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**Transatlantic Voices: Interpretations of Native North American Literatures.**

Edited by Elvira Pulitano. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2007. 336 pages. \$55.00 cloth; \$26.95 paper.

“Warum bin ich Ich und warum nicht Du?” the hirsute angel asks in *Wings of Desire*, Wim Wenders’s borderless 1992 film about postwar Berlin. “Why am i I and why not you?” This racial, religious, and national query plagues cultures—a viral niggling of differences, boundaries, and walls separating as they connect.

Why should we care about Europeans caring about Native American writing today? Because their writers, some of our American ancestors—Homer, Virgil, St. John the Divine, Dante, Chaucer, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Yeats, Mann, and Sartre—were as careful about watching others *watch others* as they were about watching themselves. Maybe some tolerant distance and seasoned objectivity, acquired through the double global war meltdown of intercultural exchange and cross-national trust, help to see Native things clearly and collectively across the Big Water. *Mitak’oyasin*, they say back home, “All my relatives.”

When the essentialist dog soldiers start snarling from academic kennels, check your kibbles. Red like me, Craig Womack boasts as he trashes Elvira Pulitano’s adventurous *Toward a Native American Critical Theory* (2003). She’s not American, he says, what could she know about Natives? Sicilian-born and Swiss-trained in postcolonial literature and intercultural theory, Elvira Pulitano did her doctoral work in Native American studies with Louis Owens at the University of New Mexico and now teaches ethnic studies at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo. Robert Warrior, Lisa Brooks, and Jace Weaver join the dogfight against non-Indian interlopers in *Native American Literary Nationalism* (2005), echoing Elizabeth Cook-Lynn’s curse on reconciliation throughout *Anti-Indianism in Modern America* (2001) and petulance toward benign authors such as Wallace Stegner or Louis Owens for not seeing things her exclusionist way, that is, my bloody way or the highway. *Ach, du, Blut und Boden*. The eugenics cauldron still smokes.

Who speaks for a thousand diversely sovereign nations, from the Bering Straits to the Florida Keys, when an estimated 82 percent of Natives live off-reservation? Voices of moderate good sense—David Treuer in *Native American Fiction* (2006), for example—worry whether resurrected essentialism and pure-blood witch-hunting have fostered a new “textual racism” that ignores Native textuality in cultural renewals, that is, story and song crafted into public literacy (185).

How refreshing to read scholars in Native American writing outside the political correctionist gulags of monocultural, racially xenophobic America. *Transatlantic Voices* samples fourteen expert readers of Native literatures from Germany, France, Italy, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Japan, the United Kingdom, and Finland. The multicultural dialogue is refreshingly open and freely interactive, untainted with essentialism and self-promotion, placing Native American literature in global regard going back to Homer and Earth Maker, Trickster, and Lao Tsu. How democratically reinspiring after all these years of outsourcing talent and infighting bloodlines for tribal authenticity. “Who

are the real Indians?" has been plaguing the Americas since governments set blood quanta, barbed-wired reservations, and told the Natives to shut up and eat fry bread. The Golden Casino Bison has reignited the controversies, and bigmouth critters circle the kill.

Pulitano's transatlantic gathering is dedicated to the memory of Louis Owens, a creative writer, beloved teacher, and gutsy Native scholar who treasured his own motley mix of Native tale telling and Euro-American literacy. "The descendent of mix-blood sharecroppers and the dispossessed of two continents," Owens says in Krupat and Swann's *Here First* (2000), "I believe I am the rightful heir of Choctaw and Cherokee story-tellers and of Shakespeare and Yeats and Cervantes" (270). Louis Owens parleyed subjective inside-out objectivity and evolutionary fascination for tribal crossings with a porous clarity that some insiders can't appreciate and most outsiders never penetrate. Still, not all folks fear cross-cultural translation or interracial reciprocity. Do Greeks worry that Slavs read Homer; do Russians bristle at the thought of the Chinese pondering Dostoyevsky? God forbid. This argument clots like gelid silly putty between global transnationalism and ethnic cleansing. Wars are fought in such stink holes.

