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## **Book Review. Teresa J. Wilkins, Patterns of Exchange: Navajo Weavers and Traders**

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and jazz. That particular dichotomy often is drawn too neatly, and Cartwright shows how blues music both implicitly and explicitly influenced Fitzgerald's musical expression.

Bob Groom's essay examines blues and gospel in the 1950s. He counters a widely-held perspective that blues is largely apolitical by discussing the sharp, even cynical, political commentary of musical lyrics following World War II. John Minton's study of Zydeco completes this compilation of essays. Minton gives readers what may become the definitive article on the roots of Zydeco. Using both published sources as well as his own interview, Minton offers a solid revision of the idea that Zydeco was first created within Louisiana's Creole communities. Rather than seeing it as Louisiana roots music, Minton demonstrates that it first appeared in house parties and music clubs in urban East Texas. Minton shows how Zydeco is related to blues music, and he insightfully explores why many want to see both forms of music as pure forms of rural-based folk music rather than recognizing the far more complex and interesting history of each.

The articles in *Ramblin' on My Mind* offer a good view of various facets of blues music scholarship. The range of topics, disciplinary perspectives, and styles of writing will provide readers with ample ways to explore blues music. One major concern, however, is the overall emphasis on the history of blues. There are interesting developments in contemporary blues scenes that deserve academic inquiry, yet much of the focus of scholarship is on the blues music created and performed prior to the 1970s. This focus on blues history results in a sense of historicizing the music, itself, and it feels incongruous that a volume of essays that offers "new perspectives on the blues" largely omits any discussion of contemporary blues artists.

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*Patterns of Exchange: Navajo Weavers and Traders.* By Teresa J. Wilkins. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008. Pp. xiv + 230, acknowledgments, introduction, photographs, illustrations, map, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth.)

White America's complex relationship with Native Americans and their arts has always reflected larger contemporary political/social realities. Among other complex elements, this has encompassed a sense of embedded guilt about the treatment of Natives by that broader society, coupled with romanticisms about the "noble savage" and the authenticity of their life in nature. To this end, much of the earlier literature on the trading posts—intermediaries between Native artists and a developing market of white collectors—tended to either describe them as exploitative pillagers or as sites that not-so-covertly attempted to acculturate the "naïve" Natives into the dominant capitalist system. This focus assumed a uni-directional relationship, ignoring any possibility that the Navajo themselves might have influenced and modified the fundamental nature of those interactions.

As Teresa J. Wilkins describes in her fine book, the reality was clearly much more complex. The trading posts were initiated and flourished in a rapidly-changing society in which two radically different cultures learned how to work with each other for the economic benefit of both. Wilkins charts how each trader in the Navajo region had a unique way of working with the Native weavers as well as how they chose to market their wares to Euro-American consumers. A significant component of all of the traders' efforts, however, was to serve the federal government's policy of promoting the assimilation of the Natives by converting them to a capitalist (cash) economy.

J.L. Hubbell, who is treated with the greatest thoroughness here, established his trading post at Ganado just after the Navajo returned from their "Long Walk" in 1864, a period of great poverty and starvation. This may have influenced him to approach the Navajo more holistically, attempting to understand their culture and adjusting his business practices to better mesh with traditional Navajo values of helping and reciprocation. Recognizing that the Euro-American market was interested in authenticity and traditionality, he promoted the age and scarcity of his products. In contrast, C.N. Cotton, marketing the "primitive" quality of Native labor and their use of natural materials, underscored the "otherness" of the producers. Cotton insisted on a more purely capitalist interaction with the weavers, as did J.B. Moore, who imposed new ways of production, dividing and compartmentalizing tasks so that several women now worked on each rug—one carding/spinning, one weaving, etc.—in order to more closely resemble an assembly-line production to maximize profit. This was a radical move, particularly as prior to the trade with the Spanish settlers the Navajo language had no words for expressing value in strictly quantitative terms. Removing the production of a rug from a single woman's home weakened its context and had profound cultural implications.

Also examined is the aesthetic influence each trader attempted to impose on the Native weavers. As is well-documented, they tried to standardize imagery (which is why certain rug designs became known by the names of the posts through which they were traded). Yet what has not been treated in past literature was the extent to which the Navajo weavers creatively adapted the traders' suggestions and even contested them, responding in light of their own cultural priorities. As Wilkins writes, "the process and end product of Navajo weavers' work was and is continually negotiated...these intercultural trade relationships resulted in both weavers and traders beginning to understand hybrid economies...cultural identity shifts occurred among all involved" (81).

Recognizing the end-of-millennium anti-modernist sentiments of the Euro-American market, the traders understood that Native weavings could be used by purchasers to protest the burgeoning industrialization of those times, allowing the buyers to connect to an authentic, exotic experience while concomitantly encouraging the seemingly inevitable and desirable progression of the Natives from their perceived savagery to civilization. Yet by marketing a homogeneous "otherness," the traders ironically reinforced social-economic class distinctions and commodified an artistic production that had previously been influenced solely by Navajo principles of autonomy, creativity, and cooperation.

As the weavers began to understand the cultural and economic changes that the traders were introducing, they exacted their own changes, reflecting the reciprocal obligations inherent to traditional transactions. Their expectation (not always fulfilled) was that since the traders were "helping" the Navajo by

buying their rugs, it implied a broader cooperative social relationship surpassing the merely economic. The Navajo attempted to teach the traders their own protocol for trading relationships, which included the understanding that any transaction heralded the beginning of a long-term relationship in which an exchange of knowledge was regarded as a form of help, in which intangible, relational forms of helping—such as telling others about a trader's cooperative acts—were considered part of the deal, in which gifts over and above the appropriate amount of goods exchanged in trade were proffered, and in which goods and knowledge continued to circulate among people (141).

The result was far from the antiseptic anthropological ideal of culture as orderly and consensual, but rather a hybridized economy characterized by resistance, challenge, and process layered upon accommodation: a much more creolized and dynamic reality. The traders' interactions with the Navajo produced a part-capitalist and part-cooperative economy, reflecting Navajo cultural convictions at the same time that it moved them from a mostly-barter to a mostly-cash way of doing business. This led to nothing less than a complete re-conceptualization of the concept of culture as process, with constantly shifting power relationships.

This book is an important addition to scholarship of the field, as it widens the conventional wisdom regarding both the economic and the social/cultural relationships between Navajo weavers and the trading posts that introduced their arts to Victorian Euro-American society. Additional color photographs would have been helpful in underscoring the aesthetic impact and evolution of the arts resulting from these socio-economic modifications; nevertheless, the book will be useful to academics and general collectors of Native arts alike. Wilkins writes well, melding compelling anecdotes with rigorous scholarship in order to break down heretofore-held stereotypes of how these iconic textiles came to embody an important and ongoing chapter of the American Southwest.

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*"I Choose Life": Contemporary Medical and Religious Practices in the Navajo World.* By Maureen Trudelle Schwarz. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008. Pp. xi +380, preface, Appendix, notes, glossary, bibliography, index. \$50.00 cloth, \$24.95 paper.)

In *"I Choose Life,"* Maureen Trudelle Schwarz examines how the Navajo both view and respond to biotechnologies such as blood transfusion, organ transplant, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and surgical intervention, especially amputation. Schwarz chooses to focus on these particular aspects of modern healthcare because the Navajo have a growing problem with diabetes and its associated complications (such as End Stage Renal Disease), which leads to their being more likely to be candidates for these medical treatments than non-Navajo. But she also chooses to focus on these aspects of modern healthcare because they are especially problematic for those Navajo who hold traditional beliefs