Caroline Rosenthal, Stefanie Schäfer (eds.)

Fake Identity?

The Impostor Narrative in North American Culture

campus

Fake Identity?

Caroline Rosenthal is Professor of North American Studies at Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena. *Stefanie Schäfer* is Assistant Professor of American Studies at Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena.

Caroline Rosenthal, Stefanie Schäfer (eds.)

Fake Identity?

The Impostor Narrative in North American Culture

Campus Verlag
Frankfurt/New York

Printed with support from US-Generalkonsulat Leipzig, Gesellschaft für Kanada-Studien, Verein der Freunde und Förderer der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena.

Bibliographic Information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek.
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at http://dnb.d-nb.de
ISBN 978-3-593-50101-7

Cover design: Campus Verlag, Frankfurt-on-Main
Cover illustration: René Magritte, "La Reproduction Interdite" (1937), © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2013
Printing office and bookbinder: Beltz Bad Langensalza
Printed on acid free paper.
Printed in Germany

This book is also available as an E-Book.
www.campus.de
www.press.uchicago.edu

Table of Contents

Making the Fake: Fake Identities in Literature, Film, and TV

AlterNatives?—A Coda

Acknowledgments

The present volume results from an international symposium held at the Friedrich-Schiller University Jena in April 2012, which most of the contributors attended. We are grateful to the Leipzig Consulate, the GKS, and the Alumni Association of Friedrich-Schiller University Jena for issuing publication grants which made this book possible at a time of economic austerity, and to Canadian indigenous writer Drew Hayden Taylor, whose short fictional piece truly embellishes this academic publication. We would particularly like to thank Mareike Dolata for her enthusiasm and tireless efforts in helping to edit this volume.

Jena, December 2013 *Caroline Rosenthal and Stefanie Schäfer*

Introduction

Caroline Rosenthal and Stefanie Schäfer

In 2008, after a spectacular thirty years of successfully impersonating other identities, Christian Karl Gerhartsreiter from Siegsdorf in Bavaria was discovered to be an impostor. The Bavarian had continuously reinvented himself in personas of ever increasing social status. He was, among others, Chris Gerhart, an affluent American; the thirteenth Baron of Chichester and descendant of the famous sailor; and finally became James Frederick Mills Clark Rockefeller, art collector, Wall Street trader, and a descendant of the famous American oil magnate. He married a rich businesswoman who divorced him twelve years later when she began to suspect that he was not who he pretended to be. Gerhartsreiter/Rockefeller's sham was only exposed when he kidnapped his seven year old daughter and became the subject of a manhunt on the American East Coast.

Commentators on the Gerhartsreiter case agree that the story of his imposture reads too fantastic to be true (see Haas 2013, Seal 2011). Gerhartsreiter's was a con game par excellence: He had no social security number or tax report, no credit cards or passports in his name, but convinced others to support him, both financially and socially. He so successfully performed a legendary WASPish identity that bystanding socialites even identified his "Rockefeller chin […], a dead giveaway" (Seal 2011, 10). Not only did his acquaintances fail to see that his identity was faked, they over-construed it to show themselves as experts on such things as the chin of a scion. The Gerhartsreiter case thus renders the cultural conceptions at work in the making of personal identity: It has to be constructed and performed by a Self but also validated and authenticated by an Other. Impostor cases show that authenticity, the concept that is vital in identity formation, is a construct based on stereotypical markers of language, behavior, and dress.

Imposture as discussed in this volume means posing as somebody more privileged. It entails shedding one's previous identity to take on a

new one for personal gain, social, or financial improvement.[1] Impostors are therefore invested in their performance in myriad ways. The present volume uses the impostor narrative to examine cultural constructions of identity and authenticity in North America through a literally negative lens. Confidence games, going Native, and racial passing are all renditions of the same process that is exposed when the audience stops to believe and authenticate it. In the deconstruction of 'true' identity the parameters at work in any identity construction become visible.

Imposture and Authenticity: The Economy of Identity

An imposed identity, just like any identity, is constituted in performative acts and becomes real or true when others take the masquerade at face value. As the Gerhartsreiter case and others have shown, impostors often 'become' the other person and leave their old identity behind.[2] The new identity becomes true in an act of authentication. Authenticity thus functions as the 'currency' of identity formation. Imposture offers a means for historicizing and contextualizing what is authentic: 'Faked' white, male, or upper class identities illuminate that such categories are artificial to begin with. By the same token, 'fake' identity gives us insight into the myths and tropes that propel North American culture and the paradigms of the Western self at large.

