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**(RE)CONSTRUCTED ELOQUENCE:
RHETORICAL AND PRAGMATIC STRATEGIES
IN THE SPEECHES OF NATIVE AMERICANS AS REPORTED
BY NINETEENTH-CENTURY COMMENTATORS**

Abstract

This paper aims to discuss some rhetorical and pragmatic strategies that occur in the speeches of Native Americans as reported by nineteenth-century commentators. The materials under investigation range from reports in journals to speeches published in books. While such texts cannot of course be discussed as authentic materials *strictu sensu*, as speeches were transcribed, translated, and finally edited by Euro-American authors, they may nonetheless prove of great interest on account of their multiple significance: on the one hand commentators stress their validity and authenticity; on the other, they highlight the ‘quaintness’ of certain turns of phrases in the speeches they offer to their reading public, thus showing the (increasing) cultural distance of their subjects.¹

Key words

Nineteenth-century English; Native Americans; pragmatics; rhetoric; authenticity

There is no distinction in Indian society so much appreciated
as the reputation of being a good orator.
(Schoolcraft 1857: 678)

**1. Some background notes: the representation of native americans
in nineteenth-century diaries, correspondence and art**

In the nineteenth century, after the romanticization of the Highlands of Scotland begun with Macpherson’s Ossian and emphasized by Sir Walter Scott and

other writers,² a similar process of idealization gained momentum in relation to the American West,³ a constantly advancing ‘frontier’ in which the creation of myths was supported by countless ‘dime novels’, emigration guides, promotional publications and even shows, such as – most famously – ‘Buffalo’ Bill Cody’s.⁴ Paintings and photographs also helped this process: the work of Joseph K. Dixon (1845–1923) and Edward S. Curtis (1868–1952) contributed greatly to the construction of the Indian as a ‘vanishing race’ (Cartosio 2010), sometimes even manipulating images.⁵

More objective views could be assumed to occur in factual writing; however, a close reading of the texts shows how indebted they are to the ideology of the times and to the expectations of the reading public. On the one hand, such texts are claimed to be authentic, reliable accounts, as title pages often stress their derivation from personal experience – see, for instance, Ruxton (1848) or Schoolcraft (1851); on the other hand, their linguistic choices reflect the bias of both authors and readers in relation to the cultural framework they are depicting, and the one in which they place themselves. Assumed authenticity is emphasized by means of traits that were presumably perceived to be particularly exotic; indeed, the interventions of scribes, translators and editors – whether admittedly or not – condition the stylistic quality of the texts, the rhetorical patterns of which are shown to be both admirable and ‘quaint’, thus meeting the expectations of the readers, whom commentators have informed about native oratory, often in explicitly evaluative terms.

These phenomena are particularly interesting to study in the texts in which nineteenth-century commentators report the speeches of Native Americans, as these are obviously not quoted verbatim, but are translated and almost certainly rephrased. As Bellin (2000: 6) aptly indicates, “it is imperative to recognize that Indian ‘voices’ in American texts exist in translation – by which I mean not only that they have been transmitted in an alien modality and languages, but that they have been shaped by the visions and ideologies of Euro-America.” It is of course beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the linguistic reliability of the transcriptions and translations (a topic already debated by Merrell 2006, Guthrie 2007, and Merrell 2013: 60–63; on issues of authenticity concerning the statements of Native Americans see also McNenly 2014); what is considered to be of greater interest here is the way in which rhetorical and pragmatic strategies that are seen to occur in the texts enable us to study how attitude is conveyed to the readership.

While in familiar letters references to Native Americans are very few and rather generic (see Dossena 2013), in book-length texts explanations are much more extensive: see for instance Macaulay (1872),⁶ Carnegie (1875), Campbell (1876), Stevenson (1892) and Simpson (1903). Campbell (1876) even supplements his text with drawings and sketches of the native people he meets while travelling west from Missouri to Oregon. Carnegie (1875) also narrates various incidents involving Native Americans, but his scope is restricted to the territories of the Hudson’s Bay Company, and only pictures of objects are presented, among which Cree syllabic characters stand out for their linguistic interest. The earlier text by

Macaulay (1872) had not provided specific information on Native Americans, except for a passing reference on the amicability of the first relations with English settlers:

At Philadelphia, as at Boston, I was upon old classical and historical ground. [...] The first English settlement here was not, as elsewhere, achieved by violence and treachery, but by amicable arrangement with the Indian possessors of the soil, and a blessing seems to have descended upon the successors of the early peaceful settlers. (Macaulay 1872: 302)

Campbell found the Indians he saw “exceedingly unlike the Indians of my reading” (1876: 40), thus highlighting the discrepancy existing between literary representations and reality, and gave much greater attention to portraits of individuals and group scenes, though always as “picturesque objects”:

At the Missouri I fell in with my first Indians. I stalked, and tried to trap an old Pawnee woman. As soon as she twigged what I was about she covered up her towsey black hair and skedaddled. [...] She was very wild and picturesque, and far too quick to be caught flying with a pencil unawares. She came from the reservations to the North. A still more picturesque boy, in red tights, with a bow and blunt arrows, wanted to shoot coins, and so far as I know continues to want. Neither understood English. (Campbell 1876: 40)

Campbell’s notes also provide touches of authenticity when spoken language is introduced, albeit as a curiosity, like in the following case:

At Fremont more Indians came about the train with papers, begging: ‘John is a good Indian; give him a dime.’ As none of them would let me draw them, I got old John, and wrote the numerals. Here they are, as near as I can spell by ear. (Campbell 1876: 40)⁷

The image of Indian beggars is indeed in sharp contrast with that of ‘savage warriors’ that much popular literature liked to depict. Robert Louis Stevenson presented the following scene, probably not unlike many other ones across the Continent:

I saw no wild or independent Indian; indeed, I hear that such avoid the neighbourhood of the train; but now and again at way-stations, a husband and wife and a few children, disgracefully dressed out with the sweepings of civilisation, came forth and stared upon the emigrants. The silent stoicism of their conduct, and the pathetic degradation of their appearance, would have touched any thinking creature, but my fellow-passengers danced and jested round them with a truly Cockney baseness. (Stevenson 1892: 66–67)

