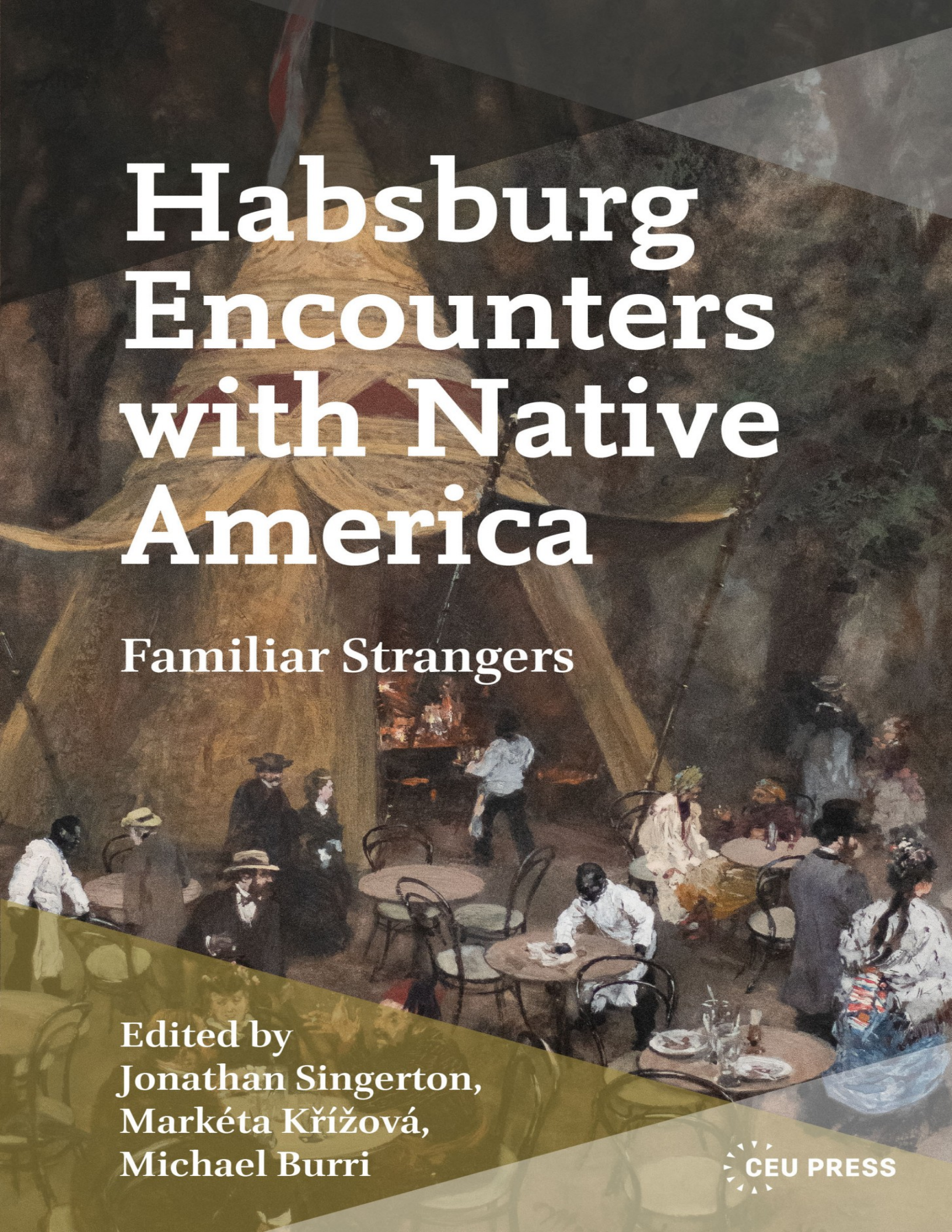

Habsburg Encounters with Native America

Familiar Strangers

Edited by
Jonathan Singerton,
Markéta Křížová,
Michael Burri

CEU PRESS

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Foreword

My late father Robert Treuer was born in Vienna, Austria, in 1926. He was one hundred percent Ashkenazi Jew but the recipient of an education and social experience common among those who lived in the heart of the Habsburg monarchy. In addition to his instruction in German language, literature, and music, he read Karl May books and loved them. Karl May's imagined Indian narratives were so popular that his work sold over 200,000,000 copies—making him one of the best-selling German writers of all time.

Reality, it turned out, was quite different from my father's imaginings, or Karl May's. My father and his mother fled Austria four months after the Anschluss. My grandfather followed after Kristallnacht. A couple of our cousins survived, but everyone else was killed during the Nazi Holocaust. My father restarted a new life in North America, serving in the US Army, working as a labor union organizer, teaching English, farming trees, and writing. He worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the agency of the American government designated to serve American Indians. That's when he met my mother.