According to Aleida Assmann (2012), Western culture places a specific, culturally distinct meaning on authenticity which "shap[es] the orientation of values, attitudes, and action" (33). Authenticity builds on the premise of

1 Other cases of masquerade may be motivated by investigative interests and include 'dressing down'. The latter case is a common motif in fiction and myth, such as when kings disguise as commoners to wander amongst their subjects, or when everyday people have a double identity as super heroes at night.

2 See Susanna Egan's discussion of Helen Darville aka Demidenko, an Australian who penned a fake autobiography and, upon receiving public attention, literally turned into a Ukrainian-Australian in the process. Egan (2004) maintains that Darville's "book gave birth to her new self" (23) and points out that "[p]erformance determined genre, explicitly associating the life in the text with the life in the world in ways that backfired on the performer herself" (24). For a similar case, see Peter Schneck's discussion of the JT Leroy case (Schneck 2010). On truth in autobiographical narrative, see also Freeman (2003).

sincerity; we assume the other person is sincere and therefore also true.[3] Authenticity and sincerity are both semantically dependent on their negatives, inauthenticity and insincerity. The counterfeit thus represents the standard by which authenticity is determined (see Balkun 2006, 17). Earnestness and truthfulness are verified by an instrument of social control. In Susanna Egan's view, this instrument is an embodied censorship authority that tracks down fake autobiography and literary imposture: the "doubt police" (2011, 28). Assmann, in turn, identifies this authority as a "suspicious gaze" that is able to unearth discord, a kind of radar for fakeness.[4] Both Assmann and Egan argue that identity, or textual identity as claimed in self-narration, is subjected to a litmus test of authenticity.

Assmann's suspicious gaze and Egan's doubt police point to the dynamics of (fake) identity performance. In meeting others, we engage in an act of social positioning: "imposture presupposes posture" (Egan 2011, 150).[5] If the identity of another person turns out to be fake this entails our own failure of judgment. Hence, we have an investment in encountering others. Authenticity therefore does not only designate an innate quality; in the symbolic economy of identity negotiation and recognition, it carries cultural value itself.[6]

While the impostor narrative per se has received little scholarly attention, authenticity has stimulated increased interest in recent years.[7] Philipp

3 In his sweeping reading of European literatures, Lionel Trilling (1974) identifies sincerity as an early modern precursor of the turn towards authenticity in the twentieth century. Trilling focuses on the value attributed to the two concepts in matters of self-inspection and living the good life.

4 Assmann claims that the "suspicious gaze […] perceives a disturbing gap between the outer representation and the inner condition of a phenomenon" (36). Egan's "doubt police" includes readers, critics, even "professional doubters" who function as censors, affirm the canon and alleged quality standards (see 2011, 28–29). The concept also relates to the problematic gaze of racial profiling in airports and security zones since 9/11, which often violates personal rights for the sake of safety in the public sphere.

5 Egan defines this "as the positions we adopt because we are interpellated into them, or because they make sense to us, or because we choose them" (150).

6 The concept of recognition as the basic motivation of our being in the world also weighs into the back-and-forth of social interaction. It has been discussed by Paul Ricoeur (2005) but is less interesting to our inquiry on the impostor narrative because of its focus on the making of selves from a double basis, the self as stable throughout time and the momentary, situated self. On recognition in self-narration, see Schäfer (2011).

7 Even though imposture in the U.S. abounds, to our knowledge the topic has not been treated in an encompassing study: Gillman (1989) examines imposture in nineteenth century literary culture; Cheever (2010) traces the concept of the "phony" to the present;

Vannini and Patrick Williams find that authenticity is sought-after as a "marker of status or method of social control" (2009, 3). Somogy Varga's philosophical take positions authenticity as an ethical ideal. He critically revisits, respectively, the "inner sense" and the "productionist" authenticity models. The former locates authenticity on the inside of the self, as brought forth by self-inspection; the latter finds authenticity in the world around us, available as a means for authenticating ourselves through our actions. The "inner sense" and "productionist" models of authenticity also underlie scholarly assessments of the term (see Varga 2011, Guignon 2013). Julia Straub, for instance, presupposes an inner sense model to argue that the very attempt to evoke authenticity is contingent, as claiming authenticity entails verbalizing that which is primarily an experience: "Once marked as authentic, the mediated character of the allegedly authentic comes to the fore, spoiling the illusion of the 'unspoiled' as it were." (2011, 10)

