

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: THE INVENTED INDIAN: RACE, EMPIRE,
AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN TWENTIETH-
CENTURY US LITERATURE

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This dissertation examines representations of ‘Indians’ to expose how these fictions underpin white male hegemony and US imperialism. As mascots, Western sidekicks, or Thanksgiving decor, ‘Indians’ permeate US culture in the twentieth century, though scholars have largely focused on the nineteenth. In the era of US expansion, representations of savage and vanishing Indians justified Native genocide. Scholars have highlighted the role these nineteenth-century ‘Indians’ played in maintaining white male dominance, but this focus on early American literature has obscured the Indian’s ongoing role in maintaining white hegemony. Fictions of Indian incompetence have led to continued abuses and assaults on sovereignty, and despite the social justice gains of the last century, Native land, water, and human rights are still under attack. By analyzing a range of writers including authors of color, women, and white men, my project intervenes in earlier scholarship to reveal an enduring, though often unconscious, commitment to colonial ideologies in twentieth-century US literature.

Americans of all races and genders participate in a culture steeped in Indian characters, costumes, and literary tropes. Race and racism are part of the fabric of US culture and language, and US authors reiterate race issues in literature, even if they do so unintentionally. In both canonical and activist literatures, the 'Indian' sustains white supremacy by propagating as neutral, if not invisible. In its normalcy, it resists critical inquiry.

This dissertation makes three interventions in American literature and Native American studies. First, it highlights the continued colonial mindset in the twentieth century and its consequences for Native peoples. Second, it reveals how the invented Indian in US fiction helps maintain white hegemony. Finally, it underscores that even activist literatures rely on the figure of the 'Indian,' meaning they, too, often unconsciously support white male hegemony. As Americans use Indian caricatures to better understand themselves, these metaphors ultimately displace Native peoples and their realities, further obscuring and normalizing their colonization. By examining dominant and resistant literatures side-by-side, my analysis reveals that colonial ideologies remain mostly unquestioned and intact in US culture.

THE INVENTED INDIAN:
RACE, EMPIRE, AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY US
LITERATURE

by

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Introduction

“Not Conspicuous by their Absence:”

The ‘Indians’ Everywhere and Nowhere in US Literature and Criticism

The deep impression made upon American minds by the Indian struggle against the white man in the last century has made the contemporary Indian somewhat invisible compared with his ancestors. Today Indians are not conspicuous by their absence from view. Yet they should be.

– Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins*

The westward course of population is neither to be denied nor delayed for the sake of the Indians ... They must yield or perish.

– Francis A. Walker, ‘Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs’ (1872)

A people unaware of its myths is likely to continue living by them.

– Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*

When Amy Kaplan published *Cultures of United States Imperialism* with Donald E. Pease in 1993, she set out to challenge academia’s “still resilient paradigm” to deny the existence of US empire. Kaplan cites as an example a special issue of *Representations*, titled *Imperial Fantasies and Postcolonial Histories*, which contains no essays on the United States or its colonization of American Indian nations.¹ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith, and Helen Tiffin’s seminal text of postcolonial theory, *The Empire Writes Back*, similarly ignores US imperialism. Disregarding America’s Indigenous peoples, the authors instead describe the problems white European settlers faced in “establishing their ‘indigeneity’ and distinguishing it from their continuing sense of their

1. Amy Kaplan, “Left Alone with America,” in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, 11, 4, 21.

European inheritance.”² As they cast the colonial aggressors as victims, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin compound the pervasive silences toward American Indians in postcolonial studies. Many leading postcolonialists rarely remark on American Indians, and when they do, they often reiterate common settler colonial myths. Gayatri Spivak writes that North America was “effectively cleared of political significance in the indigenous population,” and Edward Said claims American Indians were subjected to “wholesale colonization and destruction.”³

Eric Cheyfitz calls it a “complete scandal” that postcolonial studies has ignored American Indians, but says the fault rests in part with Native American studies, which he claims has a “resistance to critical theory.”⁴ In fact, Native American studies scholars have long insisted on situating the field within the history of settler colonialism in the United States.⁵ Nevertheless, nearly twenty years after the momentous publication of Kaplan and Pease’s paradigm-changing collection, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam reiterate

2. Bill, Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, 134. Shari Huhndorf offers a valuable discussion of *The Empire Writes Back* in *Going Native*. See especially pages Huhndorf, 10-11.

3. Gayatri Spivak, “The Making of Americans,” 783; Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 63. A significant contribution to postcolonial studies of the United States is Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt, eds. *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature* (2000).

4. Eric Cheyfitz, “The (Post)Colonial Predicament of Native American Studies,” 406.

5. Vine Deloria, Jr.’s manifesto *Custer Died for your Sins* (1969) is one salient example, but we could easily look to earlier Indigenous thinkers and writers, like William Apsess for his 1836 essay, “Eulogy on King Philip,” for meditations on settler colonial epistemologies. For a few important examples of recent work, see also Gerald Vizenor, especially *Manifest Manners: Narratives on PostIndian Survivance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999); Arnold Krupat, “Postcolonialism, Ideology, and Native American Literature;” and Maureen Konkle “Indian Literacy, U.S. Colonialism, and Literary Criticism,” in *Postcolonial Theory and the United States* (2000); Shari M Huhndorf, *Going Native* (2001); and Jodi Byrd, *The Transit of Empire* (2011).

Kaplan's criticism of American and postcolonial scholarship's neglect of the fourth world.⁶ Outside of Native American studies, inattention to American Indians, and the issues and histories they face as colonized peoples, remains common across the disciplines of American, US Multiethnic Literature, and Postcolonial Studies.

"The Invented Indian: Race, Empire, and National Identity in Twentieth-Century US Literature" takes up Kaplan's still salient call to address "the absence of culture from the history of U.S. imperialism; the absence of empire from the study of American culture; and the absence of the United States from the postcolonial study of imperialism."⁷ To address these silences, this dissertation builds on Anne McClintock's central claim in *Imperial Leather* that "imperialism and the invention of race were fundamental aspects of Western, industrial modernity."⁸ More specifically, this dissertation shares Shari Huhndorf's strong methodological assumption that colonial myths form the foundation of US culture and national narratives.⁹ A nation's myths form a compelling, reductive story of its history and peoples. Taken as truth, in whole or in part, myths come to shape a country's policies and historical events as they get codified into law, absorbed into people's behaviors and expectations, and reiterated in cultural

6. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, "Whence and Whither Postcolonial Theory?" They argue postcolonial critique often "quietly assumes the British-Indian relation as paradigmatic, while neglecting vast regions such as Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and the indigenous 'fourth world'" (372).

7. Kaplan, "Left Alone," 11.

8. Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 5.

9. Huhndorf writes, "the conquest of Native America, which took hundreds of years to complete, cannot be dismissed as an anomaly. Rather, it is the foundational event in American history. As such, it has been built into the nation's narratives, though in distorted and obfuscatory ways," (11).

products.¹⁰ Indianness comprises a crucial, though understudied, element of these foundational national myths.

This dissertation examines literary representations of ‘Indians’ to expose how these fictions underpin white male hegemony and US imperialism.¹¹ As team mascots, Western sidekicks, or Thanksgiving decor, ‘Indians’ permeate US culture in the twentieth century, though scholars have largely focused on the colonial period through the nineteenth.¹² In the era of US expansion, representations of savage and vanishing Indians justified American Indian genocide. Scholars have highlighted the role these nineteenth-century ‘Indians’ played in maintaining white male dominance, but their focus on early American culture has obscured the Indian’s ongoing role in maintaining hegemonic racial disparities and obscuring US imperial projects in both the popular and academic imaginary. By analyzing a range of writers including authors of color, women, and white men, my project intervenes in earlier scholarship to reveal an enduring, though often unconscious, commitment to colonial ideologies in twentieth-century US literature and

10. In *Regeneration Through Violence*, Richard Slotkin writes, “The mythology of a nation is the intelligible mask of that enigma called the ‘national character.’ Through myths the psychology and world view of our cultural ancestors are transmitted to modern descendants, in such a way and with such power that our perception of contemporary reality and our ability to function in the world are directly, often tragically affected” (3).

11. Maureen Konkle writes, “Colonial epistemology begins with Europeans’ production of knowledge about native peoples as ahistorical and depoliticized members of a group who share inborn characteristics that mark them as inferior to Europeans and deserving of subjection” (Konkle 152).

12. Three studies that have been especially informative for this dissertation include Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (London: Methuen, 1986); Stephen Jay Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992); and Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005).

literary criticism. I focus on literature because literature is a powerful, political tool that influences, in the words of Ngugi wa Thiong'o, the "emotions, the imagination, the consciousness of a people."¹³ As Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (Crow Creek Sioux) argues, the very function of literature and literary studies is political: they "assist all of us in understanding and interpreting the world in all ways – politically, philosophically, and aesthetically."¹⁴ Through each novel, poem, and autobiography included here, this dissertation examines the historical resonances of twentieth-century myths, surveys the shifting structures of these stories, and illuminates the significance of repetitions. In doing so, this dissertation analyzes multiethnic US literature for the ways it reiterates, engages, or alters colonial epistemologies.

Americans of all races and genders participate in a culture steeped in Indian characters, costumes, and literary tropes, but the scholars who have analyzed Indianness in US cultural products, including Phil Deloria (Dakota) and Shari Huhndorf, have largely focused on Euro-American culture. Race and racism are part of the fabric of US culture and language, and US authors reiterate race issues in literature, even if they do so unintentionally. In both canonical and activist literatures, the 'Indian' sustains white supremacy by propagating as neutral, if not invisible. In its normalcy, it resists critical inquiry. Close reading this imagery unveils Americans' investment in fictionalizing Indians to preserve their understanding of themselves as a nation of democratic anti-imperialists.

13. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Writers in Politics*, 15.

14. Cook-Lynn, *New Indians, Old Wars*, 3-4.

In writing back against the settler colonial fictions of the Indian, Native American writers have taken part in a centuries-long project of survival. Colonial epistemologies are built on the denial of Indigenous worlds, words, and narratives.¹⁵ Native American writers have no choice but to deal with colonial myths, which, as I discuss in chapter one, threaten to silence them in both the political and literary registers. The pervasive figure of the Indian is so toxic that Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe) contends that Native people's very survival depends upon its deconstruction.¹⁶

I argue throughout the dissertation that myths of Indianness produce manifold consequences, including consolidating white male cultural dominance, concealing the historical and ongoing imperial projects of the United States, and normalizing and further entrenching the colonization of over five hundred sovereign indigenous nations. Vine Deloria, Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux) insists, "The primary goal and need of Indians today is...[for] the public at large to drop the myths in which it has clothed us for so long ... 'Indianness' never existed except in the mind of the beholder."¹⁷ I analyze Native

15. Peter Hulme writes, "European civility – can only guarantee the stability of its own foundations by denying the substantiality of other worlds, other words, other narratives" (*Colonial Encounters* 156).

16. Vizenor, *Manifest Manners*, 11. Laura Coltelli writes in agreement: "[American Indian] literature is also considered by the Indian audience as a means for survival" (*Winged Words* 6).

17. Deloria, *Custer Died*, 27, 265. 'Indianness' is formed out of a network of associations that give each other authority, a phenomenon similar to what Edward Said describes in *Orientalism* about the distinct yet related discourses of the 'Orient.' "Every writer on the Orient (and this is true even of Homer) assumes some Oriental precedent, some previous knowledge of the Orient, to which he refers and on which he relies. Additionally, each work on the Orient affiliates itself with other works, with audiences, with institutions, with the Orient itself. The ensemble of relationships between works, audiences, and some particular aspects of the Orient therefore constitutes an analyzable formation ... whose presence in time, in discourse, in institutions (schools, libraries, foreign services) gives it

American literature alongside canonical and activist literature to not only continue the work of deconstructing these myths, but also to underscore the colonial epistemologies that continue to inform and influence American culture and our study of it.

In addressing myths of Indianness, this dissertation makes three important interventions in American literature and Native American studies. First, it highlights the continued colonial mindset in the twentieth century and its consequences for Native peoples. Second, it reveals how the invented Indian in US fiction helps maintain white hegemony. Finally, it underscores that even activist literatures rely on the figure of the ‘Indian,’ meaning they, too, often unconsciously support white male hegemony. As Americans use Indian caricatures to better understand themselves, these myths ultimately displace Native peoples and their realities, further obscuring and normalizing their colonization. By examining dominant and resistant literatures side-by-side, my analysis reveals that colonial ideologies remain mostly unquestioned and intact in US culture.

I. Culture in US imperialism, Empire in American Culture, and the US in the Postcolonial

Twenty-five years after the publication of Kaplan and Pease’s *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, the relationships between American, critical race, postcolonial, and Native American studies remain ambivalent. Because the US is a settler colonial nation, and each of its populations is imbricated within legal, political, and cultural systems that

strength and authority” (Said, *Orientalism*). For a powerful discussion on the creation of myths of Indianness out of a strange mixture of the discourses of orientalism and savagery, see Steven Greenblatt, “Marvelous Possessions” in *Marvelous Possessions*.

service and justify settler colonialism, these critical conversations have a great deal to share with one another when approached with caution and care.

In this section, I review the current conversations in Native American, multiethnic, and critical race studies, lay out what exchanges this project makes, and list my interventions. I begin by exploring the significant reservations held in Native American studies for such a project, and end by giving an explanation for how postcolonial critique offers a productive methodology for analyzing colonial myths of Indianness in twentieth-century US literature.

1. Native American Literature

Although the fields developed around the same time, Native American studies has shared an uneasy relationship with postcolonial studies, liberal multiculturalism, and critical race theory. This stems in part from academia's long history of reproducing colonial epistemologies in the study of Native America.

Native American literary criticism has often been troubled, Vizenor argues, by “narrow teleologies deduced from social science monologues and the ideologies that arise from structuralism,” which “reduced tribal literatures to an ‘objective’ collection of consumable cultural artifacts.”¹⁸ Misreading, stereotyping, and the neglect of specific cultures and histories in Native American literatures have led literary criticism to an “ahistorical pursuit of Indian identity,” to borrow Maureen Konkle's words.¹⁹ Assessed

18. Gerald Vizenor, “A Postmodern Introduction,” *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*, ed. Gerald Vizenor (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993): 5-6.

19. Konkle, “Indian Literacy,” 152.

by how closely they align with preconceptions about Indianness, texts that stray from the narrow field allotted them are often considered ‘inauthentic’ and unworthy of attention.

In demanding conformity to an impossible standard, literary criticism echoes colonial policies based in similar demands for authenticity. Accusations of ‘inauthenticity’ have been used to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their territories and to silence their activism.²⁰ Recognizing the ways myths of Indianness inform not only American literature but also literary criticism is crucial to decolonizing academic methodologies. This dissertation responds to Maureen Konkle’s main argument that the “point of departure for an understanding of Native oral or written traditions is, then, not the existence of an innate Indian consciousness but the existence of a historical and political entity, the Indian nation.”²¹

Native American studies scholars now regularly press for Native American literatures to be viewed as products of distinct nations, and not as another branch of multiethnic American literature.²² While they do not argue theirs should be the sole

20. In *Hawaiian Blood*, J. Kehaulani Kauanui describes the consequences of blood-quantum policies based in a logic of the dilutability of Indigenous blood, which, she argues, belie continued colonial projects of territory acquisition. In “Indian Literacy,” Konkle describes the consequences of Indian ‘authenticity’ in the critical reception of American Indian writing through William Apess’s struggles to be taken seriously by contemporaries who accused him of sounding too ‘white.’

21. Konkle, “Indian Literacy,” 152.

22. Simon Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo), Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Robert Warrior (Osage), Jace Weaver (Cherokee), and Craig Womack (Muskogee Creek-Cherokee) have led the call for a “nationalist approach” to Native American studies. Since Simon Ortiz first called for Native American intellectual autonomy in 1981, he has inspired a vast school of thought that advocates for methodologies based in Indigenous histories, cultures, and epistemologies to be used in the analysis of Indigenous literatures. These scholars argue that imposing poststructuralist or postcolonial methodologies (or any schools of thought that have been developed in non-Native contexts) can lead to misinterpretations and,

methodology, scholars in the ‘nationalist’ school insist that their approach is necessary for ensuring intellectual sovereignty, while opening opportunities to deconstruct colonial paradigms in academia.²³

Importantly, these scholars seek autonomy, not isolation. Indeed, isolating Native America from the histories and cultures of the United States is itself a problem in academia. Isolation can reproduce myths of Indianness by ignoring the historical fact of settler colonialism, or worse, it can reproduce the myth of Indian desolation by ignoring American Indian studies entirely. Although Native American literatures, as Vizenor explains, are not “mere responses to colonialist demands or social science theories,”²⁴ they do engage the toxic colonial fictions that filter through US culture at large. I agree with the tenets of the nationalist school, and attend to the histories and cultures within each of the Native American texts discussed in this dissertation. Rather than intervene in

worse, to a reinforcement of colonial systems of thought. Simon Ortiz, “Towards a National Indian Literature;” Laura Coltelli, *Winged Words* (1990); Robert Warrior, *Tribal Secrets* (1995); Jace Weaver, *That the People Might Live* (1997); Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, “Who Stole Native American Studies?,” (1997); Craig S. Womack, *Red on Red* (1999); and Jace Weaver, Craig S. Womack, and Robert Warrior, *American Indian Literary Nationalism* (2006).

23. Their reservations are warranted. As Cook-Lynn points out in “Who Stole Native American Studies,” literature departments rarely include opportunities to study American Indian languages or cultures alongside the literatures, missing opportunities to enrich readings of culturally distinct works. Beyond restricting literary analyses, critics may inadvertently marginalize Native voices. As Weaver, Warrior, and Womack argue, postmodernists invested in celebrating hybridity, for example, often speak over efforts in Native American studies to illuminate and interpret cultural continuity and resistance to colonialism. These authors argue that by focusing only on the hybridity of the colonized, and not the colonizer, such analyses tell a story of assimilation that adds to the myth of Indian desolation and Euro-American dominance that itself needs deconstructing. In *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, Weaver writes, “Hybridity works best as a choice rather than an imposition,” (35).

24. Vizenor, “A Postmodern Introduction,” 4.

this conversation, I address the isolation by bringing the lessons of Native American studies into the study of multiethnic US literature, particularly the need to attend to colonialism in discussions of US racializations, oppressions, and imperialism.

2. Multiethnic US Literature and Liberal Multiculturalism

One of the most important appeals to come out of Native American studies is the call to cease using colonization as a metaphor, as is regularly done in fields like multiethnic literary studies. When colonization is made a metaphor, the ongoing struggles unique to colonized peoples, including the defense and recovery of land rights, sovereignty, and treaty obligations disappear from the conversation. Jodi Byrd (Chickasaw), J. Kehaulani Kauanui (Kanaka Maoli), and Joanne Barker (Lenape) have each warned of the dangers of conflating colonization with other processes of oppression in the US, like racialization and gendered oppression. They have also exposed the prevalence of such practices across the academy, and the complicity of the academy, therefore, in the disappearance of US empire from academic and social consciousness.²⁵

Jodi Byrd's book *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* is an example of the kind of work Indigenous critical theory can do to remap and remember the territoriality at the heart of Indigenous oppression and resistance. One of her book's central claims is that American Indians should never be approached as one more

25. Jodi Bryd, *Transit of Empire*; Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood*; and Joanne Barker, "For Whom Sovereignty Matters" (2005). On the complex relationship between race and colonialism, Kauanui writes, "Indigeneity is tied to sovereignty, where the definitions of both are constantly negotiated and constructed in terms of competing interests (for example, vis-à-vis tribal nations and the United States). But in the realm of U.S. recognition of indigeneity through federal policy, a people's racial difference has to be proved as part of their claim to sovereignty. That 'race,' 'culture,' and 'nation' are always inextricably linked presents a further paradox, since federal recognition of Native status is primarily framed as a political category, not a racial one," (Kauanui 9).

American minority. She passionately insists: “Transforming American Indians into a minority within a country of minorities is the *fait accompli* of the colonial project that disappears sovereignty, land rights, and self-governance as American Indians are finally, if not quite fully, assimilated *into* the United States.”²⁶

Byrd, Kauanui, Barker, and many other Indigenous scholars argue that recasting American Indians as a racial minority encourages the state, the academy, and popular opinion to offer more inclusion as the solution to American Indian oppression, as if assimilation can redress stolen land, ethnocide, and genocidal acts. Such aggressive inclusion, even in academia, can “reinscribe the original colonial injury,” to borrow Byrd’s words.²⁷ Therefore, efforts to absorb Native American literature under the purview of multiethnic US literary studies have been met with suspicion. The field’s focus on race can encourage interpretations of American Indian writing that conflate resistance to colonialism with commentary on racism. Native American scholars worry that approaching Native American literature as a minority literature will serve as just one more way to “appropriate, absorb, and nullify” Native American cultures.²⁸ In uncritically incorporating Native American literature, liberal multiculturalism risks

26. Byrd, *Transit*, 137. In *Constituting Americans*, through her readings of several Supreme Court decisions, Priscilla Wald details the invention of ‘Indians’ as a single minority subject that arose from the hundreds of discrete nations of Indigenous peoples. Describing the effect of Justice Marshall’s ruling in the *Cherokee Nation* case, she writes: “Refusing to recognize the sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation, he effectively promoted the consolidation of tribes that federal treaties had previously ordained as discrete. This implied merging was consistent with the strategy that brought forth ‘Indians’ who, as individuals, could then (like immigrants) be assimilated into the Union,” *Constituting Americans*, 24.

27. Byrd, *Transit*, xxiii.

28. Arnold Krupat, *The Turn to the Native*, 27.

offering a modicum of cultural parity in lieu of any real social or political equality. Moreover, it risks the continued use of real or fabricated Indians in the academy as a means of discussing other putatively more pressing concerns.

In “The Intimacies of Four Continents,” to cite one prominent example, Lisa Lowe describes the modern labor relations and humanist philosophies that arose out of the global systems of imperialism, chattel slavery, and indenture. These global systems drew European, African, Asian, Indigenous peoples together into intimate relations that provided the conditions for the very humanism that then elided those relations. Though she describes the need for further scholarship on Indigenous survival in the Caribbean and the relations between Asian, African, and Indigenous peoples in the Americas, Lowe herself does not explore Indigenous peoples’ experiences with colonization. She writes, “men and women from Africa and Asia were forcibly transported to the Americas, who with native, mixed, and creole peoples constituted slave societies, the profits of which gave rise to bourgeois republican states in Europe and North America.” As Indigenous peoples join African and Asian laborers in yielding the conditions for European and Euro-American democratic humanism, the territoriality at the center of Indigenous colonial experience disappears with a focus on a racialized laboring class. The conquest of Indigenous land is elided in a formulation that equates slave or migrant experiences with Indigenous people’s experiences. The racialization of labor relations is co-constitutive with colonization, but not equivalent, and though Lowe at least addresses the gap in scholarship on the relationships between Indigenous peoples and global systems of

labor, movement, and power, the omission remains prevalent as scholars regularly overlook Indigenous peoples entirely.²⁹

These gaps in scholarship are not unique to Indigenous peoples. Although some scholars had been discussing race since at least 1903 when Du Bois published *Souls of Black Folk*, pre-1970s literary criticism was mostly silent on issues of race, as Henry Louis Gates, Jr. writes in his seminal essay “Writing ‘Race’ and the Difference It Makes.” Toni Morrison’s *Playing in the Dark* (1992) was integral in transforming literary scholarship to pay attention to the vast influence of African American voices, experiences, and stereotypes on US culture. She addresses “a kind of willful critical blindness” that overlooks the real and fabricated, “sometimes allegorical, sometimes metaphorical, but always choked representation” of what she calls the ‘Africanist’ presence in US literature.

To address the systemic neglect of real and fabricated Indianness in multiethnic US literature and critical race theory, I build on Morrison’s methodology proposed in *Playing in the Dark*. She argues that critics must attend to the “significant and underscored omissions, startling contradictions, heavily nuanced conflicts, [and to] the way writers people their work with the signs and bodies of this [Africanist] presence” in

29. Lowe, “Intimacies,” 192, 193. I put this reading in conversation with Jodi Byrd’s, which also discusses this passage in Lowe’s essay. While Byrd argues that Lowe includes Indigenous peoples only “as an addendum,” and imagines “their only role ...[as] either one equivalent to that of African slaves or their ability to die so imported labor can make use of their lands,” my understanding of Lowe’s point is a bit more generous. In my reading, Lowe recognizes the important role Indigenous people play in the intimacies of four continents, but she does consider that role only through the lens of a racialized labor force. Just as she does not collapse slavery and indenture, I argue she does not “collapse” African chattel slavery with Indigenous forced or hired labor, as Byrd claims. What is missing is not a recognition of Indigenous peoples as peoples (Byrd argues they are “the ground” and “the transit” for others’ intimate relations); what is missing is a discussion of Indigenous peoples as colonized peoples. See Byrd, *Transit*, xxv.

order to see its crucial influence on American culture. In keeping with Morrison's argument, I propose we can also investigate the political, cultural, and literary effects of Indianness by attending to the significant omissions, startling contradictions, signs, figures, and tropes that saturate US literature and literary criticism. Indianness is like Morrison's Africanism in its ubiquity and significance, as well as in the shared history of systemic silence and neglect. One difference I would like to underscore is that Indianness is not just overlooked; it is said to disappear in the twentieth century. While scholars have begun the important work of recovering early African American and Native American writing and political and cultural influence, as well as deconstructing and uncovering the origins of toxic stereotypes and myths, few have attended to the ongoing critical impact of Indianness in the twentieth century.

