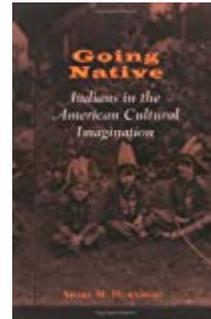




Shari M. Huhndorf. *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination.* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001. xiv + 220 pp. \$42.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8014-8695-1.



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Many readers may be familiar with the term “going native” from the social scientific admonition against losing a putatively scientific objectivity or pretending an attainment of knowledge usually reserved for community insiders. To come to terms with the pratfalls of observing and participating in a foreign community, many contemporary social scientists have become acutely self-aware of their relationships with the communities they research. Current trends notwithstanding, this problematic approach is not and has not always been a concern for social scientists, writers, nor for the American public at large. As Shari M. Huhndorf chronicles in *Going Native*, colonial fascinations with Native Americans have lead many Euro-Americans to impersonate the socio-historic role of Indians in American society through acts of cultural appropriation. Although, she acknowledges that Euro-Americans have performed Indianness since earliest contact, Huhndorf’s research focuses on the acts of going native as they developed over the last century and a quarter, beginning with the 1876 U.S. Centennial Exposition and ending with the film *Dances With Wolves* and the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian in New York City. Along the way Huhndorf examines tourist destinations, cinema, popular literature, travel narratives, the academy, museums, and the Boy Scouts.

Going Native contributes to the ever-growing body of literary and cultural criticism exposing the relationship between colonialism and the production of culture. It could easily be read as (a companion) to such new classics as Edward Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* and Marianna Torgovnik’s *Gone Primitive*. At the same time, it is an excellent addition to a recent body of literature that specifically explores the relationships and interactions between white America and Native America, and it should be read along with Leah Dilworth’s *Imagining the Southwest*, Philip Deloria’s *Playing Indian*, and numerous articles by Ward Churchill and Vine Deloria, Jr. Huhndorf improves American Indian Studies by adding much needed critical analyses of previously overlooked or under-theorized subjects, such as the film *Nanook of the North*, the books *The Education of Little Tree* and *Medicine Woman*, Native American performances at the World’s Fairs, and the abduction and virtual imprisonment, in the 1890s and 1900s, of an Eskimo family by the American Museum of Natural History. Furthermore, Huhndorf’s use of Gramscian notions of culture benefit research on Native America as this perspective allows us to explore the individual and societal power relations inherent to Euro-American representations and appropriations of Native American culture. This cultural studies approach permits her to consider how a broad range of cultural texts all support “particular visions of the [U.S.]’s history [that] have become

dominant and how their contradictions both conceal and betray white America's colonial past and its hegemonic aspirations" (p. 12).

Although going native involves the process of Euro-Americans assuming the socio-historic roles of and performing the culture of Native Americans, Huhndorf shows that acts of going native are meant to delineate and renegotiate Euro-American identities and histories. She explains that "[i]n its various forms, going native articulates and attempts to resolve widespread ambivalence about modernity as well as anxieties about the terrible violence marking the nation's origins" (p. 2). For this reason, Huhndorf examines the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a period in which the United States army completed its campaign to conquer the continental United States (and in doing so diminished a Native American military threat), when capitalism and social Darwinism dominated as the most accepted discourses of progress, and when wars, economic instability, and ecological disasters incurred in Euro-Americans increasing anxiety about technological progress. For Huhndorf, going native enables Euro-American "actors" both to establish themselves as true inheritors of North American land from the "vanishing Indians" and to escape the degrading by-products of the modern society they created.