At the turn of the nineteenth century, modernist thinking posed new questions about the links between the real and the self, as well as the self and commodity culture, where identity could now be produced, as Mary Balkun (2006, 6, 7) argues. In contemporary U.S.-American culture, Ulla Haselstein, Andrew Gross, and Mary Ann Snyder Körber find a renewed passion for the real. This might be attributed to the recent shock of the 9/11 terrorist attacks but also, on the long haul, to the postmodernist crisis of the self which results in a "manufacturing" of authenticity by contemporary culture industries (Williams and Vannini 2009, 2). Nowadays, authenticity appears as a commodity shaped by cultural definitions of 'reality' (see also Cheever 2010 and Orvell 1989).

Yet, despite this harrowing out of a concept once deemed monolithic, its cultural value remains unscathed. In the making of fake identities, the economy of authenticity provides a key paradigm for thinking about the performance of other, better, more privileged selves. Authenticity works in symbolic and in political ways: With the new identity usually comes the hard coin of wealth, or the soft power of prestige, as in Gerhartsreiter's

---

Schwartz (1996) examines the material culture of copies at the turn of the nineteenth century, as does Balkun (2006), in literary texts between 1880 and 1930. Laura Browder's *Slippery Characters* (2000) focuses on autobiographies by impostors who fake ethnicity and discusses the political repercussions of mimicking the 'authentic' voice of a minority group or cultural Other. Chen (2005) explores impersonation in Asian American literature and culture.

case. It literally opens up possibilities of self-improvement; it enables an escape from a marginal position towards a more privileged outlook.

However, impostors also run the risk of being discovered. Identity fraud is hazardous and will be punished socially or institutionally. The types of punishment differ: Acts of fraud as forging signatures and documents will be prosecuted legally. Deceiving others is not a crime, but often causes moral outrage and shunning.[8] Literary imposture, however, may end in court, as when readers of the fake drug-memoir *A Million Little Pieces* by James Frey sued the publisher. Cases such as Frey's demonstrate the interplay between the institutional and the social dimensions of identity fraud: It seems safe to say that the economic harm done to the publishing house, which paid for mislabeling the book as autobiography, pales in comparison to the attacks the author and publishing agent faced in public. What is more, the Frey case was magnified because of its appearance within a self-proclaimed 'moral forum,' Oprah Winfrey's talk show, where it evolved into a full blown scandal.

Part of the fascination with imposture is related to the dramaturgy of faking: Why does someone impersonate another identity? How do they do it? What do they get out of it and, most importantly, how does the story end? Is the impersonator punished, sanctioned, incarcerated? Does he get to enjoy his personal gain? Imposture makes for scandal, admiration, and mostly for great stories. Audiences wonder how close the impostor got to unsuspecting partners, friends, or co-workers, how, when, and by whom he was (almost) discovered. Impostor narratives are sites of identity negotiation and audience positioning: Is the fake excusable, even understandable, does the impostor repent it? By virtue of its subject, the impostor narrative invites discussion about identity performance. There are two sides to the coin of the fake: Readers can be partisans of those deceived or of the cunning pretenders, and they have to position themselves in this conflict.

Much as identity depends on storytelling, posing as someone else also builds on stories that certify the fake autobiography, ornament the performed identity, or in the aftermath, narrate the imposture. The narrativization and reception of imposture is therefore our key interest. Impostor

8 Gerhartsreiter, for instance, was not put on trial for faking his identity; in April 2013, he received a jail sentence for murdering the son of one of his rich benefactors. However, credit card fraud and identity theft (via consumer profiles) are subject to criminal prosecution, and protection software advertisement similarly evokes an 'army' of protection. On the investment of true con games see also Leblanc (2009).

narratives bring to light the performative nature of identity and the economies of authenticity and sincerity at its core. By examining imposture in cultural production, we can discern the layers of the seemingly monolithic term of identity: The fake sheds light on the presumably 'real' thing.