More problematic still, even those who attempt to correct systemic silences and marginalizations often marginalize Native Americans. When Morrison describes the influence of Africanism on even some of the earliest colonial descriptions of the New World, for example, she writes: "Why is [the New World] seen as raw and savage? Because it is peopled by a nonwhite indigenous population? Perhaps. But certainly because there is ready to hand a bound and unfree, rebellious but serviceable, black population against which...all white men are enabled to measure these privileging and privileged differences."³⁰ Her certainty on the influence of black experience, and doubt over the influence of Indianness (addressed in a casually dismissive "perhaps") parallels the common omissions of Lowe and others, and remains common in the academy to this

30. Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, 17-18, 6, 45.

day.

3. Critical Race Theory

Ninety years after Du Bois called the problem of the twentieth century the problem of the color line, scholars like Eric Sundquist still described the US as a “biracial culture.”³¹ To this day, the black-white racial binary remains the implicit and predominant paradigm in much of US culture and academia, despite the gains of those critical race theorists that have complicated the black-white paradigm by speaking to the racializations of other groups, including Asian Americans, Latina/os, and American Indians. Chicano studies has been especially influential with their reformulation of the frontier model of margins and centers with a new conceptual model, the ‘borderlands,’ which emphasizes the many ways and spaces in which cultures cross and encounter one another within asymmetrical power relations. Native American studies has also produced several significant examinations of the influence of Native American nations on early US history, culture, and politics.³²

I am indebted to those who have complicated the binary models of both the color line and the frontier line, but rather than further deconstruct or add complexity to the binary model, this dissertation unpacks how the black-white paradigm came to exist in the first place and what its consequences are on American Indians and myths of Indianness. When discussing discourses of racialization in the US, critical race theorists

31. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 9.

32. Native American studies has produced several significant works on the influence of Native Americans on the colonies. Three important studies that have interceded in the common practice to tell a historical narrative only of Native American domination and assimilation are Richard White’s *The Middle Ground* (1991); Daniel Richter’s *Facing East from Indian Country* (2003); and Michael Witgen’s *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (2013).

have tended to group American Indians uncritically alongside other people of color, which denies the unique colonial logic informing the discourses of Indigenous racialization. US blood quantum policies are based in the myth that Indianness can be diluted out of people's bloodlines, regardless of nation-specific or culture-specific attitudes toward tribal membership. Blood quantum classification has been used to deny land rights to Indigenous peoples who have other ancestries.³³ The dilution-based racialization of American Indians is wholly at odds with the 'one-drop' racialization of African Americans, though both create the conditions for dispossession. This dissertation reframes some of the current conversations in critical race theory to address the settler colonial epistemologies that inform American Indian discourses, political policies, and activism, as well as systemic misunderstandings and silence toward Indigenous issues outlined above.

When I encourage the study of the relationship of Indianness to the black-white paradigm, I do not add a third group of racialized people to the US racial binary. I bring back into consideration the third racial discourse that originally structured interethnic relationships in the US. Through the close of the nineteenth century, the dominant racial paradigm in the US was tripartite: black, white, and red. Each discourse was formed in contradistinction to the others, and red in particular represented the frontier. Immigrants were racialized through this third dimension of the racial triad, and as I discuss in chapter three, although we tend not to discuss the racial triangle in the twentieth century, its effects endure and can be found in the changing discourses of racialized xenophobia.

33. Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood*, 10-11.

The disappearance of Indianness from the racial paradigm has been received as a consequence of the 1890 close of the frontier, or a result of the successful and complete assimilation of American Indians. It has also been said to reflect the actual genocidal annihilation of Indigenous peoples, whose extinction had been projected in the popular US imagination for centuries.³⁴ In general the popular perception of the Indians' disappearance reflects a general acceptance of the notion that they had the option only to "yield or perish," as the first epigraph reflects, not to survive or resist. In reality, Native Americans saw significant population growth in the twentieth century, and their lived realities did nothing more to influence the reductive tripartite model than they do for the current hegemonic black-white model.³⁵ If the disappearance of Indianness was not a consequence of the disappearance of Indigenous peoples, then the discursive causes and effects of this significant alteration to our popular and academic understandings of the US warrant a closer look.

Throughout the dissertation, I engage and expand the recent arguments put forward by scholars like Jodi Byrd, Nicholas de Genova, Yael Ben-zvi, and J. Kēhaulani Kauanui that the erasure of Indianness obfuscates US imperialism throughout the twentieth century.³⁶ Discourses of Indianness and the frontier provided the model for how

34. I discuss the vanishing Indian trope further throughout the dissertation.

35. Ben-zvi, 201-202.

36. Nicholas De Genova, *Racial Transformations* (2006); Yael Ben-zvi, "Where Did Red Go?" (2007); Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood* (2008). I am indebted to Kauanui's dissection of the colonial logic in blood quantum policies. I complicate her argument in the dissertation by noting that the 'Indian' can be racialized or de-racialized, depending on the needs of the symbol's user. Kauanui does not differentiate between these two competing, contradictory discourses. When she discusses the 'truism' that 'red and white blood blended easily,' whereas black blood was understood as a contaminant, she unfortunately

the US would deal with indigenous populations around the world. From the Philippines in 1898 to Vietnam in 1968 and beyond, “[a]ll along,” Richard Drinnon writes in *Facing West*, “the obverse of Indian-hating had been the metaphysics of empire-building.”³⁷

Byrd develops Drinnon’s point further, arguing:

U.S. cultural and political preoccupations with indigeneity and the reproduction of Indianness serve to facilitate, justify, and maintain Anglo-American hegemonic mastery over the significations of justice, democracy, law, and terror. Through nineteenth- and early twentieth-century logics of territorial rights and conquest that have now morphed into late twentieth- and early twenty-first century logics of civil rights and late capitalism, the United States has used executive, legislative, and juridical means to make ‘Indian’ those peoples and nations who stand in the way of U.S. military and economic desires.

The erasure of Indianness, and the resultant biracial paradigm, both reflect and perpetuate the twentieth-century disavowal of US empire I addressed in this introduction’s outset.

This dissertation extends Byrd, de Genova, Ben-zvi, and Kauanui’s lines of thought into the literary realm to investigate the ways literature and literary criticism deploy the disavowed (though culturally foundational) discourses of Indianness. By attending to colonialism in the study of multiethnic US literature, we can better analyze

accepts a common revision of history I discuss in several chapters, namely the invention of indigenous ancestors. Once American Indians were imagined to inevitably vanish, they were no longer a ‘racial threat’ and it became popular to claim fictitious Indian ancestry to participate in an American identity steeped in Indian folklore. See Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood*, 10-17.

37. Drinnon, *Facing West*, 464-465.

the “coerced complicities,” to borrow Byrd’s phrasing, of all parties and processes that benefit US imperialism.³⁸ Cook-Lynn writes: “all of the stories of America contain the ghosts of an imperialistic history, yet readers and critics alike often seem to miss this essential ingredient of historical imperial thought, or perhaps they just ignore it, and that has been my constant lament as an aspiring analyst in Indian Studies.”³⁹ This dissertation responds to Cook-Lynn’s critical call to investigate the ghosts of imperialistic history in the US’s many stories.

II. ‘Indians’ in US Culture

Two studies that have laid the foundation for this dissertation are Phil Deloria’s *Playing Indian* (1998) and Shari Huhndorf’s *Going Native* (2001). Deloria argues that Euro-Americans rely on Indian play (as they have throughout their history) to construct their national and racial identities. Building on Deloria’s work, Huhndorf argues that Euro-Americans manage cultural and political crises by immersing themselves in the Indianness they imagine is their culture’s alternative. By shining a light on Euro-America’s reliance on settler colonial epistemologies, both Deloria and Huhndorf have helped reveal that there is nothing natural or inevitable in the ways dominant US culture has come to define and rely on its Indians.

For decades, scholars have studied Euro-America’s Indians. By investigating Euro-American myths alongside their effects on Native Americans, Huhndorf and

38. Byrd, *Transit*, xx, xxiii.

39. Cook-Lynn, *New Indians, Old Wars*, 178.

Deloria shifted the focus of a field that was dominated by a Euro-American monologue.⁴⁰ Though they expanded the scope of the conversation in invaluable ways, both remain focused on the Euro-American uses of Indianness. Wide gaps in the scholarship remain, and with this dissertation, I hope to add new voices and perspectives to a developing field in order to encourage further study of settler colonial epistemologies in US culture.

This dissertation adds to this important conversation by exploring Indianness in multiethnic US literature. I do so for four main reasons: first, marginalized peoples are not the recipients of a cultural monologue. They too create cultural and political tides that affect the fabric of the country, its myths, and its relationship with the world. To study only the dominant group is to risk perpetuating hegemonic power dynamics, including the systemic silences I have outlined above, in the academy and beyond. Second, the study of multiethnic US literature allows us to investigate diverse expressions of colonial and anticolonial epistemologies. It reveals the ways Americans often inadvertently rely on settler colonial epistemologies to tell stories about the US and the ways people create and define their American identities. Third, by investigating the ways diverse peoples take up, repeat, and alter settler colonial myths, we can get a better picture of settler colonialism in the US, which affects not just the Euro-American settler colonists and the

40. Some significant studies of the influence of invented Indians on Euro-American culture include Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind* (1953); Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence* (1973); Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978); Drinnon, *Facing West* (1980).

Berkhofer, for example, writes that his book explores “White understanding of the Indian in the past and the present,” and, “In the end, to understand the White image of the Indian is to understand White societies and intellectual premises over time more than the diversity of Native Americans” (Berkhofer xv-xvi). This dissertation works to move beyond the traditional critical focus on white societies and intellectual premises for the many reasons outlined throughout the introduction and chapters.

Indigenous colonized, but diasporic populations, forced migrants, and immigrants as well. Myths of Indianness structure the fabric of US oppressions and privileges; they are part of the foundations of US discourses of racism and xenophobia. By investigating the stories people tell about these myths and through these myths, we can get a clearer idea of the many ways people benefit from, and are victimized by, disavowed settler colonial myths of Indianness. Finally, I argue that in order to truly dismantle systemic oppressions in the US, we need always simultaneously to attend to the settler colonial structures of power and privilege. Settler colonialism created the conditions for the US's multicultural society to exist, and as such must be taken into consideration.⁴¹

To these ends, some of the guiding questions for this study are: in what ways does the neglect of settler colonialism prevent us from fully deconstructing other US oppressions? How can Indianness help us tell the story of the US's shifting borders, both as an imperial state and as a racialized population? How can attending to repetitions, omissions, and manipulations of Indianness in multiethnic US literature help us map shifting notions of nativeness, citizenship, and race? How do Americans use or change myths of Indianness in order to tell their story? In what ways do marginalized peoples grapple with the discourses of borders, inclusion and exclusion, nativeness, and the frontier through myths of Indianness? Can those outside the dominant culture radically alter the Indian's meanings, or can the Indian only represent, and therefore further normalize, settler colonial epistemologies?

III. Postcolonial Methodologies

41. This final argument responds to Byrd's critical call for such a move in the study of US culture. See *Transit*, xx.

In this dissertation, I argue that unquestioned and unexamined settler colonial myths remain deeply influential in American literature and our study of it. Accordingly, I have employed postcolonial critique as one of the project's primary methodologies. Multiethnic literary studies and postcolonial critique converge on issues like diaspora, mimicry, hybridity, and immigration. The relationship between Native American literature and postcolonial critique, however, is still by no means a comfortable one. Nevertheless, recently, Native American studies scholars like Jodi Byrd, Jace Weaver, Cari Carpenter, Arnold Krupat, Maureen Konkle, and others have argued that the fields have valuable contributions to offer one another.⁴² Although scholars maintain some significant reservations, including the academy's potential to share in a settler colonial agenda and the significant differences between European and US models of imperialism, Byrd explains the reasoning behind putting the fields in conversation: "because postcolonial theory arose as a politicized intervention into colonialist knowledge production, it seems worth reconsidering some of its strategies for the continued development of indigenous critical theory."⁴³ Building on these scholars' arguments, "The Invented Indian" joins the growing movement to analyze the language and rhetoric of US discourses as they relate to colonial socioeconomic, political, and historical processes.

42 Singh and Schmidt have collected major scholars' thoughts on postcolonial critique and Native American literature, several of whom point out the parallels in the ideological work performed: *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature*, edited by Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt, 3-69. Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2000.

43. Byrd, *Transit*, xxxiii-xxxiv, xxx-xxxi.

The greatest reservation scholars of Native America and US imperialism still tend to have is with the term *postcolonial* itself: there simply is no “post” to Native American colonization.⁴⁴ Postcolonial critique is not only concerned with a historical period after the end of colonization, however, as many of its leading theorists make clear. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin warn against restricting the meaning of the postcolonial to after-independence because “all post-colonial societies are still subject in one way or another to overt or subtle forms of neo-colonial domination, and independence has not solved this problem.” Instead, they argue that postcolonialism is best understood as “a continuing process of resistance and reconstruction,” processes that cannot be understood without an examination of both the antecedents and consequences of colonization.⁴⁵ For literary

44. As Amy Kaplan explains in her introduction to *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, “The history of American imperialism strains the definition of the postcolonial, which implies a temporal development (from ‘colonial’ to ‘post’)” (Kaplan 17). Krupat too writes: “Yet contemporary Native American literatures cannot quite be classed among the postcolonial literatures of the world for the simple reason that there is not yet a ‘post-’ to the colonial status of Native Americans” (Krupat 73). This has led to variations of spelling, including the common *(post)colonialism*, Krupat’s *domestic imperialism* or *internal colonialism*, or Jace Weaver’s *pericolonialism*, which speak to significant differences while still allowing scholars to draw from postcolonial studies. Amy Kaplan continues, “United States continental expansion is often treated as an entirely separate phenomenon from European colonialism of the nineteenth century, rather than as an interrelated form of imperial expansion. The divorce between these two histories mirrors the American historiographical tradition of viewing empire as a twentieth-century aberration, rather than as part of an expansionist continuum” (Kaplan 17).

45. Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, 2. Here they comment on European imperialism, but as I discussed at the start of this introduction, I argue postcolonial critique should address the US as well. Similar to Shohat and Stam, I argue that the postcolonial should be expansive in its historical scope. They argue, and I agree, that postcolonial scholarship should encompass the medieval discourses that created the conditions for racialized, hierarchical, early modern and modern European imperialisms: “we have long argued that any in-depth study of coloniality/postcoloniality must go at least as far back as the Reconquista....It should also, ideally, incorporate the Crusades’ demonization of the infidel as part of the process by which Europe constituted itself as an

studies, the postcolonial can name those historical processes as well as the discursive tensions and hybrid styles that proceed from the historical conditions of imperialism and settler colonialism.⁴⁶ It refers to aesthetics and a lens for interpreting those aesthetics. For a study of myths of Indianness, postcolonial critique encourages an awareness of the colonial epistemologies that inform American writing and its critical reception.

Postcolonial critique, in other words, allows us to attend to the “worlding” of the Indian. Spivak describes worlding as a twofold process by which a subject is first created through imperial representation, and then accepted as a reality through the forgetting of its cultural construction. In a brief moment in her article “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism,” Spivak criticizes feminist individualists and postcolonialists for reproducing imperial ideologies and axioms by claiming to inhabit the position of an Ariel or a Caliban. She writes, “As we attempt to unlearn our so-called privilege as Ariel ... we too run the risk of effacing the ‘native’ and stepping forth as ‘the real Caliban,’ of forgetting that he is a name in a play, an inaccessible blankness circumscribed by an interpretable text...[C]laiming to be Caliban legitimizes the very individualism that we must persistently attempt to undermine from within.”⁴⁷ To use the ‘native’ as a metaphor is to be complicit in the imperial processes of its worlding. Although Spivak only briefly remarks on the inattention to the worlding of the ‘native,’ does not herself address the gap, and only refers to Latin American contexts, her objection to using the ‘native’ as an

imaginary ‘continent’ through opposition to an Islam which had arrived at the very gates of Vienna” (Shohat and Stam 373, 390).

46. See Kenneth Surin, “Postcolonialisms After W. E. B. Du Bois.”

47. Spivak, “Three Women’s Texts,” 245.

“object for enthusiastic information-retrieval and thus denying its own ‘worlding’” serves as a welcome launching point for this dissertation.

The worlding of the Indian results in the same pattern Spivak decries: the use of the Indian as a metaphor, which then reproduces and denies the Indian’s worlding. As American authors use the Indian to describe their oppression, justify their power, or criticize their culture through their imagined ‘Indian’ alternative, they reproduce the systems of thought that first worlded the Indian and justified US colonialism. The unfinished conquest of Indian territory is further supported and promoted by myths of the apolitical, uncivilized, and vanishing Indian, which encourage denials of past and present American Indian sovereignty.⁴⁸ Through stories of vanishing and apolitical Indians, American authors reproduce the worlding of the United States that disavows its imperialism.

The narrative of US national identity is delivered out of the destruction and denial of Indigenous nations. US nationhood is inextricable from the study of indigeneity: first, because the US created itself as a nation using the Indian as a symbol; second, because the US became a nation-state by actively working to conquer and destroy American Indian nations and their peoples’ lives and lifeways; third, because the borders of the United States carve through several American Indian nations (like the Tohono O’odham or the Blackfeet) without concern for their national boundaries, a problem most recently aggravated by Trump’s proposed border wall; third, because nation-to-nation treaties legitimated the establishment and international recognition of the US government, just as the treaties’ disavowal later legitimated the fatally destructive reservation ward system

48. Konkle, 153-154.

and termination policies; fourth, because the trail of broken treaties signifies that Europe and the US acknowledged the existence and sovereignty of American Indian nations only to later pass laws and policies with the express purpose of dismantling Native communal, political, and territorial ties through the denial of their very existence. As postcolonial, hemispheric, diaspora, and transnational studies move the academy away from a focus on the nation, nationhood and sovereignty remain fundamental concerns to Native America.⁴⁹

IV. Addressing the Twentieth Century

When discussing treaties, colonial fictions, sovereignty, and conquest, most scholars conclude with the close of the frontier at the end of the nineteenth century, but the acts and rites of conquest continue into the twenty-first, just as Native American resistance does.⁵⁰ American Indian displacement and land appropriation have persisted with projects like the Kinzua Dam, which displaced hundreds of Seneca and flooded thousands of acres of reservation land, and, more recently, the Dakota Access Pipeline, which was moved closer to reservation land to reduce contamination of non-Native land. Genocidal acts have also carried on into the twentieth century. Termination Era hospital closures left thousands without access to medical care and resulted in a surge in infant

49. Shohat and Stam, "Whence," 375-376; Konkle, 153-154; Sankaran Krishna, *Globalization and Postcolonialism*, 122-23.

50. Huhndorf's *Going Native* addresses many twentieth-century rites of conquest, including the practice of 'going native.'

mortality rates and a measurable decrease in life expectancy.⁵¹ Later in the 1960s and 70s, between 25 and 50 percent of American Indian women of childbearing age were forcibly sterilized.⁵² More recently, uranium mining has left millions of tons of radioactive tailings on or near Native American land, poisoning Navajo, Laguna, and other Native people's land and drinking water. Causing reduced life expectancy, and increased miscarriage, birth defect, infant mortality, and cancer rates, uranium development is considered by many "a form of genocide."⁵³

In early environmental impact statements about uranium mining, the impact on Native Americans was casually dismissed with language like, "No one fishes the salmon commercially in the river – except Indians."⁵⁴ Language about Indian incompetence similarly circulated in the medical circles that performed the forced sterilizations.⁵⁵ Language is as much a tool of empire as military conquest, laws, and policies are. By producing knowledge, creating truths, forming ideologies, and worlding worlds, language supports and promotes colonial land acquisition and genocidal acts by passing off myths as reality. For the 1992 quincentennial celebration of Columbus's landfall, Michael Berliner wrote in the *Los Angeles Times* that Columbus Day celebrates "Western civilization... because it is the objectively superior culture." Parroting colonial myths, Berliner argues that American land was "sparsely inhabited, unused, undeveloped" and

51. Deloria, *Custer Died*, 30.

52. Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 56.

53. Dorothy Nelkin, "Native Americans and Nuclear Power," 7.

54. See Dorothy Nelkin, "Native Americans and Nuclear Power," 4.

55. Jane Lawrence, "The Indian Health Service," 410.

that the people lived a brutish existence characterized by “endless, bloody wars.”

Reproduced in medical circles, government reports, newspapers, and literature, myths of Indianness reverberate everywhere unnoticed. As Vine Deloria writes, “Today Indians are not conspicuous by their absence from view. Yet they should be.”⁵⁶

In this dissertation I focus on the invented Indian, not because it is an especially toxic or unique stereotype. When white police officers can record terms like “demon” (Michael Brown), “monster” (Eric Garner), and “hulk” (Laquan McDonald) in official reports and legal records to describe black men and justify their murders, we see that in many contexts stereotypes have deadly consequences, words matter, and the myths of who a people are can supersede recorded evidence disproving those myths. I focus on the Indian because Indianness is everywhere, yet invisible. Its imagery, metaphors, and discourses are an overdetermined, ubiquitous, absent presence.

The cowboys and Indians of nineteenth-century American frontier narratives have so captured the imaginations of the dominant culture that Indians ostensibly have no place in modern times. The modern Indian seems to disappear from popular and academic consciousness, in a regrettable cosmic wish fulfillment of the dominant culture’s myth of Indian desolation. This is despite the fact of thriving American Indian cultures, producing internationally acclaimed literature and art, developing culturally informed school programs, and gaining greater sovereignty and federal recognition throughout the twentieth century. Nevertheless, in 2014, The National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C. still felt the need to host an exhibit that projected images of modern Native Americans to counteract the dominant narrative of their

56. Deloria, *Custer Died*, 12.

disappearance. Vine Deloria, Jr. notes that in seminal twentieth-century studies on demographic measures like poverty, Native Americans are often simply absent. Public primary education about Native Americans ends with the close of the frontier. The average American student never learns about US empire in the twentieth century. My university students are sometimes surprised to learn that American Indians still exist at all, so caught up are they within the fictions of the American frontier. Such unconscious reproductions of Indianness reverberate silently across American culture, erasing American Indian realities, making invisible American imperialism, and reinforcing white racial and colonial dominance.

Putting Native American studies, multiethnic American studies, and postcolonial studies into conversation can help us address Amy Kaplan's call to investigate the effects of culture on US imperialism and the effects of empire on US culture. This dissertation engages and expands recent developments in Native American studies on the pervasiveness, toxicity, and invisibility of Indianness by bringing these developments to the study of multiethnic American literature. "The Invented Indian" builds on the growing body of work on the manifold ways American culture relies on its invented Indians, especially the arguments put forward by Richard Slotkin, Phil Deloria, Shari Huhndorf, and Jodi Byrd. This dissertation contributes to these developing conversations by decentering whiteness, attending to US heterogeneity, and investigating the ways Indianness is used to remedy, resist, or reiterate narratives of US privilege and oppression from the various centers, margins, and borderlands of US culture.

V. Chapter Summaries

My first chapter examines Paiute activist Sarah Winnemucca's mimicry of the 'Indian princess' fiction. In both her performances and autobiography, Winnemucca caters to the stereotyped roles and images of the time in order to resist the most damaging ones. Her autobiography, *Life Among the Piutes* (1883), is especially significant because it bears witness to genocide. To fight for Paiute survival, Winnemucca had to somehow secure the attention of white audiences that were steeped in a culture of Indian erasure. To do that, she had to convince them she was an 'authentic Indian,' a favorite figure in the nineteenth-century entertainment industry.

I argue that Euro-American demands for 'Indian authenticity' silence anticolonial activism. Those American Indians who resist colonialism through law or literature are accused of not representing 'real' Indians because they do not fit the stereotype. Sarah Winnemucca, an author, lecturer, interpreter, and army scout, was among the first to exploit the fiction of 'Indian authenticity' to claim a space for her activism. She is an early example of a tradition of Indians playing Indian that continues into the twenty-first century, though it remains an understudied practice. Previous scholarship has focused on the meanings, causes, and consequences of white people playing Indian. This important pattern in Indigenous postcolonial activism speaks to both the dominant colonial mindset that persists into the twenty-first century and the power of the colonized to influence and reclaim oppressive fictions.

