

Lívía Šavelková: **Stvořitelova hra na cestě světem: Identita Irokézů v procesu revitalizace a globalizace**. DVD with ethnographic film *Global Lacrosse Village*. Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2015. 178 pages. ISBN 978-80-7395-960-9

*Stvořitelova hra na cestě světem* [The Creator's Game on Its Way throughout the World] focuses on lacrosse, a traditional Native American game and a cultural phenomenon that reflects Native policies of self-representation and identity construction. The book's author, anthropologist Lívía Šavelková, uses the game to examine the ongoing process of cultural, ethnic, and political revitalization of the Haudenosaunee (or the Iroquois Confederacy, which consists of six nations: Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Seneca, Cayuga, and Tuscarora) within a local (North American) and global contexts. The publication is accompanied by a DVD with an ethnographic bilingual (Czech and English) film *Global Lacrosse Village*, which documents the 2011 Aleš Hřebeský Memorial, an international championship in box lacrosse, held in Radotín, Czech Republic, and the tournament's history. The film provides another view of lacrosse and its development outside the United States and Canada, specifically in the Czech Republic. The book and the film are grounded in a careful historical research and extensive field work conducted between 2001 and 2015 among the Haudenosaunee – mainly in Canada – and lacrosse players in Europe. The collected oral and visual sources from both sides of the Atlantic allow for a comparative approach to the subject and more complete insight into the game and its meanings for the diverse players and fans. This also allows the participants in the study to, quite literally, speak for themselves.

The book has two parts, one historical, the other focused on lacrosse's role in the processes of revitalization among the Haudenosaunee. In the historical section, Šavelková introduces the pre-colonial origins and history of the game and its variations among different Native American nations. Further, she traces the development of lacrosse as a sport among non-Native Americans and Canadians. The author points out the influence of different approaches to lacrosse and its function in society regarding the development of the sport and its two forms, box lacrosse and field lacrosse. She demonstrates how these attitudes (an idea of nation-building, amateurism, and citizenship in Canada and association with Ivy League universities in the United States) led, over time, to the marginalization of Native players in the sport and, in Canada, to their eventual banning from non-Native teams (pp. 29–37). While marginalized by the dominant society, American Indians continued to preserve and practice specific forms of lacrosse in their communities. However, even those were affected by the dominant society, especially by government Indian policies, such as the Indian removals in the 1830s and 1840s (which interrupted inter-tribal relations and social practices, including lacrosse) or the assimilation policy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which ironically helped to preserve the game through boarding school sports teams (pp. 43, 47–49). This section of the book is mostly based on secondary literature and provides an informative overview of the history of lacrosse. This historical synthesis is enhanced by reflections of the game and its history, collected by the author during her field work among Native lacrosse players,

which effectively documents the long tradition and importance of the game to Native communities.

Towards the end of the historical section, Šavelková turns her attention to the interest in and development of lacrosse outside North America, focusing on Europe. She identifies university study abroad programs and American popular culture, namely films such as the now cult comedy *American Pie*, as two major reasons for the popularity and spread of lacrosse outside the US and Canada (pp. 53–61). However, the Czech Republic, the former Czechoslovakia, represents an exception. The author traces the roots of interest in lacrosse to the Scout and Woodcraft movements and the image of “Noble Indian” in the early twentieth century. Since the knowledge of lacrosse was limited to a small number of available sources, especially during the Cold War era, the game’s fans created a specific form of lacrosse, the so-called “Czech lacrosse” (p. 62). In this section, Šavelková demonstrates the flow of ideas and cultural images, as well as players – namely university students – through transnational networks and their role in the adoption of new practices. As she argues, the case of “Czech lacrosse” also demonstrates the process of *glocalization*, the adaptation of an international (or global) phenomenon around local particularities. The arguments and conclusions in this section are well supported by the author’s field work among European lacrosse players, which she quotes extensively, and historical research into the Scout and Woodcraft movements in the country. Overall, the historical part of the book serves to establish a useful context for the following analysis of lacrosse and its roles in Native American societies and their revitalization.

The second part of the book discusses the various roles lacrosse plays in Haudenosaunee efforts for cultural and ethnic revitalization and political sovereignty. Šavelková positions her examination of the game and the Haudenosaunee national team, the Iroquois Nationals, within larger discourses of identity construction and (ethno)nationalism, national revival movements and nation-building, and cultural “authenticity” and “purity.”