Tappan Adney, who toured New Brunswick, Quebec and Nova Scotia in the years 1887-1890, reports two versions of a begging woman's words, among other snatches of "Injun conversation": "Spose mebbe you give me some flour. Take pity on squaw? I eat my last breakfast this mornin' [...] Take pity on squaw, give me some flour, I eat my las' breakfas' this morning" (Behne 2010: 35).⁸

In fact, not all commentators had an idyllic or sympathetic view of aboriginal life: Sproat, defending the right of "civilized settlers [...] to occupy the land of a savage people" (1868: 281), claimed that "the experience of the Jesuits in California, and of the earliest settlers in the American and British territories on the North Pacific, affords proof of the tendency of the savages to extinction, even before white people went amongst them" (1868: 274-275). Sproat supported his argument citing the first fur traders of New Caledonia, whose words he purports to "have heard from their own lips, or from those well acquainted with these pioneers" (1868: 275). On the other hand, Sproat found that contact with colonists was definitely nefarious, as at that stage 'improvement' was very difficult, *pace* the arguments made by Elias Boudinot in 1826, for whom print and education were primary means to that end (see Alves 2009: 68-69):

It is a change not to civilization, but to that abased civilization which is, in reality, worse than barbarism itself. He [the Indian] is a vain, idle offensive creature, from whom one turns away with a preference for the thorough savage in his isolated condition" (Sproat 1868: 285).

In statements like Sproat's there is a somewhat contradictory attitude to culture which is reflected in an equally ambivalent attitude to language: despite strenuous attempts to 'civilize', the condition of savages is deemed to be preferable, as that allows them to be 'noble savages'. In the same way, their (re)constructed 'natural eloquence' is exalted, despite the impossibility for the reading public (and perhaps for the compilers too) to access it in its original form.

2. The representation of language

The instances of authentic discourse presented by Campbell and Adney show a rather idiosyncratic use of self-reference in the third person singular, as if the level of competence attained by these speakers in English were actually rather limited, despite the aims of reservation and mission schools.⁹ In fact, the degradation of native populations owed much to schooling; in Simpson's brief report of a visit to a school on a reservation in the White Rolling Bluffs of Missouri, a supposedly amusing list of exotic names is provided, before informing readers that the children also have 'modern' names, on the sneering quality of which there is little doubt:

When the school had assembled the first thing done was to call the roll: a list of names such as Maneater, Young Snake, Little Hawk, Good Chief,

Sawn Egg, White Breast, Big Bear, Tabow, Arm broke, Sportman, Snowball, Rainbow, White Wolf, etc. The children were given modern names such as Washington, Victor Hugo, Daniel Webster, Oliver Goldsmith, Napoleon Bonaparte, etc. (Simpson 1903: 170)

Indeed, names have always been a crucial element in the definition of social and cultural identity, and it may be interesting to observe that in Dixon's 'account' of the last Great Indian Council, held in the valley of the Little Horn, Montana, in September 1909, the protagonists are presented "with their English, tribal, and Indian designations" – a few instances are given below:

CHIEF PLENTY COUPS, Chief of the Crow Nation, bearing the Indian name of Aleck-shea-Ahoos, signifying Many Achievements. [...]

CHIEF TIMBO, OR HAIRLESS, Head Chief of the Comanche Tribe, bearing the Indian name of Tah-cha-chi. [...]

CHIEF TIN-TIN-MEET-SA, Chief of the Umatilla Tribe, bearing the Indian name of Wil-Lou-Skin.

CHIEF RUNS-THE-ENEMY, Chief of the Teton Sioux, bearing the Indian name of Tok-kahin-hpe-ya. [...]

CHIEF RED CLOUD, Chief of the Ogallalla Sioux, bearing the Indian name of Marpiya-Luta.

CHIEF TWO MOONS, Head Chief of the Northern Cheyennes, bearing the Indian name of Ish-hayu-Nishus, meaning Two Moons or Two Suns.

(Dixon 1913: i)

Throughout Dixon's book, however, only the English names are employed, possibly to facilitate readers, but definitely showing little concern for native identity. Critical attitudes to native identity could also emerge in comments on the legendary origins of native peoples; Simpson, for instance, says the following of the Cherokees:

Their language is much the same as the Dakotas. The earliest known migration of the Dakotas was from the East. Shall we therefore trace both the Dakotas and Cherokees to Auld Scotland and make the route of their emigration by way of Iceland and the coast of Labrador?

Perhaps the strongest argument against this assumption is that had Scottish blood run through their veins they would have kept a better grip on their possessions. (Simpson 1903: 178)

Simpson's comment on the potential connection between Scots and Native Americans sounds grimly ironic when we consider that keeping "a grip on their possessions" had been extremely difficult for Scottish farmers at the time of the Highland Clearances; the link, however, may have brought a smile to the lips of readers who were probably unaware of the previous century's events, but took pride in their Scottish ancestry.

Other commentators stressed the supposed ‘purity’ of Indian languages by associating them with the conservative nature of immigrant languages and indeed of Scots Gaelic:

The Highlanders of Scotland, [...], are of a different origin with their more southern neighbours; and their language, which is likewise radically different, they have preserved in its purity, notwithstanding their union by local situation and intermarriages. In every part of the new world where these Highlanders have made settlements, the Gaelic is spoken as purely almost as it came from the lips of Ossian; under similar circumstances, therefore, the Indians have been able to retain the languages of their respective progenitors. The same can be said of the Irish, Germans, and Dutch who have emigrated to America. (McIntosh 1853: 96)

Analogies with other languages were also outlined in an attempt to provide a more accessible picture: Campbell, for instance, describes the phonological rendition of a native conversation in the Puget Sound area in the following terms:

An old woman, clicking as men click when they talk in the Caucasus and at the Cape of Good Hope, with strange grunts and gutturals for language, chattered. The men grinned. They were the ugliest set of mortals that ever I saw. (Campbell 1876: 111–112)