My second chapter investigates turn-of-the-century activist literature written to alter the landscape of American racism and imperialism. Specifically, I analyze Indian imagery in Booker T. Washington's autobiography *Up from Slavery* (1901), W. E. B. Du

Bois's treatise *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), and Zitkala-Ša's Dakota legends, *Old Indian Legends* (1901). When authors use the Indian as a metaphor, they disconnect Indianness from any particular people or territory. Born instead out of invented myths of Indianness, the Indian metaphor compounds, through language, the literal displacement of Indigenous peoples. I argue that the Indian imagery in Washington's work increases its cultural purchase with diverse American audiences. By making the Indian a metaphor to help him challenge the color line, however, I argue that Washington conflates racialization and colonization, reaffirms hegemonic hierarchical power structures, and inadvertently writes an argument in favor of US imperialism.

Du Bois and Zitkala-Ša offer a different model. Zitkala-Ša and Du Bois each put Indigenous peoples' realities at the surface of their critiques of white hegemony. Native peoples are included in these critiques not as a backdrop, stereotype, minority, or metaphor, but as members of individual nations fighting for sovereignty and land rights. By dealing with both race and colonialism in their work, they unpack the reciprocal cause and effect of these distinct though interwoven oppressions. I argue that their work illustrates that only those activists that connect the Indian fiction back to the reality of Native peoples' anticolonial struggles over land truly deconstruct white hegemony.

My third chapter examines negotiations with 'nativeness' in John Okada's novel *No-No Boy* (1957) and N. Scott Momaday's novel *House Made of Dawn* (1968), each set in the historical period shortly after the 1942 Sleepy Lagoon trial, which asserted that Latinos, Asian Americans, and American Indians were, and would remain, foreigners to the United States. Throughout the dissertation, I argue that American authors use and manipulate myths of Indianness to change the frontiers for who counts as American. The

Sleepy Lagoon trial demonstrates the role Indianness has played in the racialization of Asian Americans and Latinos. Signifying the US's literal and metaphorical frontiers, Indianness can be deployed to imprint 'foreignness' on any American population.

Set around a WWII Japanese internment camp and the Pueblo of Jemez, Okada and Momaday's novels engage the complex interplay between these domestic yet foreign spaces and their characters' native yet 'foreign' identities. In this chapter, I argue that as the war exacerbated racist xenophobic borderlines, many people used Indianness to vocalize their group's Americanness, that is, to make themselves more native. These two novels resist contributing to the normalization of US imperialism by questioning the tenets of Americanness that cause imperialism to become invisible, though they also show the limits of that pursuit.

My fourth chapter analyzes literature of the Vietnam War era. Robin Moore's pro-war bestseller *The Green Berets* (1965) illuminates the ways Indianness can be redeployed any context to promote US imperial interests. Combining Indian-hating with Indian-idolizing, this novel illustrates the ways the dominant cultural white male identity is created out of the repudiation *and* simultaneous incorporation of invented Indianness.

Critics argue that the Vietnam War caused an epistemic rupture in American culture, and they see a cultural 'transformation' from an early-war celebration of Indian-hating to a late-war devotion to Indian-idolizing. I argue that this transformation is merely superficial, and that both mainstream and countercultural uses of the Indian functioned to reaffirm, reinvigorate, and naturalize white hegemony and US imperialism, even in the midst of the civil rights era and the launch of the Red Power Movement. In both the celebratory cowboy-and-Indian versions of the war and the narratives of

disillusionment, white people looked to their Indian roots to seek wholeness and progress. The white cowboys used Indianness to escape the feminizing influences of modern life to become tougher, more skilled warriors to defeat their Indian foe in Vietnam; the counterculturalists used Indianness to escape the corrupting influences of a modern society plagued with pollution, war, and racism. In both cases, white Americans expressed a frustration with the present, and to ameliorate the ills of the present, they sought an idealized American ‘Indian’ past that would help them progress toward a more true, authentic American future. Both mainstream and counter-culture processed the Vietnam War through the American jeremiad: a ritual form based in myths of Indianness. To illustrate this argument, the second half of the chapter analyzes Indian imagery in William Eastlake’s anti-war novel *The Bamboo Bed* (1969).

By way of a final example, I analyze Asa Carter’s book *The Education of Little Tree* (1976). Sold as a Cherokee autobiography, the book is actually a work of fiction written by a leader of the Ku Klux Klan. This chapter asks why white men *played* Indian at the same time that they played cowboys *killing* Indians, and asserts that these are manifestations of the same cultural impulse.

This dissertation only begins to scratch the surface of the wealth of stories told through, with, and against settler colonial myths of Indianness. I hope the gaps left here can be used as opportunities for further scholarship on the causes and consequences of using Indianness to write the story of American identities, whose frontiers change through time and circumstance. Official narratives of nation and personhood rely heavily on Indianness. The texts in this dissertation speak to the difficulty – but also the possibility – of telling a different story.

Chapter One

The ‘Authentic Indian:’

Sarah Winnemucca’s Resistance to Settler Colonial Constructions of Indianness

In the late-nineteenth century, crowds of excited white Americans gathered all over the United States to see a touring, real-life, Indian¹ princess. She dressed in fringed, beaded buckskin and a princess crown, a perfect replica of the cartoon Indians found on posters and cigar boxes. Newspapers had reported the charming gibberish of other Indian performers, with one recent speech transliterated as “Rub-a-dub, dub! Ho-daddy, hi daddy!”² The waiting crowds expected their Indian princess to similarly entertain them. However, when this Indian princess opened her mouth, audiences heard neither amusing

1. Although many people refer to themselves as Indians, when I use the term “Indian” in this chapter, I rely on the work of Native American scholars like Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe), who defines *Indian* as a colonial construct: “*postindian* is the absence of the invention, and the end of representation in literature; the closure of that evasive melancholy of dominance.” Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Narratives on PostIndian Survivance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 11. Jodi Byrd writes of the term *Indian*: “There was a violence embedded in the naming. And slavery. And genocide. It is today a marker of that legacy.... It is an ‘Orientalism’ transplanted and remapped onto the indigenous peoples of the Americas, and it carries with it all the discursive attempts to control and to narrate the place of peoples into an already established world.” Jodi Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2011), 72–73. When I use the term *Indian*, in other words, I generally use it to discuss a construct created and perpetuated to justify settler colonialism and disparage, disenfranchise, and condemn immensely diverse groups of peoples by minimizing the differences between them.

2. This is not what Old Winnemucca, Sarah Winnemucca’s father, said. The mistransliteration appeared in *Daily Alta California*, “City Items,” October 23, 1864, 1. For an extended discussion of contemporary newspaper articles on Winnemucca, see Gae Whitney Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiutes* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983).

chanting nor the standard recitation of a “Pocahontas” love story. This speaker informed the audience of a genocide. To the Euro-American onlookers, Sarah Winnemucca—Thocmetony, or “Shell Flower”—looked like an “authentic Indian princess,” but she certainly did not sound like one.³

Winnemucca’s ‘Indian authenticity’ was a performance.⁴ Though she was full-blooded Paiute, and the daughter of a headman, her public image mimicked Indian princesses of Euro-American fairytales. Ironically, because she met expectations for how Indians should look by touring in this Indian princess costume, she appeared more authentic in the eyes of her white audiences. Vine Deloria, Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux) writes: “Indianness has been defined by whites for many years. Always they have been outside observers looking into Indian society from a self-made pedestal of preconceived ideas coupled with an innate superior attitude toward those different from themselves. ... ‘Indianness’ never existed except in the mind of the beholder.”⁵ For the American general

3. Indian authenticity is not a fixed category. I explore its meanings and tensions throughout the rest of the article, as well as Winnemucca’s uses of the stereotypes that defined Indian authenticity in her time. In reality, of course, there is no one way to live authentically or express one’s culture authentically. There is no “real” Indianness against which to measure Winnemucca.

4. There is a long, violent, racist history of Euro-Americans playing Indian. From the Boston Tea Party to Hollywood, from white people taking scholarships reserved for Native students to white shamans leading “authentic Indian retreats” for the wealthy, to this day questions of authenticity are a real problem for Native Americans, whose cultures are regularly appropriated by Euro-Americans perpetuating racist stereotypes through false representations staged as truth. While questions of authenticity are important for American Indians for many reasons, from finance to social justice, Euro-Americans have consistently evoked questions of Indian authenticity to disempower Native people who deviate from the racialized script of Indianness. See Philip J. Deloria’s seminal text on this issue, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

5. Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, 1988), 265.

public, this invented Indianness displaced and replaced real Native people. This “Indian,” a settler colonial myth, was uncivilized, ahistorical, and apolitical. It did not read or write; it did not participate in United States politics. The Indian fought on the American plains, not in the courtroom. If Native Americans engaged in resistance in the political or literary arena, they were often accused of no longer being “authentic Indians.”⁶ Their activism could be disregarded, since clearly they did not, and could not, speak for “real Indians,” which existed only in the settler colonial imagination.⁷

This chapter argues that Winnemucca was among the first Native people to gain agency by strategically appropriating the stereotyped roles and images that were available at the time. She is an early example of a tradition that continues into the twenty-first century, though it remains an understudied practice. Scholars have tended to analyze, instead, the history of white people playing Indian, and the ways in which this practice

6. For a thoughtful meditation on this, see Maureen Konkle, “Indian Literacy, U.S. Colonialism, and Literary Criticism,” in *Postcolonial Theory and the United States* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 151–75.

7. Paige Raibmon writes, “Although there has never been an official policy called ‘authenticity,’ shared assumptions have functioned as such in many respects. Official policies could not have developed as they did without widespread agreement on these assumptions,” 8. To interrupt the fictions and engage with those in power, Aboriginal peoples have often taken up performances of authenticity. This is because, Raibmon notes, subaltern groups do not create the rules of engagement or the terms of the discourse. Rather, “Aboriginal people were far less likely to gain access to this public sphere when they did not ‘play Indian,’” Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 11. See also Scott Lauria Morgensen, “The Biopolitics of Settler Colonialism: Right Here, Right Now,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 1, no. 1, (2011): 52-55; Mark Rifkin, *Settler Common Sense: Queerness and Everyday Colonialism in the American Renaissance* (Minnesota: University of MN Press, 2014); Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism.”

has disempowered Indigenous peoples.⁸ The long tradition of Native Americans playing Indian powerfully suggests the efficacy of narratives of ‘Indian authenticity’ to disempower Native people. It also suggests that Native Americans have some power to influence, manipulate, and reclaim these oppressive fictions. It is, therefore, an important element of Indigenous postcolonial⁹ activism, and it merits further attention.

Native American and settler colonial studies scholars, including Maureen Konkle, Elizabeth Povinelli, Joanne Barker, Paige Raibmon, and Patrick Wolfe, have made important strides in theorizing the ways that an invented ‘Indian authenticity’ has been used to limit Native people’s political agency.¹⁰ Patrick Wolfe, for instance, argues that

8. Two seminal texts in this field include Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); and Shari Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 2001).

9. See the dissertation’s introduction for a discussion of how I use the term *postcolonial*. As Maureen Konkle argues, “Contemporary Native intellectuals have argued for some time now that colonialism did occur in the U.S. and that it still determines relations between Native and non-Native people” (Konkle 152). Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt have collected major scholars’ thoughts on the relationship between postcolonial critique and Native American literature, and many in this collection point out the parallels in the ideological work performed in these two canons. With the greatest reservations over the “post” in “postcolonial,” because there is no end to the colonization of Native Americans, I use the term as a name for work that foregrounds tension with imperial oppression, rather than as a name for a historical period. Anishinaabe writer and scholar Gerald Vizenor alternatively calls this settler colonialism “paracolonialism” which, as he explains, is, “a colonialism beyond colonialism, multiple, contradictory, and with all the attendant complications of internal, neo- and post-colonialism” (Vizenor, *Manifest Manners*, 77). Drawing on the overlapping work between fields, I alternate between the terms *postcolonial*, *(post)colonial*, and *settler colonial*, choosing whichever is most appropriate for that moment. See *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature*, edited by Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2000).

10. See, for example, Konkle, “Indian Literacy;” Elizabeth Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism* (Durham: Duke UP, 2002); Joanne Barker, *Native Acts: Law, Recognition, and Cultural Authenticity* (Durham: Duke UP, 2011); Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of*

restrictive settler colonial definitions for who ‘counts’ as Indigenous compound other genocidal practices.¹¹ By artificially reducing Indigenous population size, he argues, “repressive authenticity” bolsters the settler colonial myth that Indians are disappearing, or worse, that they are already gone, now only a thing of white America’s past. While Wolfe focuses on the discursive power of Indian authenticity, Maureen Konkle, for instance, discusses its legal codification.¹² In the European cultural imaginary, unlettered savages had no legal claim to their territories. “It is therefore in settlers’ best interest,” Konkle explains, that “the claim be made that Indians who write are no longer really

Encounter from the late-nineteenth-century Northwest Coast (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005);

Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* (2006): 387-409.

11. Wolfe explains, “the style of romantic stereotyping that I have termed ‘repressive authenticity,’ which is a feature of settler-colonial discourse in many countries, is not genocidal in itself, though it eliminates large numbers of empirical natives from official reckonings and, as such, is often concomitant with genocidal practice” (Wolfe 402).

12. Konkle argues that in *Johnson v. M’Intosh* (1823) Chief Justice Marshall “asserts the principles of the doctrine of discovery, Marshall also allows that the European assertion of authority is an extravagant pretense because settlers clearly understood that North America was inhabited by politically autonomous groups of Indians who defended their territory and their governmental authority. Marshall recognizes that he denies Indian natural rights – rights that precede positive, European law – and that he violates the law of nations in order to support a system of government ostensibly founded on those same republican principles” (Konkle 154-155). In *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831), she notes that the court changes its story: “Conceding that Indian nations have political authority thus provides an opening for Native historical continuity and political organization that must be closed off. ... In *Worcester*, Associate Justice John McLean elaborates ... Indians’ inherent difference and inferiority may be taken for granted; the acculturated Cherokee are a ‘savage people’ (573). The inscription of inherent Indian difference must preclude the possibility of future Native political organizations” (Konkle 155-156). In contradictory conclusions, the Supreme Court both recognized Indians had nations, which they gave away, and concluded that they were incapable of nation formation, and so needed the reservation ward system.

Indians.”¹³ As the self-fulfilling, circular reasoning went, unlettered Indians had no legal right to the land, and literate Indians were not “authentic Indians” and therefore had no more entitlement to Indian territory than any other non-Indian. This chapter adds to this developing conversation by exploring Indigenous performances of ‘Indian authenticity’ as a means of resistance to settler colonial politics. Sarah Winnemucca, an author, lecturer, interpreter, and army scout, was among the first to exploit the fiction of ‘Indian authenticity’ to claim a political, activist space for herself and her agenda.

Limited notions of “Indian authenticity” preemptively silence writers and activists. Taking this into account, Winnemucca’s accomplishments cannot be overstated. She was, in her own words, “the first Indian woman who ever spoke before white people.”¹⁴ She was also the first Native American woman to advocate on a national level and take her fight to the federal government, where she even received an audience with the President.¹⁵ With the publication of her 1883 book, *Life among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims*, she became the first Native American woman to publish a book-length autobiography and tribal history, and the first to publish in English.¹⁶ Born in 1844, Winnemucca lived through a period of massive upheaval. Her lectures, and the autobiography in which she recorded them,¹⁷ chronicle the early encroachment of white

13. Konkle, “Indian Literacy,” 165.

14. *San Francisco Chronicle*, 14 November 1879. See also Canfield, *Winnemucca*, 162.

15. Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 197.

16. Fowler, introduction to Winnemucca, *Life*, 3. A number of other Native Americans had written and published in the US before Winnemucca, including Samson Occom, Elias Boudinot, William Apess.

settlers, the atrocities committed against the Northern Paiutes, and the calculated negligence of the US government's Indian policies. Winnemucca's book documents Northern Paiute suffering and resistance to Euro-American colonial policies of Indian eradication. From stories of rape and removal, to scenes of burning stores and the withholding of reservation supplies, to accounts of starvation and massacres, Winnemucca's text bears witness to genocide.

To fight for Paiute survival, Winnemucca chose to spread awareness. She had to somehow secure the attention of white audiences who were deeply invested in the silencing and erasure of Indigenous peoples. To do that, she had to convince them she was an 'authentic Indian,' a favorite figure in the nineteenth-century entertainment industry. The invented Indian princess costume she wore during her lectures lent her credibility and marketability. The autobiography did not share the benefit of this simple disguise. What tools did she use to maintain her 'authenticity,' while doing all the things 'authentic Indians' cannot do – from writing and speaking fluent English to political activism? In her particular socio-political environment, Winnemucca could not simply satirize Indianness, as later activists have done. She also could not fully deconstruct it and still maintain her 'authenticity.' Instead, I argue, the autobiography draws on the standard racist imagery of the day. In doing so, I argue, it mimics, then subverts, the dominant cultural discourse in much the same way her costume had done during her performances. Settler colonial constructions of Indianness appear in both Winnemucca's lecture series and her autobiography, a fact that suggests these were intentional rhetorical choices.

17. In the editor's preface, Mary Mann notes: "Finding that in extemporaneous speech she could only speak at one time of a few points, she determined to write out the most important part of what she wished to say" (Mann, Editor's Preface of *Life Among the Piutes*, 2.)

Close reading of her autobiography can offer some clues as to how this Paiute activist managed to manipulate her audiences' (post)colonial fictions to her benefit.

Winnemucca's mimicry of Indianness has generated a great deal of controversy over the last century. Her princess costume has been called "the most detrimental public relations strategy she could have adopted."¹⁸ The autobiography has similarly agitated modern readers, my students included, for the blatant racist imagery employed within its activism. The childlike naiveté of the Paiutes, the praise of white culture, the apparent resignation to white rule, and the concomitant abandonment of the political objective of sovereignty give the impression of deep internalized racism. Uncertainty over how to receive Winnemucca's racist stereotypes has led some critics to dismiss Winnemucca for her "acculturated" bias.¹⁹ Modern readers tend to find Winnemucca's perspective off-putting because she does not sound "Indian" enough. Much like the white audiences of her performances, modern readers come to Winnemucca's work with a specific set of expectations regarding what makes an authentic activist Native American text. By unfairly holding Winnemucca to modern standards of authentic Indian activism, modern audiences fail to see past Winnemucca's performance of the 'Indian princess' stereotype. Maureen Konkle argues that the modern critical search for a "true Indian identity" in Indigenous literatures is a result of the longstanding belief that "when Indians engage in the practice of writing, they undermine their own identity."²⁰ In other words, as she

18. Joanna Cohan Scherer, "The Public Faces of Sarah Winnemucca," *Cultural Anthropology* 3, no. 2 (1988): 196.

19. See, for one example, Gretchen Bataille and Kathleen Mullen Sands, *American Indian Women: Telling Their Lives* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 21.

explains, “the effects of both the historical and contemporary production of knowledge about Indians are the same.”²¹ In comparing American Indian writers and activists to their imaginary counterpart – the invented Indian – modern readers participate in a colonialist mindset that dismisses Indigenous activism and overlooks Winnemucca’s unique voice.

Recently, scholars have begun to acknowledge the autobiography’s powerful syncretism and activism.²² Nevertheless, the text’s racist episodes and imagery remain a problem for scholars. Some recent critics have chosen to set aside these awkward images,

20. She writes, “most critics agree, traditional Indian cultures do not have a concept equivalent to ‘literature.’ Although Indians’ oral practices may change over time, the Indian consciousness made available through oral tradition provides an atavistic link to their preliterate past; once Indians move from oral to written practices, their consciousness changes irrevocably. Native writers in English are then most successful in expressing their Indian identity when they provide evidence of what is understood as their culture through themes, forms, narratives, and figures correlated with the oral tradition written down by scholars. The assumption underlying the belief that true Indian identity – the most complete expression of that inborn consciousness – is always associated with the scholar’s traces of a preliterate past is that when Indians engage in the practice of writing, they undermine their own identity” (Konkle, “Indian Literacy,” 151-152).

21. Konkle, “Indian Literacy,” 165.

22. Andrew McClure argues against the common assumption that Winnemucca was fully assimilated or acculturated into white culture. He close reads her book to uncover the Paiute perspectives hidden within her performance of assimilation. She “learned to adapt,” he argues, “in order to maintain as much of her Native identity as was possible” (McClure 30). Greatly indebted to McClure’s reading, I extend his argument by considering the particular motivations and contexts for Winnemucca Indian play. Cari Carpenter argues similarly that Winnemucca was neither traitor nor neutral mediator, but rather “a figure of generic hybridity” (Carpenter 72), arguing that this leads to the hybrid elements of Winnemucca’s writing. I extend this argument by moving away from the hybrid elements of Winnemucca’s text, and thinking instead about the manipulations of the audience. For more readings of Winnemucca’s complex syncretism, see Cari Carpenter, “Tiresias Speaks: Sarah Winnemucca’s Hybrid Selves and Genres,” *Legacy* 19, no. 1 (2002): 71-80; Andrew McClure, “Sarah Winnemucca: [Post]Indian Princess and Voice of the Paiutes,” *MELUS* 24, no. 2 (1999): 29-51; Malea Powell, “Rhetorics of Survivance: How American Indians Use Writing,” *College Composition and Communication* 53, no. 3 (2002): 396-434. [lop

focusing instead on the anti-racist elements of the text.²³ Still others note how the racist tropes “neatly echo” those informing Indian policy of the time.²⁴ Neither the generous nor the dismissive analyses yet deal effectively with the key role such stereotypes played in Winnemucca’s activism. Because Indian authenticity has been used to restrict Indigenous peoples’ political engagement, the usual binary employed by critics to evaluate Native cultural products as either assimilationist or traditional is counterproductive.²⁵ In this chapter, I attempt to rethink the literary aesthetics of Native American autobiography, which has traditionally been pigeonholed in such unproductive ways. Previous critical analyses leave room for deeper exploration into the particulars of Winnemucca’s anticolonial work. The racist elements of Winnemucca’s advocacy do not only echo settler colonial culture; they recreate and revise settler colonial culture by defamiliarizing one of its essential components: Indianness.

23. See, for one example, Danielle Tisinger, “Textual Performance and the Western Frontier: Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins’s ‘Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims,’” *Western American Literature* 37, no. 2 (2002): 170-194. I am indebted Tisinger’s work on Winnemucca’s activism. The focus on Winnemucca’s anti-racist message has proved a significant recovery of her as a historically criticized and underrepresented nineteenth-century Native American woman, author, and activist. I build on, rather than criticize, this earlier scholarship for its reclamation of Winnemucca’s work. A second example can be found in Frederick Hoxie who looks at Winnemucca’s interventions in both US’s colonial culture and male-dominated Indigenous resistance. Focusing on her powerful activist work, he describes “Winnemucca’s uncompromising voice and unapologetic public persona” (564). In this chapter, I unpack a number of Winnemucca’s compromises, which, I argue, were vital components of her activist work. See Frederick E. Hoxie, “Denouncing America’s Destiny: Sarah Winnemucca’s Assault on US Expansion,” *Cultural and Social History* 9, no. 4 (2012), 549-567.

24. Powell, “Rhetorics,” 411.

25. Here I am in agreement with Mark Rifkin’s work. See “Finding Voice in Changing Times: The Politics of Native Self-Representation during the Periods of Removal and Allotment” in *Routledge Companion to Native American Literature*, ed. Deborah Madsen (New York: Routledge, 2015), 154.

Reading Native American texts requires situating them within the ongoing history of settler colonialism in the Americas.²⁶ This is in part because Native American writers have no choice but to deal with colonial fictions of Indians, which threaten to silence them in both the political and literary registers. The invented Indian is so toxic that Vizenor contends that Native people's very survival depends upon its deconstruction.²⁷ Unpacking settler colonial history will help move away from questions of Indian authenticity, which are themselves a manifestation of the procedures of racialized politics that preclude native people from political participation. To this end, this chapter offers a close reading of Winnemucca's mimicry of Indianness within its socio-political context. As the US prepared to expand into an overseas empire toward the end of the nineteenth century, Indianness gained new meanings within US culture and US nationalism. As the first two sections of the chapter argue, Winnemucca's activism tapped into the zeitgeist of late-nineteenth-century US imperialism. After analyzing Winnemucca's performed lecture series and autobiography, the chapter closes on an overview of the century of Indigenous performances of Indianness that succeeded Winnemucca's. Ultimately, this ongoing form of resistance evinces both the continued colonialist mindset that persists into the twenty-first century, and the continued fight for Indigenous survivance.²⁸

1. Winnemucca's Performances: The Indian Princess, not the Vanishing Indian

26. Major voices in this important scholarship have included Chad Allen, Maureen Konkle, Arnold Krupat, Mark Rifkin, and Gerald Vizenor.

