

# Mediating Indianness

Edited by Cathy Covell Waegner | FORTHCOMING SPRING 2015  
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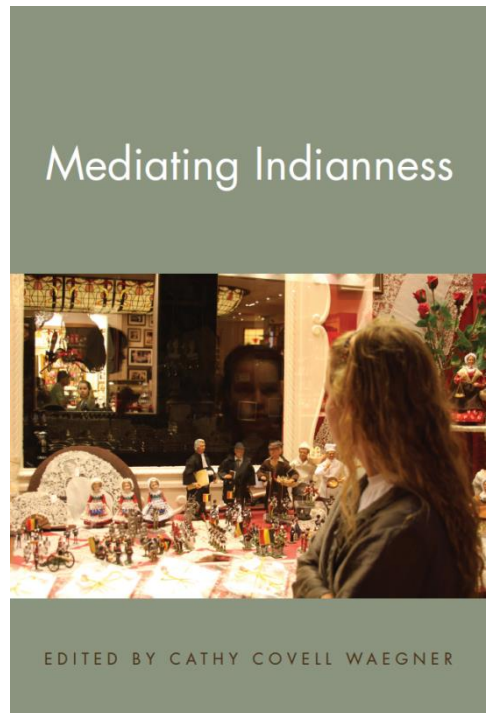
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## Volume Description

*Mediating Indianness* investigates a wide range of media instruments, such as print, film, stage play, ritual dance performance, music, recorded interviews, orality and alphabetization, photography, rhetoric of treaty-making (and -breaking), and virtual networking, which have been used in exploitative, informative, educative, sustaining, protesting, and/or entertaining ways to negotiate Native American identities and images.

The project team gathers (Native) American and European (German, British, Romanian) scholars, an interdisciplinary group of both senior and junior academics from the fields of cultural and literary studies, anthropology, rhetoric, and creative writing. The initial findings were presented or performed in a four-panel format at the 2012 MESEA (*Society for Multi-Ethnic Studies: Europe and the Americas*) conference in Barcelona/Spain. The “Creative Correspondences and Virtual Affiliations” contribution by leading Native American Studies scholars, in the volume with a poetic response by Gerald Vizenor, is a particularly successful experiment in inventive academic discourse. *Mediating Indianness* includes a review by A. Robert Lee of Gerald Vizenor’s latest prose work *Blue Ravens: Historical Novel* (Wesleyan University Press, 2014).



The title of the project and this volume was chosen with care. The selection of a potentially essentialist term like “Indianness” is deliberate and indeed points to the intricate *construction* of ethnicity as filtered through media, despite frequent assertions of “authenticity.” From William ‘Buffalo Bill’ Cody’s claim, extravagantly advertised on both sides of the Atlantic, that he was staging “true-to-life” scenes from Indian life in his *Wild West* shows (1872-1908) to contemporary Native hip-hopper Quese IMC’s announcement that in his engagé songs he tells his people’s “own history” and draws on their ‘true’ culture, media of all types has served to promote disparate agendas claiming legitimacy. The volume does not shy away from the issue of evaluation and how it is only tangential to medial artificiality, in offering explanations of why, for instance, the multi-media blitz of Eric Gansworth’s 2010 innovative play *Re-Creation Story* is perceived as conveying viable and valuable Indianness.

The active mediation which can expose the construction of stereotyping and stir up processes to loosen the perception of Native Americans from standardized surfaces, is the strategy of the Native artists and writers dealt with in this volume, as well as, on a meta-level, the tactic of the scholar-contributors presenting their analyses. This “upset” is stressed in the book through the concept of “refracting” which the cover photo, “Indigenous Indices of Refraction, Brussels 2012” by Kimberly Blaeser, embodies so richly. *Mediating Indianness* thus emphasizes forms of deliberate refraction and creative mediation. As one reviewer has said, “I was struck by how flexible and alive this collection was, purposely unsticking, unsealing, so many working assumptions about Native identity and culture. As I read I felt that lift from old concepts, old ways of seeing history, experience, and prior scholarship. This collection tilts toward a vibrant, ever-changing future where Native peoples are located within a complex intersection of cultural influences” (Susan Power, author of *Sacred Wilderness*).

For more early reading responses, visit [www.mediatingindianness.com](http://www.mediatingindianness.com).