Commentators tried to express their evaluations of native languages on the basis of what they could presuppose their readers to recognize and understand. McIntosh calls Algonquin “the Italian of the western continent” on account of its vowel system, and relies on positive qualifiers which were not infrequent in elocution manuals, in order to stress traits that were seen to be characteristic of ‘proper’ languages: elegance, harmony, “richness of expression, [...] variety of turns, [...] propriety of terms, and [...] regularity”:

The *Algonquin* language has not so much force as the *Huron*, but it has more sweetness and elegance, and may with great propriety be denominated the Italian of the western continent; for it abounds with vowels, which renders it soft, musical, and harmonious. Both the *Algonquin* and the *Huron* have a richness of expression, a variety of turns, a propriety of terms, and a regularity which seldom prevails in some of the more cultivated languages of Europe. (McIntosh 1853: 93–94)

While Campbell talks about “strange grunts and gutturals”, McIntosh suggests comparisons with “the more cultivated languages of Europe” – an attempt to grant propriety to otherwise ‘barbarian’ languages through analogy with familiar idioms. Schoolcraft had even called Algonquin “the court language of the Indian” (1857: 673), thus applying Euro-American models of ‘politeness’ and so-

ciolinguistic evaluation in his emphasis on “copiousness of expression” (1857: 683):¹⁰

The general tone of conversation is more elevated in point of thought, than among any analogous class of people in civilized life. The diction is simple and pure; and hence, the most common sentences of their speakers, when literally translated, are remarkably attractive. Exalted and disinterested sentiments are frequently expressed by their sententious polysyllables with a happy effect. In attempts to unravel the intricacies of its syntax, the mind is often led to wonder where a people so literally “peeled and scattered,” should have derived, not the language itself, but the principles which govern its enunciation. (Schoolcraft 1857: 684)

Debate on the origins of languages had been very lively since the seventeenth century, and both the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries had witnessed a tremendous increase in the interest in what nowadays we call philology, particularly as regards the genealogical relationships among languages (see Dossena 2006: 56–63). The attempt to find connections between ‘savage’ languages and ‘civilized’ ones was often strenuous (see, among others, Read 2005: 120). In particular, as regards Native American languages, commentators often highlighted the perceived links with Hebrew, the prestige and antiquity of which enhanced the status of every language with which it was associated:

The Indian language and dialects appear to have the very idiom and genius of the Hebrew. Their words and sentences being expressive, concise, emphatical, sonorous, and bold, and often, both in letters and signification, are synonymous with the Hebrew language (Fisher 1812: 220).

Indeed, these languages had elicited the very early interest of missionaries, whose need to communicate effectively had led them to draw up grammars and dictionaries (see Eliot 1666; Stevens 1956 and Swiggers 2009). At the same time, complimentary observations also concerned comparisons with Latin and Greek. Lossing, discussing the eloquence of “Our Barbarian Brethren”, cited the French Jesuit Pierre de Charlevoix (1682–1761) to draw an explicit parallelism with the Classical world:

Their harangues are full of shining passages which would have been applauded at Rome or Athens. Their eloquence has a strength, nature, and pathos which no art can give, and which the Greeks admired in the barbarians. (Lossing 1870: 801)

Similarly, Sorber (1972: 232) quotes witnesses according to whom the Iroquois are “polished orators, virtually heroes out of Homer” and have an “Attic elegance of diction”; as for Decanesora, among his countrymen, the Onondagas,

“as among those of Quintilian”, eloquence was supposed to be directly correlated to virtue – see also Anon. (1836: 385, 390). It was the kind of remarks that enabled Euro-Americans to stress the quality of ‘Indian eloquence’ – an appreciation which was not devoid of ideological connotations, as shown by Guthrie (2007): what could have been legitimate political discourse was shifted onto a level of literary appreciation, thus changing its textual status altogether and pre-empting any argumentative value. Indeed, the anonymous author of *Indian Eloquence* did express a certain degree of embarrassment about the situation:

Turn to Red Jacket’s graphic description of the fraud which has purloined their territory, and shame mingles somewhat with our pity.

(Anon. 1836: 389)

The appeal of the brave warrior, his sublime style, various specimens of which are provided in the text, are stressed by the author as valuable sources of empathy:

The genius of eloquence bursts the swathing bands of custom, and the Indian stands forth accessible, natural, and legible. We commune with him, listen to his complaints, understand, appreciate, and even feel his injuries.

(Anon. 1836: 385)

Like Sproat, this article gives voice to a paradoxical attitude not unlike the ‘Pinkerton syndrome’ that had concerned Scots in the previous century – see McClure (1985):¹¹ an idealized, distant, literary image is much more acceptable than real life. Speeches were thus reported on the basis of the approach to oratory that was current in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America, according to which native languages conveyed “natural eloquence” (see Clements 1996: 97–98 and 2002),¹² nor was praise restrained, though in terms that are distinctly reminiscent of the pre-Romantic fascination with graveyard scenes:

Expression apt and pointed – language strong and figurative – comparisons rich and bold – descriptions correct and picturesque – and gesture energetic and graceful, were the most striking peculiarities of their [the Indians’] speeches. The latter orations, accurate mirrors of their character, their bravery, immovable stoicism, and native grandeur, heightened as they are in impressiveness by the melancholy accompaniment of approaching extermination, will be as enduring as the swan-like music of Attic and Roman eloquence, which was the funeral song of the liberties of those republics.

(Anon. 1836: 390)

On the other hand, as Gustafson (2000) illustrates, oratory did play a very important part in the religious life, government, and diplomacy of native populations, as eloquence projected power and authority; Schoolcraft pointed out:

There is no distinction in Indian society so much appreciated as the reputation of being a good orator. [...] It is doubtful whether any man, born beyond the precincts of the wigwam, or not reared under the influence of the Indian council-fire, has ever attained to perfection in speaking the Indian language, [...] and revelling, so to say, in the exfoliation of its exuberant transpository expressions. I have witnessed the effects of its stirring appeals in the brightening eyes of an excited auditory, as the speaker directed their thoughts to themes of thrilling interest. He seemed to move their hearts with such a talismanic power, that they were ready to seize the lance and rush forth to a perilous encounter, without allowing a controlling thought to restrain them. (Schoolcraft 1857: 678)

A linguistic analysis of such texts thus promises to be very fruitful; in the next sections a sample of them will be taken into consideration, in order to identify the main strategies with which they convey both reliability and uniqueness.