My mother Margaret Treuer was born and raised on the Leech Lake Reservation in northern Minnesota. She spent the first eighteen years of her life there, and in spite of the fact that there are around 10,000 tribal citizens at Leech Lake, she only met one professional Native person her entire childhood. The denial of opportunity to Indians was pervasive. The one person she met was the school nurse and, inspired, my mother went to nursing school. One of her first jobs afterwards was working for our tribe's health program. Disappointed with the disempowerment, she went on to law school and became the first Native attorney in the state of Minnesota.

My father had great respect for Native people and our tribal culture, Ojibwe. But it was nothing like he imagined and far from anything Karl May described. Nobody wore eagle feathers except for powwows. Nobody owned a horse. The people, were just as

complex, diverse, fascinating, beautiful, and problematic as people everywhere else. There was so much to learn.

In her brilliant TED Talk, "The Danger of a Single Story," Nigerian literary figure Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie said, "The problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue but that they are incomplete."[1] They give us a single story to understand the experience of an entire group of people. Any single story by itself will, no matter how true it is, distort our perception. A single story about Austria might have everyone thinking that Austria was only a victim of the Nazis despite its welcoming of the Anschluss, Austrofascism, and the fact that Hitler himself was Austrian. Another single-story narrative would have us believe that Austrians all thought and acted like Hitler. The truth is that there were Austrian Nazis and there were Austrians who resisted the Nazis, and there were many other people, experiences, and truths simultaneously. The more stories we get, the better able we are to see, understand, and tell a narrative that is nuanced, complex, and accurate.

Most of the citizenry across the former Habsburg empire has received stories of Indians that are from the 1800s rather than the modern age, stories of tragedy, trauma, and loss, rather than stories of resiliency, survival, and growth. They also have received a lot of stories about people of the Great Plains and horses and buffalo, and not nearly as many about the people of the woodlands, water, deserts, and coasts. They have received stories of poverty and political collapse rather than ones of thriving and dynamic rebuilding. This volume speaks to these issues well, such as Secklehner's chapter on Hans Larwin's use of Indigenous poverty as something akin to the Roma in central Europe. Ambach and Gröber also speak well to the staged representations of Indigenous people displaying all of these tropes. Markéta Křížová shows how stereotypes about Native Americans were constructed and perpetuated in the Czech lands. Finally, Ildikó Sz. Kristóf showcases the religious depictions of Native Americans as "diabolical" and "savage" peoples.

This volume is well framed in that it seeks to explore not the imagined Indians of Karl May, but the real ones, especially as they encountered people from central Europe. And it also examines stories in plural. Instead of one, single story, we get many. We find multiple sites of encounter and multiple instances of imagination, aptly framed in the introduction as "running alongside the simplified reduction of Native Americans to common Europeanized stereotypes." This effort helps us understand the complexity of

the Native experience and deepen our understanding of what life was like for Native people then and now.

There has been a shift in Native literature, history, and even moviemaking in recent years. It is an evolving effort rather than one that is fully evolved. The effort is to center Native voices in the telling of stories about Native cultures, to have efforts be Native led rather than be Native inspired, to get information about Natives from Natives, rather than filtered by everyone else—to encounter Native people face-to-face. It is in these encounters with one another that real growth happens. The need to truly encounter and reencounter one another has never been greater. Take it from a man with roots in central Europe and Native America—we are all thousands of years of human history still in the making.

Anton Treuer

Leech Lake, MN

June 2024

About the Author

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1 Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "The Danger of a Single Story," 7 October 2009, 13:14–13:21, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg, 11 June 2024.

Introduction: Reencountering Native America from the Habsburg Lands

Jonathan Singerton, Markéta Křížová, and Michael Burri

Encounters with Native America abound in the present day. Across Europe today, preconceptions of Native Americans as "Indians" emerge from sedimented images of the "American Indian" found in early depictions of Indigenous peoples from the initial period of contact between European explorers and settler colonists.[1] We have become all too familiar with such tropes as the noble savage, the nomadic Plains Indians, and the objects, customs, and dress that go along with these stereotypes. At the conclusion of the "Habsburg Encounters with Native America" symposium held at the University of Innsbruck in June 2023 that serves as the backdrop for this volume, participants were confronted by this very fact. As coffee arrived to mark the end of the event's proceedings at a communal dinner, the branded cups and sugar sachets were from Passalacqua, a contemporary Neapolitan coffee company whose founder, Samuele Passalacqua, used the image of a "little American Indian boy" licking his lips to evoke the taste and quality of the coffee. Founded in 1948, Passalacqua's coffee bar and company became an established import and export business in Italy with a global outreach today.[2] The image of a smiling black-haired "Indian" youth wearing two colorful eagle war feathers resembles a standard Western assembly of Native American imagery; skin tones, facial features, and animal props combine to propagate the extensive commercialization of Native Americans.[3] In this case, the Passalacqua brand utilizes (according to their own website) these stereotypical elements to convey the "metaphysical dimension of beauty where rigor, loyalty, a sense of community [combine] in the work and the pursuit of good coffee."[4] Conflating notions of Native aesthetic simplicity with ascribed ideals of Native resilience, community, harmony, and pride recall what Oneida activist Pamela