Going Native's four body chapters each explore historically distinct instances of going native. The first examines the American Indian-themed displays and performances featured prominently at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876 and the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. Huhndorf explains how these expositions—both of which commemorated important events in American history such as the founding of the United States and the arrival of Columbus—constructed Indians (and other non-Westerners) in relation to a social evolutionary schema so as to celebrate Euro-American technological and cultural dominance. Exposition managers developed narratives of progress to illustrate the success and importance of the U.S. and to distinguish Euro-Americans from Europeans. According to Huhndorf, Indians were critical to this narrative. Exhibition of their "primitive" lifestyles, which were constructed as elements of America's past, illustrated the progress of Euro-Americans. This narrative of progress naturalized Euro-American dominance over Native Americans through a discourse of evolution, which masked the violence of westward expansion and obscured the human agency involved in Manifest Destiny, thereby justifying Euro-American claims to succeed Native Americans in the historical progress of the nation. Euro-Americans

thus distinguished themselves from Europeans and in the process "went native" by constructing North America as their aboriginal homeland, not Europe. The necessity of going native in the name of progress is made explicit in Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis, which was presented in a speech at the Columbian Exposition. Huhndorf cogently argues that Turner's positioning of American nationality in the experience of the wilds of the frontier constructs Euro-Americans as natives and natural heirs of North America. More subtle and implicit instances of this reasoning are drawn out by Huhndorf in her semiotic analysis of the fairs' displays and her schematic analysis of their spatial layouts.

Chapter two provides the best examples of Euro-Americans seeking out "native" life to address modern American problems, from the emasculating threat of technology to the capitalist disruption of community life. First, she discusses the development of social clubs for men and children, which attempted to recreate the tribal and communal elements of Indian society through secret meetings, costumes, and camping trips. She also examines Robert Flaherty's famous documentary *Nanook of the North* (1922) and Gontran de Poncins's autobiography of his arctic travels, *Kabloona* (1941), narratives which purport to objectively represent Eskimo life and which extol the innocence and beneficence of Eskimo people but which finally reinscribe both the Euro-American authors and their Eskimo objects of study in hegemonic colonial narratives. Huhndorf argues that for Flaherty and Poncin as well as for the social club members, it is the social and economic privileges of whiteness which allow them to go native and that the act of going native ultimately serves to mask the hegemonic realities of U.S. imperialism and to justify the standing racial and social order.

In chapters three and four, Huhndorf moves forward to more contemporary examples of going native, citing romanticized Euro-American representations of Indian culture as putatively resistant responses to the status quo. Literary works by Forrest Carter and Lynn Andrews illustrate how perceived social imbalances drove Euro-Americans towards Native American culture, yet at the same time reinforced the contemporary social and racial order. In chapter three, she adeptly enters the debate over Forrest Carter's *The Education of Little Tree* (1976); whereas other authors have focused solely on Carter's identity politics, Huhndorf examines the way his narrative ultimately justifies its author's racist views. Before writing *Little Tree*, author "Forrest" Carter was the devoted segregationist and Ku Klux Klan member Asa

Carter. Carter symbolically remade himself by changing his name and writing a supposedly autobiographical account of his childhood with his Cherokee grandparents. Carter details a purportedly Indian worldview conflating Indians with nature as he relates his grandfather's social Darwinistic lessons about the wild animals and the food chain; these same lessons serve to justify Indian boarding schools and the necessity for Indian assimilation. Huhndorf asserts that the main objective of this book, and of Carter's book *Gone to Texas*, is to align Cherokees and other Indians forcefully removed from their tribal lands with the Confederate South. Carter sets them up as allies joined by white Northern aggression in a way that not only allows him as a white Southern segregationist to claim Indian land and identity but which also reinforces white dominance against the challenge of the Civil Rights Movement. Perhaps Huhndorf's most astute observation is that Carter's work reflected "the extent to which mainstream Americans began to imagine Indianness as a set of individual qualities rather than as a community-based and historically determined identity" (p. 160).