Pulitano's transatlantic collection is organized in four parts from theoretical crossings; to fictions early and late; to trauma, memory, and narrative healing; to comparative mythologies and transatlantic journeys. If you're inclined toward postmodernist theory, the Germans and Swiss have a penchant for chunking ideas around cultural identity politics. With authority and precision Hartwig Isernhagen tweaks the storytelling trope that for so long set Native oral traditions against written textuality in "They Have Stories, Don't They?" He decenters the vagaries of oral literacy and decreates alterity in storytelling culture—the unlettered Native versus the literate Euro-American migrant as a flogged Trojan horse. What about Stanford doctorate, Pulitzer Prize-winning N. Scott Momaday "writing" himself autogenerically into a "man made of words," Isernhagen asks, querying tribal identity through cultural story and the master-narrative of history as trauma of authenticity (echoes of Walter Benjamin in *Illuminations*). Isernhagen asks some hard questions. Is victimization a sign of the genuine Indian, the internalized colonialism of Western imperial aggression? Do Native American healing stories push through pity to survival and finally celebrate ongoing cultures? Is there solace mixed with self-deception in "survival" literature, as Gerald Vizenor coins the phrase, bound self-referentially by chronotopes of memory, time, and identity? Finally, the essay seems less about Native American literature and specific tribal textuality and more about cultural and identity politics as postmodernist theoretical skirmishes in which abstract reasoning spreads so broad that the clouds of dispute slip over the horizon. For those who like that sort of thing, a great American president once said during the civil war, that's about the sort of thing they would like.

Bernadette Rigal-Cellard is much crisper, more to the point discussing the selected, linear, and slippery uses of history in captivity narratives, coming down to Gerald Vizenor's "narrative histories" as decreative fictions or metanarratives, the self-constructions of "Plotting History." Helmbrecht Breinig ties

his theoretical ropes in Gordian knots around “transculturality” and “transdifference” alterity with a Teutonic fixation on gloppy ideational blocks. Decode the jargon. Can one group acculturate another only one way, or can each transculturate the other? If there is no “other” in the argument, for some reason, there is no differentiated “mine” or “yours.” Could global interconnection work toward “ours”? Gordon Henry’s litany of “I am not” *that* kind of troped Indian brings some sharp humor into the debates over Red-on-Red jihad and cultural othering. Can Indians recognize the Native selves within others, as in-group flows through out-group? The reasoning works toward a double cultural helix of hybridity, what Breinig sees as palimpsestic isomorphic chains of evolving cultural beings, the way microbiologists and macroecologists look for evolutionary syntheses to racial holocausts and environmental devastations. Selective adaptation works through potential disaster by mutating toward mutual needs, the scientists say, or symbiogenesis. Besides genocide and endangered species, think about the transatlantic trade-offs: horse and sheep are to the Navajo as corn and beans are to the Spanish, cross-acculturated exchanges benefit all. Breinig admits toward the end that there has always been a power asymmetry stacked against tribal cultures, so divisions are legion and grievances uncountable. Still, barring missteps, he sees evolving cultural identities as continually reinscribed historical texts working toward interdependent understandings and transnational reconciliations. *A-ho!*

With refreshing clarity and carefully detailed thought, Gaetano Prampolini turns to the early realist novels of D’Arcy McNickle and John Joseph Mathews, *Sundown* and *The Surrounded*, published in the Great Depression depths. It’s a felicitous return to textual and biographical data and writerly context, free of jargon and tongue-twisting theorization. Literature is verbal craft, first and foremost, interracial “speakerly texts” that cross the peopled cultures of traditional stories into the inscriptions of modern letters, all through a Native American fusion of living history and realistic fiction. Brigitte Georgi-Findlay questions Native America vis-à-vis all the American others in terms of national identity, multicultural novels, European audiences, and the “American” or “cosmopolitan” thrust of Native American fictions. She provides a translucent overview of Native novels, transatlantic crossings, permeable ethnic and national boundaries that filter constructed Indian identities, more or less blooded, traditional or postmodern, authentic or ethnotourist in the novels of Owens, Vizenor, Silko, Welch, and Erdrich. These novelists go beyond buckskin curtains and national boundaries to track their characters around the globe.

Deborah Madsen parses trauma theory through Paula Gunn Allen’s pointillist-impressionist novel, *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*, working toward a kind of psychopathology of Native American fiction as homeopathic circling narrative. Kathryn Gray looks at visual perception and international repatriation in Wendy Rose’s poetry, in which historical grudge evolves toward grounding acceptance, and Rebecca Tillett examines Leslie Silko’s edgy *Almanac of the Dead* along the lines of transcultural sovereignty and postcolonial emancipation. The cure to Native traumas of dispossession and betrayal, Silko implies, nestles in the spiritual wings of political activism. Tell that to the barking-dog soldiers.

The final section commences with Paul Taylor riffing the shape-shifter logorrhea of Vizenor's trickster mythologems, the liberating reality of free-form logos in *Darkness in Saint Louis Bearheart*. "We Indians are great storytellers and liars and mythmakers," Sherman Alexie adds from *Ten Little Indians* (2003). Mark Shackleton tackles the fusions of Western and Native belief systems, specifically an "ironized" Christianity in Louise Erdrich's early novels *Love Medicine* and *Tracks*. Yonka Krasteva opens her Native discussion of sacred, profane, and political with an astounding quote from Pope John Paul II: "Not only is Christianity relevant to the Indian peoples, but Christ, in the members of his Body, is himself . . . Indian." *A-ho, dok-shá, kola!* Hey, pay you back later, bro. Krasteva is intrigued with the Bulgarian/Native affinities she finds discussing bears and other tribal matters with N. Scott Momaday in her mother country. She, too, discovers fusions of Euro-American and Native spiritual beliefs in borderland fictions such as Linda Hogan's *Power*.