Identity Fraud in North American Culture

As a cultural contact zone and immigrant society, North America has been a playground for negotiations of identity and may have been especially prone to identity fraud. In North America, historical, cultural, and social power relations are a fertile ground for the invention of new selves for personal gain, whether social or monetary. In the U.S., as Laura Browder (2000) has argued, the cultural narratives of the self-made man and of unlimited possibilities function as a stimulus for reinvention. In addition to these typical American myths, the history of slavery and the Jim Crow laws, the encounter of white settlers with Native Americans, and class divisions induced by capitalism created the oppression and disenfranchisement of certain groups. Racial passing, going Native, or faking white upper class identity became a backdoor for escaping underprivileged social strata. Canada, in contrast, lacked master narratives and cultural myths and, according to Northrop Frye, was more concerned with the question "where is here?" than with "who am I?" (1971, 220). Canada's self-definition in the beginning hence very much hinged on defining the subject's relationship to the land. Thus, impostor narratives such as Archibald Belaney alias Grey Owl's interrelate faking an identity with constructing a genuine Canadian Northland as distinct from the motherland Great Britain and the U.S.

The confidence man may be the most prominent example of culturally specific identity fraud; the figure has been hailed as an American national phenomenon and immortalized in the cultural archive as "radically entangled with the myth of the 'New World'" (Lindberg 1982, 4).[9] If the con man looms large in American cultural history, this also seems due to his

9 See Bergmann and Lindberg's more elaborate discussion of the con man as "covert cultural hero" who is acknowledged rather behind closed doors: "When we denounce someone publicly and then privately laugh up our sleeves at his exploits, we celebrate the cult of the con man."(3)

appeal to cultural and literary historians. The genesis of the figure opens up further questions about the reception of imposture.

In 1849, a man was arrested in New York for swindling passengers in a remarkably simple, yet effective confidence game: He would approach people in the street and talk to them in a familiar way to make them think he was an old acquaintance they had not recognized. This alleged lapse and the bad conscience on the pedestrian's part was then used by the con man as a basis to extract valuables from his victim: to his question "Well don't you have any confidence in me?" the swindled one would answer "Why of course I do!", and the con man then asked: "Well, if you really do, prove it and entrust me with your gold watch until tomorrow!" The prank worked famously, and the con man, after serving his term in New York's Sing Sing, was caught -handed again six years later in Albany. The German Gerhartsreiter perfectly reiterated the con game upon arriving at the polls of the 1980 elections, where he intimidated the officials. When they asked for identification as citizen, he said he was from Massachusetts and yelled at them, "Don't you know who I am?" (Haas 2013).

Like Gerhartsreiter's, the case of the 'original' con man incited a media hype in his day; it spawned real-life imitators, an intermission skit at Burton's theater and newspaper comments, and it certainly was an inspiration to Herman Melville's 1857 novel *The Confidence Man: His Masquerade*. Reactions included satirical derision and didactic warning against confiding in strangers. However, as Bergmann points out, all regarded the con man case as entertainment and inspiration, as the entry in the *National Police Gazette's* 1859 *Rogue Lexicon* shows:

> CONFIDENCE MAN. A fellow that by means of extraordinary powers of persuasion gains the confidence of his victims to the extent of drawing upon their treasury, almost to an unlimited extent. To every knave born in the world it has been said that there is a due portion of fools. Of all the rogue tribe, the Confidence man is, perhaps, the most liberally supplied with subjects; for every man has his soft spot, and nine times out of ten the soft spot is softened by an idiotic desire to overreach the man that is about to overreach us. This is just the spot on which the Confidence man works. […]. The Confidence man is perfectly aware that he has to deal with a man who expects a result without having worked for it, who gapes, and stands ready to grasp at magnificent returns. The consequence is, that the victim—the confiding man—is always *done*. […] The Confidence man always carries the trump card; and whoever wishes to be victimized can secure his object by making a flat of himself in a small way, while attempting to victimize somebody else. (Matsell 1859, 20–21)

Like many other assessments of the con man, the *Rogue's Lexicon* is fascinated with the interaction rather than the crime aspect. The victim has to blame himself for being "done" by an admirably cunning man. The *Lexicon* thus excuses the fraud and applauds the cunning.[10] Since the reception of the con game promulgates an individualist stance, it merges deception with business and business with white masculinity.[11] Commentators grant the con man professional status and herald him as tinkerer of identity and performance artist of social make-belief. More succinctly, the figure's cultural prestige illustrates an intricate feature of fake identities: The impostor narrative can be applied in juxtaposed ways, to either applaud or denounce the faker or those betrayed respectively.

