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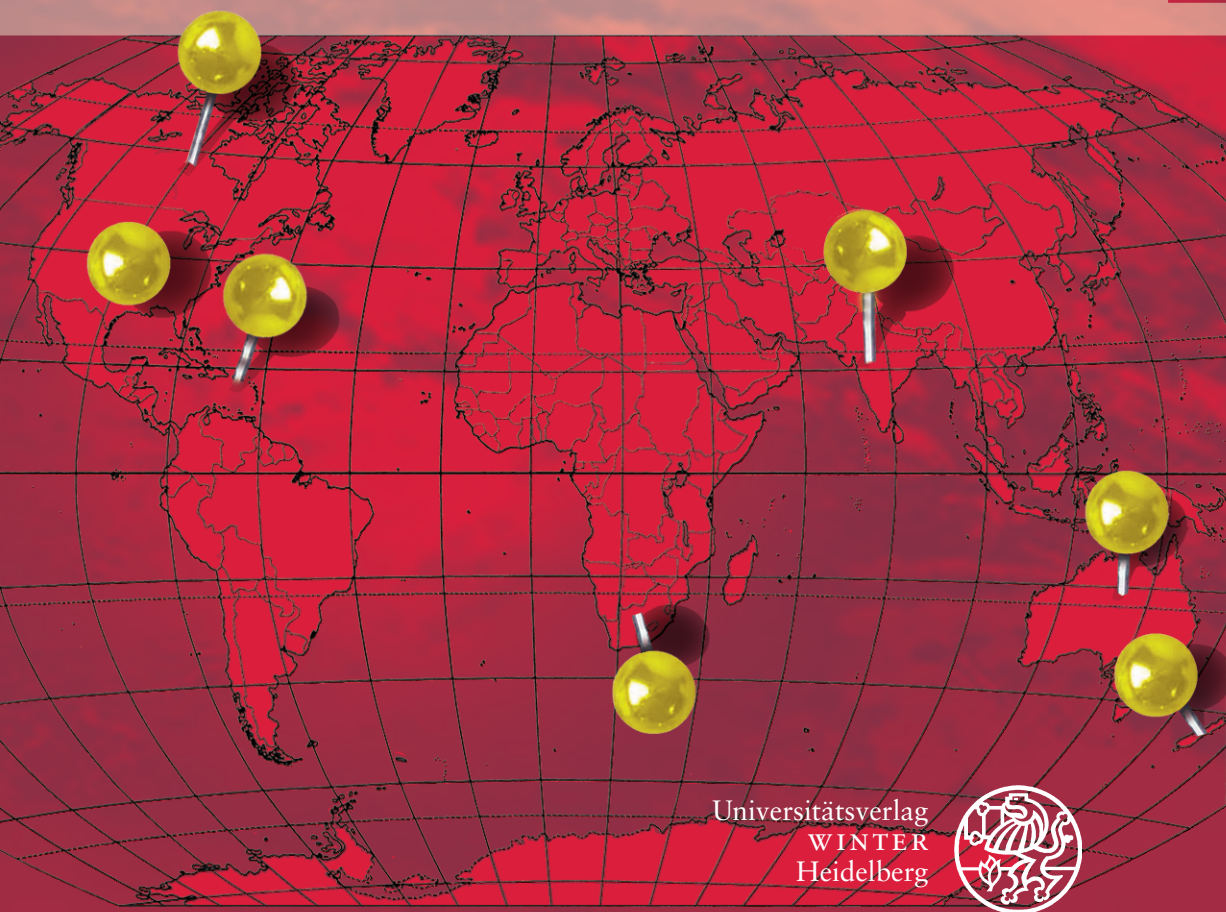
Editors

Teaching the New English Cultures & Literatures



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Introduction: Teaching the New English Cultures and Literatures

The present publication comprises the first publication in Germany of a full-volume book on teaching the so-called New English Literatures and Cultures. It provides an exemplary survey of the challenges teachers of English are currently faced with – i.e. the opening towards the post-colonial and global world, and the new diversity and pluralism in English-speaking cultures which are entailed in the changing realities of the world we live in. In a globalizing world we are exposed to the loss of former concepts of homogeneous cultures or nation-states and we are experiencing a fundamental shift away from Eurocentric worldviews. It seems, though, that the loss of former certainties in teaching – that one had to teach Culture with a capital C and focus almost exclusively on the "core" countries of English – are richly balanced by a "new" or rather hitherto neglected body of cultures and (literary) texts. These present an exciting extension of our curiosity as teachers and challenge us to become learners ourselves – or, as students, to disregard the formerly well-established hierarchical binarisms of centre and periphery, superior and inferior culture(s) right from the outset of one's studies of English cultures.