Ulla Haselstein treats James Welch's last transatlantic novel *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* as an interdiscursive text challenging the Homeric *nostos* or homecoming paradigm of so much Native fiction. The late James Welch takes a young Lakota to Europe with Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West, leaves him married and fathering a child in France, and lets Charging Elk die there a murderer in prison. The plot charts a transatlantic journey to a parallel prisoner-of-war reservation camp. Simone Pellerin parses Louis Owens's last book of essays in 2001, a year before the author shot himself in the Albuquerque airport parking lot. *I Hear the Train* is the record of a French book-tour carnival noir, author Indian as clowning poodle, a Native American abroad fiasco. Is the Indian comically alive and well on continental tour or tragically running in fear of erasure? Invisibility and oblivion are Owens's ghosts of betrayal, nightmares of self-destruction on an absurdist Old World tour never to reach a Native homeland. The interracial author ends his final essay with a corrosive fear: "I see in these mixedblood ancestors the kind of suspicious yet resolute indeterminacy that I feel in my own life and see in my own face, a kind of native negative capability. The Indian has never been real in the mirror" (104).

Robert Lee concludes the book upbeat with "Oklahoma International: Jim Barnes, Poetry, and the Sites of the Imagination." For some fifty years and more than a dozen volumes now, Jim Barnes has been a most respected translator, editor of *The Chariton Review*, and Native poet read by the fewest number of people. Maybe because poetry has never had much currency in the frontiers of American illiteracy and maybe because Barnes writes in traditional forms, counting his measures, rhyming his lines occasionally, constructing narrative lyrics that draw a fine thread from Thomas Gray and William Wordsworth through Richard Hugo and Seamus Heaney to James Welch and Roberta Hill, the blank verse spine of Euro-American traditions woven with the prairie wonders and Native place-names of American Indian frontiers brokering newcomers. In this midwestern poet's hands local color blossoms into global pallet, Choctaw burial mounds align with the Roman catacombs, *La Plata Cantata* connects with Picasso's studio, petroglyphs fuse with "paraglyphs," and Sitting Bull flanks Baudelaire. The Missouri

Métis singer of tales is internationally collaged back and forth across the Big Water. Lee pays detailed attention to tare and texture in Barnes's lines, shows gracious understanding of Native sites, place-names, towns, and soil in this Choctaw-Anglo-Celtic master of lyric lines. Jim Barnes finds his multiple heritages, the archaeological end of *Transatlantic Crossings* and Native fusional renaissance, preserved in a Missouri cave:

Two fish,  
definitely carp,  
picassoed in stone.

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**White Man's Club: Schools, Race, and the Struggle of Indian Acculturation.** By Jacqueline Fear-Segal. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007. 422 pages. \$55.00 cloth.

Books long in the making often disappoint. *White Man's Club* is more than worth the wait. This study has its roots in Jacqueline Fear-Segal's doctoral dissertation, completed at the University College of London in 1978. Although focused on American Indian reservation schools, the dissertation's discussion of federal Indian education policy and of the meaning of schools for the Indian students foreshadowed the argument presented in *White Man's Club*. Even then she placed Indian education in the larger context of American schooling and offered compelling analysis of its cultural aggressiveness. Her phrase that "the school cut into the fabric of Indian culture like a million little knives," stands for this reviewer as one of the most evocative characterizations in the literature (422). This widely cited dissertation helped initiate a generation of extraordinarily rich literature on American Indian schooling and the late-nineteenth-century effort to erase Native cultures and communities. The author's rephrasing of her twin goals, "to interrogate the overt and covert agendas of white education programs and probe the actions and reactions of Indians who struggled to resist as well as claim the power of white schooling," suggests a much richer study than her preliminary work (xv). Fear-Segal has mastered the literature and archival sources on American Indian education, demonstrated the value and relevance of the broader postmodernist studies of colonialism and subalterns, drawing especially on Michael Foucault and James C. Scott, and, through fieldwork and interviews, connected the events of a century ago to the contemporary scene.

In the title, *White Man's Club*, we see the author's interest in implementing James C. Scott's conception of the interplay between the public and hidden transcripts of the powerful and the dominated, respectively (*Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, 1992). The phrase comes from the memoirs of a returned Indian student and was used by his Shawnee elders who advised him to go to school so that he would be able "to use the club of white man's