27. Vizenor, *Manifest Manners*, 11.

28. Here I borrow Gerald Vizenor's famous coinage. See Vizenor, *Manifest Manners*.

Late-nineteenth-century Euro-Americans had an insatiable appetite for the Indians their culture invented. To a culture anxious about its budding modernity, these Indians symbolized an ‘authentic American past’ rooted in the frontier. At the same time, Indian imagery evoked a bright imperial future envisioned as a natural extension of America’s Manifest Destiny.²⁹ A symbol for how far the US had come and how much their empire had already achieved, Indians occupied a pivotal role in the growing number of public displays of patriotism that accompanied the country’s centennial. At the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, for example, white Americans celebrated the country’s military victories with displays of Indian mannequins dressed in real slain warriors’ clothing.³⁰ Carefully selected Indian people, scenes, and wares were put on display to contrast civilization and savagery at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition.³¹ All the while, the centuries-old debates raged on as Euro-American thinkers, writers, anthropologists, and even psychologists mused over whether the Indian represented humanity’s prelapsarian roots or civilization’s frightening alternative.³²

29. In 1898, the US annexed Hawaii and colonized the Philippines, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Guam. For an in-depth study on the ways “Indianness” facilitates US imperial projects, see Jodi Byrd’s *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2011).

30. Huhndorf, *Going Native*, 24, 30.

31. Displays such as these were limited invariably to Plains Indians. East coast farming tribes were considered too acculturated, for example, to be recognized as ‘real’ Indians, that is, as America’s authentic past and mythical opposite. They did not perform the same ritualistic function. See Huhndorf, *Going Native*, 32.

32. Huhndorf provides the following salient example: “In the 1890s the American psychologist G. Stanley Hall formalized these notions of the relationship between the individual and social progress in his revolutionary and widely celebrated theories on childhood development, most notably the ‘recapitulation theory.’ According to Hall, children repeat the epochs of human history in the process of their development. ... Just

Historian Richard Slotkin explains that in this period, through Indian performance and play, “history, translated into myth, was reenacted as ritual.”³³ As a way to ritualistically participate in their culture, nineteenth-century Euro-American consumers flocked to see real-life Indians for themselves. Indian performances became wildly popular. Human zoos attracted tens of thousands of spectators,³⁴ but even more popular were Wild West shows, which gave Euro-American audiences the opportunity to revisit and exult in the drama of their colonial conquest. Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show, which used actual Plains Indian actors in its reenactments, drew unprecedented crowds, and was praised as an “inculcator of patriotism.”³⁵ As ‘Indians’ became part of Euro-American

as ‘most savages in most respects are children,’ he asserted, so too are children like savages: ‘The child is in the primitive age. The instinct of the savage survives in him’” (Huhndorf 74). Examples of participants in these philosophical debates include Pope Paul III who affirmed that Indians were human beings in 1537; Filipe Guaman Poma de Ayala who wrote a twelve hundred-page letter to the Spanish king in the early seventeenth century to protest the injustices of colonial rule; Spanish jurists like Francisco de Vitoria; French philosophers like Montaigne; British prospectors like Raleigh and John Smith; American politicians like Jefferson; the list is inexhaustible. Importantly, Indigenous thinkers and leaders produced resistant knowledge, cultures, and political organizations that also had an impact on European and Euro-American thinkers, shaping the trajectory of these colonial epistemologies. There has even been debate on whether the Iroquois Confederacy served as inspiration for the political organization of the young United States.

33. Richard Slotkin, “Buffalo Bill’s ‘Wild West’ and the Mythologization of the American Empire.” In *Cultures of United States Imperialism*. Edited by Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), 166.

34. The Inuit put on display in New York drew twenty thousand spectators alone. In this tragic case, white audiences watched and did nothing as the prisoners died one by one, so that they could observe and comment on their mourning rituals. See Huhndorf, *Going Native*, 79.

35. Slotkin writes: “The leading figures of American military history, from the Civil War through the Plains Indian wars, testified in print to the Wild West’s accuracy and to its value as an inculcator of patriotism” (Slotkin, “Buffalo Bill,” 166).

nationalism, Euro-Americans used their Indian misrepresentations as mirrors by which to understand themselves, their nation, and their place in the world.

By performing as a fictional figure, Winnemucca stood in the place of the Euro-American mirror to reflect a different image. In her costume, she personified for her audiences all that the Indian meant to them: she was nature's child, America's past, the seductive champion of conquest, and the pitiable vanishing Indian. She looked like the ahistorical 'Indian princess,' but she refused to play the part of white America's seductress, opposite, or past. She offered white audiences not a view of themselves, as they would have expected, but a view, instead, of the genocide next door. Winnemucca informed her audiences of her people's suffering, but, importantly, she never surrendered to the myth of Indian desolation. Neither purely 'traditional' nor assimilationist, Winnemucca used select Indian misrepresentations to dismantle the most damaging misconception about the Paiute. Indians, she affirmed, would not inevitably disappear.

Winnemucca's early life gave her unique points of entry into the colonizer's culture. In early childhood, she learned English and Spanish fluently when she was sent to live with several white families.³⁶ As a young adult, she performed along with her father and siblings in a series of 'Indian' shows in Nevada and California. These performances were the Winnemuccas' first attempt to garner awareness and sympathy for their people. To be profitable, the shows catered to their white audiences and consisted of stereotypical 'Indian' scenes like Wild West tableaux and recitations of the Pocahontas

36. Carpenter, "Tiresias Speaks," 73.

story.³⁷ These fictional scenes gave Winnemucca the opportunity to learn more about what Indian myths white audiences responded well to.

As an adult, Winnemucca gained celebrity through newspaper reports about her work as an acclaimed interpreter and scout for the US army. As accounts of her supposed affinity for Euro-Americans spread, Winnemucca built on her language skills, cultural knowledge, performing experience, and generally positive celebrity to start her lecture series to advocate for her people.³⁸ Indian myths had displaced the reality of her people. She started her lectures because white people, she lamented, “don’t know what the Indians have got to stand sometimes.”³⁹ For five years, between 1879 and 1884, Winnemucca traveled the United States from coast to coast delivering three hundred lectures, informing army officers, politicians, and the general public of her people’s starvation, theft, suffering, and death.⁴⁰ Delivering unscripted speeches to sold-out venues, Winnemucca elicited sympathy and shock from audience members before circulating a petition for Indigenous rights and protections. Her petition was signed by almost five thousand people.⁴¹

For each performance, Winnemucca donned a costume of her own creation that catered to her audiences’ stereotyped assumptions of who and what they were going to

37. Canfield, *Winnemucca*, 39-40.

38. For more on Winnemucca’s biography see Canfield, *Winnemucca*; and Sally Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2001).

39. *San Francisco Chronicle*, 14 November 1879. See also Canfield, *Winnemucca*, 162.

40. Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 2-3; Linda Bolton, *Facing the Other: Ethical Disruption and the American Mind* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 150.

41. Canfield, *Winnemucca*, 209.

see. While Paiute women in this era tended to wear skirts made of rabbit hide or woven sagebrush bark, Winnemucca's costume was made of cloth or buckskin, to which she attached ready-made fringe used on lampshades and curtains. Around her neck she wore an assortment of yarn, sequins, and beads. In lieu of the leggings popular among Paiute women, Winnemucca sported studded stockings. Most incongruous of all, she wore a crown upon her head.⁴² The iconography in the costume was central to Winnemucca's performance. Not only did she wear a costume for each of her three hundred lectures, she also had a series of formal portraits taken to circulate the imagery to even wider audiences (see Fig. 1).

Winnemucca's costume reproduces settler colonial imagery of Indian 'authenticity,' but this does not mean her performances were "inauthentic." As Paige Raibmon argues, "Moments of Aboriginal self-essentialization, strategic or otherwise, are less instances of fake 'put-on' culture than they are examples of how culture representation works." Assessing Winnemucca's reproduction of, or divergence from, "traditional" or "authentic" attire only reproduces restrictive binaries. Rather, her costume can help reveal the dominance of discourses of 'authenticity' within her own era. Likewise, responses to her costume, both in her time and in ours, can underscore the continued domination of 'Indian authenticity' to frame critical reception of her work. Winnemucca's engagement with these fictions is not strategy alone, nor is it a "fake" performance of culture. All cultures, Raibmon emphasizes, involve representation and performance, and 'authenticity' is not a stagnant category. Rather, across vastly asymmetrical power dynamics, non-Indigenous peoples and Indigenous peoples both

42. Scherer, "Public Faces," 179–80.

create and adapt discourses of authenticity to restrict, or gain, access to resources. When Winnemucca performs the role of the ‘authentic Indian princess,’ she adopts a restrictive script in order to modify it.⁴³

To gain even more power from the Indian princess imagery, Winnemucca promoted the tale that her father was the head chief of the Northern Paiutes, which would make her the Paiute princess. She not only dressed the part, but also claimed to be an authentic incarnation of the icon Euro-Americans knew so well. While her father was indeed a headman, there were several headmen for various Paiute families, and he was just one of many. Her promotion did help them both gain access to white power structures, which treated him as a head of state and garnered her the title of princess.⁴⁴

Anthropologist Joanna Scherer insists that Winnemucca would have thought that Indian princesses were “associated with royalty, which would facilitate their reception as citizens in Euro-American society,”⁴⁵ but, even more likely, Winnemucca would have known that while “associated with royalty,” Indian princesses were not associated with governance. The colonial invention of “Indianness” depoliticizes Indigenous peoples by casting them as either brute savages or prelapsarian noble savages, who live outside the

43. Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 13. She explains further, “Through self-representations that conformed to colonial expectations, Aboriginal people also gained access to an international public forum, where they could make dynamic assertions of identity, culture, and politics to White audiences. For indigenous people, the very act of entering this international public sphere contradicted the colonial cast of them as ‘backward cultural conservators’ and challenged their exclusion from modernity,” *Authentic Indians*, 11.

44. Scherer, “Public Faces,” 190-91.

45. Scherer, “Public Faces,” 188.

bounds of civilization for better or worse.⁴⁶ Marking the frontier of civilization in the nineteenth century and long before, invented Indians by definition were outside of civilization's politics. The figure of the Indian princess, particularly, was known in European and Euro-American tales for her pliant, apolitical character. She certainly would never have been associated with activism. Sympathetic toward white men, she is almost always a Christian convert, who eventually must betray her people when she saves 'good Christians' from 'bad Indians.' Submissive and seductive, she invites masculine conquest of her body and land, and ultimately advances the Euro-American tale of the vanishing Indian.

We would be right to wonder at Winnemucca's decision to pretend to be an Indian princess. Modern critics have deplored Winnemucca's choice, noting that this sexualized, depoliticized figure fuels the colonial ideology of inevitable white male domination.⁴⁷ In her time, Winnemucca was both vilified and praised in the media. One contemporary critic commended her for illustrating the "better traits of the Indian

46. The idea that Indigenous peoples had no civilizations is, of course, nonsense. The narrative of US national identity is delivered out of the destruction and denial of Indigenous nations. Nation-to-nation treaties legitimated the establishment and international recognition of the US government. The trail of broken treaties signifies that Europe and the US acknowledged the existence and sovereignty of American Indian nations, only to later pass laws and policies with the express purpose of dismantling Native communal, political, and territorial ties through the denial of their very existence.

47. For one example, see Scherer, "Public Faces." Notably, such criticism attends only to Euro-American fictions of Indian princesses and ignores contemporary tribal princess pageants, in which politics is a central element. For just one example, the Choctaw Indian Princess "serves as an ambassador for the Tribe for one year. During her reign, she travels around the country, many times with the Tribal Chief, to promote awareness of the Tribe;" see The Choctaw Indian Reservation, *Choctaw Indian Fair*, 2018, <http://www.choctawindianfair.com/pageant>.

character,”⁴⁸ surely referring to her self-presentation as an idealized ‘noble savage.’ Many, then and now, have maintained that she is a “white man’s Indian,”⁴⁹ a remark that has been employed to both compliment and disparage her. Among the Northern Paiutes, her reputation remains in dispute, with many stressing the fictitiousness of her position, since her father was only one headman among many.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the powerful fiction persists over a century after Winnemucca’s death, as even the book jacket of the 1994 reprinting of her autobiography describes her as a “Paiute princess.” The Indian princess sells just as well today as it did in Winnemucca’s time, and at the same time the stereotype is, to borrow Scherer’s words, “incompatible and even in conflict with,”⁵¹ political activism.

Criticism of Winnemucca’s princess play tends to focus on the Indian princess as a mythic colonial construct, defined only through its relationship to white settler colonial politics.

Of note, however, is that relationship’s inverse. Settler colonial politics also needs its princesses. The figure of the Indian princess legitimates settler colonialism. In the Euro-American imagination, Indian princesses, like the legendary Pocahontas or Yarico, welcomed colonialism, converted to Christianity, conceded to the superiority of Euro-American cultural mores, and married European men, which thereby relinquished to their

48. *San Francisco Morning Call*, 22 January 1885. See also Canfield, *Winnemucca*, 222.

49. For more on this, see Catherine S. Fowler, “Sarah Winnemucca,” in *American Indian Intellectuals of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Margot Liberty (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing, 1976), 34.

50. Carpenter, “Tiresias Speaks,” 72.

51. Scherer, “Public Faces,” 178.

husbands the deeds to America. Indian princesses are not only imagined to seductively welcome and encourage European colonization; they are also made the original ancestor in a fictional lineage that makes natives of Euro-Americans. In his manifesto *Custer Died for Your Sins*, Vine Deloria, Jr. rails against the habit of white Americans to invent an Indian princess grandmother. He dubs the habit “the Indian-grandmother complex,” asking “why is a remote Indian princess grandmother so necessary for many whites? Is it because they are afraid of being classed as foreigners? Do they need some blood tie with the frontier and its dangers in order to experience what it means to be American?”⁵² The answer, it seems, is yes. Indians were reimagined as white American patrimony. As Indians ‘inevitably disappeared,’ the nineteenth-century mindset went, they would be replaced by their white descendants: the new authentic, ‘native’ Americans.⁵³

Indians haunt the white imagination. In his follow-up essay “American Fantasy,” Deloria explains:

Indians, the original possessors of the land, seem to haunt the collective unconscious of the white man and to the degree that one can identify the conflicting images of the Indian which stalk the white man’s waking perceptions of the world one can outline the deeper problems of identity and alienation that trouble him. ... Underneath all the conflicting images of the Indian one fundamental truth emerges – the white man knows that he is an alien and he knows that North America is Indian – and he will

52. Vine Deloria, *Custer Died*, 3-4.

53. For more on this, see Huhndorf, *Going Native*, especially chapter 3.

never let go of the Indian image because he thinks that by some clever manipulation he can achieve an authenticity that cannot ever be his.⁵⁴

In the guise of the figure that confirms the authenticity of white inheritance, Winnemucca instead advocated Native American self-determination. In an attempt to secure her people's survival that turned out to be misguided, Winnemucca fought for property rights, which eventually took the form of the heinous 1887 Dawes Act. This policy resulted in yet another colonial land-grab that caused the loss of another ninety million acres of land. Winnemucca supported the ownership of land in severalty to prevent further abuses within the ward system. From her perspective, she was fighting for self-determination, though unfortunately the result was anything but empowerment. In addition to her land advocacy, she demanded the reunion of families that had been torn apart across multiple reservations. She exposed the policies and neglect that had brought about so much suffering and death, and she called upon the US government to uphold the promises it had made to the Northern Paiutes who had upheld all of theirs. Her speeches, delivered in English, could not be transliterated into gibberish, so her message could not be received as the mere entertainment others' had been. Winnemucca's political message was irreconcilable with the apolitical, ahistorical Indian princess icon that voiced it, and yet, there she stood before her white audiences: a timeless, imaginary figure demanding recognition of the specific political realities of the Northern Paiutes.

2. Winnemucca's Success: From Object to Speaking Subject

54. Vine Deloria, Jr., "Foreword: American Fantasy," in Gretchen M. Bataille and Charles L. P. Silet, eds., *The Pretend Indians: Images of Native Americans in the Movies* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1980), x-xi, xvi.

Linda Bolton explains Winnemucca's calculated transformation from fiction to subject: "In the guise of the Indian princess, she placed her face in the mind and memory of an American public that was resolved to deny Native peoples both the legitimacy of their historical past and the contemporaneity of the present, in which recognized subjects live and speak."⁵⁵ How Winnemucca managed to accomplish this remains in debate. Winnemucca both dressed as an Indian princess – the ideal noble savage – and spoke as one. A San Francisco reporter labeled Winnemucca "Nature's child," emphasizing the "natural, unconstrained language" she used in her unscripted speeches.⁵⁶ Electing to not use notes, Winnemucca presented herself as the 'unlettered savage,' that last survivor of a lost golden age before civilization spoiled Natural Man. This prelapsarian figure had been a staple of European and Euro-American critical self-reflection for centuries.⁵⁷ To criticize Euro-American society, I argue that Winnemucca took up the pre-existing role they had created to judge themselves. The invented Indian justifies white supremacy, but it also reflects Euro-America's anxieties and aspirations. Winnemucca chooses not to reverse the stereotype; instead, she joins it and exploits it as a vehicle of critique.

In what ways and to what extent her work may have confirmed stereotypes of Native women remains an issue worth considering. Certainly, as a Native woman public speaker, and as newspaper reports illustrate, Winnemucca had entered a gendered and

55. Bolton, *Facing the Other*, 150.

56. *Daily Silver State*, 28 November 1879. See also Canfield, *Winnemucca*, 163-64.

57. Michel de Montaigne, for example, criticized Europe through the figure of the cannibal, which had none of the common vices of Europeans corrupted by civilization, such as greed, deception, and treachery. The 'Indian's' antecedent, the monsters that populated the distant spaces on medieval maps, were similarly used to criticize Europe. Sir John Mandeville's *Travels* is a clear example of this practice.

racialized minefield. A reservation agent responsible for many of the cruelties inflicted on Paiute reservations used racist, misogynist stereotypes of Indian women's promiscuity to discredit Winnemucca. He publicly accused her of being an "Indian woman of questionable virtue" with "low, unprincipled" character.⁵⁸ Again, Winnemucca was able to counter one stereotype about Native women by exploiting another, the fictive Indian princess. Since the qualities associated with the Indian princess figure included chastity, docility, coquettishness, and deference, these worked to mitigate the negative stereotypes associated with outspoken women.

Newspaper reports tended to emphasize her appearance to assure audiences that this was a bona fide Indian princess, the daughter of a chief and bearer of a "proud head dress of eagle's feathers." At the same time, the princess costume produced her intended effect of "seducing" audiences likely to resist her political message. Her princess attire was described erotically as draping over her "beautifully-rounded brown" body. If only afterward did articles in the press turn to her key political message, ultimately that political message was disseminated to a wide public, which other shows, such as her father's, had failed to do.⁵⁹

Because the Indian princess was so culturally important to her Euro-American audiences, Winnemucca's Indian princess act enticed crowds, but critics have argued that it destroyed Winnemucca's credibility with the government. Drawing from evidence that Winnemucca failed to achieve many of her goals, that several government officials, including Rinehart, actively campaigned to discredit her in the media, and that the

58. See Canfield, *Winnemucca*, 163.

59. *Daily Silver State*, November 28, 1879. See also Canfield, *Winnemucca*, 163–64.

government blacklisted Winnemucca, preventing her from working any longer as an interpreter or teacher, Scherer concludes that Winnemucca's Indian princess performance "must have held little attraction to politicians involved with Indian issues."⁶⁰ The costume, however, did not cause Winnemucca's failures. The costume made her dangerous. America's princess could not be ignored. The government certainly took notice of Winnemucca's massive popularity, and, recognizing that she was a threat to the status quo, launched its own campaigns to discredit and ostracize the Indian princess the public loved so well. Her advocacy was so successful that she gained an audience with the highest-level officials, including members of Congress, President Hayes, and Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurtz, who begged Winnemucca to stop lecturing and promised, "the government is going to do right by your people now. Don't lecture now; go home."⁶¹ Acquiescing to each of her demands, Secretary Schurtz provided Winnemucca with a letter confirming his department's intentions to aid her people. The letter, dated January 24, 1880, granted the Paiutes who had been forcibly removed to the Yakima reservation the right to return home and rejoin their people in Nevada. Each family and each single man was allotted one hundred sixty acres of land, and, as a gesture of good faith, one hundred canvas tents would be sent for general distribution. Winnemucca's lectures succeeded in bringing public opinion to bear on the US government. She returned home triumphant.

The tents, however, never arrived. It was winter, and the people began to starve. Winnemucca wrote to Schurtz, who offered just one solution: take her starving people

60. Scherer, "Public Face," 193.

61. Winnemucca, *Life*, 221.

three hundred miles through ice and snow to the Malheur Reservation, where they would find no supplies, food, or land available to them.⁶² She knew her starving people would not survive the journey. The Paiutes again faced death due to the calculated negligence of the US government. Undeterred, Winnemucca recorded her lectures in an autobiography, which named names and included a petition to change BIA policies and promote Paiute independence.

3. Resistant in Both Content and Form: Winnemucca's *Life Among the Piutes*

Copies of Winnemucca's 1883 autobiography, *Life Among the Piutes*, sold for a dollar. For fifty cents more, subscribers would receive an autographed picture of their 'princess.'⁶³ As the continued capitalization on the Indian princess myth makes clear, the autobiography employed conscious strategies to manipulate and negotiate her audience's expectations, just as her lecture series had done.

After briefly depicting her early childhood, the autobiography portrays Winnemucca's adult life as a scout, leader, and activist. Throughout the narrative of her life, Winnemucca focuses on the destruction caused by violent and rapacious white settlers, as well as the cruelty and inhumanity of US Indian policy. The chapters that focus on her childhood place descriptions of Paiute festivities and customs alongside accounts of brutal attacks, robberies, and massacres committed against the Paiutes. Paiute legends and histories are interwoven with Winnemucca's commentary on current affairs. The final result is a compilation of personal memory, historical record, and cultural celebration. Winnemucca documents Paiute stories, traditions, and experiences not just to

62. For more on this history, see Canfield, *Winnemucca*, 174-176.

63. Canfield, *Winnemucca*, 211-12.

assist Euro-Americans in seeing the Paiutes as fully human beings, but also to announce Paiute survival. *Life* does not document a dying tribe. At every turn, Winnemucca insists the Paiute will survive, just as she insists her audiences do something to help.

Autobiographies tend to be read as ‘authentic’ or ‘true’ narratives, and are often not recognized as conscious rhetorical constructions. This is especially a problem for Native American authors, whose writing is expected to convey authentic Indian culture and a singular, spiritual Indianness.⁶⁴ Native American autobiographies, Winnemucca’s included, are valuable for articulating experiences that are often either ignored or spoken over. When Native Americans are so routinely supplanted by fictive representations of Indians, these autobiographies provide critical counternarratives. However, they should not be regarded as objective representations of reality. They are valuable for their historical content as well as their literary form.

Life has an especially unusual form. The mixture of anthropological discourses, autobiographical storylines, elements of romantic sentimentality, direct activism, and overt pandering to Euro-American racism has confused audiences. If this is an activist text, the portrayal of the Northern Paiutes as implausibly naïve, along with the elements of sentimentality that draw on romanticized constructions of womanhood and Indianness,

64. Powell, “Rhetorics of Survivance,” 405-06. Konkle also writes: “Native writers in English are then most successful in expressing their Indian identity when they provide evidence of what is understood as their culture through themes, forms, narratives, and figures correlated with the oral tradition written down by scholars. The assumption underlying the belief that true Indian identity – the most complete expression of that inborn consciousness – is always associated with the scholar’s traces of a preliterate past is that when Indians engage in the practice of writing, they undermine their own identity” (Konkle 151-152).

at best seem out of place and at worst an expression of internalized racism and sexism.⁶⁵

The activism itself does not quite fit the genre of the autobiography, nor does the anthropological gaze. Part autobiography, part history, part autoethnography, *Life Among the Piutes* nebulously combines multiple genres. It includes newspaper clippings, a poem Winnemucca wrote herself, a verse from a Longfellow poem, and Paiute legends.⁶⁶

Frederic Jameson argues that genres are “social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artifact.”⁶⁷

Winnemucca’s autobiography does not adhere to her white audiences’ expectations for the genre. If it is meant to be an autobiography, perhaps it is a failed one. But if we consider it failed, then the question is, according to whose standards?