In the field of teaching English as a foreign language (henceforth EFL), this "opening up" of the cultural and literary perspectives had its early roots in the 1970s and 1980s, when critical educators expressed their growing uneasiness about traditional concepts of *Landeskunde* (*area studies, background studies*). To many, *Landeskunde* seemed to present merely factual knowledge – facts and figures – about the two main target cultures Britain (often referred to as "England" only) and the United States (for a detailed critique cf. Delanoy, Volkmann 2006). Conventional teaching goals included the teaching and learning of British and American "life and institutions", ranging from fine arts to political and governmental systems as well as geography. Such a catalogue of general knowledge about the target culture(s) has been criticised for projecting conventional and elitist concepts of culture. What was missing, according to its critics, was not only a theoretical and conceptual underpinning of *Landeskunde*-topics, which were often taught in an arbitrary and haphazard manner according to the idiosyncratic preferences of the instructors. It was also the absence of many aspects of small-c culture, of popular culture and everyday life that was being attacked. Moreover, it has increasingly been emphasised that minorities, marginalised or excluded regional, ethnic and social groups should be regarded in the EFL classroom to redress the lopsided scope of traditional representations in textbooks (in which white, middle-class, intact families used to be presented as the normative model). Finally, renowned researchers informed by post-colonial studies have not only critiqued images of social harmony and ethnic homogeneity as concerns the presentation of Britain and the USA, but have also

demanded an enlarged focus on other English-speaking countries, their societies, their traditions and their customs – mainly Australia, Canada, India and South Africa. These "New English Cultures", which were once part of the British Empire and belong to the Commonwealth of Nations, are in the centre of this volume's contributions.

In the field of foreign language teaching and in cultural studies at university there has been a trend to go beyond earlier concepts of teaching cultural awareness. While earlier concepts of intercultural competence adhered to ideas of national differences, thus instructing students in culturally adequate behaviour, the evolving concept of transculturality calls such national constructs into question. It challenges the "container theory" of national cultures as separate entities, which still seems to be inherent in terms like "multiculturalism" and "interculturalism". Rather, transculturality stresses the hybrid, interlocking interdependence of cultures in the age of globalization. What is envisioned in some publications is a new ethics of cosmopolitanism in a new humanist spirit which can further peaceful, productive and mutually enriching encounters between human beings from diverse backgrounds (cf. the discussion of Wolfgang Welsch's concept of transculturality in the introductions of Antor 2006, Eckstein 2007, Schulze-Engler, Helff 2009, Freitag, Stroh, von Reinersdorff 2009). A "transcultural scope" would thus go beyond the cultural perspective expressed in the present volume. However, this volume follows a transcultural agenda in that the articles compiled here pay ample regard to transcultural elements such as the all-pervasive forces of globalization such as electronic and digital media.

Thus, the vantage point of this volume's contributions is in accordance with what Frank Schulze-Engler and Sissy Helff state on transculturality in a recent publication on "Transcultural English Studies". As they point out, the New or Postcolonial Literatures in English

> […] were originally often thought of in terms of a mosaic of more or less discrete (usually national) cultures characterized by an inherent difference from Britain and the USA. Today, the field of the "New Literatures" has come to be seen as a world-wide network of Anglophone literatures and cultures with increasingly fuzzy edges: Indian authors not only write in India, but also in the Caribbean, in South Africa, Canada, Australia, Britain and the USA; Anglophone African literature extends to a variety of new diasporic locations in Europe and North America that have come into existence in the wake of migration, flight, and exile; and even where people stay put, ideas, texts, images, and sounds circulate through a globally interlinked network constituted by old and new media alike. The idea of "locating" culture and literature exclusively in the context of ethnicities or nations is rapidly losing plausibility throughout an "English-speaking world" that has long since been multi- rather than monolingual. (2009: x)

Without a doubt, the success of postcolonial studies in Departments of English across Germany and the increasing inclusion of Anglophone cultures and texts in the curricula and lists of set topics and texts for the *Gymnasium* in most of Germany's federal states is an encouraging sign. It shows that a wider