Colorado has framed as the ongoing struggle over the power to define “Indianness” by Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups.[5]


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passalacqua
www.passalacqua.com
info@passalacqua.com
caffè

Figure 0.1 The coincidental Passalacqua "Indian" logo on a coffee cup at the Habsburg Encounters with Native America conference held at the University of Innsbruck

This moment brings to life two aspects central to the core of this volume as it typifies many forms of encountering that still perpetuate stereotypes of the Native American "Indian" among Europeans. Firstly, the Passalacqua example is emblematic of the sustained conversation between European and Indigenous (whether actual or, in this case, contrived). In this sense, the phenomenon is certainly not restricted to places like a restaurant in present-day Innsbruck but abound throughout much of central Europe. When boarding a Condor flight from Canada to Germany, for example, the Diné (Navajo) academic Renae Watchman witnessed an inflight safety video that depicted characterized stand-ins of Karl May's Winnetou and Old Shatterhand. Writing about the incident in a volume of works by Indigenous scholars written in response to the European fetishization of Native Americans, the authors of that volume understood this encounter to be emblematic of the "problematic German infatuation with the Indigenous peoples and cultures of North America."[6] It is this infatuation that Hartmut Lutz has described with the neologism "German Indianthusiasm" (*deutsche Indianertümelei*) as a witty but serious attempt to capture the unusual level of cultural absorption, fascination, and obsession with Native Americans among German-speaking societies.[7]

Popular periodicals and magazines continue to cater to a public enthusiasm for *die ersten Amerikaner* that adorn art and history publications. Taking a stroll through Viennese bookstores, one is confronted by images of Honii-Wotoma (Wolf Robe) of the Heévâhetaneo'o (Southern Cheyenne) on *Der Spiegel*'s *Geschichte*, or Diné (Navajo) objects featured on the front of *Tribal Art* magazine, which markets itself to the international bourgeois craze of collecting non-European artworks. In Prague and Ostrava, the host cities of the International Ice Hockey Federation's 2024 World Championship, Czech fans adorned themselves with large feathered headdresses painted in Czech colors that contrasted their Native-American-derived buckskin coats. In both cities, one can hear frequent performances of Antonín Dvořák's Ninth Symphony, nicknamed "From the New World" during the composers sojourn in the United States—a period when contemporaries observed the Czech master was obsessed with the legend of Ayenwatha (Hiawatha).[8] As a cultural phenomenon, there is no doubt that Indianthusiasm is still a product of European imagined and past encounters with Native

America. In this volume we seek to historicize the deeper roots of Indianthusiasm as a process of continual (re)encountering and (re)imagination of Native Americans, their history, cultures, and identities within the central European context.

To be sure, Indianthusiasm can be interpreted as an equally central European phenomenon. The ubiquitous imagery of Native Americans and Indigenous tropes abounded in the historic lands belonging to the Habsburg monarchy. Among the aristocracy of the monarchy in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, Native Americana became a status symbol. Palaces featured allegories of the four continents where the Americas frequently appeared in Native form, adorned with colorful feathers, headdresses, and skirts, along with parrots and alligators.[9] In Prague, workshops emerged to produce painted feathers as an imitation of elite tastes that could be reproduced for mass consumption.[10] In the nineteenth century, mass consumption of Native American imagery became commonplace through printed paraphernalia, organized touring shows, and museums exhibiting exotic artifacts. Translations too played an important role. Long before he arrived in the United States, Dvořák first became familiar with the Ayenwatha legend through a translated version of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's famous epic poem which "appealed very strongly" to his imagination.[11] The present ubiquity represents part of a far longer tradition of encounters such as these historical mediums between central European audiences and Native Americans.

Yet central European audiences engaged with Native America beyond a superficial level. Consumption also entailed debate and critique. Running alongside the simplified reduction of Native Americans to common Europeanized stereotypes was a continued rumination on Native American traditions, circumstances, and culture. From theological forays into the nature of Indigenous humanity to the linguistic and pseudo-anthropological studies of central European missionaries present among Indigenous communities, the process of (re)encountering the significance of Native American cultures occurred over centuries.

For the purposes of this volume, we attach special significance to the lands of the Habsburg monarchy as a polycentric, multinational, and composite region that together constructs a distinctly Habsburg Indianthusiasm as a space where particular understandings and fascinations for Native Americans emerged. Rather than merely reducing Native Americans to cheap advertising imagery or simplistic representation as logos, central Europeans under the Habsburg monarchy often encountered Native America on its own terms or within wider dynastic or (multi)nationalistic frameworks. These specific contexts added nuance and layered meaning to the idea of Native