3. 'Indian eloquence' reported

Though many speeches are very critical of the Euro-Americans' behaviour and policies, they were nonetheless presented to the public on account of their supposedly unpredicted beauty from the rhetorical point of view. Besides, an ideological reading of such texts proved invaluable once the so-called Indian Wars were virtually over. Dixon's report of the last council (1913: 188–215) is of course the literary representation of a fabrication: the praise heaped on Dixon himself and 'Uncle Sam' does sound like flattery; however, the book exploited metaphors that had almost become stereotypical, and thus functioned as overt markers of authenticity, such as we see in the following excerpts:

The ashes had cooled in the bowl of the council pipe, when, at the head of the circle, Chief Plenty Coups, chief of all the Crow Nation, arose from his blankets, laid down his coup stick, and addressed his brothers:

"The ground on which we stand is sacred ground. It is the dust and blood of our ancestors. On these plains the Great White Father at Washington sent his soldiers armed with long knives and rifles to slay the Indian. Many of them sleep on yonder hill where Pahaska—White Chief of the Long Hair—so bravely fought and fell. A few more passing suns will see us here no more, and our dust and bones will mingle with these same prairies. [...]. The white man's medicine is stronger than ours; his iron horse rushes over the buffalo trail. He talks to us through his 'whispering spirit.' (The Indian's name for the telegraph and telephone.) We are like birds with a broken wing. My heart is cold within me. My eyes are growing dim—I am old. Before our red brothers pass on to the happy hunting ground let us bury the tomahawk. Let us break our arrows. Let us wash off our war paint in the river. [...]."

Memories of tribal tragedies, of old camping places, of the coming of the white man, of broken treaties, of the advent of the soldiers—all thronged for recognition; the wigwam around which happy children and the merry round of life sped on, the old men, their counsellors and friends, who had gone into the spirit land, and now this was to be the last, the very last council. The heart grows tense with emotion as they break the silence, and in Indian fashion chief looks into the face of chief, and, without an uttered word, they pass one by one through the doorway that leads to a land without a horizon. (Dixon 1913: 188–189, 214–215)

Although the advent of European pioneers is judged very positively, it is nonetheless with sadness that an idea of inevitable loss runs through the comments: imperialist nostalgia is thus made to be expressed by the victims themselves in words which readers could see as credible. As a matter of fact, a mode of communication rich in metaphors had already characterized the speech presented by Samuel Johnson nearly two centuries before:

I have often heard from men hoary with long life, that there was a time when our ancestors were absolute lords of the woods, the meadows and the lakes, wherever the eye can reach or the foot can pass. [...] Many years and ages are supposed to have been thus passed in plenty and security; when, at last, a new race of men entered our country from the great ocean. [...] Those invaders ranged over the continent slaughtering, in their rage, those that resisted, and those that submitted, in their mirth. Of those that remained, some were buried in caverns, and condemned to dig metals for their masters; some were employed in tilling the ground, of which foreign tyrants devour the produce; and, when the sword and the mines have destroyed the natives, they supply their place by human beings of another colour, brought from some distant country to perish here under toil and torture. [...] They have a written law among them, of which they boast, as derived from Him who made the earth and sea, and by which they profess to believe that man will be made happy when life shall forsake him. Why is not this law communicated to us? It is concealed because it is violated. For how can they preach it to an Indian nation, when I am told that one of its first precepts forbids them to do to others what they would not that others should do to them?

(Johnson 1759)

Throughout the nineteenth century, various publications presented texts in which the ‘eloquence’ of Native chiefs and orators was supposed to be reproduced. The materials under investigation in this study range from reports in journals to speeches published in books and magazine articles: among these, special attention is given to McIntosh (1853: 267–301), whose title page specifically mentions his aim to present “The origins of the North American Indians: with a faithful description of their manners and customs, both civil and military, their religions,

languages, dress, and ornaments [...] concluding with a copious selection of Indian speeches, the antiquities of America, the civilization of the Mexicans, and some final observations on the origin of the Indians".¹³ The list of items taken into consideration highlights the book's varied range of interests, which spans antiquarianism, history, archaeology and ethnography. Among such interests, speeches also feature as artefacts worth studying, and provide an essential testimony on which the author expects readers to rely. In McIntosh's (1853) collection the speakers are identified by their original names, by their anglicized names, by their national affiliation, or by a combination of these. In most cases (14 out of 18) the recipients, whether in person or by proxy, are white agents, missionaries or governors; four speeches, instead, are said to have been delivered in council or are addressed to other nations. As for the topics under discussion, they typically concern land sales, treaties and the relationships with other nations and/or French or English or US agents, though issues like religion and ethical concerns are also considered; finally, the collection includes one surrender speech (Black Hawk's).

As we saw above, authenticity is debatable; however, these speeches represented – for both the reporters and their readers – a highly exotic culture, and that makes them particularly useful to study the way in which rhetorical constructions show a certain degree of ambivalence: on the one hand the texts tend to reflect the 'quaintness' of certain turns of phrases, thus highlighting their supposed authenticity; on the other, their ideology is made acceptable to the readers through skilful use of the very same rhetorical models.

In order to investigate this research question, my analysis first took a corpus-based approach, in which speech acts and syntactic forms were tagged manually; subsequently, a closer, qualitative study was undertaken; in what follows my discussion will centre on forms of address and (self-)reference; authenticating vocabulary and the description of gesture in both representation and peroration; and metaphors and metacommunicative moves. These features were selected on account of their relative frequency and of their pragmatic viability.