global awareness is well established; an awareness that English is not only spoken in Great Britain and the USA, and the importance of non-European cultures in today's increasingly interconnected global culture are recognised as being of paramount importance for intercultural understanding. However, behind all this display of openness and tolerance towards foreign cultures, there sometimes still lurk petrified attitudes of Anglocentrism and the exclusionary strategies that result from these. What Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) has so fittingly called the need for "decolonising the mind" must still remain one of the main objectives on the agenda of intercultural learning. It is not only the minds of people from former colonies that have to be decolonised (cf. Mitchell 2005). The importance of the continued demand for "decolonising the mind" is illustrated, for example, by the surprising recurrence with which traditionalists still ask the question of whether a country or an area qualifies for EFL teaching or whether a postcolonial text passes the usual aesthetic norms. In these remarks we can still detect Eurocentric perspectives and the prevalence of Eurocentric aesthetic standards which continue to precariously legitimise an exclusive focus on the "core cultures", i.e. Britain and the USA, with the odd non-European short story included as a token gesture of political correctness. As Heinz Antor (2006) stresses, the study of postcolonialism and world literatures in English will not be served by paying lip-service to the abstract values of difference, plurality, decentering, openness and tolerance towards the Other. Rather, this step towards global awareness is approached through the actual transgression of mental boundaries, i.e. by incorporating texts from Anglophone cultures around the world into foreign language teaching. They invite us to participate and intervene in the cultural, social, political and economic discussions of which Anglophone texts are an integral part. These "global issues" entail questions of gender-formation, coming of age, becoming an individual, coping with traditional forces in society, accepting diversity as well as political and environmental issues. Theses issues range from social inequalities caused by the widening gap between the haves and the have-nots to the socially and environmentally detrimental impacts of world-wide trends in urbanisation and industrialisation.

There are still other reasons which should lead us to extend teaching and learning in the EFL classroom beyond the "core" countries and issues. When extending our scope, we are faced with some of the key issues of language and culture teaching. Vital and controversial issues arise, leading to questions such as: Which variety of English do we teach? What do we teach English for (for a trip to London? for future use in the business world? for participating in discussions on global issues?)? What do German school curricula prescribe, and where do they stand in need of further additions and adaptations? Notwithstanding the need to address these crucial aspects, a decisive point must be raised: Both with a view to the role of English as an important medium of international communication and with regard to the many very different contexts in which English is spoken as a first or second language in this world, a

privileging of British and American English and its cultural contexts to the almost complete exclusion of other Anglophone regions is no longer tenable today. In the field of foreign language pedagogy, too, there can be no way around including the New English Literatures and Cultures (cf. Antor 2006 and the contributions on teaching in Schulze-Engler, Helff 2009).

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The present volume is divided into two main chapters: "New English Cultures" and "New English Literatures". This division is based on the assumption that some readers might be more interested in gaining an insight into some of the exemplary "New English Cultures" presented here, while others may be specifically interested in literary texts of certain cultures, areas or nations. The editors have attempted to provide an exemplary and paradigmatic survey of the two closely interrelated fields of interest; yet, we encourage readers to carry their interests beyond the countries and regions presented here and to broaden their – and their students' – horizons by exploring other English-speaking countries, ranging from Nigeria and Singapore to islands like Sri Lanka or Malta. The second chapter, "New English Literatures", pays homage to the ongoing and enduring prominence and significance of literary texts when it comes to teaching foreign cultures. Part of this privileged status rests in the very nature of literature, its linguistic and semantic complexity, density and ambivalences, which per se discourage simplistic, one-sided representations. Another part or literature's special status lies – as reader-response criticism has convincingly demonstrated – in its capacity to trigger both cognitive and emotional responses, which are a prerequisite for readers to take on a different perspective and to foster identification processes and empathy. All of these sentiments do not just result in furthering cognitive skills, but also have a positive effect on the affective domain, which are deemed crucial for processes of intercultural understanding.

The first chapter on "Teaching the New English Cultures" presents a selection of articles dealing with individual Anglophone countries or areas. Each chapter comprises a short outline of why the culture under discussion appears as suitable and exemplary for EFL teaching. It continues with remarks on which aspects of culture would be most fruitful when dealing with this specific culture and continues to outline and discuss a number of relevant cultural topics and adequate texts. In addition, teaching suggestions are provided and a bibliography for further inquiries. The texts listed include non-fictional texts and other media, such as photos, films, cartoons, music and Internet sources, all adding to a variety of perspectives on the country or area in question. Conversely, the second chapter on "Teaching the New English Literatures" focuses on specific works of art or a short selection of literary texts by English-speaking authors. They range from canonised novels such as Margaret Atwood's "classic" dystopian narrative *The Handmaid's Tale* to a selection of Caribbean

poetry, both from the Caribbean islands as well as from the diaspora in England, and to Tony Hillerman's ethnic detective stories set in the South-West of the USA, which were included here to indicate the considerable similarities between minority and postcolonial studies. Again, the literary texts presented in this chapter should be seen as an exemplary choice and the focus in each case is not solely on literary artefacts but on literature as the locus of dynamic negotiations of cultural meaning. Therefore, in each case additional literary and non-literary texts are included in the discussion to provide a multi-faceted image of the foreign culture and for students to achieve insights into the complex dynamics of meaning-creation through literature as part of a wider cultural/textual universe.