This argument certainly proves true for her examination in chapter four of Lynn Andrews's book *Medicine Woman* (1981). As a prominent and outspoken member of the New Age movement, Andrews's work typifies the way Euro-American New Agers turn to Native American culture for solutions to the ecological, spiritual, and physical degeneracy they attribute to modern corporate America. However, as Huhndorf notes, the movement's inclination toward self-healing and self-discovery rather than political action commodifies Native practices to fulfill a desire to possess and own Native American culture and spirituality. This commodification of Indianness as set of "individual qualities" ultimately reinscribes capitalist ideology and white privilege. Andrews uncritically manipulates her white privilege in *Medicine Woman*, as she details her initiation into a Cree community of elder woman. She then chronicles her journey to recover a basket stolen from these woman by a Native man and her ultimate retrieval of the basket that symbolizes her right to possess the basket and Native culture as she consider herself kin to the Cree woman. Here, as with her analysis of masculinity in chapter two, Huhndorf makes astute comments about the role gender plays in the process of going native. She details the way Andrews calls upon notions of universal womanhood as a deep connection to the Cree women in a way that obfuscates her ability to freely cross racial and culture boundaries. In this sense, Andrews manipulates gender to establish her affinity to traditional cultures. Finally, this chapter posits a compar-

ison between three woman-authored texts: Andrews's story, Mary Rowlandson's captivity narrative, and—as an example of Native resistance to the idea of going native—Leslie Marmon Silko's *Garden in the Dunes*.

While Huhndorf continually marshals her perceptive close readings to excellent analyses of Euro-American colonial and hegemonic domination, her definition of "going native" is often a bit ambiguous. Under the broad heading of "going native," she groups together what may be very different kinds of engagements with and enactments of Indianness. Andrews, Carter, Poncin, and the Boy Scouts encourage identification with Indians; while Rowlandson, Flaherty, and the Expositions ask audiences to assume and maintain a colonial perspective. Is Mary Rowlandson's involuntary captivity and her orthodox Puritan vilification of the Narragansett the same variety of experience as Lynn Andrews's Cree fantasia? Is the Boy Scout desire to return to nature comparable in its dynamics to the Expositions' celebration of progress? All of these texts ultimately reproduce and justify American imperialism, but they do so in different ways. One might alternatively describe some of these events as "going imperial," "going colonial," or "going pioneer."

Finally, it is important to note, that by no fault of the author's, *Going Native* labors under inevitable comparison to another recent book. Published only three years ago, Philip Deloria's *Playing Indian* covers some of the same topics and even some of the same source materials as Huhndorf does. Huhndorf acknowledges *Playing Indian* in her introduction and attempts to distinguish her work by suggesting:

By contrast (to the act of playing Indian), the instances of going native I describe arose specifically in response to late-nineteenth-century events, and they involve the more widespread conviction that adopting some vision of Native life in a more permanent way is necessary to regenerate and to maintain European-American racial and national identities. Going native as a collective phenomena expressed a widespread ambivalence about modernity (p. 8).

Although it is clear that Huhndorf covers a more compressed time frame than Deloria, it is not clear that "going native" is that much different than "playing Indian." The authors use slightly different terminologies and methods—Deloria writes from the field of history, while Huhndorf inclines to literary criticism. Moreover, *Going Native* covers important issues and examples not covered in *Playing Indian*. However, both authors come to similar conclusions about what it means when Euro-

Americans try to adopt the perceived qualities and characteristics of Indianness. Perhaps the future of this discussion lies in a more sustained engagement with other Euro-American forms of racial emulation such as blackface. Suffice it to say that the phenomena that both authors skillfully analyze are diverse and immensely critical to understanding Euro-American identity and U.S. nation building. At this stage, there certainly cannot be too much written on the subject of imagining, emulating and appropriating Indianness.

Going Native will be graciously welcomed into

American Indian Studies and the study of colonialism/imperialism. Huhndorf's detailed research and methodology are important contributions to American Indian Studies because they allow for the examination of cultural texts and social positions of power without having to resort to arguments of what is authentic and non-authentic Indian culture. Such arguments necessarily put authors in the difficult position of cultural arbitrator. *Going Native* will also benefit studies of colonialism and imperialism by introducing new evidence and restoring overlooked instances of the Euro-American exploitation of Native Americans.

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