”

Lawrence B. Goodheart and James Allen discuss in a review essay entitled “*Bulworth*: The Hip-Hop Nation Confronts Corporate Capitalism” the 1998 film co-written and directed by Warren Beatty, who also stars in it. The authors find that Beatty “indicts the current corporate manipulation of American politics” through a tragi-comedy that is “as enlightening as it is entertaining.”

In the review section, Michael Oppermann pursues the examination of political films by discussing *Wag the Dog* (1997), though from another angle. In “The Impact of Television on Our Perception of Reality: A Joint Review of Three Recent American Films,” Opperman discusses the film in conjunction with *Truman Show* (1998) and *Pleasantville* (1998) to consider the “different aspects of the presence of TV in people’s lives” as reflected in these films. Our film review editor, who has not yet missed an issue without sending a film review, writes from Germany where he moved after JAST began publication.

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