The first chapter concentrates on teaching Anglophone regions. The individual contributions demonstrate clearly how current EFL teaching must rely on the different approaches informed by the new paradigms of "cultural studies", "intercultural learning", "multiculturalism" or "transculturalism". The contributions emphasise the importance of the individual process of acquiring interculturally valuable knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour. It is shown that – if students aim at developing skills such as cultural and language awareness – such "intercultural competences" must be linked to current phenomena such as the interaction of different cultures during the process of globalization. The chapter starts with **Sabine Doff**'s article which focuses on teaching modern Canada by reading an Aboriginal folktale and a short story dealing with some of the key concepts of contemporary Canadian politics, society and everyday life. **Nancy Grimm** shows how Australia and New Zealand can be methodologically approached in the EFL classroom, going beyond stereotypes and clichés by using a multidimensional and intertextual/intermedial approach. In her article, she favours a focus on minorities, everyday life and the non-exotic in particular. **Gisela Feurle**'s contribution discusses the literary scene in South Africa today and outlines the didactic concept and material of a course called "South Africa: Young People in Literature and Society". As an example, she provides a detailed outline of Phaswane Mpe's short story "Lerato's Ordeal" and presents a range of further literary texts as possible choices for the topic suggested by her, as well as some assignments and methods. **Oliver Lindner** refers to the perception of colonial India as the "Jewel in the Crown" in Victorian Britain. He connects this to modern India, which can be regarded as a "jewel in the classroom". The essay introduces Bollywood cinema and India's self-fashioning via the Internet as rewarding choices for discussing aspects of Indian culture and society in the EFL classroom. **Michael Mitchell** provides fundamental insights into the postcolonial mosaic of the Caribbean describing its historical, political, economic and social contexts. For pedagogic settings he recommends using Caribbean short stories in order to cover the diversity of issues in this region and make students aware of its unique qualities. His aim is to challenge preconceptions and to reassess global issues from a different perspective.

Rüdiger Ahrens examines specific linguistic features of the English language in South-East Asia and the South Pacific. He also refers to the postcolonial situation and discusses Paul Theroux's novel *Kowloon Tong* focussing on national stereotypes and their highly ambivalent functions in intercultural encounters.

The second chapter presents a broad range of literature and films that can be used in today's EFL classroom. Methodological and didactic aspects as well as learning theories are taken into consideration and it is shown how encounters with authentic situations, authentic language and different cultures in texts and films can be highly motivating for students. **Albert Rau** demonstrates how Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* can be dealt with in classroom settings. This Canadian feminist dystopian novel, set in a totalitarian theocracy and depicting a veritable nightmare society, has retained its status as a canonised novel and as a set text in many parts of the world. In his essay he concentrates on the role of women in the novel and on its imagery, suggesting student-oriented approaches to tackle this dark tale of women's subjugation. **Maria Eisenmann**'s contribution introduces Jane Harrison's contemporary Australian drama *Stolen*, which is about Aboriginal children who are forcibly removed from their families and physically, psychologically and sexually abused. The article focuses on cultural issues as well as on developing skills in analysing and working with dramatic texts in the EFL classroom. In the next essay various methodological concepts are introduced by **Albert-Rainer Glaap**. He discusses several New Zealand plays and their topics by focusing on Māori culture, namely in Robert Lord's play *Joyful and Triumphant* and in important plays by Hone Kouka. **Nancy Grimm** depicts a teaching unit on the New Zealand movie *Whale Rider*, which also deals with Māori culture, to foster (inter)cultural learning and to establish knowledge about cinematic techniques. As this is an expertly narrated and directed movie, it allows for creative and student-centered activities in the realms of media studies and analysis. **Laurenz Volkmann** discusses the South African novel *Disgrace*, written by J. M. Coetzee, and reflects on a range of topics, such as education, ethnicity and race or language, which could be focused on when dealing with this controversial text in class. The main concern is to show how students can be enabled to gain a closer insight into the complexities of post-apartheid South Africa. In her essay about Bali Rai's *(Un)arranged Marriage* **Mechthild Hesse** points out how the novel can be used in the broader context of teaching literature and cultural studies. In providing many teaching ideas, she shows how to deal with this male coming-of-age story, in which the protagonist attempts to find his own identity and a way out of the double-bind of being caught between two cultures. In the following article **Göran Nieragden** exemplifies how Caribbean poetry can help to raise postcolonial awareness and to facilitate intercultural competence. In this context, classroom activities are proposed which integrate linguistic creativity, learner-centredness, exposure to authentic texts, real life issues and interculturally relevant insights. In the concluding contribution, **Peter Freese**

deals with Tony Hillerman's Navajo mystery novels, discussing in particular the novel *Listening Woman*. Since Hillerman paints an authentic picture of Indian reservation life as it is today, his mysteries can provide students with appropriate means of approaching unfamiliar cultures and teach them to understand the "Other".