The case of the con man shows how the impostor narrative has shaped the American cultural imaginary. It highlights the symbolic economy at work in identity formation and the cultural specifics of how selves are made in North America. Other forms of the impostor narrative, such as racial passing, cross-dressing, or going Native, are equally indicative of identity categories and conventions of constituting the self. It goes without saying that these transgressions differ with regard to their politics. While the con game appears mostly playful, racial passing in the days of Jim Crow laws entailed a legal offense as well as a social crossing of segregated spaces.[12] Nevertheless, mechanisms underlying identity fraud are always the same, as the con man, just like the passing person or the ethnic impostor, anticipate their audience's expectations.

In an ethnic imposture, someone pretends to be someone else by assuming a different racial or ethnic background. As this performance has to be validated by a specific audience, ethnic imposture is always situated in a

10 See e.g. Maurer (1999), whose investigative journalism finds con games to be "as old as civilization" (18). A cynical response to the original con artist in 1849 bemoaned that the poor con man was sent to jail for stealing a gold watch, while the business con men on Wall Street thrive off the same mechanism and accumulated fantastic riches. See "The 'Confidence Man' on a Large Scale", *New York Herald*, July 11, 1849. The complete piece is reprinted in Bergmann 1969, 562–565.

11 The gender aspect in the con game has been largely ignored by commentators. Hyde and Zanetti's (2002) collection of 36 con men narratives features one story by Alexander Pushkin about a *femme fatale* who tricks some gamblers. Both Blair's (1979) comparative study of the con man in Western literature and Lindberg's (1982) overview of American literature include only male figures.

12 Racial passing in North America is an extensive topic that cannot be covered in its entirety here; for a discussion and for further reading suggestions, see Victor Goldgel's contribution in this volume.

distinct socio-historical context. The success of ethnic impersonators depends on their ability "to manipulate stereotypes, thus further miring their audience in essentialist racial and ethnic categories" (Browder 2000, 11). Ethnic impostors or impersonators have different motivations for their charade, some financial, some to advance their social status but all of them share a desire to transcend an identity limited by the race, class, or ethnic biases and boundaries of their time. America's most famous 'Indian face,' Iron Eyes Cody, up until 1971 starred in commercials for the preservation of nature, but later turned out to be an Italian-American from Louisiana. Another renowned showcase Indian, the Hollywood actor Buffalo Child Long Lance, who in his autobiography posed as a Blackfoot Chief, later was exposed as a Black janitor who grew up in the North Carolina backwoods and escaped segregation and racism by becoming an Indian.

The contributions in this volume demonstrate that, while the politics of imposture may vary, the performance part from ludic to legal has inspired most curiosity. Not only does the performance of transgressing identity categories play a central part in the reception of real-life cases, it is also a paradigm of aesthetic reflection and cultural epistemology in cultural products and impostor fictions. Our volume therefore proposes to examine the cultural construction of authenticity and identity through the lens of the fake. The first part looks at historical cases of fakery in chronological order while the second part investigates imagined fakes or literary and filmic representations of impostors.

In the eighteenth century, English explorer and attempted self-made man Jonathan Carver's expedition to British North America failed to achieve public acclaim. Ramin Djahazi's discussion of Carver's memoirs and the posthumous reception of his persona reveal the politics of self-promotional travelogues: Merely a land surveyor, Carver aggrandized his persona and posed as the first English gentleman explorer. His masquerade showcases the narrative construction of cultural identity and authority in a contact zone, interestingly so, in Carver's case, by means of a failed imposture. Caroline Rosenthal's contribution looks at the life and works of Archibald Belaney, alias Grey Owl, a Scotsman who went Native. Grey Owl turned into a Canadian national icon and acquired a pop star-like status in England in the nineteen-thirties when Canada barely had a cultural identity of its own. Rosenthal explores how and why his impersonation was validated by the cultural contexts of the time. While Grey Owl's exposure first annihilated his environmental message, his life and works

were rediscovered at the end of the twentieth-century as mediating between Western and indigenous paradigms. Going Native is also part of Asa Carter's story discussed here by Laura Browder. While pursuing his career in the Ku Klux Klan and as almost successful politician, Carter penned the fake memoir *The Education of Little Tree*, an account of his (invented) 'Indian' childhood. Aided by Carter's media-savvy promotional appearances as 'civilized Indian,' the book became hugely popular in the nineteen-seventies and was instrumental for eco-critical debates. Browder chronicles the quest for the 'real' Carter, owner and creator of these highly disparate public identities, through interviews and research in FBI files. The section on real life impostors concludes with Stefan Löchle's examination of the pseudo-anthropological *Don Juan*-cycle by Carlos Castaneda. Castaneda's apprenticeship with the Mexican sorcerer earned him a PhD from UCLA and enthusiastic support in the New Age community. Löchle traces the signals of the trickster narrative in the cycle and argues that the rhetoric signposts of imposture are quite visible, if one is only willing to see them.

