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ENG 3113

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Annotated Bibliography of the Almost Absence of Native American Literature

Brown, Kirby. "American Indian Modernities and New Modernist Studies' Indian Problem". *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*. Vol. 59 (2017): 287 – 318. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 8 Nov. 2018.

This article discusses the different studies of Modernism and the ways these studies are being explored. It points out how American Indian literature still appears to be absent from these talks of modernism. The article proceeds to come to terms with this absence, and then begins to make suggestions, of how to turn Native Americans into the central figures of these conversations, and not as peripheral figures.

Cox, James H. "Modernism and Native America". *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*. Vol. 59 (2017): 269 – 273. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 8 Nov. 2018.

The article discusses the literary movement known as modernism. This article takes a look at the books "House Made of Dawn" by N. Scott Momaday, a native American author, and "The Idea of Modern in Literature and the Arts" by Irving Howe, a non-native author. Then discusses the approach these authors take regarding modernism and labeling texts modernist.

Fitzgerald, Stephanie, and Hilary E. Wyss. "Land and Literacy: The Textualities of Native Studies". *Early American Literature*. Vol. 45 (2010): 241 – 251. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 8 Nov. 2018

This article discusses the connections between contemporary Native American literary studies and historical Native American literary research. It examines the overall relationship of the two of how they

both share information, how one influences the other, the issues they have faced, and the possible future for Native American Literature.

Lundquist, Suzanne. *Native American Literatures: An Introduction*. New York City: Continuum Books, 2004. Print.

This book goes deep into the elements of this genre. It shows the progression of Native American literature, the different ways to read the literature, the challenges this genre faces, a variety of deep analysis into the different themes and issues, and details of popular Native American authors.

The Elephant in the Room: Native American Literature

The article “Of the Melting Pot, into the Nationalist Fires” by Deborah Madsen speaks to how in Europe that there no dedicated university programs in Native American studies, only disciplinary units. However, one of the major issues that arise from this, is that Native American studies usually gets unified into the “melting pot” of multi-ethnic works, and its voice is often lost within the American Literary Voice. Madsen, as well as Stephanie Fitzgerald and Hilary Wyss in their article, “Land and Literacy”, points out how this issue does not only exist Europe, but in the United States as well. Sometimes, more often than not, Native American Literature is completely left out of American Literature courses and World Literature courses. Even though there is enough Native American Literature to contribute to both. The few times Native American Literature is talked about, it usually includes a few authors from the colonial times or from the Native American Renaissance. Rarely both, its usually one or another, and sometimes the works that are brought up from the colonial times, is not even by a Native American author. Most the time, they choose a biography written by a non-native that wrote about a Native American. According to Fitzgerald and Wyss, the problem with those type of texts is that they always make Native Americans the objects of the text, but never the subject. When written this way, an audience cannot get the full just of what the Native Americans felt during those times and how the arrival Europeans affected them. The audience only gets to see what the Europeans assumed they felt, which was inaccurate most of the time. Even though, there were many Native American writers who had written during these times, many whom of which had learn to write in European, they were still looked over because of who they were.

Before the twentieth century, scholars like Jace Weaver and Robert Warrior had been trying to get more attention to early Native American works, that are actually by natives. However, it seemed nobody was interested in discussing works from the seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries (Fitzgerald 242). The “Native American Renaissance”, a term coined by a man named Kenneth Lincoln, which was the supposed age of rebirth for Native American Literature. According to James Cox in his

article “Modernism and Native America”, this renaissance was brought on by a book called “House Made of Dawn” by Kiowa author N. Scott Momaday. This book was critically acclaimed for the many modernist components in the text. Momaday’s book even won the 1969 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. While this book and era opened the door for many Native American writers, it also caused the issue of the main attention being brought only to authors who could bring in elements of modernism to their works. Early Native American works or anything that dealt in too much “Indianess”, are often overshadow because of the lack of the modernism they possess(Brown 297).

There has been a total of almost 200 Native American writers throughout the course of United States history and those are only the recognized ones like Simon Pokagon, D’Arcy McNickle, N. Scott Momaday, and Leslie Marmon Silko(Lundquist 11 - 16). This does not include the oral storytellers, the pictograph authors, birchbark writers, Mohegan elm bark writers, Ojibwe memory writing and more(Fitzgerald 245 - 246). This also does not include the writers that are unknown to us because of language barriers either between tribes, or natives and non-natives. Both Fitzgerald, Wyss, and Lundquist make cases of issues that connect with one another. Another issue of the lack of Native American Literature, is because many scholars overlook alternative textualities, like the bark writings, either because of the amount of work it would take to decode such texts, or because the large language barriers. There is a total of 562 Native American tribes in the United States, at least those are the ones recognized. Some of these tribes are of the same people, like the Navajo, Cherokee, and Sioux, which are considered the three largest tribes. Then you have other tribes like the Kiowa, Choctaw, Osage, and Ojibwe. While many tribes may share the same language, there are many who share different languages, and some of these languages have never been completely translated. This is where the language barriers arise, because there is almost as many languages as there are tribes, the complexity of decoding Native American past texts and oral stories rises. However, is this issue as big as scholars make it out to be?

Over the centuries, the time has been taken to explore pieces of literature from Greece, Rome, England, Africa, France, Germany and many others. Many foreign literatures were at one point an oral story, and many are texts that had been translated into English. Why is Native American Literature so

easily casted aside? Especially, when there is no lack of it out there to explore. If we can reach across time, across cultures, and across languages to explore lessons and find importance in foreign literature; then what stops American scholars from putting in the effort to explore literature that is literally right at their feet. Is it really because it is an avenue of literature that is too much work to put research into, or is it because Native American Literatures serve as a constant reminder for a past that America would rather forget? If scholars can work beyond these issues along with the other obstacles mentioned in this article, an abundance of new knowledge could be gained. It can also open up many possibilities to new ways of thinking, new ways of seeing the world, and perhaps provide options to many of the dilemmas facing the multiple cultures within the United States (Lundquist 29).

Works Cited

- Brown, Kirby. "American Indian Modernities and New Modernist Studies' Indian Problem". *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*. Vol. 59 (2017): 287 – 318. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 8 Nov. 2018.
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