Life does not attempt to mimic traditional Euro-American autobiography. It shares few attributes with that genre. It does not include, for example, many stories of Winnemucca’s formative years. She also shares very little information about her personal life, instead keeping the focus on her accomplishments as an interpreter, scout, and leader of her people.⁶⁸ But what if we think of Winnemucca’s writing, not as a failed version of a Euro-American genre, but as a text of her own creation that skillfully maneuvers through her audience’s expectations to effect real change? She does not meet expectations; she negotiates them. This would offer an additional means of understanding

65. Carpenter, “Tiresias Speaks,” 75.

66. Winnemucca, *Life*, 96, 153, 164. Subsequent citations will be made parenthetically in text.

67. Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1982), 106.

68. McClure, “[Post]Indian Princess,” 35-36.

Winnemucca's exploitation of stereotypes. She does not use the oppressive tools of American racism and settler colonialism outright. Her tools share only superficial characteristics with the racist tropes created by Euro-American culture.

Although Winnemucca does not adhere to the form of the Western autobiography, Andrew McClure notes that other early Native American authors did, including Samson Occom (Mohegan) and William Apess (Pequot).⁶⁹ They too wrote for predominantly white audiences, and using Euro-American tools to communicate with their Euro-American audiences was a shrewd rhetorical choice. I argue that as an author, Winnemucca likely recognized that because of her audience's perception that "Indians do not write," she would already be challenging Euro-American romanticized conceptions of Indianness in writing at all. William Apess notably met with such criticism from his contemporaries: William Joseph Snelling wrote of Apess, "If he writes, it is in the character of a white man."⁷⁰ *If* he writes, which is left in question, his writing does not embrace the Euro-American invented Indian, and therefore does not sound authentic enough to merit attention.⁷¹ Given this reception of Native American writing, why would Winnemucca aim to "master" Euro-American literary forms when to do so would undermine her "authenticity" and consequently, her activist objectives?

69. McClure, "[Post]Indian Princess," 35–36.

70. January 1835, quoted in Konkle, "Indian Literacy," 151.

71. For further reading on William Apess's important anti-colonial work, see Konkle, "Indian Literacy."

It is important, however, as Raibmon argues, not to overemphasize “the extent to which Aboriginal people lived in reaction to white society,”⁷² and to note that Winnemucca’s choices to use or refuse colonial paradigms were not simply reactive. H. David Brumble argues that Winnemucca’s *Life* follows the model of Native American coup tales, which inform the audience of personal and collective achievements, and tell a tale not about an individual, but about a member of a group.⁷³ Viewed as following this formal tradition, Winnemucca’s childhood fear of white people is a synecdoche for the sentiments of the Northern Paiute toward the Euro-American settlers that would terrorize them. Her success as a scout and translator is a sign, catered toward her white audiences, that given the opportunity, all Northern Paiutes would work with white society, not against it. If *Life* is about a member of a larger group, we can see the chapter that turns an anthropological gaze onto the larger group not as a deviation from the larger narrative, but as an integral part of it. Winnemucca sets out to tell a Paiute story, and uses the Paiute genre of coup tales to do so. She may tell the story in English, and she may draw on Euro-American symbols and references, but in its formal choices, *Life* affirms a Paiute perspective, even as it employs invented Indian imagery to communicate with white audiences. As Jameson argues in *The Political Unconscious*, readers tend to impose their own beliefs and perspectives on literature, whether or not such readings are justified. This is especially problematic for resistant minority literatures, as readers pass over syncretic moments, thinking they merely repeat dominant perspectives. To understand

72. Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 12.

73. H. David Brumble III, *American Indian Autobiography* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1988), 65-66

Winnemucca's text, we must read it, as Jameson argues, "not as the replication of imposed beliefs," but as syncretic process.⁷⁴

Further, as Audra Simpson argues, autoethnography can "interrupt anthropological portraits of timelessness, procedure and function that dominate representations of their past and, sometimes, their present."⁷⁵ Winnemucca's performance of authenticity was one way to interrupt dominant discourses, but, as Simpson's argument continues, refusing to share information can also be valuable and generative. Why represent this information? Simpson asks. Who benefits from knowledge about Indigenous affairs and cultures? Ethnographic refusal can be powerful, and there is a great deal Winnemucca chooses not to share, including details about ceremonies or religious practices that likely would have excited her Euro-American audiences and may have even boosted sales. Winnemucca did navigate the pressures of the assimilation era, but she also wrote on behalf of the Paiutes, not just for white audiences. While the conventions of contemporary anthropology produced depictions of American Indian cultures as monolithic, unchanging, and dying, Winnemucca's anthropological chapter depicts the Paiutes as a dynamic and diverse people with an evolving culture that responds to the needs of its time.

Nevertheless, the book also depicts stereotypes, in part to elicit sympathy through a heart-wrenching, sentimental narrative of Indian suffering on the frontier. The first chapter narrates the history of Paiute first contact with Euro-Americans emigrating west.

74. Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 86.

75. Audra Simpson, "On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, 'Voice' and Colonial Citizenship," *Junctures* 9 (2007): 68.

It opens with a scene featuring Winnemucca's grandfather, introduced as "chief of the entire Piute nation," which in turn announces the narrator as a beloved Indian princess (5). Despite the hardships caused by cruel settlers, Winnemucca's grandfather remains hospitable and hopeful, especially after receiving an extraordinary piece of "talking paper" from some members of the US military, men he calls his "white brothers" (22). For him, writing attests to the white men's greatness. The chief's adoration escalates to the absurd: he kisses the paper, wears a plate – another gift – upon his head, and defends the rapacious Euro-American settlers at every turn, often citing the extraordinary paper in their defense. The chief's admiration of writing recalls the racist trope of the Indian enthralled by the superiority of Western culture. The homage to literacy in the autobiography mirrors the unscripted character of the lecture series that inspired media accolades for "Nature's child." In Winnemucca's time, authentic Indians could not write by definition. In these opening scenes with her grandfather's beloved paper, Winnemucca, a writer, can divert her audience from the "unspeakable contradiction," to borrow Barry O'Connell's phrase, of an Indian writing.⁷⁶

Euro-America imagined its "Indians" as civilization's incompatible opposite. An utter lack of writing, with all its attendant associations—primitivity, a lack of history, unmitigated mobility, and even semi-humanity—had been equated with Indians since they were first invented.⁷⁷ Compounding this, in 1879, the first federal Indian boarding

76. Barry O'Connell, "Introduction," *A Son of the Forest and Other Writings by William Apess, a Pequot* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), xviii.

77. For more on literacy's meanings to European and Euro-American cultures see Walter Dignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2003); Mathew Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Gordon Brotherston, *Book of the*

school had opened with the express purpose, through education, of “killing the Indian to save the man,” as the founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, Richard Henry Pratt infamously put it. If Euro-Americans saw the teaching of English literacy as a means of “killing the Indian,” they imagined that, once literate, Native Americans would no longer fit within the prescribed limits of authentic Indianness, an assumption that reveals how Indian authenticity is deployed as a settler-colonial tool of disempowerment, and even genocide.

Winnemucca ensures that her Indian authenticity remains intact, so her message will not be silenced before it begins. This is precisely the problem Pequot activist William Apess faced half a century prior. To this day, nearly two hundred years after he wrote on behalf of pan-Indian rights, there remains “political unease,” to borrow Randall Moon’s phrasing, over Apess’s writing because he sounds too ‘white.’⁷⁸ He does not represent Native America ‘authentically’ enough. Perhaps it is because William Apess could not be styled as “Nature’s child” as Winnemucca could in 1879. With an imagined opposition between literacy and orality, in the nineteenth century white Americans thought of Indian writing as an “unspeakable contradiction,” to borrow Barry O’Connell’s phrase. In *Life*’s opening scenes with her grandfather’s beloved paper,

Fourth World: Reading the Native Americas through Their Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992); Konkle, “Indian Literacy”; Arnold Krupat, “Postcolonialism, Ideology, and Native American Literature,” in *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature* (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 73-94; Barry O’Connell, “Introduction,” *A Son of the Forest and Other Writings by William Apess, a Pequot*. William Apess au. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997); Birgit Rasmussen, *Queequeg’s Coffin: Indigenous Literacies & Early American Literature* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

78. Randall Moon. “William Apess and Writing White.” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 5.4 (1993): 52.

Winnemucca, a writer, can divert her audience from the “unspeakable contradiction” of an “Indian” writing.⁷⁹ Winnemucca feeds the stereotype while living its contradiction as an author of an English-language book.

In the preface to the book, Winnemucca’s editor, Mary Mann, issues an apology for Winnemucca’s weakness as a writer. She claims, “In fighting with her literary deficiencies she loses some of the fervid eloquence which her extraordinary colloquial command of the English language enables her to utter.”⁸⁰ The humility, apology, and white-authored authentication are all nineteenth-century minority literary conventions. Mann’s apology here, however, authenticates the text further. White readers can trust that this Indian author is an authentic Indian, according to late-nineteenth-century standards. Though white audiences have the text before them, they can rest assured that it is not written so well that its author has lost her authenticity. Close reading Winnemucca’s text, however, makes it clear she had sophisticated command of writing in the English language.

79. O’Connell, “Introduction,” xviii. Barry O’Connell explains this catch-22 in his introduction to the works of William Apess, “Contact with civilization would only mean the loss of whatever virtues belonged to the savage state and the acquisition of the vices of the civilized. For Apess, or for any other Native American, to become literate in this ideological script entailed being represented as in an intermediate state, a location where one was neither Native nor Euro-American but someone, at best, on the edge of degeneracy or complete assimilation” (O’Connell xviii).

80. Mann, Editor’s Preface, 2. For a recent article on the work of Elizabeth Palmer Peabody and Mary Peabody Mann to help Winnemucca mediate assimilation-era pressures, see Katharine Rodier, “Authorizing Sarah Winnemucca? Elizabeth Peabody and Mary Peabody Mann” in *Reinventing the Peabody Sisters*, ed. Monika M. Elbert, Julie E. Hall, and Katharine Rodier (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006), 108–25.

Mimicry of the colonizer's culture, as Homi Bhabha writes, is "at once resemblance and menace."⁸¹ This menace inflames preconceptions and necessitates the immediate reinforcement of stereotypes to bring the oppressor back to a state of comfort. Even positive reception of William Apess's writing called forth the resurgence of toxic stereotypes. In 1835, *New England Magazine* reported that Apess' polemic "Indian Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts" "is written *far better* than *could* have been expected from an Indian, and is well worth reading."⁸² Praise of his mimicking prowess had to be tempered with an emphasis of his difference. That Apess cannot be allowed to escape the negative valuations of his Indianness is a sign of the ultimate impenetrability of borders assimilation ironically erects. Zita Nunes' study of Brazilian assimilation policies explains how assimilation reinforces the very borders between people it is purported to erase. She writes: "The very process that promises the erasure of the (black) race as difference – and blackness as inferiority – maintains race as a problem and produces a resistant remainder that is a constant reminder of its failure."⁸³ Indianness remains a problem. So long as Native Americans remain, Euro-Americans can never truly be native to their country. Winnemucca negotiates the impenetrable border of assimilation. She performs assimilation into a cultural comfort zone for her white readers without ever presenting herself as assimilated.

In the late nineteenth century, assimilation was officially made US Indian policy with the passing of the 1887 Dawes Act, which imposed private property on Native

81. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 86.

82. Emphasis added.

83. Zita Nunes, *Cannibal Democracy*, 95-96.

peoples who traditionally held their lands in common. Colonial systems always control the degree to which Indigenous peoples can assimilate. As Étienne Balibar argues, colonizers “delimit and control the possibilities of moving from the status of an indigene to that of a newly ‘emancipated’ citizen.”⁸⁴ In the late nineteenth century, Native Americans were not expected to become “emancipated citizens,” however; they were expected to disappear. Though colonialism requires mimicry that produces, as Bhabha explains, “a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite,”⁸⁵ in the US, Indian assimilation took a slightly different form. Assimilation policies were not meant to aid American Indians in becoming reformed, recognizable Others. The Dawes Act, for example, caused the loss of another 90 million acres of land, after Native peoples had already been confined to reservations comprised of merely 155 million acres. The assimilation policy was yet another land-grab that reduced food sources and mired Native peoples in a nearly inescapable cycle of poverty. In the US, assimilation policies were just another arm of genocide.

The hybrid Native American – the Indian crossing the frontier into civilization – was threatening.⁸⁶ Bhabha writes, “The paranoid threat from the hybrid is finally

84. Étienne Balibar, *We, the People of Europe?: Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*. Trans. James Swenson (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2004), 39.

85. Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 86.

86. Jodi Byrd argues that the Declaration of Independence writes the Indian in as America’s first terrorist. The “‘merciless Indian Savage’ stands as the terrorist, externalized from ‘our frontiers,’ and functions as abjected horror through whom civilization is articulated oppositionally. This non-recuperative category, a derealization of the Other, serves as a paranoid foundation for what Jasbir K. Paur defines in *Terrorist Assemblages* as Islamic ‘monster-terrorist-fags,’ the affectively produced and queered

uncontainable because it breaks down the symmetry and duality of self/other, inside/outside”⁸⁷ Winnemucca’s literary form and use of stereotypes does not break down the duality of self/other, inside/outside. She mimics without menace. Winnemucca the historical figure was in fact not assimilated into white culture. Despite Gretchen Bataille and Kathleen Mullen Sands’ determination that Winnemucca’s autobiography “is heavily biased by her acculturated and Christianized viewpoint,”⁸⁸ Winnemucca herself did not feel torn between cultures, and understood herself as unconditionally Northern Paiute.⁸⁹ By not attempting to ‘master’ Euro-American literary form, Winnemucca does not perform assimilation into Euro-American culture; she does the opposite. She performs as a recognizable, comforting stereotype, a stereotype that confirms for her audiences a sense of their own dominance.

4. *Life*’s Second Meanings and Trick Mirrors

Because *Life* takes such a different form from the traditional Euro-American autobiography, many have assumed Winnemucca was not well-read. Brumble argues that it was “unlikely that she was familiar with [European or Euro-American] literature; indeed, aside from the hymns she quotes occasionally, it is unlikely that Winnemucca was much aware of literary influences at all.”⁹⁰ McClure agrees, noting that Winnemucca writes in her autobiography that she had trouble reading an army captain’s letter: “It took

West Asian (including South Asian, Arab American, and Muslim) body that is targeted for surveillance and destruction by U.S. patriotic pathology” (Byrd xxi).

87. Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 116.

88. Bataille and Sands, *American Indian Women*, 21.

89. McClure, “[Post]Indian Princess,” 30.

90. Brumble, *American Indian Autobiography*, 62.

me some time to read it, as I was very poor indeed at reading writing; and I assure you, my dear readers, I am not much better now” (82).⁹¹ Written by a performer of Indian authenticity, this direct address reassuring readers that she has not mastered their culture – that she has not lost her Indian authenticity, even as the evidence of her writing lies before them – appears suspect.⁹²

Frederick Hoxie has noted that Winnemucca did not consider herself a “literary figure,”⁹³ and wrote only to further her activism. Setting her intentions aside, the author’s literary skill warrants that a close reading of *Life* will be productive, although it has not yet prompted a significant corpus of literary analysis. Winnemucca may not have been a scholar, but perhaps she was better informed than she has typically been given credit for. Winnemucca was well versed in both cultural and literary representations of Indians. She also clearly evokes narrative models of white middle-class femininity and conventions of Euro-American sentimentalism.⁹⁴ Her descriptions of herself as anything but a ‘literary

91. McClure, “[Post]Indian Princess,” 36.

92. In his introduction to the works of William Apess, O’Connell notes that William Apess also makes the claim that his literacy was limited. O’Connell convincingly argues that Apess clearly developed a much greater command of literacy in English than he claims. I argue the same for Winnemucca.

93. Hoxie, “Denouncing,” 554.

94. Cari Carpenter provides a thoughtful analysis of Winnemucca’s appeals to sentimental femininity in her article, “Tiresias Speaks: Sarah Winnemucca’s Hybrid Selves and Genres.” She argues that Winnemucca caters to her audience in both what she says and what she does not say. Knowing that white audiences would be partial to monogamy, *Life* does not include any information about her father’s alleged other wives, nor does it detail her own multiple marriages and divorces. Accommodating white middle-class sensibilities about proper behavior for women, she does not mention her legal troubles or her bar fights. These details were discussed in local newspapers, though, where she was accused of being a liar and a schemer. This is probably why she includes

figure' should be read with a notion of their self-awareness. She is still playing the Indian princess.

Rita Felski warns against the critical impulse to read suspiciously. She argues that in teasing out hidden messages, counter-meanings, and repressed ideologies, the suspicious critic may simply reveal their own political unconscious, not that of their subject of study.⁹⁵ “All too often,” Felski admonishes, “we see critics tying themselves into knots in order to prove that a text harbors signs of dissonance and dissent – as if there were no other conceivable way of justifying its merits.”⁹⁶ Because critics see merit in critique, they feel they must prove their favorite works engage in criticism, whether they do or not. To be clear, I do not impose suspicion over Winnemucca’s text. *Life’s* generic and formal properties, as well as its word choice and literary imagery, themselves elicit such suspicions.

On the surface, *Life Among the Piutes* does not seem to challenge Euro-American presumptions about Indians. In fact, it seems to cater to her contemporary white audiences so fully that she fails to meet the expectations of modern audiences. These moments that indulge her contemporary white audiences, along with the elements of romantic sentimentality in her writing, as Andrew McClure explains, do not “sound ‘Indian.’”⁹⁷ Winnemucca’s book is clearly written for a white audience. From her

several letters of recommendation by white men in the appendix of *Life Among the Piutes*. That way she could reframe the story through appeals to recognized authority figures.

95. Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 66.

96. Felski, *Limits*, 17.

position as a Native author, she explains cultural details and terms (“We call heaven the spirit land”) and directly addresses other, “civilized” readers (“our hearts’ delight ... whom in civilized life you call beaux”) (15, 46).

Her book is full of subtleties that evince a clear understanding of her mostly white audience’s cultural assumptions, but she does not just deploy these perspectives; she uses some, and contradicts others. For example, she calls Indians “savages,” but only in tender emotional scenes: “It is the way we savages do when we meet each other; we cry with joy and gladness” (101). She adopts colonial terms but undercuts their meanings. *Life’s* conflicting and inconsistent references to US settler colonial culture compel suspicious reading. Audiences are asked to question whether the text means what it says at face value, and they are compelled to question their assumptions. Perhaps Indians are not the savages they had assumed they were.

At times Winnemucca undercuts racist assumptions, as in her use of the word *savage*. At other times she directly panders to white racism. For example, she portrays the Paiutes as naïve and optimistic children in need of a kind parent to care for them. Winnemucca presents herself as a potential parent and leader. She also suggests that the BIA agents who oversee the reservation could be the parents the Paiutes need. Indeed, the Paiutes call the agents “father.” These agents, however, are usually cruel and abusive. Winnemucca discusses their only kind agent at length: “[Mr. Parrish] then said, ‘How many of you want to go out hunting?’ They said, ‘We would all like to go.’ ‘Well, you can go, and don’t stay too long, because your potatoes will be ready to be dug.’ So he gave each man a can of powder and some lead and caps, and also to each one a sack of

97. McClure, “[Post]Indian Princess,” 32.

flour. Oh, how happy my people were!” (112). In this sweet, domestic scene between a father and his children, Mr. Parrish generously allows his adult Indian children their toys and fun, and gently reminds them of their chores, which they are happy to come home to do.

The scene is awkward for modern readers. Unlike her use of the word *savage*, nothing in this scene undercuts the stereotypes she deploys. Literary works are always more, and less, than “heroic dissidents or slavish sycophants of power,” as Felski argues. All at once, they reflect, renew, and dismantle the worlds in which they were produced. Interpretation must consider literature’s social entanglements and its uses in people’s everyday lives.⁹⁸ *Life*’s (post)colonial responses to American myths cannot be appreciated without considering their entanglements within conflicting social constraints. Winnemucca’s childlike characterization of her people functions a great deal like her princess costume. If only ‘authentic Indians’ can keep audiences’ attention, then Winnemucca chooses an Indian Euro-America loves: their own children. These Indians appear to be more like Euro-American children, who were also construed as savages in nineteenth-century domesticity narratives.⁹⁹ If savage Euro-American children could be tamed with good parenting into the body of the nation, *Life* seems to suggest so too can Winnemucca’s people.

We might ask, is Winnemucca far too conciliatory to a racist audience? Is she fueling stereotypes that prevent real progress? Has she given up on a dream of self-determination? I argue that if we consider the text in its entirety, the answer to these

98. Felski, *Limits*, 191.

99. See Kaplan, “Manifest Domesticity,” 115.

questions must ultimately be no. Reading this autobiography closely makes clear that Winnemucca's activism is a layered, labyrinthine balancing act that did not actually espouse white paternalism. In 1884, Winnemucca explained herself more directly: "I have not contended for Democrat, Republican, Protestant or Baptist for an agent. I have worked for freedom, I have labored to give my race a voice in the affairs of the nation."¹⁰⁰

In *Life*, Winnemucca explains herself directly to her detractors who accused her of collaborating against Indigenous peoples by seeming to advocate for the ward system. She writes, "Can you wonder, dear readers, that I like to have my people taken care of by the army? It is said that I am working in the interest of the army, and as if they wanted all this care. It is not so."¹⁰¹ With an ambiguous "they," she is able to make a statement both about the army and her people at once: they do not want this paternal relationship. Included, then, within the autobiography is a subtle message for self-determination, for which Winnemucca fought in her activism more broadly.

The paternalism in the text may have encouraged her contemporaries to do what they could to save these children, and it may make modern readers cringe, but for Winnemucca it carried another meaning. Winnemucca explains the use of the words father and mother as a traditional Paiute practice: "Now, my dear reader, there is no word so endearing as the word father, and that is why we call all good people father or mother; no matter who it is, - negro, white man, or Indian, and the same with the women" (39). Malea Powell notes that this practice in the text "neatly echoes the paternalistic slant of

100. Canfield, *Winnemucca*, 231; *Reno Evening Gazette*, June 26, 1884.

101. Winnemucca, *Life*, 93.

Indian policy of the time,”¹⁰² but Winnemucca’s explanation does not do the same. The equal respect accorded to people across race and gender lines marks a significant difference between the racial politics of Euro-American governance and the echo Winnemucca exercises in the text.

Other textual details also substantiate that Winnemucca is deliberately distinguishing between paternalism and other forms of caregiving in her book. Notably, she describes one of the agents abusing a child: “to my horror saw our agent throw a little boy down on the ground by his ear and kick him. He said, ‘... I will beat the very life out of him. I won’t have any of the Indians laughing at me. I want you to tell them that they must jump at my first word to go. I don’t want them to ask why or what for’” (128). Here, she portrays the risks of being in a child-parent relationship; the agent’s savage, outrageous response signifies the dangers of a paternalistic system in which those in positions of authority are themselves the savages. Indians do not need white paternalism. They need leaders – of any gender or race – and Winnemucca nominates herself for the position.

A powerful figure, Winnemucca ends one tale of her dramatic bravery and strength, “I, only an Indian woman, went and saved my father and his people” (164). While often depicting women and Indians in Euro-American sentimental roles, the narrative simultaneously combats certain fictions by presenting Winnemucca as the exception. Winnemucca is the strongest, most industrious character in the text – traits not in line with contemporary stereotypes about Indians or women. She rides horses faster and farther than anyone else, she is the sole person capable of negotiating peace between

102. Powell, “Rhetorics of Survivance,” 411.

warring peoples, and she fears no man, from corrupt reservation agent to US president. After a tale of her unparalleled bravery, Winnemucca quotes a Longfellow poem:

Let us then be up and doing
 With a heart for any fate;
 Still achieving, still pursuing
 Learn to labor and to wait.

The Longfellow verse interrupts the text, and Winnemucca provides no gloss to help readers understand its purpose. Though the passage itself does not directly address the invented Indian, the verse would have elicited the common association between Longfellow and his Indians. The verse comes from Longfellow's first collection, *Voices in the Night* (1839), a text that Christoph Irscher has argued had a clear investment in the obligatory performance of Indian authenticity.¹⁰³ Though he purported to portray "real" Indians, Longfellow has long been held as the nineteenth-century author who popularized the figure of the noble savage. Recalling a lost golden age of Man before the decay of civilization, the noble savage is a figure out of time. Having no place in modern civilization, the noble savage ultimately reinforces the myth of the Indian's inevitable disappearance. As one of the authors most responsible for interweaving authenticity with fiction, Longfellow is an odd choice for a Native American author to quote, though Winnemucca's text is never black and white.

103. Literary critic Christoph Irscher has made note of the performance of Indian authenticity that structures the text. He writes that Longfellow's work is "a carefully contrived performance" that toys with "notions of authorship and authenticity" in Christoph Irscher, *Longfellow Redux* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 111.