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Jena, Erlangen-Nürnberg
Laurenz Volkmann *Nancy Grimm* *Maria Eisenmann*

NEW ENGLISH CULTURES

SABINE DOFF

Beyond Beavers and Bilingualism: Reasons and Suggestions for Teaching Modern Canada in the EFL Classroom

The Canadian Question: What to Be (or not to Be)

Whereas Canadians have often disagreed about who or what they actually are or should be, they have always been very certain about what they are *not*: They are not Americans. However, the existence of "big brother" to the Northern and Southern frontiers offers only one explanation, albeit *ex negativo*, for the ongoing debate about national and cultural identity which seems to have been going on forever. Another main reason is that like its neighbour to the South and North Canada as a nation has constantly been challenged to represent unity in diversity, since it is a multifaceted immigrant nation with strong aboriginal roots that has made multiculturalism part of its official political programme ever since the 1970s.

The potential of this linguistic and cultural diversity is one of the reasons why this paper argues to assign Canada a more important role when teaching (about) English language, Anglophone literatures and cultures. In order to get started and to provide the context, the position of Canada in the Anglo-American world as well as in the German EFL classroom is discussed (part 2). Part 3 highlights the main thesis by analyzing two examples of teaching modern Canada to learners of English of different competence levels. The contribution closes with a collection of a choice of particularly useful websites for further reading (part 4).

Modern Canada in the (Anglo-American) World and in the Classroom

Canada has often been neglected in the German EFL classroom so far. Despite the fascination it has for many German tourists and immigrants, and despite numerous exchange programmes between the two countries, textbooks, schoolbook material, text collections and anthologies as well as other compilations have tended to ignore North America's nation of the Maple Leaf altogether or only deal with it superficially (for recent exceptions see, for example, Heinze, Müller-Schneck 2004; Glaap, Heinze 2005; Merkl 2005a; Doff 2006a; Doff 2006b). Up to date, this part of the Anglo-American world

remains less easily accessible to learners and teachers of English in Germany than other countries for which there is more material like, for example, Australia, and still seems to be less popular than other, more "exotic" choices like, for example, India.

A recent study (Merkl 2005b) has shown that as a result, German students of English know very little about present-day Canada and that they cling to a traditional preconceived and romanticized image of Canada created by 18th and 19th century travel and exploration literature as well as in modern tourist brochures and travel guides. Among the most prominent features of this image are "the noble savage", "the lumberjack", "the mountie", "the sheer endless woods", "the moose", "the beaver" (Merkl 2005c: 1) as well as the two official languages, English and French. Needless to say, this picture usually does not include an awareness of processes which have shaped Canada as a multicultural and modern nation since the second half of the 20th century.

However, one cannot but notice a rising interest in Canada in German EFL classrooms recently, a development that is reflected in the new materials and text compilations mentioned above as well as in a more general tendency in current *Richtlinien* and *Lehrpläne* which are moving away from the traditional focus on topics predominantly relevant to Britain and the USA towards an extended study of the whole of the English-speaking world. As a result, it is not only the role of Anglophone countries like, for example, Australia, New Zealand and Canada that has been intensified in the German secondary EFL classrooms, but also of other so-called new English literatures and cultures, such as those of the Caribbean, Africa and the Asian Pacific which have gained in importance and which widen our picture of the regions where English is spoken. In this process Canada has not yet been given the attention it deserves as an interface between east and west in the globalizing process.

The main elements of Canada's international reputation include its magnificent scenery, wildlife and open spaces, cleanliness and environmentalism (for example, Greenpeace was founded in Vancouver in 1971) as well as interesting cities like, for example, Montreal, Vancouver, Quebec and Toronto. Canada can be called outstanding for many reasons; for example, it is a country with two official languages, English and French, and a country where multiculturalism and diversity have been part of the national political programme for over thirty years, starting with the adaption of an official multiculturalism policy as early as 1971. The Canadian approach to integrating aboriginal societies and their history is often seen as a model by other countries with large aboriginal populations. Canada is a young country, but nevertheless, its recorded history, though short – relative to much of the world – is intriguing: aboriginal societies have left their marks as well as early European settlers who came from France as well as from Britain. This not only led to a hard struggle for power in the past but has had a considerable impact on the state of the country in the present, for example in Quebec's struggle for independence or in the struggle for equity and equality of a number of other so-called minority

voices emerging in the 1960s and 1970s which resulted in cultural diversity as a fundamental concept of present-day Canadian policy (Department of Canadian Heritage 2003; see also Merkl 2005c: 4).

Following Russia, Canada is the second-largest country in the world, bordered by the Atlantic Ocean in the East, the Pacific Ocean in the West and the Arctic Ocean in the North. Its only neighbour is the United States, including Alaska in the North. The two North American countries share the longest unguarded national border (6379 kilometres) in the world. Canada has a population of just over 31 million people which works out to about two people per square kilometre. Three quarters of the population live in the southern region close to the border, which is the warmest, most hospitable part of the country with the best land and waterways. Nevertheless, the North has continued to fascinate many Canadians and visitors alike. Most Canadian towns and cities like, for example, Toronto (the largest city with a population of around 2.4 million), Quebec, Montreal and Vancouver, can be found in the Southern portion of Canada, which borders on the US. The nation's capital is Ottawa, Ontario, in Central Canada (population ca. 785000).

