
**“Judit Kádár: Ethnic Positioning in Southwestern
Mixed Heritage Writing. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2022”**

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Judit Kádár’s interdisciplinary approach combines psychology, literary criticism, cultural studies and an extended focus on visual arts and poetry in exploring current mixed-blood writing, or in the author’s words, “mixed heritage US literature with a regional accent.” The author delves into the cultural and literary history of the southwest and presents a panorama of contemporary multiracial literary production. Kádár at first provides a theoretical foundation for her inquiry, and recognizing the inapplicability of Western colonial, or hegemonic approaches she extends the post-colonial paradigm “with different cosmologies” (3). She is influenced among others by Susan Ilcan’s notion of the transitory aspects of ethnicity dominated by location, displacement, and re-location. Consequently, Kádár maintains “mobile sensitivity and nomadic awareness” (20) in exploring her main theme.

In Foucault’s view the West includes subjugated knowledges buried below, which are to be discovered, unearthed, and included into our perception of culture. The writings of mixed-blood authors or the perpetuation of mixed-blood experience is such a knowledge. Kádár’s book performs this unearthing function and similarly to Alice Walker undertakes a search not necessarily of “our mother’s garden,” but that of a distant relative. In other words the author not only digs the figurative grounds for heretofore buried literary treasure, but illustrates how the lessons gained from the respective texts can help anyone in dealing with various challenges of life.

By its very nature mixed blood or multiracial literature is liminal representing individuals caught between two cultures, the dominant Anglo and the subjugated indigenous one or as Paula Gunn Allen asserts such a multiracial identity includes “the blood of both the victim and the victimizer” (148). Consequently, in case of such threshold position the traditional racial or ethnic binary is not applicable. Kádár, relying among others on Appadurai and Ilcan strives to surpass the binary perspective and makes a leap beyond the post-colonial and even the post-modern paradigm. One of the requirements for such paradigm shift is thorough familiarity with the very perspective and approach the writer aims to exceed. In this vein, the author’s inquiry rests on a solid theoretical foundation implying an impressive level of knowledge regarding the given conceptual models. She

provides a clarification of the mixed-blood concept, the central term of her inquiry, and positions it among such terms as hybridity, creolization, or borderland.

Kádár realizes that similarly to the protagonists of the works she explores, she has to find a Thirdspace which according to Edward Soja represents the hybrid movement of the subject, not merely negating a given social space, but building upon the specific socio-spatial paradigm. Therefore, she develops a research angle not caught between, but profiting from the achievements of both the indigenous and Euro-centric inquiry.

The author has compiled a critical mass of primary sources in which representing four different decades such works as James Welch's *The Death of Jim Loney* (1979), Louise Owens' *Bone Game* (1994), Linda Hogan's *The Woman Who Watches Over the World* (2001), and Joy Harjo's *Crazy Brave* (2012) receive special emphasis. The main goal of the comprehensive inquiry is to reveal the wellsprings behind the formation of a multicultural identity. Kádár considers a wide variety of genres including memoirs, frontier writings, even Canadian novels, and examples of post-colonial life writing, while demonstrating a thorough familiarity with Native American and in a larger sense American or Western literature.

The primary focus is on the responses provided by the protagonists to the challenges of mixed-blood existence, which range from abjection (ambiguity, disorder) via secession (Third Space) to prospection (racelessness, racial indeterminacy). The inquiry is enriched by the inclusion of intercultural psychology methods facilitating the exploration of the pitfalls of identity construction, in addition to deploying Maslow's hierarchy of needs model. Kádár discusses a wide variety of psychological and emotional quandaries the divided subject can face and the relevant means of self-healing. She reveals different types of mixed-blood identity including the Border, the Protean, the Traditional and the Transcendent. The author demonstrates how mixed-blood writers invoke the concept of the trickster, a motif generally deployed in literary works produced by members of marginalized groups.

The focus of the research also includes such concepts as spatiality, lifewriting, the minority female experience of the triple bind of oppression, questioning and re-establishing identity.

The investigation identifies additional features of mixed-blood writing including the maze, water, or the eponymous concept of the blood. Furthermore, the author offers her own criticism of specific critical approaches as she calls Linda Hogan to task for an imbalanced treatment of her own heritage along with using oversimplified images reminding one of the colonial perspective. The comprehensive analysis maps routes for further research as well. One of its conclusions recognizing the purported capability of mixed-blood stories to change reality in my view potentially draws a parallel with the conative aspects of African American slave narratives.

In sum, the author certainly deserves praise for her significant scholarly effort, which enriches the discipline of American Studies by identifying an area of Native American literature, which until now perhaps has not received critical attention equal to that of the larger indigenous literary canon along with expanding the existing research arsenal and professional terminology. Last but not least, the writer should also be commended for maintaining scholarly objectivity in discussing a highly politicized and rather controversial aspect of American culture.