

**Judit Kádár: GOING INDIAN: Cultural Appropriation in Recent
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I

The concept of allophilia, literally the love or appreciation of the Other has gained increasing currency in today's multicultural societies. American culture and history abound in examples of allophilia. Suffice to mention Cadwallader Colden comparing the courage, patriotism, and moral rectitude of Indians to that of the ancient Romans, or Benjamin Franklin's enthusiasm over the lack of prisons and centrally administered punishments in Native American society. However, the special appreciation of the Other or the desire to transgress racial or ethnic boundaries on the part of the representatives of the mainstream is not only applicable to white and indigenous relations.

Carl Van Vechten, the author of the perennially controversial *Nigger Heaven* (1926) providing a detailed introduction into the frantic life of Harlem referred to himself as "this ole cullud man" (Sanneh). Furthermore, Norman Mailer's white negro adopted black culture as a form of rebellion and expressed his adoration of the aforementioned race "forced to explore the moral wildernesses of civilized life" (Hoberek 67). Moreover, demonstrated by an exaggerated appreciation of the Chinese as purveyors of the wisdom of the East allophilia is operative in the direction of Asian-American culture as well.

The four-part model forwarded by Seth Rosenthal distinguishing between admiration, trust, connection, and engagement appears to be a helpful tool for the exploration of the allophilia phenomenon. Admiration implies the recognition of desirable personality traits, trust emphasizes moral rectitude, connection alludes to the formation of an emotional bond, while engagement refers to one's intention to interact with the representatives of the given minority group respectively (Pettus).

II

Judit Kádár performs a thorough intercultural and interdisciplinary inquiry into the allophilia phenomenon, namely non-Native transgression into or adoption of Indian culture, which exists both in reality and in the literary universe as well.

The protagonists of the respective literary works and real life episodes meet the requirements of the Rosenthal model.

The author applies a wide selection of ethno-racial and ethno-cultural passing paradigms to recent works of North American fiction in a skillful and culturally sensitive manner. The variety of identity shift schemes including “Indianthuisism,” mimicry, impersonation, indigenization In-dianing and Out In-dianing reflects an effort on the part of the mainstream to define itself via the Other and tends to reinforce Ralph Ellison’s famous conclusion that the “purpose of the stereotype is not so much to crush the Negro (or in our case, the Indian) as to console the white man” (146).

The undoubtedly hegemonic and violent settler-Native American relations had always contained a secret attraction or yearning toward the supposedly simpler and less restricted lifestyle of Indians as it is demonstrated by the 1661 Maryland and 1691 Virginia statutes prohibiting the establishment of sexual relations between the two races respectively. One of the first documents of this interracial and intercultural encounter is the captivity narrative commemorating the experiences of mostly women subsequent to their forcible removal from their frontier homes.

Kádár’s scholarly study concentrates on the concept of identity shift manifested in recent works of North American fiction ranging from Thomas Berger’s *Little Big Man* (1964) to Charles Frazier’s *Thirteen Moons* (2007). Certainly the works in question provide a different angle on the ethno-racial identity shift and Kádár makes a distinction between acting, playing, or going Indian. While the phenomenon in question is undoubtedly a type of passing, a concept primarily applied to black and white relations, it can never be full, and despite the intentions of the given protagonists the respective efforts fall short of their original goal due to resistance either on the part of the base or targeted culture. Consequently, none of those going Indian can escape from the trap of liminality, that is they remain suspended in-between “the original and the receiving society” (152).

One of the strengths of this work is the dual focus probing both the popular and high cultural manifestations of the Going Indian phenomenon. In an exhaustive survey of recent North American fiction the author recognizes two main trends, ethnic identity transformation and postmodernity along with cultural misappropriation and selective assumption of identity. The focal point of the inquiry includes the manifestation of such well-known stereotypical images both in North American and Central European culture as the Noble Savage or the romantic sentimentality of New Custerism. Technically each main character of the given cultural product could be correlated with the Rosenthal model. Starting with the disillusioned Civil War veteran finding a new lease on life among the Sioux in *Dances with Wolves* (1991) via Eunice Williams or Mary Jemison evolving

from Indian captive to full members of the captor society to Iris/Winnie Beaver, an Anglo woman living among Native Americans and creating and trading Indian masks admiration, trust, connection, and engagement are applicable. Moreover, as seen in the case of Archibald Belaney, or William Johnson the crossing of ethno-racial barriers can provide economic and political benefits as well.

The reader is forced to ponder a barrage of questions. What reasons could justify someone's yearning to join the ranks of the Other? To what extent this intended passing or identity shift takes place, is it complete or partial? Is it merely adopting cultural components, appearances, elements of lifestyle, or is the assumption of a new identity motivated by guilt, not to mention a romantic desire for a supposedly simpler way of living? Furthermore, is it, in the words of Baudrillard, the ethno-racial identity shift the result of the fetishization of the Other, or an excessive appreciation of diversity?

On the whole the Going Indian phenomenon amounts to an attempt on the part of the mainstream to explain itself, or using the Other to define the Self. After all the assumption of a different identity expresses the rejection of the mainstream, or despite the purported positive aspects, such as appreciation, the definition of the Other connotes a certain amount of control. If one plays Indian then via cultural misappropriation he or she adopts selected values, not the full cultural spectrum. The "public hunger for aboriginal wisdom" (qtd. in Kádár 159) noted by Francis connotes a romanticized longing for a seemingly purer and simpler way of life. The person going through the cultural borders can fulfil the function of culture broker, mediator, or impostor.

In order to achieve the above outlined research goals Kádár elaborates a complex methodology. The various literary examples are examined in an interdisciplinary manner probing the following aspects: the journey motive, the nature of the ethno-cultural space, conditions of acculturation, psychological, socio-cultural considerations. In the spirit of Tzvetan Todorov Kádár makes a witty distinction between In-dianing and Out-Indianing with the mainstream representative playing Indian and making an effort to eradicate indigenous culture respectively. The Going Indian or indigenous passing phenomenon is the manifestation of post-colonialism or a post-colonial mindset, or as Diana Brydon asserts, "the world waking up from the dream of dreaming itself American and learning to dream otherwise" (qtd. in Kádár 216). In the same vein Roy Harvey Pearce argues that the literature of the Indian is the literature of the white man, or the Indian is the vehicle for understanding the white man himself. One of the common denominators among the means of ethnic identity transformation namely passing, Othering, and indigenization is the figurative or literal use of masks. The assumption or acceptance of Native identity amounts to masking as well. The

mask naturally plays a similar role in case of minstrelsy, however in this latter instance it is not a vehicle of self-expression, but of the denigration of a whole race. Similarly to the minstrelsy phenomenon implying a temporary transgression of racial boundaries whites or non-Natives assuming the role of Indians can act out in ways they cannot perform in their normative roles (Kádár 48). In both cases the participants put on masks either figuratively or literally. According to Gabriella Varró masks contain a logonomic system expressing power relations, or in case of the minstrel show or minstrelsy, the white actor darkening his face mocks the black person or expresses his superiority over blacks, while as a result of the assumption of Indian identities passing implies a secret yearning or romantic attachment, even a hidden appreciation. Thus in case of minstrelsy allophilia is not applicable, the main goal is cultural deterritorialization, or relegation of African-American culture into secondary status.

III

Kádár's thoughtful study handles an impressive amount of primary and secondary sources with scholarly care and thoroughness. The inquiry encompassing popular and high culture both in North America and Europe facilitates a better understanding of the dynamics of multicultural societies, offers an excellent example of interdisciplinary scientific investigation and provides a significant contribution to American Studies worldwide.

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