Basic data concerning the texts in McIntosh (1853: 267–301) are given in Table 1 below, as a case study.

| Speaker | Nation | Addressee | Place | Year | Notes ¹⁴ | Topic |
|-----------------|----------|-------------------|----------|------|--|--|
| Logan | Iroquois | Lord Dunmore | Virginia | 1744 | | Relationship with Euro-Americans |
| Iroquois Chiefs | Iroquois | Queen Anne | Nd | Nd | London 1710 ¹⁵ | Anglo-French war |
| Half-King | Seneca | Moravian Indians | Nd | Nd | Gnadenhütten 11 Aug. 1781 [Drake 1837: 59] | Invitation to follow him to Canada |
| Petchenanas | Delaware | Friends + kinsmen | Nd | Nd | 1781 [Drake 1833: 43] | Support of the English in the Am. Revolution |

| Speaker | Nation | Addressee | Place | Year | Notes ¹⁴ | Topic |
|------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|------------------|------|--|--|
| Capt. Pipe (Hopocan) | Delaware | British commandant | Nd | Nd | During Am. Revolution [Drake 1837: 86] | Support of the English |
| Little Turtle | Miami | M. Volney | Nd | Nd | Philadelphia 1797 [Young 1917: 144] | Wish to return home |
| Red Jacket ¹⁶ (Saguaha) | Seneca | Missionary | Nd | Nd | council of chiefs of the Six Nations 1805 [Ganter 2006: 138] | Religion |
| Red Jacket (Saguaha) | Seneca | Court | Nd | Nd | near Buffalo 1821 [Ganter 2006: 231] | Witchcraft |
| Farmer's Brother | Seneca | Council | Genesee River | 1798 | | Interpreters' rewards |
| Cornplanter | Seneca | Pres. Washington | Philadelphia | 1790 | | Land |
| Tecumseh | Shawnee | Gov. Harrison | Vincennes | 1810 | | Land |
| Black Thunder | Meskwaki | American Commissioners | Portage | 1815 | | Self-defence |
| Metea | Pottawattomie | Gov. Cass | Chicago | Nd | [1821] ¹⁷ | Land |
| Keewtoughskum | Ottawa | Nd | Chicago | 1821 | | Negotiation of trade |
| Black Hawk | Sauk | Agent | Prairie du Chien | Nd | 1832 ¹⁸ | Surrender |
| Onondagas + Cayugas | | Govs. of Virginia + New York | Nd | Nd | 1684 [Colden 1747] | Relationship with Canada + other nations |
| Canassatego | Onondaga | Council | Philadelphia | 1742 | | Land |
| Gachradodow | Seneca | Governor | Lancaster | 1744 | | Land |

Table 1. Data concerning speeches in McIntosh (1853: 267–301) – names and place names given in the original spelling

McIntosh's chapter on speeches includes a total of 13700 words, 17% of which consist of authorial and supplementary comments.¹⁹ The remaining 83% of the text is devoted to the speeches themselves, representing different speakers and nations in varying percentages, as shown in Table 2 below.

| Nation | Words | % | Speakers | % |
|-------------------|-------|-----|----------|-----|
| Seneca | 3144 | 28 | 5 | 29 |
| Onondaga / Cayuga | 2873 | 25 | 2 | 12 |
| Delaware | 1120 | 10 | 2 | 12 |
| Pottawottomie | 824 | 7 | 1 | 6 |
| Sauk | 763 | 7 | 1 | 6 |
| Iroquois | 695 | 6 | 2 | 12 |
| Ottawa | 644 | 6 | 1 | 6 |
| Meskwaki | 558 | 5 | 1 | 6 |
| Shawnee | 533 | 5 | 1 | 6 |
| Miami | 184 | 2 | 1 | 6 |
| Tot. | 11338 | 100 | 17 | 100 |

Table 2. Distribution of text and speakers in McIntosh (1853: 267–301)

Obviously, samples are not sufficiently large to enable conclusive identification of patterns relating to specific nations or speakers. The book, however, is not meant to cater for this kind of specific ethno-linguistic interest, but simply to offer readers an overview of usage. Even so, the Seneca nation is represented with the longest sequence of speeches and the highest number of speakers; among these is Red Jacket, whose answer to a missionary is defined “perhaps, the chef d’oeuvre of Indian oratory” (McIntosh 1853: 275). Indeed, in all these texts authorial evaluations occur consistently in relation to both language and culture: McIntosh (1853: 95) praises the Hurons’ greater propensity to cultivate the land, and thus attributes to them a higher degree of civilization; on the other hand, he is critical of their ‘confused ideas’ concerning religion and the cultivation of the arts. Schoolcraft, instead, discusses the use of dubitative forms not quite as a politeness strategy, but as a superstitious way to avoid offence to the dead:

The Indian is, at all times, a being of fears. [...] . This trait is traceable even in his linguistic forms. He fears to be held to account, or to be misapprehended; and when he recites what he thinks a spirit might overhear and condemn, he omits particulars which would give offence, or invents dubitative forms. (Schoolcraft 1857: 674)

Indeed, respect for the dead is shown to affect word formation:

There is a delicate mode of alluding to the dead, without mentioning the word death. It is done simply by suffixing the particle of the perfect past tense, *bun*, to the deceased person’s name. Thus, “Pontiac;” the nominative, *Pontiac-ebun*, “the late Pontiac.” (Schoolcraft 1857: 682)

Affixation is also discussed in relation to place names, always a topic of interest when an exotic world is concerned:

The accumulation of auxiliary ideas is not always, to European ears, productive of poetic sounds; but, in our geographical nomenclature, this object is so often attained, as to have ensured universal admiration. The names of Ontario and Niagara, Peoria and Missouri, Ticonderoga and Talladega, will long continue to impart a pleasing cadence of sounds in our geographical terminations, when the people who first bestowed them shall have passed away. An analysis of these names develops a singularly terse mode of combination, of which the term Ontario may be taken as an example. In this word, the syllable *on* is the radix for “hill” and “mountain,” characteristic of some parts of its shores. *Tar* is from *dar*, the radix for “rocks standing in water;” and *io*, the felicitous termination of a compound term for “the beautiful [rock] in a water landscape,” which is heard also in the word Ohio. These particles are Iroquois. [...] If two consonants or two vowels come in contact in these accretions, one must be dispensed with; for there is no orthographical law more generally observed in syllabification than the one which directs that, for the sake of euphony, a vowel must either precede or follow a consonant. Where two vowels coalesce, as the ultimate and penultimate, they are pronounced as open vowels, and independent members of the sentence. Hence the rhythm of the language. Such words as Ontario, Oswego, Chicago, Potomac, Alabama, and Monongahela, are examples of this peculiarity. (Schoolcraft 1857: 676, 679)

4. Conveying authenticity

In what follows examples are offered of different strategies employed by commentators to stress the reliability and uniqueness of their documents. Instances will be derived from different sources and will be discussed in relation to context and pragmatic value.