The second part of this volume addresses the politics of authorship and fictionalization of imposture. Jan Kucharzewski's article links the treatment of authorship in contemporary U.S. literature to the impostor and the (modernist) *doppelgaenger*. His analysis of autobiographical narration and authorial imposture in recent novels sheds new light on autobiography and contemporary performative notions of self-narration. Authorship and cultural identity are central to canon formation, as Yulia Kozyrakis argues. Her discussion of the canonization of Emma Dunham Kelley-Hawkins as African American author illustrates the framing power of cultural politics and the pitfalls of reading ethnicity into a text or an imagined author persona. Kelley-Hawkins's case is emblematic of the political interest invested in literary canon formation and identity politics. Victor Goldgel interrogates theories of passing narratives with their focus on deception and mistake. He argues that the two nineteenth century Cuban Novels *Ambarina* and *Carmela* novels put forward a more nuanced understanding of deception and sincerity. In view of the porous nature of the color line and the strong impact of whitening ideologies in nineteenth-century Cuba, the character's willingness to turn a blind eye on the presence of blackness works as a means of authenticating fake identities. Christian Knirsch discusses the meaning of imposture and cultural identity in two American novels, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Richard Powers's *The Echo Maker*. Knirsch interlinks the masquerade of Rinehart the trickster in the former

to the loss of self in the latter piece and frames his analysis with the cultural myth of the American Dream.

Wieland Schwanebeck interlinks the newly fuelled popularity of the impostor with the debate around masculinities in crisis. Schwanebeck argues with specific recourse to John Requa's 2009 *I Love You, Philip Morris* that the impostor film entangles the viewer in the confidence game. In his discussion of the 2009 film *There Will be Blood*, Martin Holtz zooms in on the depiction of Daniel Plainview, as self-made 'oil man' and master of the con game. The film's capitalist critique is shown in the character development of the self-made man and the figure's filmic representation. Plainview, the big businessman, represents a capitalist impostor turned misanthrope whose economic success allows him to escape the prison of social norms and relations. Economic interest is also at the heart of the imposture of Dick Whitman, who poses as the already iconic Don Draper, one of the 'ad men' at the helm of post WWII-consumer culture in the series *Mad Men*. Stefanie Mueller critically examines the fakery of Draper in a discussion of nostalgia and representations of crisis that relates the fictional *Mad Men*-era to the moment of its reception in post-9/11 U.S. culture.

The coda of this volume takes the impostor narrative from the academic to the storytelling level. Maryann Henck's essay subjects the aboriginal trickster persona John in Drew Hayden Taylor's novel *Motorcycles & Sweetgrass* to a thoroughly Western identity examination: Henck puts the trickster on the psychoanalyst's couch. The fictional dialogue between psychoanalyst and shapeshifter highlights cultural epistemologies of identity performance. It also incorporates the impostor narrative's sensationalism as a composition principle by staging the question audiences ask most pressingly: Are impostors crazy? Can they be diagnosed and 'cured'? By pathologizing impostors, they can be done away with easily, beyond the identity negotiations 'normal' people engage in. Instead, it seems that this is too easy and that impostor narratives are interesting to us because of their transgressive or subversive qualities and because their stories invite different readings. Henck's essay interacts with the final contribution by Ojibwa writer Drew Hayden Taylor. His literary *oeuvre* is propelled by a humor that unravels cultural stereotypes about Natives. Taylor here reflects on "Pretending to Be an Impostor" in a short fictional piece. His thoughts conclude the volume with a humorous remark about the impostor

narrative as a cultural practice inextricably ingrained in our daily lives: We are all impostors, all the time.

Works Cited

Assmann, Aleida (2012). "Authenticity: The Signature of Western Exceptionalism?" In Julia Straub (ed.). *Paradoxes of Authenticity: Studies on a Critical Concept,* 33–50. Bielefeld: transcript.

Balkun, Mary McAleer (2006). *The American Counterfeit: Authenticity and Identity in American Literature and Culture*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.

Bergmann, Johannes Dietrich (1969). "The Original Confidence Man." *American Quarterly* 21,3, 560–577.