Longfellow was criticized for portraying Indigenous characters at all. They were often not considered worthy of representation. In a *New York Times* review, *The Song of Hiawatha*¹⁰⁴ was denounced for “embalming pleasantly enough the monstrous traditions of an uninteresting, and, one may almost say, a justly exterminated race.”¹⁰⁵ In quoting Longfellow immediately following the narrative of her own heroism, Winnemucca could add herself to the legends of American Indian heroism, still lambasted by Euro-American audiences for their assumed fictitiousness. Stories of her heroism could also subvert Longfellow’s male-dominated depictions;¹⁰⁶ and, in telling a story based in her real-life experiences, it is likely she hoped to undermine or supplement his representation of fictitious Indians, offering in their place not a noble savage, but a real Native American woman hero.

Whether or not her rhetorical strategies were effective, it is clear that by speaking the language of the colonizer—variously evoking, deconstructing, or pandering to stereotypes—Winnemucca hoped to alter the settler colonial landscape that codified the Indian race as destined for extinction. More importantly, however, Winnemucca’s autobiography also serves as an important documentation of Northern Paiute resistances,

104. The origin of *Hiawatha* stemmed from Henry Schoolcraft’s collected stories from Jane Johnston Schoolcraft and her relatives, often without credit to the individuals.

105. “The Song of Hiawatha,” *New York Times*, December 28 1855, 2.

106. For nearly the whole of the nineteenth century, Native American women leaders had steadily lost power and visibility, as patriarchal Euro-American leaders refused to engage them. For more on the shifting power dynamics for Native American women leaders and their effect on Sarah Winnemucca’s work, see Frederick E. Hoxie, “Denouncing America’s Destiny: Sarah Winnemucca’s Assault on US Expansion,” *Cultural and Social History* 9, no. 4 (2012): 549-550; for more on these historical changes more broadly, see Devon Abbott Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2003).

large and small. She documents the political organization of the Paiutes, their activist coalitions, their negotiations with BIA agents; she documents the rescue of kidnapped Native children from white settlers and the anguish felt by the survivors of massacre. For all these reasons, her book cannot be termed a “fake” simulation of Indianness. Its performances of Indian authenticity are much more complex. Counternarratives written by Indigenous authors produce important contrapuntal readings, to borrow Edward Said’s phrase, of the invented Indian.

Winnemucca clearly recognizes the power of storytelling. Euro-Americans had the power to define Indianness, and she consciously writes back. In one episode, after two Paiute children are kidnapped and raped, the white settlers that took them are killed when the children’s families fight to rescue them. Winnemucca notes, “Three days after the news was spread as usual. ‘The bloodthirsty savages had murdered two innocent, hard-working, industrious, kind-hearted settlers’” (71-72). Such ‘usual news’ would be repeated in reports of Winnemucca’s own work. In response to Winnemucca’s accusations against the BIA for its negligence and cruelty, the BIA and others publicly attacked Winnemucca’s character by deploying the standard racist tools.¹⁰⁷ She was not a noble savage, they would argue in the press; she was just a savage cannibal. In 1884, a letter was sent to the editor of a local newspaper calling Paiutes, and Winnemucca in particular, “bloodthirsty and drunken.”¹⁰⁸

Life anticipates such clichéd responses. In one story, the Paiutes kill a group of cannibals, shifting the standard dichotomy of whites and Indians to civilized and savage,

107. Powell, “Rhetorics of Survivance,” 407.

108. Qtd. in Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 249.

with Northern Paiutes firmly on the side of the civilized (74). Accompanying this story are documentations of the violence committed by white settlers against the Paiutes. With the Paiutes as the civilized heroes of the chapter, the Euro-American murderers are cast as the real savages.

Before she reaches the place where she can overtly condemn the savagery of her readers, she employs more palatable strategies to keep her audiences reading, even as the narrative marches steadily toward denunciation of the entire settler colonial paradigm. She employs the more acceptable rhetorical device of *sermocinatio*, putting words into another's mouth to both lend the ideas credibility and distance herself from them. At one point her father says about white people, "I am sure they have minds like us, and think as we do; and I know that they were doing wrong when they set fire to our winter supplies. They surely knew it was our food" (14). This powerful rhetorical move asserts the humanity of Indigenous peoples for the white readership by having a Native character assert the humanity of whites to his listeners, who themselves doubt it because of white people's savage behavior. The circuitous writing potentially draws readers to conclusions they do not realize they are being compelled to make.

Throughout her text *Winnemucca* compromises and concedes, appealing to white readers' expectations and lulling them into a sense of security. She depicts white people as civilized, intelligent, cultured, and, when they choose to be, kind. Small moments of shifting binaries build over the course of the text, as *Winnemucca* carefully and quietly works her way to her final blatant condemnation of Euro-American barbarity. At the end of her book, she angrily demands her white readers recognize their own hypocrisy: "Yes, you, who call yourselves the great civilization ... your so-called civilization sweeps

inland from the ocean wave; but, oh my God! leaving its pathway marked by crimson lines of blood, and strewn by the bones of two races” (207). Speaking directly to readers, she demands each one – “yes, you” – to see their role in this genocide. It is not the lone, cruel settler or the single negligent reservation agent, or even the US government and the racist culture of the US that are responsible for the genocide; rather, her audiences are themselves to blame for not dismantling their own ignorance. The root cause of her people’s suffering is their belief in the racist stereotypes that she has evoked. *Life* concludes with a direct address to its audiences: if you believe Paiutes are savages, then you have been complicit. Just as she inhabited an Indian princess costume in order to engage and deconstruct a racist Euro-American nationalism predicated on the disappearance of the Indian, so too does her autobiography inhabit a cultural discourse based in stereotypes in order to shake the bedrock of American ideals.¹⁰⁹

5. Influencing the Fiction

Winnemucca made herself recognizable, marketable, and credible as an “authentic Indian.” Indian authenticity proved a valuable device because settler colonial culture required – in both the sense of insisting and relying upon – its Indians to fit its narrative. Consuming Indians was part of what made Euro-Americans unique from

109. Raibmon articulates why people might choose to engage toxic stereotypes: “For Aboriginal people on the late-nineteenth-century Northwest Coast, authenticity was a structure of power that enabled, even as it constrained, their interaction with the colonial world,” *Authentic Indians*, 10-11. Phil Deloria also examines the play with the myths and stereotypes of Indianness in *Indians in Unexpected Places*. He writes, “Native people have always acted from imperatives formed in the meeting of tribal cultures and the social, political, economic, and environmental wreckage and opportunity generated by colonial encounters.” See Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2004), 7.

Europeans;¹¹⁰ Indians marked the frontier by which Americans defined the borders of their nation;¹¹¹ Indians were even the metaphor used to understand Euro-American childrearing.¹¹² Indians were a fundamental part of white US identity. Settler colonial politics arise out of the methods and historical conditions of producing the state through the toxic production and regulation of the state's others. Colonialism simultaneously produces and is a product of these processes.¹¹³ The fictions of the Indian were so deeply embedded in settler colonial culture that they had become completely naturalized. Winnemucca did not exploit these fictions as if she were wearing any costume or taking part in any clown show. She exploited fictions of Indianness so she could undermine the fictions at the heart of US nationalism, fictions that naturalized the settler colonial state and demanded the eradication of Native American culture, history, and lives.

110. See chapter two for more on this point. See also Yael Ben-zvi, "Where Did Red Go?: Lewis Henry Morgan's Evolutionary Inheritance and U.S. Racial Imagination," *The New Centennial Review* 7, no. 2 (2007): "U.S. culture is nourished by consuming Native American cultures" (203).

111. See chapter 3 of this dissertation. See also, for example, Frederick Jackson Turner's "frontier thesis," which famously argues American democracy was forged from its frontier; *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1921 [1893]).

112. For more on the Indian in nineteenth-century Euro-American domesticity narratives, see Amy Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity," in *The Futures of American Studies*, ed. Donald E. Pease and Robyn Wiegman (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 111-134.

113. See Scott Lauria Morgensen, "The Biopolitics of Settler Colonialism: Right Here, Right Now," *Settler Colonial Studies* 1, no. 1, (2011): 52-55; Mark Rifkin, *Settler Common Sense: Queerness and Everyday Colonialism in the American Renaissance* (Minnesota: University of MN Press, 2014); Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism."

Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo) has written, “books were and still are weapons in the ongoing struggle for the Americas.”¹¹⁴ This is certainly true in the case of Winnemucca’s powerful reversals of fictions that justified genocide. Whether she is judged as a traitor,¹¹⁵ a bastion of anti-racism,¹¹⁶ or a complex amalgam of the two¹¹⁷ who negotiated the limits of her position as a woman and a Native American in the late-nineteenth century, Winnemucca’s text is a formidable example of writing back against a dominant settler-colonial paradigm. Extending the arguments of critics like Cari Carpenter and Andrew McClure, who have worked to unpack the syncretic and activist elements of Winnemucca’s work, this chapter has focused on Winnemucca’s playing Indian to argue that in doing so, Winnemucca does more than just reflect colonial culture. She interrupts the Euro-American tradition of playing Indian, and forces audiences to hear her points, not their own ideas echoed back to them.

In his book *Playing Indian*, Phil Deloria exposes how white Americans play Indian to discover their identity. In a “dialectic of simultaneous desire and repulsion,”

114. Silko, *Yellow Woman*, 155.

115. In her lifetime, many Paiutes accused Winnemucca of being a traitor to their people. When the government never followed through on any of its promises, people wondered whether Winnemucca was lying to them. See Canfield, *Winnemucca*, 174-176. One critic who argues the princess costume made Winnemucca look more like a traitor than an activist is Joanna Scherer in “Public Faces,” 185-88.

116. See Hoxie, “Denouncing America’s Destiny.”

117. For more readings of Winnemucca’s complex syncretism, see Cari Carpenter, “Tiresias Speaks: Sarah Winnemucca’s Hybrid Selves and Genres,” *Legacy* 19, no. 1 (2002): 71-80; Andrew McClure, “Sarah Winnemucca: [Post]Indian Princess and Voice of the Paiutes,” *MELUS* 24, no. 2 (1999): 29-51; Malea Powell, “Rhetorics of Survivance: How American Indians Use Writing,” *College Composition and Communication* 53, no. 3 (2002): 396-434.

Deloria argues, white Americans play Indian but never become Indians.¹¹⁸ They put on the Indian mask to feel its freedom. Mindful that it is only a mask that they can remove, they confirm for themselves the myth of their racial superiority. They can take up what they love and cast off what they loathe.¹¹⁹ From the Boston Tea Party, in which colonists dressed as Indians to showcase their rebellion, to 1960s white shamans leading ‘Indian retreats,’ to the casting of Johnny Depp as Tonto in the 2013 film *The Lone Ranger*, playing Indian has remained a staple in white American culture for centuries. To this day, white people playing Indian remains a problem for Native people because the practice perpetuates myths by making a metaphor of the Indian. Most importantly, the practice of playing Indian by non-Native peoples removes Native Americans from the mental and physical landscape of Euro-America.

In the nineteenth century, Euro-America never loved its Indians more than when they were disappearing or already gone. In their stead came a Euro-American nostalgia for a lost people who could have taught white people something before they disappeared. Winnemucca writes at a time when many white people fully believed in Indians’ inevitable extinction. Winnemucca’s book is footnoted by such sentimentality in her white editor’s lament that “Christendom missed the moral reformation it might have had, if they had become acquainted with the noble Five Nations, and others whom they have exterminated.”¹²⁰ The editor, Mary Mann, evokes the Indian in all its Euro-American fictitiousness. The Indian exists for what white people need from it. Mann depicts the

118. Phil Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 3.

119. Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 7.

120. Mann, Editor’s Note in Winnemucca, *Life*, 52.

Indian in the way that would most effectively move Winnemucca's nineteenth-century sentimental women readers. This interjection feels in harmony with the portrayal of Indians in the rest of the text. We might have expected the representation of Indians by a white author and a Native American author to sound resoundingly distinct from one another, but here the two depictions are in accord. Winnemucca reproduces dozens of stereotypes, from the childlike savage in need of a civilizing influence to the Indian princess out to save her people's enemies. Winnemucca's inclusion of settler colonial fictions may indeed fortify harmful stereotypes, including the most dangerous, that of the inevitable disappearance of the Indian; upon closer review, however, as this chapter has argued, the Indian Winnemucca plays is a consciously different creation than the one Mann evokes.

Faced with concerted efforts to kill, or let die, the Paiute people, Winnemucca and her benefactors, Mary Mann, worked tirelessly to publish and disseminate the autobiography before the US Congress was next scheduled to convene to deliberate over the Indian question.¹²¹ Winnemucca presented her petition before Congress a year after her book was published in 1884. With each signature, she pressured the government to open a dialogue. Her plan worked. She was invited to speak with the senate subcommittee on Indian affairs, where she passionately pleaded for a new reservation to be established with enough land for each family. Believing the military to be less corrupt than the BIA, she also asked for the military to administer the reservation, which would solve many of their most pressing problems and abuses. Convinced by her arguments, the House passed a bill giving the Paiutes their new reservation.

121. Canfield, *Winnemucca*, 206.

The bill, however, never made it through the Senate. Instead, the Senate granted the Paiutes permission to go to the Pyramid Lake Reservation, a reservation that had already been in Paiute possession for decades, and which was overcrowded and nearly unusable as farmland.¹²² In her lifetime, the only result of Winnemucca's decades of activist work were a few barrels of clothing donations and her own savings, which she planned to use to start a school. In 1884, after losing the bill in the Senate, Winnemucca discovered that her husband had gambled away their savings. At that point, to borrow Gae Whitney Canfield's pointed words, "all was lost."¹²³ Winnemucca's activism did not change government policy, but it did work. We need only to look at the thousands of signatures her petitions acquired to see the efficacy of her strategies.

Most importantly, while Winnemucca uses a slew of stereotypes in her writing, she never yields to the myth of the vanishing Indian. Though her characters often look like those of sentimental literature, her petition at the end of her coup tales changes their meaning. She does not conclude her text with a pitiable reflection on the declining state of the Indians – Indians who could have done so much for white people – as most nineteenth-century sentimental literature about Indians did. Feeling bad is not the point. Rather, Winnemucca closes her text with overt political engagement in the form of her petition to Congress. Her readers are not allowed to feel that they have done something through their feelings of pity.

Maureen Konkle discusses the dangers of nineteenth-century Euro-American pity for the plight of the Indian. She points out that pity is everywhere in literature and legal

122. Canfield, *Winnemucca*, 214.

123. Canfield, *Winnemucca*, 215.

discourse when Euro-Americans discuss the demise of Indians. Pity, she argues, excises human responsibility for Native American poverty, starvation, and death. When Indians vanish, no actor is responsible. It is simply a pitiable inevitability. Audre Lorde writes similarly of guilt, “guilt is just another name for impotence, for defensiveness destructive of communication; it becomes a device to protect ignorance and the continuation of things the way they are, the ultimate protection for changelessness.”¹²⁴ Pity too is another name for inaction. It too is a device to maintain the status quo. Winnemucca does not use Indian stereotypes to feed into the sentimental discourse of guilt and pity, for doing so would ultimately continue the inertia.

In *Life*'s first chapter, an angelic white woman and man personify this Euro-American pity for the Indian. Both messianic characters appear when Winnemucca the character needs protection. They repeat “poor little girl,” so that these are the first English words she learns. Winnemucca the child is comforted by the fact that they pitied her, but the two soon abandon her in the narrative. The Indian women and children are left at the mercy of white rapists (35). Pity does nothing to stop the forward march of settler colonial violence. Only activism will change anything, and Winnemucca models this throughout the rest of the coup tales. The book ends with a petition to Congress to end the arbitrary separation the Northern Paiutes onto two reservations, a forced removal that had resulted in families being torn asunder. With this petition, she provided her readers with the opportunity to take direct political action. Indian stereotypes in Winnemucca's text and lectures serve as tools of manipulation for her Euro-American audience. The depoliticized ‘authentic Indian’ is made a driver of political change.

124. Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (California: Crossing Press, 2007), 130.

Winnemucca may never have seen many of the changes for which she fought, but she also never saw the century of Indian performances of Indianness that she, in part, helped engender. Her activism was powerful, complex, influential, and necessary. She gave voice to a silenced genocide, to which her book to this day bears witness. Her narrative concludes with her indefatigable spirit and with her own forward march: “[my people] urged me again to come to the East and talk for them, and so I have come” (246).

6. Playing Indian: A Twentieth-Century Tradition

For over a century, Native American artists, activists, performers, and everyday folk have carried on the tradition of playing Indian. In this final section, I review this ongoing tradition both because it helps shed light on the historical importance of Winnemucca’s activism, and because it highlights the endurance of invented Indianness to influence and inform twentieth-century US culture. In the twentieth century, the invented Indians with which Winnemucca and other nineteenth-century activists wrestled remain normalized and ingrained within American institutions. The commonsense status of Indian authenticity results in the belief, as Vine Deloria, Jr. writes, that “the contemporary Indian ... is a pale imitation of the real Indians of the American imagination.”

At times, Native Americans play Indian to supplement income, and at other times, they do so as a form of protest. Sometimes people play Indian for themselves, as a form of cultural celebration, and sometimes they do so because it is required of them.¹²⁵ As in

125. Later in the twentieth century, many American Indians modeled themselves on their own elders, as opposed to “mimicking white mimickings of Indianness.” This marked important shifts in pride, self-consciousness, and indigenous sovereignty (Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 147, 189).

Winnemucca's time, performing Indianness helps contemporary Indigenous people engage with a system built around limited notions of Indian authenticity. Deloria explains, "Contemporary Indians confront this demon of the past whenever they attempt to deal with the various institutions that make up American society. In almost every instance we are forced to deal with American fantasies about the Indians of white imagination rather than the reality of the present."¹²⁶ The old dichotomies of white and Indian, civilized and savage, present and past persist. They result in a dominant culture that views change in Indian cultures as assimilation and assimilation as annihilation.¹²⁷

Although Indian authenticity is not part of any official policy, official US policies have been informed by common expectations about what Indianness means and who Indians are. Blood quantum classifications, for example, are built on a genocidal logic of blood dilution, and the American Indians who cannot measure up are denied access land, resources, and even education reserved for 'authentic' Natives. As Kanaka Maoli scholar Kēhaulani Kauanui argues, "Thus, the 'inauthentic' status of Natives is a condition for sovereign dispossession in the service of settler colonialism."¹²⁸ Similarly, in a 1964 Washington State Supreme Court case, Judge John D. Cochran used myths of Indian authenticity to pronounce the Puyallup extinct. The Puyallup did not fit comfortably on the invented Indian side of the white-Indian binary. They were too 'modern,' and too distinct from the 'traditional' Puyallup culture defined by nineteenth-century white

126. Vine Deloria, Jr., "American Fantasy," xiii-xiv.

127. Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 9.

128. Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood*, 25. She argues, "In the context of the HHCA, and indeed in U.S. policy in general, the logic of blood dilution through legal and popular discourses of race displaces indigeneity and erodes indigenous people's sovereignty claims," (9).

anthropologists. At trial, an expert anthropologist witness argued that the “Puyallup culture is dead.” Agreeing with the expert testimony, in opposition to the Puyallup people, Judge Cochran ruled that “there is no Puyallup tribe,” and used this claim to justify his ruling that the US government was absolved of its treaty obligations.¹²⁹

Playing Indian is not just a performance, it is a means of survival. Deloria explains that when dealing with white people, from charitable donors to government agencies, American Indians often “send out the most Indian-looking people [they] can muster to deal with them...in order to survive.” White people, he argues, are willing to work only with ‘authentic Indians,’ and will “keep searching until they find the Indian of their fantasies.”¹³⁰ For this reason, American Indian activists have routinely returned to the kind of trickster play Winnemucca performed.

Just a few decades after Winnemucca’s performances, for example, Yankton Dakota author, teacher, musician, and activist Zitkala-Ša, whom I will discuss further in chapter two, created her own pan-Indian dress. Like Winnemucca, Zitkala-Ša wore a costume to further her political activism by increasing her audience appeal. When asked to perform a piano solo in “Indian dress,” she made the politically conscious choice to acquiesce, noting, “No doubt, there may be some, who may not wholly approve of the Indian dress. ... Even a clown has to dress differently from his usual citizen’s suit.”¹³¹ Here I emphasize her choice of words that like a “clown,” she “has to” wear such a

129. Bradley G. Shreve, “‘From Time Immemorial’: The Fish-in Movement and the Rise of Intertribal Activism.” *Pacific Historical Review* 78, No. 3 (August 2009): 432.

130. Vine Deloria, Jr., “American Fantasy,” xiv-xv.

131. Zitkala-Ša, *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*, ed. Cathy N. Davidson and Ada Norris (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), xxiii-xxiv.

costume. Also worthy of note is that her Indian dress, which she wore for a photograph published in a 1918 issue of the *Washington Times*, was used as evidence before Congress that Zitkala-Ša was not authentically Indian. In this case, her performance of Indian authenticity had proved inadequate, and, despite her Dakota heritage, her representation of authentic Native America was called into question. Yet again, Indian authenticity served as an instrument for discrediting a Native American leader, speaker, and writer. Zitkala-Ša wrote of her experiences: “Every Indian who has attempted to do real uplift work for the tribes gets stung. No wonder that he quits trying,”¹³² though indeed she never did quit.

In his book *Playing Indian*, Phil Deloria insists that Native Americans took part in playing ‘authentic Indians’ in the early decades of the twentieth century to “challenge and redirect American constructions of Indianness,” but that this mimicry and manipulation ultimately “indicates how little cultural capital Indian people possessed at the time.”¹³³ I argue, on the contrary, that Native people took part in their own tradition of trickster play in order to gain agency in a cultural climate that rendered them invisible. Native Americans could never authentically occupy the limited Euro-American invention of the Indian. By playing with these fictions, and making them their own, Native performers, writers, activists, and musicians manipulated the symbolic meanings of the Indian.

Many Native Americans have chosen play Indian to reclaim Indianness and combat negative stereotypes. In the early decades of the twentieth century, white people routinely played Indian, usually in response to anxieties over the effeminizing effects of

132. Zitkala-Ša, *American Indian Stories*, xxiv.

133. Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 124-25.

modernity. Invented Indians – thought to be masculine, pre-modern, virile, brave, and strong – supplied an antidote. Youth programs like the Boy Scouts and Camp Fire Girls encouraged Indian play to train white children in the ‘natural’ masculine and feminine arts. To make the programs more authentic, Native Americans were invited to participate to share their ‘Indianness’ with the children. Dakota anthropologist, educator, and writer Ella Deloria took a leadership role in the Camp Fire Girls. As Phil Deloria argues, his famous relative participated in this Indian play to advance “her own cultural mission – constructing positive images of Indians around the primitivist foundation laid by the Camp Fire Girls.”¹³⁴ Ella Deloria played Indian to reinforce the positive stereotypes in the hope of eradicating the most harmful.

In the twentieth century, the most damaging stereotype remained that of the vanishing or vanished Indian. Hollywood reinforces the myth of the vanished Indian by all too often representing Indigenous peoples in stereotype-laden narratives set in bygone eras, and, moreover, by casting non-Native actors in these roles. When an Indigenous person is finally offered a rare opportunity on screen, like Jay Silverheels who played Tonto, the Lone Ranger’s sidekick, they are more often than not compelled to play a stereotype.¹³⁵ When American Indians play Indian on their own terms, they reinsert themselves back into the physical and psychological gaps produced by the myth of the vanishing Indian.

134. Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 122.

135. Rayna Green, “The Tribe Called Wannabee: Playing Indian in American and Europe,” *Folklore* 99, no. 1 (1998): 41.

Native American theater has served as a key countercultural space to rescript the Indians portrayed through Indian play. The list is extensive, but two illustrative plays include Kiowa and Delaware playwright Hanay Geiogamah's plays *Body Indian* and *Foghorn*, which he wrote and produced for the American Indian Theater Ensemble that he founded in 1972. Both plays bring dark, trickster, American Indian humor to the stage to comically triumph over Euro-American fantasies about Indians, while still depicting the gritty poverty faced by so many. At one point, a character yells, "If I had twenty dollars, I'd buy me a...a...a living bra! Aae."¹³⁶ Critic Kenneth Lincoln, who notably coined the term *Native American Renaissance*, notes of the structure of *Foghorn*: "From taped electronic music for a pilgrimage, to performed Zuni sunrise chant, to Pocahontas' Indian Love Call and the William Tell Overture from the Lone Ranger show, to 'Pass That Peace Pipe (And Bury That Hatchet)' and the concluding AIM unity song about Wounded Knee, life on the stage musically mimes Indian life in the streets and along the fringe of Euro-American fantasies."¹³⁷ The actors certainly do mimic Euro-American fantasies, purposefully producing Bhabha's mimicking menace by acting out the anger felt by Indigenous communities through a mockery of stereotypes trapped in both history and the present. As Lincoln notes of *Body Indian*, it "sets the stage for Indians to play Indians, after five hundred years of historical stand-ins."¹³⁸ American Indians playing Indian can be an empowering and subversive gesture, changing the meanings found in indigenous representation.