In pragmatics, self-validation is a key issue for both speakers and receivers, which implies that person deixis plays a crucial part in the construction of face, whether of self or other (see Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013). As we saw above, in stereotypical representations Native Americans refer to themselves in the third-person singular (see also Anon. 1854), which conveys a salient shift, as subject and referent do not coincide. This is unlike what is actually witnessed in official documents, such as the reports of Indian Affairs Commissioners: for instance, in the report of a visit to Red Cloud and chiefs of the Ogallala Sioux by Commissioner Felix R. Brunot, (dated June 14, 1871), Red Cloud is shown to use the first-person singular subject (see NADP Document R871003).

In the accounts taken into consideration for this study, instead, the orators may refer to themselves using the first or the third person singular or the first person plural (when referring to their people as a collective entity). Indeed, in Logan’s speech first and third person singular pronouns are used simultaneously:

I appeal to any white man to say, if ever he entered Logan's cabin hungry, and he gave him not meat; if ever he came cold and naked, and he clothed him not. [...] I had even thought to have lived with you, but for the injuries of one man, Colonel Cresap, the last spring, in cold blood, and unprovoked, murdered all the relations of Logan, not even sparing my women and children. [...] Logan never felt fear. He will not turn on his heel to save his life. Who is there to mourn for Logan? Not one! (McIntosh 1853: 268)

As for recipients, these are identified as *brothers*, *brethren*, *cousins* or *kinsmen* if they are from other nations or if the relationship can afford to be more direct, such as in the case of Red Jacket answering the missionary, who is always addressed as 'brother'; in other cases, the relationship between native people and Euro-Americans is represented to be a filial one, with the former being the 'children'. Indeed, Barsh (1993: 102) discusses the shift from 'children' to 'brothers' on the part of the 'Great White Father', i.e. the American President, and it is Red Jacket again who summarizes how natives were often cheated out of their lands by somebody who – with tragic irony – called them 'brothers':

They asked for a small seat; we took pity on them, granted their request, and they sat down among us; we gave them corn and meat; they gave us poison in return. The white people had now found our country, tidings were carried back, and more came among us, yet we did not fear them, we took them to be friends; they called us brothers; we believed them, and gave them a larger seat. (McIntosh 1853: 276)

This quotation provides an important comment on diverging semantic values: while natives assumed lexical items to convey what they appeared to signify, their counterparts behaved in contrary and unexpected ways, hence the disappointment and sense of betrayal conveyed in the passage. Indeed, vocabulary plays a key role in the validation of propositions: for this reason, borrowed words, loan translations and borrowed meanings will be discussed in the next paragraphs.

As discussed by Dossena (2001), the occurrence of native vocabulary can function as a very powerful authenticating device; in the speeches under investigation here, similar uses are observed in relation to "wigwam words" (Lepore 2001), i.e., native lexical items that function as overt markers of cultural identity. These are not normally translated, though they could be, like in the case of the fairly numerous references to 'the Great Spirit', instead of 'God'. The mention of 'squaws and papooses', instead of 'women and children', or of 'the great water (where the sun rises)', i.e. the ocean, contributes to the preservation of the texts' exotic flavour. Together with borrowed words, loan translations and borrowed meanings also contribute to stylistic effect; the former, however, may be seen to have greater impact, on account of their supposedly unique semantic value.

Exotic forms of communication are also highlighted when different pragmatic strategies are discussed. Sincerity and trustworthiness, for instance, may be en-

coded by the donation of skins – in the instance quoted below, a beaver skin is presented as a memory token, while the “two white dressed deer skins” are expected to form the support on which an agreement is to be written and sealed:

We give these two white dressed deer skins to send to the great Sachem, that he may write on them, and put a great red seal to them, to confirm what we now do, and put the Susquehanna River and all the rest of our land under the great Duke of York [...]. We desire you therefore to bear witness of what we do now, and that we now confirm what we have done before; let your friend that lives on the other side of the great lake, know this, that we, being free people, though united to the English, and may give our land to the Sachem we like best; we give this beaver to remember what we say.

(McIntosh 1853: 291, 292)

Skins can also be donated as rewards, as in the next example – a relatively familiar gesture in which gratitude is signified by gifts:

We esteem our present interpreter to be such a person, equally faithful in the interpretation of whatever is said to him by either of us, equally allied to both; he is of our nation, and a member of our council, as well as of yours. [...]. In return for these services we recommend him to your generosity; and on our own behalf we give him five skins to buy him clothes and shoes.

(McIntosh 1853: 299)

Even more significant from the pragmatic point of view is the case of wampum belts, which are used to validate the predication itself – see Merrell (2013: 63-65):

as a token of the sincerity of the Six Nations, we do here, in the name of all, present our great queen, with the belts of wampum. [...] “To confirm to you that we will see your request executed, we lay down this string of wampum in return for yours.” Then turning to the Delawares, holding a belt of wampum in his hand, he spoke to them as follows: [...]. This string of wampum serves to forbid you, your children, and grandchildren to the latest posterity, for ever, meddling in land affairs; neither you, nor any who shall descend from you, are ever hereafter to presume to sell any land; for which purpose you are to preserve this string, in memory of what your uncles have this day given you in charge. (McIntosh 1853: 270, 296, 297)

McIntosh then illustrates the use and importance of wampum in a footnote to Colden’s text:

Wampum is the current money among the Indians; it is of two sorts, white and purple: the white is worked out of the insides of the great Congues into the form of a bead, and perforated, so as to be strung on leather; the purple

is worked out of the inside of the muscle shell. They are wove as broad as one's hand, and about two feet long: these they call belts, and give and receive them at their treaties, as the seals of friendship. For lesser motives a single string is given; every bead is of a known value; and a belt of a less number is made to equal one of a greater, by so many as are wanted being fastened to the belt by a string. (McIntosh 1853: 303)

Other objects also contribute to the validation of the message, though in a less formal way: their presence boosts the predication, but does not have a performative value *per se*. This is the case, for instance, of a chief addressing his listeners while holding a stick to which a scalp is fastened; though at first it may only seem a gruesome prop, the relevance of the object becomes clear later on in the text:

In his [Hopocan's] left hand was a short stick to which was fastened a scalp. He arose, and spoke as follows: "Father, [...], some time ago, you put a war hatchet into my hands, saying, 'Take this weapon and try it on the heads of my enemies, the Long Knives, and let me afterwards know if it was sharp and good.' [...]. Now, Father, here is what has been done with the hatchet you gave me, (with these words he handed the stick to the commandant, with the scalp upon it. (McIntosh 1853: 272–273)

The representation of gesture is indeed a powerful indicator of textual reliability: it suggests that the narrator is reporting eye-witness accounts of rhetorical events.²⁰ Among these, perhaps most famously, there is smoking a pipe; in the following instance, smoking together bears witness to the sincerity of the participants and is interpreted as a sign of good will on both parts; the ritual is expected to dispel animosity like smoke is expected to vanish into air:

I smoke this pipe in evidence of my sincerity. If you are sincere, you will receive it from me. My only desire is, that we should smoke it together [...]. When this pipe touches your lip, may it operate as a blessing upon all my tribe. May the smoke rise like a cloud, and carry away with it all the animosities which have arisen between us. (McIntosh 1853: 284–285)

In addition, metacommunicative moves also occur in many speeches, almost framing predications so as to enhance their memorable quality by making their performativity explicit (see Busse and Hübler 2012) – see the following quotation:

We have now made known to you our minds. We expect and earnestly request that you will permit our friends to receive this our gift, and will make the same good to them, according to the laws and customs of your nation. [...] remember what we have announced to the complaints of the Governor of Canada; yea, we wish that what we here said, may come to his ears.
(McIntosh 1853: 280, 295)

In such cases rhetorical moves acquire a trait of novelty which is likely to prove of interest, particularly for educated readers, familiar with those strategies that had been in use since classical times: exclamations, exhortations, and rhetorical questions. In the speeches presented by McIntosh (1853), these strategies of classical oratory do occur, but alongside them instances of metacommunication shed new light on predications, thus making them both more exotic and – at the same time – more credible.

In addition, the commentators discussed in this study agreed that what made Indian eloquence so special was its use of metaphors. Paradoxically, this was attributed to a certain lexical poverty; however, eloquence was praised already in introductory paragraphs, such as in the example below:

Old Chief Seattle was the largest Indian I ever saw and by far the noblest looking. [...] When rising to speak in council all eyes were turned upon him, and deep-toned, sonorous and eloquent sentences rolled from his lips like the thunders of cataracts flowing from exhaustless fountains.

(Bierwert 1998: 285)²¹

As for uses in texts attributed to Native speakers, some metaphors have crystallized and actually occur in present-day English; it is the case, for instance, of references to the war hatchet, the famous ‘tomahawk’, which can be raised or buried, depending on whether war or peace is declared. More interesting metaphors concern the sun, the varying brightness of which may epitomize war or peace, defeat or victory:

Friend and Brother, it was the will of the Great Spirit that we should meet together this day. He orders all things, and he has given us a fine day for our council. He has taken his garment from before the sun, and caused it to shine with brightness on us. [...] My warriors fell around me; it began to look dismal. I saw my evil day at hand. The sun rose dim on us in the morning, and at night it sank in a dark cloud, and looked like a ball of fire. That was the last sun that shone on Black Hawk. (McIntosh 1853: 275, 289)

In addition to clear skies, peace can also be represented as ‘a bright chain’ that both parties are expected to maintain in pristine condition or indeed make stronger:

Now we have a new chain, a strong and a straight chain that can not be broken; the tree of peace is planted so firmly, that it cannot be removed; let us on both sides hold the chain fast. (McIntosh 1853: 292–293)

Armies, instead, can be represented metonymically by the colour of their uniforms – not unfamiliar practice for readers accustomed to reading about ‘Red-coats’;²² in the speech of the Ottawa chief Keewtagoushkum, for instance, the events leading up to the American Revolution are summarized in these terms:

The first white people seen by us were the French [...]. Shortly after, the people that wear red coats (the English) came to this country, and overthrew the French, and they extended their hand to us in friendship. [...] After the British took possession of the country, it was reported that another people, who wore white clothes, had arisen and driven the British out of the land.

(McIntosh 1853: 287)

As for speakers' authority, the way in which Metea expressed himself on the occasion of the Chicago treaty (1821) is indeed very elegant, as the personal statement ('what I have spoken') is equated with the voice of the nation – unanimous agreement is thus conveyed metaphorically, but very efficiently, again thanks to a significant metacommunicative move:

what I have spoken is the voice of my nation. (McIntosh 1853: 286)

5. Concluding remarks

The image of Native Americans which emerges from the texts considered in this study is both complex and linguistically intriguing. In the nineteenth century a process of increasing romanticization of so-called 'savages' was in full swing, continuing the tradition of noble savage representations of pre-Romantic times. At the same time, the Euro-American westward progression appeared to be fulfilling its 'Manifest Destiny', pushing aboriginal peoples further away from their settlements and attempting to either isolate them or assimilate them as thoroughly as possible. 'Imperialist nostalgia', granting noble elegance to the object of its destruction – already experimented in relation to the Gaelic culture of the Scottish Highlands – appeared to affect also North America's First Nations in significant ways.