As a nation Canada started with four provinces in 1867 and today is made up of ten provinces and three northern territories: the Atlantic provinces in the east (Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick), Central Canada (Quebec and Ontario), the prairies (Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta), the West Coast (British Columbia). The territories are Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. Not only is Quebec the country's largest province (three times the size of France), but also the one predominantly French province. It is generally at odds with the rest of English-speaking Canada, particularly in politics: various referendums to separate from Canada and form a new country have taken place since the mid 1960s.

The history marked by aboriginal as well as European and worldwide influences has resulted in a linguistic and cultural diversity which today makes modern Canada an interesting and rewarding topic which has a lot to offer beyond beavers and bilingualism for learners as well as for teachers in the German EFL classroom.

Teaching Suggestions: Aboriginal Roots and Multiculturalism Exemplified

In the following two suggestions are presented which highlight salient aspects for an approach to teaching modern Canada in the secondary EFL classroom: a folktale by an aboriginal people (representing the foundations of present-day Canada) and a short story dealing with one of the key concepts of contemporary Canadian politics, society and everyday life, i.e. multiculturalism and its practical implications.

1. Eldrbarry: "Raven Finds the First Men" (McWilliams 1995-2002)

This text originally is a Haida folktale that tells the story of how Raven created the world and discovered the first men and women. It is a version of the history of creation to which learners of English already at the beginning of secondary education (ages 10-12) can relate to on the conceptual level. Since it is a text coming from the oral tradition of storytelling of Canada's aboriginal people, the language is not too difficult and includes a lot of typical stylistic elements like repetition and paraphrasing. The text could also be shortened easily without hindering understanding. Nevertheless, the folktale is also open to more complex reading approaches for upper secondary level. Tasks in the EFL classroom relating to this story could – depending on the age and competence level of the learners – thus range from creating a picture book to a feminist approach of interpreting this version of a history of creation as compared to, for example, the Christian version of the Genesis. This multifaceted potential on the linguistic as well as on the conceptual level is what makes the text particularly suitable for teaching Canada to EFL learners of different competence levels.

A summary of the text is followed by background information plus suggestions for analysis, transfer and project tasks for advanced EFL classrooms. Key aspects of tentative answers are sketched out; students should be asked to illustrate their responses by using quotes from the text. The tasks sketched out below are geared towards the upper secondary EFL classroom (see also Doff 2006a: 6-10; Doff 2006b: 21-24) but could easily be adapted for younger learners. The text itself as well as a wide range of information on its background plus more tales in the storytelling tradition (including a wealth of text and audio material) can be found on Barry McWilliams' website (McWilliams 1995-2002).

Summary

After a great flood Raven has just satisfied his appetite with the delicacies the water has left on the coast, and is now strolling up and down the beach, not hungry, but bored. He perceives the world around him as "pretty but lifeless" (direct quotations from the text are taken from McWilliams 1995-2002, where neither page numbers nor lines are indicated), then he hears sounds, which he identifies as coming from small creatures inside a huge clamshell which is lying on the beach. With his loveliest voice he makes the tiny and timid creatures come out of their shell. For quite a long time Raven has fun accompanying these creatures, whom he recognizes as the first humans, on their discovery of the world. But then he gets bored since he thinks their activity is "ceaseless". The group of first humans consists of boys only, whom Raven soon perceives as "tired", "demanding" and "annoying".

In order to cheer them and himself up, Raven starts looking for the girls who have to exist somewhere in his opinion since they complement the existence of the boys. It takes him quite a while to find them – one girl each inside Chitons, large shellfish clinging from the rocks and only accessible at low tide. The girls

are also frightened by Raven but he finally manages to carry them on his back and unite them with the boys. When the boys and girls meet for the first time, they are not as happy as Raven expected them to be but behave rather self-consciously, and are shy and embarrassed. But after a while, they overcome their confusion and begin to attract each other's attention. Gradually the two groups mix and individual pairs of boys and girls begin to form. Raven observes this process with great delight and he wonders about them, since males and females are so very different on the one hand but seem to balance each other's strengths and weaknesses on the other.

Raven has been busy ever since, observing, accompanying and protecting the first humans and their offspring who have made their homes on the shores and who have turned into the "strong and loving, courageous and compassionate" people of the Northwest Pacific.