The spiritual and cultural aspect of lacrosse is of particular importance to the Haudenosaunee and their expression of specific identity through the game. This stands in contrast to the secularized views of non-Native players, who in general perceive the game purely as a sport. The collected interviews with Iroquois players indicate lacrosse is an inseparable part of their culture and cosmology, a gift from the Creator and a way of healing and conflict solution (pp. 79–82). The author’s analysis of the spiritual meanings of lacrosse is somewhat limited, partly due to the fact that until recently Haudenosaunee spiritual leaders kept this aspect hidden from non-Natives (p. 82). It was only in the late 1970s that the first text about lacrosse from a Native point of view was published. It presented the origin story of lacrosse and a contemporary reflection of its influence on the game (pp. 82–83). Secondary sources, used by Šavelková for her discussion of spirituality and lacrosse, also indicate that this topic is relatively new to scholars, as most of the sources were published in the past ten years.

Šavelková also examines lacrosse as a tool to assert political sovereignty and self-representation. When competing at international tournaments the Iroquois Nationals participate as representatives of the Six Nations, not as a team from the US or Canada. The team

expresses Haudenosaunee sovereignty visually as well, through symbols based in their cultural traditions. For example, the team's main logo is the head of a dancer with eagle headdress, while recently added logos on the team's helmets depict a traditional wampum belt and another emblem representing the Iroquois Confederacy and Haudenosaunee clans. The team also flies its own flag (with the wampum belt) and plays its own anthem (p. 129). Further assertion of sovereignty is the team's insistence on traveling internationally only on Haudenosaunee rather than American or Canadian passports. This practice goes back to the 1920s and poses many challenges as not all countries are willing to accept the travel documents (pp. 100–103). In her discussion, Šavelková effectively demonstrates the potential of sport as a tool for cultural and political self-representation and ethnic revival based on traditions and a way for indigenous peoples to challenge the dominance of the settler-states. To better illustrate the role of sport in national revival movements, she provides a comparison to the role of sport and specifically the Sokol organization in the Czech national revival of the nineteenth century (pp. 115–116).

While traditions are important for the formation of identity and cultural and ethnic revitalization, they can sometimes become sources of contention and debates. The author demonstrates this regarding the issue of gender and lacrosse. While the attitudes toward female lacrosse players have differed among Native nations, among the Haudenosaunee the game was traditionally considered to be a male domain. The Onondaga and Tonawanda communities, considered to be the most conservative traditionalists, continue to view lacrosse as a male-only game. However, today the Haudenosaunee have a national women's lacrosse team as well. Even so, since the team does not have the support of the traditionalist leaders, it does not use the name Iroquois Nationals, but goes by the name Haudenosaunee. As the author's fieldwork indicates, some Haudenosaunee are now re-evaluating their position on women lacrosse players, but the issue of gender and lacrosse, as a part of the cultural and ethnic revitalization efforts, remains one of the most contested (pp. 88–90, 140–142).

The issue of gender raises an interesting point about the project's methodology and sources. Šavelková reflects on the issue of gender and accessibility of information at the beginning of the book. She discusses the work on the documentary film *Global Lacrosse Village* that focuses on box lacrosse, a game that remains predominantly a male domain. The film crew included the author's two male coworkers who had access to the "male spaces" that remained closed to her. Because of this ability to access otherwise "closed" information, the documentary team was able to form a more complex interpretation (p. 21). As someone who also works with oral history and often considers my own role and its effects on the information I receive, I would be interested to see more of the author's reflection on the influence of gender on her work. For example, did she and her male crew experience different attitudes from the men and women they interviewed? Were there differences in the interactions with members of the more conservative traditionalist communities and others? Such reflection could further illuminate the discussion on gender and the different attitudes between conservative traditionalists and other Haudenosaunee.