136. Fina in *Body Indian* by Hanay Geiogamah.

137. Kenneth Lincoln, "Indians Playing Indians," *MELUS* 16, no. 3 (1989-90): 95.

138. Lincoln, "Indians Playing Indians," 91.

The long list of Indigenous performers and activists is inexhaustible here, though one final significant and suggestive performance of Indianness includes “The Couple in the Cage” by Chicano performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Cuban-American artist Coco Fusco. In the 1990s, the Couple in the Cage toured the US pretending to be the last survivors from the made-up tribe ‘the Guatinauis’ from the fictional island of Guatinau. Their performance art, chronicled in their documentary *The Couple in the Cage*, was meant to serve as a commentary on the “five hundred year tradition of exhibiting indigenous peoples, a tradition first started by Christopher Columbus.”¹³⁹

The two artists were surprised to find that audiences believed in the authenticity of their absurd performance, in which they were locked in a cage as “specimens,” taken to the bathroom on leashes, and scrutinized by audiences while they performed their ‘traditional’ cultural tasks, like watching TV. The documentary reveals the continuance of the racist stereotypes that cast Indigenous peoples as vanishing, pre-modern, and inferior. At one point in the film, a spectator comments on “things that [Gómez-Peña] doesn’t appear to understand...like the TV set. Something about that fascinates him, but I’m sure he doesn’t know what that is.” Something about the Indianness of Gómez-Peña fascinates the spectator, but it is clear he does not know what that is.

The deeply rooted fictions of the Indian – as an inherently fictional creature – demand further critical scrutiny. Why do these twentieth-century performances share so much in common with Sarah Winnemucca’s? Just a decade before the publication of Winnemucca’s *Life Among the Piutes*, the *Atlantic Monthly* described Indians as “hideous

139. Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco, *The Couple in the Cage: Two Amerindians Visit the West*, 1992-93.

demon[s], whose malign traits can hardly inspire any emotion softer than abhorrence.”¹⁴⁰

The meanings of Indianness have changed over time, yet even as invented Indians shift from formidable nineteenth-century foe to twentieth-century Euro-American heritage, from colonial-era savage to tearful twentieth-century survivors of a bygone age, invented Indians still dominate collective thought and displace Indigenous peoples. Like Winnemucca, Native Americans still take up the position of the mirror by which Americans know themselves and attempt to reveal a different image.

7. Conclusion: Indian Authenticity and Settler Colonialism

“Indian authenticity” continues to inform perception, policy, and culture. It continues to serve settler colonialism as a tool to silence, disempower, and undermine the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples by demanding American Indians fit the stereotypes invented to justify their colonization. Native American experiences and contributions to United States history are still largely “without voice,” to borrow the words of artist Tom Jones (Ho-Chunk Nation). This fact serves as the catalyst for his artwork and the exigence for my dissertation.

Philip Deloria argues that Native people play Indian to defend themselves against stereotypes “left over from colonial conquest.”¹⁴¹ These stereotypes, however, are not only “left over from colonial conquest;” myths of Indian authenticity inhere in US settler

140. “Writing about the fair in the *Atlantic Monthly*, William Dean Howells expressed the derision with which many fairgoers viewed Indians: ‘The red man, as he appears in effigy and in photograph in this collection, is a hideous demon, whose malign traits can hardly inspire any emotion softer than abhorrence.’ Howells articulated the sentiments of many observers who saw in the Indians’ ‘inevitable’ fate a cause not for sorrow but for celebration” (Huhndorf 31).

141. Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 122.

colonial culture. Only “authentic Indians” can claim a right to land and sovereignty, and the only “authentic Indians” are pre-modern, traditional, and vanishing. In either case, contemporary American Indians lose. In the next three chapters, I will look more closely at the role the invented Indian plays in maintaining white racial dominance, settler colonialism, and US imperialism.

Over a century after Winnemucca fought on behalf of the Paiutes through Indian play, another Paiute artist, Gregg Deal, carries on the tradition. While dressed as a stereotypical Indian, he can be found carrying signs that say things like, “My spirit animal is white guilt.” Like so many others, Deal confronts settler colonial culture by occupying the enduring fictions for himself. The purpose and meaning of each performance of Indianness is unique to its context, but together these performances point to the endurance of “Indian authenticity” to shape policy, thought, culture, and, as this dissertation argues, US literature and literary criticism.

Chapter Two

Vanishing in the Color Line:

“Indians” in Assimilation-Era African-American Literature

The primary goal and need of Indians today is not for someone to feel sorry for us and claim descent from Pocahontas to make us feel better. Nor do we need to be classified as semi-white and have programs and policies made to bleach us further. . . . We need a policy by Congress acknowledging our right to live in peace, free from arbitrary harassment. *We need the public at large to drop the myths in which it has clothed us for so long.*¹

– Vine Deloria, Jr., 1969

At the turn of the twentieth century, with the close of the frontier, the barbarian-Indian-enemy of the nineteenth century transformed into a tragically disappearing American minority.² In the hope of either saving the final few Indians or completing the conquest once and for all, federal assimilation policies attempted to aggressively absorb

1. Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (Norman: U of Oklahoma, 1988), 27, emphasis added.

2. Meanwhile, the myth of the ‘savage Indian’ lived on within the discourses that sought to justify US overseas imperialism. Later, in 1924, Native Americans were granted citizenship, a legal maneuver that consolidated Indigenous peoples from hundreds of distinct nations into one ethnic minority, thereby further negating many of the legal protections available through treaties with their distinct nations. By appropriating territories and resources and attacking the freedom to pray, dance, and exist, the US government, social workers, and ‘friends of the Indian’ sought to complete the colonization of the continent’s first peoples.

distinct Indigenous nations into one racial subgroup. In 1903, Du Bois reflected these changing attitudes when he prophetically asserted that the problem of the twentieth century would be the problem of the color line. Race, not colonization, would define the twentieth century.

The recasting of American Indians as a racial minority in the twentieth century elides colonization as an ongoing structure of oppression. As William Appleman Williams reflects, “One of the central themes of American historiography is that there is no American Empire. Most historians will admit, if pressed, that the United States once had an empire. They then promptly insist that it was given away.”³ Generally, Americans believe that continental expansion, colonization, and imperial acquisition were problems unique to the nineteenth century. By the twentieth century, the colonization of American Indians had disappeared from the American consciousness, and with it the distinct oppressions American Indians face as colonized peoples. Jodi Byrd explains:

Of course, colonization relies upon racialization to facilitate, justify, and rationalize the state-sponsored violences that tear land, resources, and sovereignty from indigenous peoples, but to reframe colonization as racialization at the site of radical critique risks leaving those very colonial structures intact.⁴

Moving indigenous histories from margin to center, this chapter is periodized by two events that altered the course of American Indian-US relations: the 1890 Massacre at

3. William Appleman Williams, “The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy,” *Pacific Historical Review* 24 (November 1955): 379-95.

4. Byrd, *Transit*, 54.

Wounded Knee and the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924. These two dates mark the start and end to an imagined absorption of Indians into the nation. This assimilation era also saw the heyday of social Darwinism, Yellow Peril, immigration quotas, international US imperialism, the fight for women's suffrage, and racial uplift led by African American leaders and intellectuals. The era was one of tumultuous readjustment as Americans clamored for and against civil rights. Who counted as American and how were questions on everyone's minds. Americans could make themselves 'count more' by becoming 'more native.' During this same period, images of invented Indians proliferated across the US. As baseball became the national pastime, Indians were made to represent many of its teams, and the nation adopted an Indian as an emblem on its currency alongside US presidents.⁵ The invented Indian became so intertwined with the concept of the American that Indianness became the common tongue for all those negotiating their American identities.

This chapter investigates turn-of-the-century activist literature that was written to alter the landscape of American racism and imperialism. Specifically, I examine Booker T. Washington's autobiography *Up from Slavery* (1901), W. E. B. Du Bois's treatise *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), and Zitkala-Ša's book of Dakota legends, *Old Indian Legends* (1901). Mary Louise Pratt argues "that important historical transitions alter the way people write, because they alter people's experiences and the way people imagine, feel and think about the world they live in. The shifts in writing, then, will tell you something about the nature of the changes. Such shifts in writing, if they are historically

5. Huhndorf, *Going Native*, 59-60.

profound, affect more than one genre.”⁶ I would argue that the turn-of-the-century transformation in cultural perceptions of Indians was indeed historically profound, and its effects can be seen across multiple genres, including the autobiography, treatise, and folktales analyzed here. Moreover, although each text takes a different form, they have a shared goal: to teach readers to be better Americans. Each text employs the ‘Indian’ to accomplish that purpose.

As a metaphor, the invented Indian can represent the villainous savage, the best iteration of humankind, the tragic victim, the true American, the cultural outsider. Its many contradictory meanings make it a convenient metaphor for authors wishing to comment on US affairs. The Indian is also more than a metaphor. Richard Slotkin argues that the Indian and the Indian fighter form the “basis of [US] mythology,” which in turn shapes “our characteristic attitudes toward ourselves, our culture, our racial subgroupings, and our land.”⁷ By turning to the Indian in their works, Du Bois, Washington, and Zitkala-Ša probed US culture, policies, and attitudes through the nation’s founding myths.

Most critics have focused on Du Bois and Washington’s debate over how best to address black social and economic injustice. Few have put them in conversation with contemporary activists, like Zitkala-Ša who worked with Du Bois at the Society of American Indians (SAI). Fewer still have investigated their works’ shared trope, the Indian. Building on the work of those who have situated *Up from Slavery* and *The Souls of Black Folk* within the context of black history, I focus on the authors’ use of ‘Indians’

6. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 4.

7. Slotkin, *Regeneration*, 17-18.

in order to resituate the texts within the racialized discourses of American imperialism. The only activist authors who truly deconstruct white hegemony, I argue, are those who connect Indian fictions back to the reality of Native peoples' anticolonial struggles over land.

Jodi Byrd argues that traces of Indianness can be felt, articulated, and intuited, but “they have often remained deactivated as a point of critical inquiry,” in part because “apprehending [Indianness] as a process is difficult, if not impossible, precisely because Indianness has served as the field through which structures have always already been produced.”⁸ If Indianness is the field through which other structures have always already been produced, then its deconstruction has the potential to reflect and refract institutionalized cultural norms. Paying attention to these traces can change our reading practices of American literature, particularly that which is invested in antiracist, feminist, or anticolonial work. It can reveal a more nuanced picture of the many ways literature like *Up from Slavery*, which attempts to push against the norm, still maintains white male hegemony.

When ‘Indians’ appear in passing scenes or brief moments in US literature, they often go undetected as a site of interpretation. Philip Deloria’s investigation into the Euro-American practice of playing Indian, Shari M. Huhndorf’s analysis of the Euro-American cultural need to “go native” to feel truly American, and Jodi Byrd’s examination of how traces of ‘Indianness’ in US culture support and extend structures of

8. Byrd, *Transit*, xvii-xviii.

domination and empire are some of the remarkable few exceptions.⁹ Each of these texts examines the central – though subtle – place of the Indian in Euro-American culture. In centering Euro-American culture, however, these studies risk positioning whiteness as a central feature of Americanness.¹⁰ All American authors, not just white authors, take up the Indian in their discussions of American identity, culture, and structures of power. Investigating how authors of color use invented Indians does more than take into account a few more Americans. Such investigation is an important step in decentering whiteness as a defining feature of American identity.

In using the standard metaphor and cultural myth, Washington increases the cultural purchase of his work, but he unfortunately participates in the normalization of American colonialism, which in turn supports current power structures. To illustrate this argument, in the first half of this chapter, I examine texts by African American authors who each attempted to use the invented Indian to challenge the color line. Each text demonstrates the common pitfalls in this strategy for posing an antiracist argument. Du Bois and Zitkala-Ša offer a different model. The second half of the chapter unpacks the

9. Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1998); Shari M. Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP: 2001); Jodi Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2011).

10. Each study focuses on Euro-Americans' use of the Indian and on mainly non-literary cultural artifacts. Richard Slotkin's *Regeneration through Violence* also unpacks the use of the Indian in Euro-American cultural myths. These authors participate in a field that is itself an intervention into American cultural studies, which largely overlooks the Indian. Other major voices include Joanna Brooks, *American Lazarus: Religion and the Rise of African-American and Native American Literatures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Mark Rifkin, *Settler Common Sense: Queerness and Everyday Colonialism in the American Renaissance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014);

unique strategies employed by these two rare exceptions. Zitkala-Ša and Du Bois each put Indigenous peoples' realities at the surface of their critiques of white hegemony. Native peoples are included in these critiques not as a backdrop, stereotype, minority, or metaphor, but as members of individual nations fighting for sovereignty and land rights. By dealing with both race and colonialism in their work, they unpack the cause-and-effect reciprocity of these distinct but interwoven oppressions.

I. Racial Metaphors and Settler Colonial Silences

1. Indians and the Color Line

The invented Indian supports and augments white hegemony, but when authors of color take up the metaphor, they rarely use it to comment on whiteness as many Euro-American authors do. Instead, authors of color often employ the invented Indian to subvert racism. African American authors like Pauline Hopkins and James Weldon Johnson, for example, bring Indians into their works in transparent efforts to combat racism and expand the scope of who counts as American. In this section, I examine the role Indians play in Pauline Hopkins' *Winona* (1902) and James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912). By using the Indian as a metaphor, authors risk inadvertently participating in a discursive system that silences Indigenous peoples and eclipses their colonization. I argue that the habit of employing the Indian in this way reveals an enduring, though often unconscious, commitment to settler colonial ideologies, even in literature meant to challenge and disrupt the status quo.

Hopkins' western, *Winona*, deploys stereotypical Indian caricatures to depict a celebratory – though fabricated and ahistorical – solidarity among people of color.¹¹ *Winona* draws on the shared history of black and Indian dispossession, and in the novel a multiethnic cast of characters work together to overcome systemic racism and gain ownership of the land that promises opportunity and freedom. In the novel's somewhat convoluted plot, an English aristocrat adopted by the Seneca marries a fugitive African American slave. The two bear a daughter, named Winona, and adopt another fugitive slave, named Judah. The central crisis occurs when the father's rapacious English brother kills him, enslaves the children, and steals their family land. When this uncle mires the idyllic West with the poisons of slavery and Indian dispossession, Judah finds strength in his 'Indian' heritage to resist. Though he would be Seneca by culture, Judah draws on the powers of "all the Indian tribes of the West" to attain respect and freedom.¹² Not grounded in any particular people or culture, Judah's Indianness represents an alternative to a white American culture of conquest and domination.

As several critics have argued, Hopkins' Indians, and the fantasy of fraternity among America's oppressed peoples, are meant to disrupt an American identity based in whiteness.¹³ Through their Indian grandmother, Winona and Judah acquire an outsiders' perspective that enables them to challenge dominant cultural views. They inspire the

11. For an in-depth analysis on this, see Elizabeth Ammons, "Afterword: *Winona*, Bakhtin, and Hopkins in the Twenty-first Century" in *The Unruly Voice: Rediscovering Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins*, ed. John Cullen Gruesser (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), especially 216-217.

12. Hopkins, *Winona*, chapter 5.

13. Both O'Brien and Ammons make this argument.

other characters – and the novel’s audiences alike – to question white supremacy and violent colonial conquest. The book’s setting, the West, offers the possibility of a truer America, one that better lives up to its ideals of freedom and equality. In the West, Hopkins writes, there is an America “not polluted by the foul breath of slavery,” in which black, Indian, and white people can live peaceably together as Christian farmers and ranchers.¹⁴ There, “the free Negro was seen mingling with other settlers upon the streets, by their presence adding still more to the cosmopolitan character of the shifting panorama.” Black and white Americans live and work side by side, and no one battles for dominion or conquest. The Indians join the cosmopolitan landscape, and though they still “cling” innocently to their “picturesque” tribal dress, they have chosen to adopt “all the arts of civilized life, and cultivat[e] the friendship of the white population about them.”¹⁵ Hopkins’ picturesque, stoic, wise (and acceptably assimilated) Indians are meant to destabilize the color line. She even announces in the opening paragraphs that her multiethnic story will stir audiences to “stand aghast and try in vain to find the dividing line supposed to be a natural barrier between the whites and the dark-skinned race.”¹⁶

Similarly, James Weldon Johnson’s novel *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* also takes up the Indian to deconstruct the color line. Not a western or a novel about Indians like *Winona*, Johnson’s novel mentions Indians only in passing. However, much like *Winona*, the text uses the figure to argue against black people’s exclusion from the

14. Pauline Hopkins, *Winona: A Tale of Negro Life in the South and Southwest*, chapter 1. First published in serial form, in *Colored American Magazine*, Volume 5, Numbers 1-6 (May-October 1902). Published online through the University of Pennsylvania digital Library.

15. Hopkins, *Winona*, chapter 1.

16. Hopkins, *Winona*, chapter 1.

rights and privileges of full American citizenship. Indians appear in one scene, in which Johnson's narrator describes the civil rights struggle as a progression from the demand to be recognized as human, to a fight for education, to now a crusade for social recognition.¹⁷ The narrator justifies black social recognition by comparing black culture to Indian culture: "the [black] race has been a world influence; and all of the Indians between Alaska and Patagonia haven't done as much."¹⁸ The narrator establishes a new hierarchy, deconstructing the color line by redirecting it into a cultural divide. Some cultures have been a world influence; some have simply not done much.

Both novels do important work in challenging the color line,¹⁹ but, in using fictitious Indians to accomplish this work, both novels perpetuate toxic settler colonial myths. Johnson's Indians are indistinguishable and interchangeable. From Alaska to Patagonia, they share the same history and culture, or lack thereof. Not bound to any particular place, they are divorced from the territory and sovereignty disputes that define the experience of Indigenous peoples *as* colonized peoples. Eric Sundquist argues that

17. James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-colored Man* (New York: Penguin, 1990), 35.

18. Johnson, 41.

19. Masami Sugimori argues in "Narrative Order, Racial Hierarchy, and 'White' Discourse in James Weldon Johnson's 'The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man' and 'Along This Way'" that passing narratives risk reinforcing the color line that they attempt to challenge. She writes that *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* "seems to contradict its own racial investigation when it draws plot development, dramatization, and closure from the essentialist and binary-predicated assumption that the Ex-Colored Man looks white but is actually black (37-38). Similarly Valerie Smith argues in "Reading the Intersection of Race and Gender in Narratives of Passing" that passing narratives often draw on stereotypes that "become sites where antiracist and white supremacist ideologies converge, encouraging their black readers to stay in their places" (43-44).

because Johnson wrote the novel outside the United States, he “could stand outside the racial dilemma just long enough to imagine an alternative.”²⁰ Although Johnson imagines an alternative to the color line, nothing in the novel suggests an imagined alternative to the settler colonial ideologies that sustain white dominance.

Hopkins’ western is far more saturated with Indianness than *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, but *Winona*’s Indians are no more grounded in the land or reality. Judah learns how to be ‘Indian’ from his “Nokomis,” a Seneca woman called by the Ojibwe word for grandmother. His Nokomis teaches him an imagined, stereotypical ‘Indian’ way of stewarding the land with respect, and through her Judah and Winona acquire a cultural outlook that combines Seneca culture (or Hopkins’ imagined version of Seneca culture) with “all the tribes of the West.” *Winona*’s fictitious Indians are unsurprising since the author used no Native informants; instead, Hopkins’ source materials included Longfellow’s *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855), dime novels, and narratives that otherwise featured exclusively invented, stereotyped Indians.²¹

While critics have focused on the imagined alliances between people of color in Hopkins’ *Winona*, Colleen O’Brien generously argues that the uncle’s “dishonest

20. Eric Sundquist, *The Hammers of Creation: Folk Culture in Modern African-American Fiction* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 47. Other noteworthy arguments about Johnson’s treatment of the color line in the *Autobiography* include Masami Sugimori, “Narrative Order, Racial Hierarchy, and ‘White’ Discourse in James Weldon Johnson’s ‘The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man’ and ‘Along This Way,’” *MELUS* 36, no. 3 (2011): 37-62, in which Sugimori argues that the novel simultaneously refutes and affirms “clear-cut racial classification” (37). Explaining further, Sugimori argues that the narrator believes, and the novel shows, “how white hegemony reproduces itself by limiting one’s ability to speak outside of the white/black binary opposition” (38).

21. O’Brien, “All the Land,” 35.

manipulation of the right to inherit property on a familial level mirrors the national practices of encroaching on Indian territory and promoting the Westward expansion of slavery that also took place in the 1850s.”²² O’Brien does not take into account, however, that none of *Winona*’s characters is Seneca, let alone Indigenous, so the family’s fight for land rights is not a fight for Indian territory. It is a fight for racial equality alone.²³ The book, therefore, still ends with the dispossession of Indians. By making the Indian a metaphor for racial injustice, Hopkins participates in a system of thought that makes Indian issues invisible. The territorial questions unique to colonized peoples are made a metaphor for an antiracist argument that all Americans have a right to the land of the free. Although some have argued that *Winona* serves as an important example of an African American writer taking up American Indian issues, and that it is, therefore, an early example of cross-racial activism,²⁴ I argue rather that *Winona*’s Indians actually bolster

22. O’Brien, “All the Land,” 34.

23. The Seneca adopt people, and for them, culture, not blood quantum, defines what it means to be Seneca. There is no evidence of whether Hopkins was aware of this practice, but since Hopkins’ source materials were Longfellow’s *Hiawatha* and dime novels, I argue that it is unlikely her Indians were Seneca in anything but name. As O’Brien remarks, “Winona and Judah learn, first through their experience as Seneca people, then as enslaved black workers, that the land can and should be the source of one’s freedom. . . . By the end of the novel, they transcend national and racial affiliations to act on behalf of universal—and environmental—justice” (O’Brien, “All the Land,” 31). Even O’Brien, who argues that Hopkins did apply the Seneca adoption system to her novel, agrees that the story is about “universal justice” not justice for the Seneca. Elizabeth Ammons writes: “Drawing on stereotypes, positive and negative, Hopkins’s novel is not about Indians. It is about Hopkins’s fantasy of non-Western cultural affinity and solidarity among people of color in the North American continent” (217).

24. O’Brien argues that *Winona* is “particularly important to scholars of American culture. First, Hopkins’s literary engagement with Seneca history and culture, though limited and at times problematic, offers an early example of an African American activist writer attempting to represent Native American people and the issues of injustice they faced” (O’Brien, “All the Land,” 28-29).

white hegemony by perpetuating myths that displace Indigenous peoples from the cognitive and physical landscapes of the US.²⁵

In disconnecting Indianness from any particular people or territory, both novels make a metaphor of the Indian. Metaphor, writes Paul Ricoeur, “constitutes a displacement,”²⁶ a semantic displacement that echoes and compounds American Indians’ territorial displacement. As in imperial systems around the world, the language and practice of empire work in tandem, and, as the Spanish monarchy reasoned on the eve of its American conquests, “Language is the perfect instrument of empire.”²⁷ As a rhetorical process, Ricoeur explains, metaphor “unleashes the power that certain fictions have to

25. Cheyfitz’s analysis of a comparable moment in James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Pioneers* is worth reiterating here for comparison. In Cooper’s *The Pioneers*, an ‘Indian’ is revealed to have been a white man adopted by Indians, and so he has title to the land: “In this revelation, Indian claims are merely an allegory for the claims of an individual white man; the claims of kinship are merely an allegory for the claims of property. This allegorization of Indians for the purpose of telling stories about property, a rhetorical strategy that drives the narrative of the *Johnson* case as well, is made possible by a classic Western rhetorical division: that between the proper, or literal, and the figurative, in which the proper, like property, is a privileged place, so privileged that it tends to take on the status of the ‘natural,’ particularly in the nineteenth century with the rise of biology as a science and the concomitant naturalization of the category of ‘race.’...Because of this rhetorical division, which we understand is the effect of a set of discursive practices not limited to those of rhetoric but including those of law, anthropology and the sciences as well, Oliver Edwards is able to slip off his Indian identity, to reduce it to the merely figurative...From a Native American perspective, if such a perspective were not under erasure in *The Pioneers*, Oliver Edwards would remain an Indian. For it is the function of kinship-based societies to extend the terms of family to everyone in the culture, so that no similar division is made between the literal and the figurative, the natural and the cultural” (Cheyfitz, “Savage,” 124-125).

26. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 3.