Background (adapted from McWilliams 1995-2002; see also Ferguson 2000: 25-28)

The Raven stories of the aboriginal peoples of the Pacific Northwest give an idea of the customs and life of a people who depended on and respected their environment. The lives of the many tribes of the Northwest coast like the Haida, Kwakiutl, Makah and the Coast Salish were closely linked to both forest and sea. These aboriginal people lived along rivers, bays and beaches of rocky coasts between dense rain forests of spruce, fir and cedar and the sea. From cedar trees they made plank houses that kept them save in the cool wet winters, canoes in which they travelled, their tools and even most of their clothing. Their food came mostly from the rivers and from the sea, for example, smoked salmon, whales, crabs, clams and oysters.

It is not surprising that they thought their world was filled with spirit beings dwelling in animals and trees. Raven is one of these spirit beings whom the aboriginal people believed were living between steep mountains and deep valleys shadowed with mysterious forests, and the misty fog bounded rocky islands and shores of the Northwest coasts. Before a tree could be felled to be made into a house or canoe, whenever game was taken or a whale was killed, its spirit had to be properly thanked and released in order to prevent misfortune. In the cedar slab houses during the long rainy winters, and at the potlatch feasts where social rank and position were established and maintained by gift giving, the storytellers passed on tribal traditions with the stories of Raven and the other spirit beings. Contrary to many of the stories of the peoples of the Northwest Coast that are considered private property of a household or clan, the Raven myths are generally common to the whole culture.

Northwest Indian art then and now is full of the "eyes" of the spirits that filled their world, watching them all the time. The distinctive totem poles carved of cedar portray the myths and stories of the Raven and the other spirit beings with whom the Indians had to constantly stay in contact to live in harmony with the natural world. The things they made are covered with the eyes and faces of

this spirit world, for example the wooden masks they used in their dance, the artwork painted on their house fronts and the carvings on their canoes.

Today, many young artists who have Northwest Indian ancestors help to keep their memory alive with their works. One of the most famous examples of a combination of modern art and the established Northwest Coast tradition is the sculpture "Raven Finds the First Men" by the carver Bill Reid in the Vancouver Museum of Anthropology (Museum of Anthropology 2008). The museum's website not only offers pictures of the sculpture as well as a virtual sourcebook which both supply (visual) support for teaching the folktale. Students can also go on a virtual tour of the museum and find out more about the art and traditions of Canada's aboriginal people, in particular those of the Northwest Pacific.

Analysis

How is Raven characterized? Pay attention to his role in the world in general and with regard to the first human beings in particular.

- Raven is described as a curious troublemaker who likes to play tricks on others and who is easily bored. Since he has placed the moon and stars where they are he must be very powerful.
- The two sides of Raven's character are, for example, reflected in his voice, which can be loud and unpleasant or lovely and irresistible.
- Raven is interested in what is happening around him and he likes to be entertained. That is why he finds the boys inside the clamshell and keeps looking for the girls soon afterwards.
- Once he has found the first humans and united the two sexes he takes responsibility for them, protects them and cares for them. He makes their life on the Pacific shore easier by enriching their world with the sun, the moon, the stars, fire, salmon and cedar and by showing them how to hunt and other secrets of the world.
- Thus Raven is shown as a character with many sides that proves to be a powerful and loyal observer and friend of humankind.

How does Raven perceive the first humans? Describe how his perspective changes in the course of the story.

- When Raven first meets the first humans, he perceives them as "timid shell dwellers" who are quite different from him as far as their appearance as well as their behaviour is concerned: they are frightened by him, they have neither a beak, nor feathers or fur, i.e. they are naked. They have pale skin and "stick-like arms" instead of wings.
- The boys explore their expanded world "with wonder", but Raven soon finds them boring since their activity is "ceaseless"; from his point of view they are helpless, fearful, small and in constant need of shelter from the sun and the rain. Raven expects them to be happy once they meet the girls, but contrary to his expectations, both sexes are not only afraid of him, but also of each other.

- However, the boys and girls eventually overcome their fears, realize that they are stronger when they are together and start "wrestling their livelihoods" and making their homes on the North Pacific shore.
- Raven has not become bored by watching them, since despite being so very different, men and women fight together for their own lives and those of future generations. The frightened shell-dwellers have become "courageous and compassionate […] children of the wild coast" who with the help and under the constant observation of Raven have become strong enough to survive.

What does the text tell you about what the Haida think about nature, creatures and human life?

- Due to the significant role Raven plays in this story, it can be assumed that the Haida ascribe a very important role to animals like him and that they consequently have to be respected and treated well by humans.
- Raven is wiser and more powerful than the first humans: he knows, for example, that there have to be girls to complement the boys, he can teach them tricks and has the power to bring them such wonderful things as the sun, moon, stars, fire salmon and cedar.
- It is not only creatures like Raven whom human beings have to respect, but also nature: nature is shown to be a pretty and idyllic place in which – as the last paragraph of the story shows – humankind only plays a subordinate role. The first humans have to get used to their environment and, with the help of Raven, adapt their behaviour and their way of living to it. The end of the story suggests that in order to survive human beings have to master the challenge of nature, in this case the stormy North Pacific shore, and respect their environment.