With any project involving historically marginalized peoples, such as this one, it is important to reflect on the questions of our moral and ethical responsibilities as researchers. The nature of this project, both the book and the movie, touches on the issues of “objectivity” and “subjectivity,” representation of those we work with, and the balance between professional standards and responsibility to our subjects. These issues can sometimes lead to dilemmas and hard choices, as the author demonstrates. Šavelková directly addresses these questions in the opening of her book, where she discusses her experience while working on her first ethnographic documentary about lacrosse, *Lacrosse – It’s a Way of Life* (2014). The film follows the Iroquois Nationals’ first visit to the Czech Republic during the box lacrosse World Championship in 2011. The original version of the film included few short scenes – an injured player leaving a playing field and team members sitting with a glass of beer – that were objectionable to the Haudenosaunee traditionalists. The author was asked to consider removing those scenes. In situations like these, one has to consider the impact of the representation on the communities involved. Showing an injured player may mean nothing to Czech audience, but, as the author points out, it can have important impact on the Native player, due to the spiritual aspect of the game. Similarly, a scene with alcohol in it may mean nothing to a European audience, but given the existing problems as well as prevailing social and racial stereotypes in the US and Canada, showing Native Americans with beer can potentially perpetuate those stereotypes. It would be interesting to know whether similar considerations and debates went into *Stvořitelova hra na cestě světem* and the film *Global Lacrosse Village*. One example may be the author’s somewhat limited analysis of the spiritual meanings of lacrosse and its origin stories as many of these aspects are still considered sacred by the Haudenosaunee and not appropriate for scholarly inquiry.

One topic I would like to see discussed more fully is the issue of cultural appropriation. The book briefly addresses the question of the game’s contested “ownership.” Šavelková debates the claims of Canada and the United States to lacrosse as their national games, while they excluded Native Americans from the story. She points out the bitterness Native players have felt due to the expressed superiority of white elite teams toward them throughout the twentieth century (pp. 114–115). Native Americans have had ample experiences with forced assimilation and destruction of their cultures, as well as Anglo-Americans and Europeans “playing Indians.” For example, in the early twentieth century, the Boy Scouts of America “played Indians” during their summer camps, a practice supported by a contemporary evolutionary theory that linked Indians – savagery – and children’s developmental stages. It would be interesting to see a deeper analysis of how lacrosse, originally a Native American game that has expanded through the world and is now dominated by non-Natives, fits into the larger discourse of cultural appropriation. What are Native views on the spread of lacrosse throughout the world? Have these views changed through interactions with non-Native players? And if so, how?

*Stvořitelova hra na cestě světem* will be of interest to academics and non-academics alike. Lacrosse players and fans interested in the history and development of the sport and its two forms, box lacrosse and field lacrosse, will appreciate the wealth of factual

information on these topics. Students of Native American history and culture will find engaging discussions about the role of sport in identity construction, expression of political sovereignty, and cultural and ethnic revitalization. Together the book and the ethnographic film *Global Lacrosse Village* provide a complex picture of the game's roles in Native American culture and identity construction, as well as a formation of global connections and networks and local practices.

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doi: 10.14712/23363231.2017.19

Peter Pomerantsev: **Nothing is True and Everything is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia**. New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2014. 241 pages. ISBN 978-1-61039-455-0

Peter Pomerantsev's debut book teeters on the edge between a memoir and a chronicle in real time. It mostly revolves around the use and misuse of media and language in contemporary Russia, as well as the impact that has had on the Russian population and its mentality. For several years during the last decade, the Kiev-born British journalist worked as a producer for various Russian television companies, in particular TNT (or *Tvoje Novoye Televideniye* in Russian, one of the largest commercial TV channels in the country). In the process, Pomerantsev learned about the many oddities of the Russian political and social system and its postmodern nature. The author's personal experience serves as the foundation upon which his carefully presented views are based.

Though he was always a well-known journalist, correspondent and documentary producer, and the book reflects that career, in recent years Pomerantsev has come to the Western world's attention as a renowned expert on Russian propaganda. He fulfills an important role as a professional consultant to government agencies and policy think tanks, and publishes works on the topic for major international media. *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible* largely kickstarted his newfound reputation as an expert in the field. The book displays not so much his academic expertise as the extensive first-hand experience he obtained living and working in Russia.

Pomerantsev's ambition is to make his book a relevant piece of social science literature. However, analyzing it from a proper academic perspective is difficult, because he offers no clear underlying hypothesis, no citations to literature, or any of the other trappings of academic writing. Needless to say, confirmation of the validity of Pomerantsev's first-hand testimony (if that were possible at all) is beyond the scope of this review. For simplicity's sake, all of Pomerantsev's quotations and his accounts of various events will be considered at least accurate enough to be accepted as a paraphrase of reality. Apart from what seems to be the occasional slight embellishment, there is little that would warrant an extraordinary amount of skepticism or caution on the reader's part.

The book's primary objective is laying the groundwork for Pomerantsev's own concept of "postmodern dictatorship," i.e., a non-democratic regime that employs some