In addition to art and literature, linguistic commentary is observed to contribute greatly to this process of simultaneous validation and distancing. The texts were presented as authentic and reliable, though exotic and with certain traits of specific 'quaintness', especially in their use of vocabulary, metaphors, and metacommunicative moves. As a result, they proved both credible and acceptable – not necessarily in terms of their contents, which may actually be critical of Euro-American views and behaviour, but in ideological terms, since their stylistic quality reinforces the idea of an increasingly distant culture. This culture was no longer relevant to the current world of the readers, and yet – paradoxically – for this very reason it had become a valuable object of curious scrutiny, worthy of preservation in crystallized memories.

Notes

- ¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 17th International Conference on English Historical Linguistics (Zurich, 20.–25.08.2012). I am grateful to the Editor and anonymous reviewers of this journal for their helpful comments. Any remaining shortcomings are my sole responsibility.
- ² On the progression from ‘Scotophobia’ to ‘Celtomania’ see Sorensen (2000).
- ³ See Fulford (2006); see also Bickham (2005) and Calloway (2008). In the previous centuries references to Native Americans had already occurred also in the works of John Dryden (*The Indian Emperor*, 1665), and Aphra Behn (*Oroonoko*, 1688). The fascination with the West and the culture of Native Americans was then to continue well into the twentieth century, nor were similarities with the case of Scotland to disappear altogether: while Mendelssohn’s overture *Fingal’s Cave* and his Scottish symphony had been nineteenth-century hits, in 1916 Ferruccio Busoni’s *Indian Fantasy* for piano and orchestra was premiered in Zurich; the score, written between 1913 and 1915, relied on native material supplied to the author by American ethnologist Natalie Curtis.
- ⁴ In fact, the concept of an actual ‘frontier’ has been challenged by more recent historical investigations: see, among others, Cartosio (2008).
- ⁵ Dixon, for instance, deliberately hid subjects and adjusted light effects, in order to make his 1913 photogravure *The Sunset of a Dying Race* more impressive (see www.masshist.org/photographs/nativeamericans/doc-viewer.php?pid=&item_id=474, accessed April 2014). Observed in the context of Dixon’s 1913 book, *The Vanishing Race*, it is interesting to see how words and images combine to convey both an elegiac image of native subjects and a triumphant view of the new settlement between Natives and Euro-Americans – see Barsh (1993). This, however, was not without precedent: Paul Kane (1810–1871) had turned his field sketches into more elaborate (and figuratively selective) paintings (MacLaren 1989), while George Catlin (1796–1872) and Frederic Remington (1861–1909) are household names in histories of Native American representations on account of their dramatic compositions. On earlier and later artists see also Ewers (1971) and Elsasser (1977).
- ⁶ This is based on papers that had previously been published in *The Leisure Hour*, of which Macaulay was an editor.
- ⁷ Numerals and other lexical items were also provided as ‘Vocabulary of the Language of the Shawanoese’ and as ‘Specimen of the Wyandot language’ by Johnston (1820: 287–299). A few years before, William Fisher had compiled “a dictionary of the Indian tongue”, which he published with “a variety of very pleasant anecdotes, remarkably calculated to amuse and inform the mind of every curious reader” (Fisher 1812: title page). Later, Sproat published “An Alphabetical List of Words [...] fairly representing the Language of all the Aht Tribes on the West Coast of Vancouver Island” (1868: 295–310): the list also included numerals.
- ⁸ On the supposedly less romanticized comments of fur traders, see Saum (1963).
- ⁹ On educational practices in mission schools see, for instance, Provenzo Jr. and McCloskey (1981), McKellips (1992), and – more recently – Alves (2009). Relatively divergent readings of the influence of Christianity on Native American rhetoric are given by Wyss (2000), Bross (2001) and White (2003).
- ¹⁰ Already Williams had devoted a chapter of his text to salutations, noting that “There is a savour of civility and courtesie even amongst these wild Americans, both amongst themselves and towards strangers” (1643: 38).
- ¹¹ In 1786 John Pinkerton published a selection of poetry from the Maitland MSS with the title *Ancient Scottish Poems, never before in print*, and in the Preface he wrote: “None can more sincerely wish a total extinction of the Scottish *colloquial* dialect than I do, for there are few *modern* Scoticismisms which are not barbarisms [...]. Yet, I believe, no man of either kingdom would wish an extinction of the Scottish dialect in poetry”.
- ¹² On rhetoric in nineteenth-century America see also Johnson (1991) and Clark and Halloran (1993).

- ¹³ Note that McIntosh does not always indicate his sources: for instance, he cites Anon. (1836) as the “able observations of one of our public journals” (1853: 215). Only at the beginning does he refer to “Jefferson’s Notes on Virginia” (1853: 267).
- ¹⁴ Where McIntosh (1853) does not provide indications of date and place of delivery, other sources have been consulted. It is interesting to observe the relatively large quantity of texts belonging to the so-called Colonial Age (pre-1776).
- ¹⁵ See Reed Digital Collection, Indian Converts Collection: http://cdm.reed.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/colhist&CISOPTR=273&CISOBX=1&REC=4 (accessed April 2014).
- ¹⁶ On Red Jacket (Sagoyewatha)’s rhetoric see Ganter (2006, 2009). Another speech is reported by Holditch (1818: 108–110).
- ¹⁷ See <http://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/metea-a-potawatomi-chief.htm> (accessed April 2014).
- ¹⁸ See <http://historyengine.richmond.edu/episodes/view/4638> (accessed April 2014).
- ¹⁹ McIntosh also presents an introductory narrative by Thomas Jefferson and a note by Lord Cadwallader Colden on the Five Indian Nations of Canada (based on Colden 1747), to which observations by James Buchannan and M. De la Potherie are appended.
- ²⁰ On the importance of oral delivery and performance in Native American cultures see Hymes (2004).
- ²¹ Commentators guided the readers’ interpretation of ensuing texts also in other ways; Drake (1837: 86), for instance, introducing Hopocan’s speech, added: “then he stooped a little, and, turning towards the audience, with a countenance full of great expression, and a sarcastic look, said, in a lower tone of voice, [...]”.
- ²² The *Oxford English Dictionary* dates the first occurrence to c1605 (online edition accessed June 2014).

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