Blair, John G. (1979). *The Confidence Man in Modern Fiction*. New York: Harper & Row.

Browder, Laura (2000). *Slippery Characters. Ethnic Impersonators and American Identities*. Chapel Hill, London: University of North Carolina Press.

Cheever, Abigail (2010). *Real Phonies: Cultures of Authenticity in Post World-War II America*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

Chen, Tina Yih-Ting (2005). *Double Agency: Acts of Impersonation in Asian American Literature and Culture*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Egan, Susanna (2011). *Burdens of Proof. Faith, Doubt, and Identity in Autobiography*. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier Press.

— (2004). "The Company She Keeps: Demidenko and the Problems of Imposture in Autobiography." In Maggie Nolan and Carrie Dawson (eds.). *Who's Who? Hoaxes, Imposture and Identity Crises in Australian Literature, Australian Literature Studies* 21,4, 14–27.

Freeman, Mark (2003). "Rethinking the Fictive, Reclaiming the Real: Autobiography, Narrative Time, and the Burden of Truth." In Gary D. Fireman, Ted E. McVay, and Owen J. Flanagan (eds.). *Narrative and Consciousness: Literature, Psychology, and the Brain*, 115–128. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Frey, James (2003). *A Million Little Pieces*. New York: Random House/Double Day.

Frye, Northrop (1971). "Conclusion to a Literary History of Canada." In Northrop Frye. *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination,* 213–251. Toronto: Anansi.

Gillman, Susan (1989). *Dark Twins. Imposture and Identity in Mark Twain's America*. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press.

Guignon, Charles (2013). "Review: Somogy Varga: *Authenticity as an Ethical Ideal*." *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*. Web. 13 February 2013. http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/37284-authenticity-as-an-ethical-ideal/.

Haas, Michaela (2013). "American Beauty." *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 59. 11 March.

Haselstein, Ulla, Andrew S. Gross and MaryAnn Snyder Körber (eds., 2010). *The Pathos of Authenticity. American Passions of the Real.* Heidelberg: Winter.

Hyde, Steven and Geno Zanetti (eds., 2002). *Players. Con Men, Hustlers, Gamblers, and Scam Artists.* New York: Thunder's Mouth Press.

Leblanc, Michael (2009). "The Color of Confidence: Racial Con Games and the Logic of Gold." *Cultural Critique* 73, 1–46.

Lindberg, Gary H. (1982). *The Confidence Man in American Literature.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Matsell, George W. (1859). *Vocabulum; Or the Rogue's Lexicon. Compiled from the Most Authentic Sources.* New York: George W. Matsell & Co.

Maurer, David L. (1999) *The Big Con: The Story of the Confidence Man.* 1940. Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill.

Melville, Herman (1989). *The Confidence Man: His Masquerade.* 1851. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Nolan, Maggie and Carrie Dawson (eds., 2004) *Who's Who? Hoaxes, Imposture and Identity Crises in Australian Literature. Australian Literary Studies* 21,4.

Orvell, Miles (1989). *The Real Thing. Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940.* Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press.

Ricoeur, Paul (2005). *The Course of Recognition.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Schäfer, Stefanie (2011). *Just the Two of Us: Self-Narration and Recognition in the Contemporary American Novel.* Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier.

Schneck, Peter (2010). "Fake Lives, Real Literature: JT Leroy and the Hustle for Authenticity." In Ulla Haselstein, Andrew Gross, Maryann Snyder-Körber (eds.). *The Pathos of Authenticity. American Passions of the Real,* 253–279. Heidelberg: Winter.

Schwartz, Hillel (1996). *The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles.* New York: Zone Books.

Seal, Michael (2011). *The Man in the Rockefeller Suit. The Astonishing Rise and Spectacular Fall of a Serial Impostor.* New York: Viking.

Straub, Julia (2012). "Introduction: Paradoxes of Authenticity." In Julia Straub (ed.). *Paradoxes of Authenticity: Studies on a Critical Concept,* 9–29. Bielefeld: transcript.

Trilling, Lionel (1974). *Sincerity and Authenticity.* London: Oxford University Press.

Vannini, Philipp, and Patrick J. William. (eds., 2009) *Authenticity in Culture, Self, and Society.* London: Ashgate.

Varga, Somogy (2011). *Authenticity as an Ethical Ideal.* London: Routledge.

Faking It:
Real Impostors
and the Fabrication of Identities