Transfer

Discuss how the differences between the sexes as well as the changing relationship between them are presented. What do they mean to humanity, according to this story?

- Without the girls, the boys' activities are ceaseless and purposeless, they are – from Raven's point of view – helpless, fearful and small, demanding and annoying.
- Raven starts looking for the girls since he is looking for some fun and he knows that it is the way of all things in the world that there are males and females who complement each other.
- When they first meet, neither boys nor girls are enthusiastic, but they behave rather self-consciously and are afraid of each other.
- Little by little they start attracting each other's attention (by gender-specific strategies), the two groups mix gradually and finally girl and boy creatures pair off totally absorbed in each other.

- Among humankind males and females are very different according to Raven, for example, with regard to their characteristics and their behaviour.
- One of Raven's core statements about the two sexes is that "[t]he strengths of each balanced the weakness of each", i.e. the fact that men and women are so different is not only seen in a negative way (although it also causes a lot of misunderstandings and trouble) but as an opportunity that both complement each other.
- Humankind can only become stronger and survive on the rough North West Pacific shore because there are two sexes.

Sum up what you think are the most important similarities and differences between how this Haida story and your own culture describes the origins of the first humans. What do the ways in which various cultures trace back their origins reveal about their beliefs and their view of the world?

- Raven finds the first humans, but does not create them.
- Raven is very powerful, but not almighty.
- Raven first finds the boys, then the girls.
- The concept of sin is missing in this story of creation. The first humans are allowed to stay in the paradise of nature although they have to adapt to the rough environment on the North West Pacific shores.

Project work

When the first Europeans, i.e. the Vikings (around 1000), the French and English explorers (late 15th and 16th century) came to Canada, the aboriginal population of North America at that time was between one and 18 million. However, it dropped dramatically afterwards. Find out more about life and culture of the so-called First Nations in what is Canada today prior to European contact, as well as which Europeans came, when and what impact they had on Native American culture. Your results could be presented, for example, in a collage.

The following websites offer good starting points for the students to find out more about Canada's First Nations and the first Europeans in Canada (all last accessed in April 2008):

- http://www.tolatsga.org/Compacts.html
  The Compact Histories of nearly 50 Native North American tribes are presented on this website to provide information to those interested in learning more about the First Nations. It also includes a First Nations Search Tool as well as a link to a compact geographic overview of First Nations Histories.
- http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/
  This is the website of the INAC (Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada), giving an overview of programmes, resources and services, including a section on "Art, Culture and History". Created in

1966, the INAC is a highly decentralized organization, which responds to the varying needs of a culturally, economically and geographically diverse clientele. The legislation establishing the department, as amended in 1970, made its Minister responsible for Indian and Inuit affairs, the residents of the Yukon and Northwest Territories and their resources. The department fulfils the lawful obligations of the federal government to Aboriginal peoples arising from treaties, the Indian Act and other legislation.

- http://www.cln.org/themes/explorers.html
  This Theme Page provides a variety of resources related to the study of early explorers. It contains documents that look at the exploration of the New World from the First Nations' as well as from the European explorers' perspective.

2. Gary Engkent: "Why my Mother Can't Speak English" (1991)

With the *Multicultural Act* established in 1971, one of the most popular Canadian Prime Ministers, Pierre Trudeau, emphasized the equality of "all cultural and ethnic groups" within Canada as a bilingual country and provided funding, for example, for a variety of ethnic organizations as well as for further second-language instruction. This marked a substantial shift in attitude and made multiculturalism, i.e. cultural diversity, part of Canada's political programme. Since Trudeau during his time in office (1968-1979 and 1980-1984) embraced multiculturalism on an official level, it has become something to be proud of and today is widely regarded as a national Canadian virtue. This "national virtue" is illustrated and discussed critically by the text "Why my Mother Can't Speak English", a story that provides an example of the practical implications of the Canadian approach to multiculturalism in contemporary Canadian society.

A summary of the text is followed by background information plus suggestions for analysis and transfer for advanced EFL classrooms. Key aspects of tentative answers are sketched out; students should be asked to illustrate their responses by using quotes from the text. The tasks sketched out below are geared towards the upper secondary EFL classroom (see also Doff 2006a: 49-52; Doff 2006b: 47-50).

Summary

In "Why my Mother Can't Speak English" the Chinese-Canadian writer Garry Engkent (Engkent 1991) tells the story of a 70-year-old Chinese woman, the first-person narrator's mother, who wants to get Canadian citizenship after having lived in Canada for over thirty years. Otherwise, she thinks, the Canadian government could take away her house. Her husband, who owned the restaurant in which she worked hard for over 25 years, died five years ago. This is why the first-person narrator as an obedient son is now responsible for his mother's well-being.