27. Bishop of Avila to Queen Isabella of Castile, 1492. Qtd. in Hulme 1.

redescribe reality.”²⁸ In this discursive reality, the invented Indian both justifies colonialism and legitimates the settler colony as sovereign. Regarding the legal value of the metaphor, Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo) writes that Europeans burned the great libraries of the Americas “because they wished to foster the notion that the New World was populated by savages. ... International law regulated the fate of conquered nations but not of savages.”²⁹ Throughout the Americas, the figure of the Indian, and its related discourse of ‘savagery,’ was, as Peter Hulme writes, “honed into the sharpest instrument of empire.”³⁰ The US Supreme Court based its nineteenth-century decisions to strip American Indians of their land and sovereignty in its own metaphorical Indians, Indians that shifted from court case to court case between foreign and domestic, savage and civilized, as the Supreme Court needed.³¹ Maureen Konkle writes that such Supreme Court decisions were made to justify white hegemony, and they demonstrate “that the most effective means of denying [Indians’] dangerous autonomy is the production of

28. Ricoeur, *Metaphor*, 7.

29. Silko, *Yellow Woman*, 157. For more on this historical process, see Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* (2006): 387-409. For more on international law and its legacy, see Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* (2006): 387-409.

30. Hulme 3.

31. In *Constituting Americans*, through her readings of several Supreme Court decisions, Priscilla Wald details the invention of ‘Indians’ as a single minority subject that arose from the hundreds of discrete nations of Indigenous peoples. Describing the effect of Justice Marshall’s ruling in the *Cherokee Nation* case, she writes: “Refusing to recognize the sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation, he effectively promoted the consolidation of tribes that federal treaties had previously ordained as discrete. This implied merging was consistent with the strategy that brought forth ‘Indians’ who, as individuals, could then (like immigrants) be assimilated into the Union,” *Constituting Americans*, 24.

knowledge that reduces resistant Indian political entities to an assemblage of inferior, soon-to-be-extinct individuals who, because of their inherent characteristics, cannot claim to form real governments.”³²

By collapsing distinct Indigenous nations into one signifier: the Indian, Hopkins’ and Johnson’s novels participate in a system of knowledge inherited from, and supportive of, American settler colonialism. In this these novels are not unique. Their Indians look like those in most of American literature. As Vine Deloria Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux) argues, “the image of Indians has radically shifted from any reference to living people to a field of urban fantasy in which wish fulfillment replaces reality.”³³

2. Indian Metaphors in *Up from Slavery*

Like *Winona* and *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, Booker T. Washington’s 1901 autobiography *Up from Slavery* uses Indian figures for his defense of African American civil rights. The Indian is not a major element of Washington’s text, and yet the short chapter that includes Indians at its periphery, titled “Black Race and Red Race,” is significant because Indigenous issues and fictions are crucial aspects of American structures of power. In Washington’s case, as in US literature at large, it is impossible to examine racism, racial uplift, education, civilization, or notions of progressive history without invoking either the real or the invented Indian. By using the Indian as a metaphor for social injustices faced by African Americans, Washington undermines the efficacy of his antiracist work.

32. Konkle 153.

33. Vine Deloria Jr., “American Fantasy,” ix.

The autobiography chronicles Washington's ascent from enslaved child to one of the most influential leaders of his time, a transformation that takes place at Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute. As a school established for freedmen, or in Washington's words, for "the undeveloped races," Hampton offered its students a rudimentary education and, according to him, the chance to acquire "a higher degree of civilization."³⁴ In the autobiography, Washington himself metamorphoses from an uncivilized child into an industrious American man, and he does so by assisting in the civilization of others, namely Hampton's first class of Indians.

Regarding the purpose of the Indian program at Hampton, Washington writes:

About this time the experiment was being tried for the first time, by General Armstrong, of educating Indians at Hampton. Few people then had any confidence in the ability of the Indians to receive education and to profit by it. General Armstrong was anxious to try the experiment systematically on a large scale. He secured from the reservations in the Western states over one hundred wild and for the most part perfectly ignorant Indians, the greater proportion of whom were young men (80).

Arriving "wild" and "perfectly ignorant," Washington's Indians reveal the potential of vocational schools to transform the "undeveloped races" into civilized adults by instilling American values in even the least American of populations.

34. Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 79, 123. Here Washington refers to his own school, the Tuskegee Institute, though he makes similar remarks about both institutions' uplifting of the 'undeveloped races' to a higher level of civilization. All further citations from *Up from Slavery* in this section will be in text.

As metaphors, Indians evoke two conflicting ideas. In one sense, they represent “America’s” opposite, and through their difference, they create and delimit the frontier of American self-definition.³⁵ Because invented Indians represent civilization’s antithesis, Washington’s Indians exhibit the extraordinary efficacy of the civilizing assimilation program he advocates.

In their second sense, metaphorical Indians represent “America’s” cultural core. After the 1890 Massacre at Wounded Knee, the threat of Indigenous armed resistance had been quelled. In this period, Buffalo Bill’s wildly popular Wild West show shifted its depiction of Indians from a formidable, savage enemy to “Former Foe – Present Friend – the *American*.”³⁶ True Americans all had Indianness in their hearts. In 1893, a Chicago newspaper responded to a Wild West show with a discussion of “the aboriginal ancestor” inside all Americans, even “after all the long generations of attempted civilization.”³⁷ In 1899, a journal described “the hidden savage” and “ineradicable trace of savage instinct”

35. As Frederick Turner wrote in his 1893 frontier thesis, “The frontier is the line of most rapid and effective Americanization.” Though Turner’s thesis has been mostly rejected by historians, he speaks to an idea that remains predominant in the American cultural imagination. For several critiques of Turner’s frontier thesis, see Shari Huhndorf, *Going Native*; Patricia Nelson Limerick, ‘The Adventures of the Frontier in the Twentieth Century,’ in *The Frontier in American Culture*, ed. James R. Grossman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 66-102; and Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Modern North America* (Philadelphia: U Penn Press, 2013), which tells American history from the perspective of peoples west of the frontier.

36. Cody Scrapbooks, Denver Public Library, vol. 2; Qtd. in Slotkin, “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West,” 172.

37. The Chicago *Inter-Ocean*, 1893; qtd. in Slotkin, “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West,” 174.

that transforms Europeans into Americans.³⁸ In 2017, a Florida newspaper reported on “our Indian ancestors” that can be felt in the heart, even if not found in ancestral records. In the writer’s opinion, Floridians’ preferences for nature, hunting, and even protest are “in our blood.”³⁹ The fictional Indian lies within America’s heart.

Washington takes up both senses of the Indian metaphor. His Indians are true outsiders. As an emancipated slave, he presents himself as in need of civilization, but he emphasizes that Indians are civilization’s true antithesis. Since Indians delineate the borders of the nation, Washington uses them to confirm that black people are firmly within those borders. African Americans are irrefutably American. Through his Indians, he forms an alternative binary, in which both black and white Americans are cultural insiders, and their shared opposite is the Indian. At the same time, his Indians serve a second function: as a metaphor of ‘true Americanness,’ the figure mediates between author and reader to encourage diverse American audiences to approach the narrative sympathetically.

Up from Slavery was written to appeal to a general American public.⁴⁰ In its form as an autobiography, it appeals to Americans’ cultural appetite for tales of individualism

38. David A. Curtis, *Criterion*, 1899; qtd. in Slotkin, “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West,” 174.

39. Margaret Miller Curtis, “Our Indian Ancestors,” *Jackson County Times*, 22 November 2017.

40. Washington’s other autobiography *The Story of My Life and Work* (1900) was intended for an audience of southern rural black readers. When that book was published, Washington and his ghostwriters had already begun work on *Up from Slavery*, a version intended to appeal to a wider audience. For more, see Roger J. Bresnahan “The Implied Readers of Booker T. Washington’s Autobiographies.” *Black American Literature Forum* 14, no. 1 (1980): 15-20.

and self-reliance. Both the book and Washington's public philosophies resonated so well with dominant American culture that for three decades, from the 1920s to the 40s, no white-authored books about great American activists or leaders featured any other African American figure.⁴¹ Since then, *Up from Slavery* has earned a permanent place in the canon of American and African American literature. The work is taught in universities across the country and has been translated in every major language. Co-authored and meticulously edited for mass appeal by advisors, editors, and publishers, its early success speaks to its ability to balance the needs of a diverse audience made up of former slaves, former slaveholders, and social rights activists.⁴² Its continuing appeal reflects its success in wielding American cultural symbols, like the Indian, to communicate with diverse generations of American readers.

The book carefully avoids offending white readers while still offering messages of hope and strength for black readers.⁴³ While Washington's compromises result in such absurd claims as "the black man got nearly as much out of slavery as the white man did," his book also offers black readers inspiring messages about resourcefulness and self-reliance (37). Because the book filters dominant discourses through black history and for black audiences, the autobiography offers a complex picture of the role the Indian can play for various American audiences. Although the invented Indian traditionally signifies an opposition between white civilization and Indian savagery, under Washington's hand

41. Pero Gaglo Dagbovie, "Exploring a Century of Historical Scholarship on Booker T. Washington," *The Journal of African American History* 92, no. 2 (2007), 241.

42. Charlotte D. Fitzgerald, "The Story of My Life and Work: Booker T. Washington's Other Autobiography," *The Black Scholar* 21, no. 4 (1991): 35, 36.

43. Dagbovie, "Exploring," 258.

the Indian also carries a message of inclusion for black Americans. Looking at Indians, foreigners, blacks, and whites, Washington examines “how difficult it sometimes is to know where the black begins and the white ends” (82). Using the Indian, he deconstructs the color line, musing, “I never could understand how he knew just where to draw the colour line, since the Indian and I were of about the same complexion” (83). Roger Bresnahan argues, “Washington’s method in the autobiographies is to tap the reader’s own identity and then to modify it.”⁴⁴ Washington takes up a standard cultural metaphor and modifies it to shift his white audiences’ perceptions about who counts as American, all while reminding black readers of their value as American citizens – a small modification of the Indian metaphor, but a noteworthy one nonetheless.

Furthermore, by helping the first class of Indians adjust to life at the school, black people become the generators, not the recipients, of American civilization. Although the Indians “were about like any other human beings,” and although Washington found that academically “there was little difference between the coloured and Indian students,” his juxtapositions of black and Indian students invariably confirm the inferiority of the Indian (81). Black students work tirelessly on their educations, while the Indians passively await direction and assistance. While Washington, for instance, actively fights to earn his place at Hampton, the Indians are “secured from the reservations” by the school’s principal (80). Given neither dialogue nor individual characterization, Washington’s Indians never gain subject status. Through them, however, Washington does. He gains a promotion to “house father” in “charge of [the Indian students’] discipline, clothing, rooms, and so on” (80). The Indians never evolve out of their childlike stereotype, but through them

44. Bresnahan, “Implied,” 16.

Washington earns his first leadership position. By helping Americanize the Indian, he takes his first step toward becoming an American leader, and offers an important model of black inclusion for black and white readers alike.

As the black students happily assist civilizing the newcomers, Washington lectures white readers: “How often I have wanted to say to white students that they lift themselves up in proportion as they help to lift others, and the more unfortunate the race, and the lower in the scale of civilization, the more does one raise one’s self by giving the assistance” (80). Black students are lifted up through their acts of generosity in the same way that white people are degraded by their racism. As John Hope Franklin points out, however, Washington’s appeals to white Americans to change their racist behaviors tended to fall on deaf ears.⁴⁵ This moment likely missed its instructive mark, but more noteworthy is how the Indian disappears into the message that racism is degrading to the racist. Existing solely to make a point, the Indians’ presence ironically erases them from the scene. As stereotypes, these invented Indians erase real Indigenous people and issues, as stereotypes always do, but *Up from Slavery*’s stereotypical Indians are not even the subject or the object of the scene. They are merely a platform on which to stage black and white dramas.

3. Repeating the Myths that Justify Imperialism

The previous scene is not the only moment Indians vanish from the text. Over and over again, Washington contributes to the myth of the vanishing Indian. Describing Indians as a most “unfortunate race,” “lower in the scale of civilization,” Washington fuels the

45. John Hope Franklin, introduction to *Three Negro Classics* (Avon Books: New York, NY, 1965), 11.

contemporary cultural belief in progressive history and social evolution. *Up from Slavery* describes Africans living “in the darkest heathenism” while Euro-Americans produce the pinnacle of civilization (71). Such social evolution theories propagate the idea that the fittest races would dominate and the least fit would vanish, implying both white dominance and Indian extinction were inevitabilities. Historically, Native American genocide served as evidence of an invented Indian inferiority; in turn, this invented inferiority was used to justify genocide.

Washington’s inferior, wild, and ignorant Indians are replicas of those found the writings of social Darwinists like Frederick Jackson Turner. Turner wrote in his 1893 speech titled “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” that the Indian must inevitably assimilate or perish. Indians, Turner claims, represent the earliest humans. The “Indian and the hunter” are part of the past; and the trader, rancher, farmer, and finally the industrialist will succeed one another as a culture evolves.⁴⁶ Turner’s theory of human evolution aligns neatly with the mainstream American perception of United States history: European traders supplanted the Indian, and Euro-American pioneers, farmers, and industrialists supplanted their European forefathers.

Abundant evidence exists (and was available in Turner’s time) that many Native American nations were farming long before contact with Europeans.⁴⁷ Many others were

46. Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893), (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), *The Project Gutenberg*. 2015.

47. Thomas Hariot made extensive notes of Native American farming before England even had a foothold in the New World. See Thomas Hariot, “A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia” (Frankfurt, 1590).

practicing farming at the moment in which Turner delivered the speech. European and Euro-American economies had relied on Indigenous trade for centuries, and Native labor had supported the industrialization of the US economy. Disregarding all such evidence, Turner portrays Indians as embodying a regressive stage of human development, so that they could be reduced – in Turner’s words – to “our Indian history.”⁴⁸ As Huhndorf writes, this reframing of American history meant “[r]esponsibility for a massive and bloody conquest no longer lay with human agents. . . . Their ‘disappearance’ – the result of the abstract force of progress rather than human acts of conquest – thus negated the challenges Native America posed to European-American hegemony and rendered the colonists the legitimate heirs of Indian lifeways and land.”⁴⁹

In *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois criticizes Washington’s adherence to social evolution theories, writing, for instance, that his “programme practically accepts the alleged inferiority of the Negro race,” for he “withdraws many of the high demands of Negroes as men and American citizens.”⁵⁰ Du Bois is certainly not alone in his criticism of Washington. As Raymond Hedin argued in 1979, “Washington’s current standing among scholars is fairly low,”⁵¹ and not a great deal has changed since then.⁵² To be fair, Pero Gaglo Dagbovie argues, “With few exceptions, since the mid 1990s, more than a few leading African American public intellectuals, figureheads, and spokespersons, as

48. Turner, “Frontier.”

49. Huhndorf, *Going Native*, 58.

50. Du Bois, *Souls*, 246.

51. Raymond Hedin, “Paternal at Last: Booker T. Washington and the Slave Narrative Tradition.” *Callaloo* 7 (1979): 95.

52. See Dagbovie, “Exploring,” for an excellent summary of scholarly trends.

well as one of the most recent Washington biographers, have tended to oversimplify Washington's leadership and legacy by largely focusing on the negative dimensions of his strategy of conciliation."⁵³ Similarly, Hedin cautions readers not to oversimplify Washington's work, and instead to contextualize his ideas and how he expressed them within "the force and direction of racial history."⁵⁴ Washington's conciliatory politics and assimilation of the ideologies of social Darwinism and civilizationist chauvinism⁵⁵ should be understood, Hedin argues, "in the context of black history as Washington perceived it, felt it, and acted to repair its damages."⁵⁶

Rather than focus on the negative dimensions of Washington's conciliatory positions, some scholars have highlighted his influence on international anticolonial struggles. Washington did inspire several leaders in African independence movements through his promotion of self-pride and self-reliance.⁵⁷ However, in Sylvia Jacobs' opinion, while Washington may have inspired international leaders, he ultimately "helped to bolster the argument justifying colonialism."⁵⁸ Jacobs focuses solely on colonialism abroad, but it is important to note that Washington's adherence to social evolution hierarchies and discourses also helped bolster the arguments justifying the colonization of

53. Dagbovie, "Exploring," 239-240.

54. Hedin, "Paternal," 95.

55. I borrow this phrase from Dagbovie, "Exploring," 247.

56. Hedin, "Paternal," 95.

57. Manning W. Marable, "Booker T. Washington and African Nationalism," *Phylon* 35 (No. 4, 1974): 400- 406.

58. Sylvia M. Jacobs, *The African Nexus: Black American Perspectives on the European Partitioning of Africa, 1880-1920* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1981), 49.

American Indians and their territories. Since the ‘vanishing Indian’ myth was one of the means by which US imperialism is made invisible, it is worth unpacking the relationship between Washington’s inferior and vanishing Indians and the imperial ideologies at work in his text.

The myth of black and Indian evolutionary delay rebrands imperialism as progress. In 1898, the US expanded its imperialism of North America into violent overseas conquests of the Philippines, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii. Robert Rydell writes, “millions of Americans would understand the ensuing decades of social struggle and imperial adventure as an integral part of the evolutionary process that accompanied progress.”⁵⁹ As Jodi Byrd argues, however, nineteenth-century US overseas imperialism is not the result of scientific racism or social evolution theories alone. Rather, US overseas imperialism arises out of the nation’s and the Indian’s mutual constitution.

Because Indians never existed, the myths they represent can be superimposed on any population.⁶⁰ As invented Indian myths were transferred abroad, Indianness helped facilitate US imperialism by rebranding any population that obstructed US objectives as Indian-like peoples in need of civilization or annihilation. Thus, the reduction of the Indian to a solely racial construct – as opposed to a colonial one – poses a threefold benefit to white hegemony: first, paired with social evolution theories it suggests that the forced assimilation or genocide of peoples who stand in the way of US prerogatives is inevitable; second, its association with savagery implies that US conquest is a natural part

59. Robert Rydell, *All the Worlds a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 71.

60. Byrd, *Transit*, xx-xxi.

of progress; and third, because of their ostensibly natural and inevitable characters, white supremacy and US imperialism work together to make the other unquestionable. The Indian metaphor's reiteration and reverberation across American culture normalizes racial and imperial oppression.

Up from Slavery was published just three years after the US launched its overseas imperial conquests. In the book, Washington describes the black regiments that fought in Cuba during the Spanish-American war, noting that the black soldiers fought "to give freedom to the enslaved people of Cuba, forgetting, for the time being, the unjust discrimination that law and custom make against them in their own country" (167-68). He says this to highlight African American contributions and to ask whether "a race that is thus willing to die for its country should not be given the highest opportunity to live for its country" (168). Although the 'Indian wars' served as the model for US imperialism abroad, even sharing the same tactical strategies and military personnel, and although Washington discusses both Indians and US imperialism in his autobiography, he never connects the two. Instead, his antiracist argument normalizes US imperialism and perpetuates the notion that imperialism is progress, not conquest. In his perspective, the US brings freedom to Cuba, not conquest.

Mark Rifkin suggests that "Indigenous peoples and geographies become unseen as part of ordinary, nonconscious nonnative praxis and writing."⁶¹ In a text like Washington's, in which the author actively endeavors to dismantle oppression, the

61. Mark Rifkin, *Settler Common Sense: Queerness and Everyday Colonialism in the American Renaissance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), xvii.

agenda-driven use and erasure of Indians reveal unquestioned, normalized, and institutionalized structures of oppression, which cause this antiracist project's failure.

4. Loud Silences in *Up from Slavery*

In keeping with Morrison's argument in *Playing in the Dark* that both real and fabricated black-ness are central not marginal to US culture and literature, I propose that the same principle holds true for Indianness. The principal difference is that the Indian is a present absence, a forced erasure that leaves a trace. Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe) describes the invented Indian as "a commemoration of an absence."⁶² I argue that the Indian is rather an overdetermined, ubiquitous presence, rarely signifying Native experience, and inevitably conveying a vast set of contradictory cultural assumptions about empire, nation, and race – that is, about the network of oppressions and privileges that maintain white dominance in the US.

One of the ways *Up from Slavery* reinforces white hegemony is through the myth that people of color have no common ground for forming an alliance against white supremacy. When working with the American Indian students, Washington fears he would not be successful because, "there was a general feeling that the attempt to educate and civilize the red men at Hampton would be a failure" (80-81). He writes, "At first I had a good deal of doubt about my ability to succeed. I knew that the average Indian felt himself above the white man, and, of course, he felt himself far above the Negro, largely on account of the fact of the Negro having submitted to slavery – a thing which the Indian would never do" (81). Washington is pleasantly surprised at Hampton's success

62. Gerald Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 15.

with the Indians. To make his point about the school's educational efficacy, however, Washington repeats a Euro-American revision of history, in which Indians were never enslaved, black people never resisted, and Native and African Americans are inherent adversaries. The result is a reiteration of a worldview in which black people and American Indians share no common interests and have no history of mutual participation in antiracist and anticolonial work.

Stereotypes about Indians not only disempower Indigenous peoples, but also erase histories of mutual support and resistance against white dominance. The Nanticoke, among countless other Native nations, provided refuge for runaway slaves; the Pequot Methodist minister William Apess campaigned avidly against anti-black racism;⁶³ Sarah Winnemucca's grandfather, too, denounced the brutalizing of slaves and refused the much needed protection of white slaveholders at a time when white people were slaughtering Paiutes who travelled without white people's permission and protection.⁶⁴ The Indian that makes its way into Washington's text revises reality to sustain white supremacy even as it propagates as neutral, if not invisible.

In Washington's final comment on Indian issues, he writes that black people chose "slavery rather than extinction" (167). At this point in the narrative, Indians have disappeared, from America and the text. They make no further appearance, although Washington continues to discuss the many twentieth-century affairs that affected Indigenous peoples. In his discussions of US imperialism and the vocational school

63. Barry O'Connell, introduction to *A Son of the Forest and Other Writings by William Apess, a Pequot*. William Apess au. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), ix.

64. Sarah Winnemucca, *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* (Reno: University of Nevada, 1994), 23-24. For more on Sarah Winnemucca, see chapter one.

system, he never comments on settler colonialism or the Indian boarding school system, which shared the common goal with Hampton's Indian program to solve America's 'Indian problem' through education, a typical colonial enterprise that one sees in various settler colonies. These silences are likely not an intentional omission. When Native Americans are seen only in terms of race and not as a colonized population, as they are in Washington's text, an examination of the imperial nature of the formation of the United States is not possible. Thus, questions of sovereignty or the legitimacy of white rule on indigenous land are not questions that Washington can raise. Yet they are evoked every time Washington draws on the Indian, a figure invented to justify settler colonialism.

Through his use of Indians, Washington moves away from the color line and focuses instead on that other defining American line, the frontier. Unfortunately, Washington's merely shifts the black-white binary. His alternative dichotomy, an American-unAmerican opposition based in social evolution, still centers on whiteness. In his worldview, although people of color can assimilate into Euro-American culture, whiteness remains the defining feature of both civilization and Americanness.

5. Retelling the Same Story

The Indian's appearance in these texts is not unique. Indians are everywhere in US literature. What is unique to Washington, Hopkins, and Johnson is how they attempt to use the figure not in the service of white supremacy but in the service of black liberation. They each take up the figure in an attempt to dismantle the color line, but because their metaphor exists for the sole purpose of justifying white dominance, it could only undermine their endeavors. Du Bois wrote in Washington's obituary: "He was the greatest Negro leader since Frederick Douglass" but "we must lay on the soul of this

man, a heavy responsibility for ... the firmer establishment of color caste in this land.” Washington’s Indians had a hand in this “firmer establishment of color caste.”⁶⁵

In her analysis of countercultural narratives, Priscilla Wald argues that it is “apparent how much an official story actually determines the shape of the nation and how difficult it is, therefore, to tell a markedly different version of that story.”⁶⁶ Often, in its service as a standard American metaphor, the Indian limits authors’ ability to tell a markedly different story. However, Wald explains, despite “[s]ocial unacceptability and political censorship, personal prohibitions and cultural conventions, the literary market and language itself,” silenced narratives make their way into literature and “untold stories press for a hearing.”⁶⁷ For Wald, literary disruptions like “unexpected words, awkward grammatical constructions, rhetorical or thematic dissonances” each suggest untold stories.⁶⁸ Real American Indians displaced by the Indian metaphor also have untold stories. Their stories, too, press for a hearing. W. E. B. Du Bois and Zitkala-Ša offer a different model for dealing with American Indians issues in their texts. Both authors take up American Indian issues with the intention of discussing the connections between American Indian oppression and the oppression of African Americans. Neither lets the Indian remain a metaphor.

II. Reconnecting the Invented Indian to the Reality

65. W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Late Booker T. Washington,” *The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races*, December 1915, 82.

66. Priscilla Wald, *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 20.

67. Wald, 2.

68. Wald, 2.

1. Racialized and Colonized Peoples

Although *The Souls of Black Folk*, like *Up from Slavery*, does not foreground Indigenous people, ideas, or plots, American Indian issues “press for a hearing,” to again borrow Wald’s words. *Souls* mentions Indians only twice: in a description of the American landscape and in an aside about their cultural influence. At the time it was popularly believed that US cultural producers were exclusively Anglo-Saxon.⁶⁹ Challenging this racist revision of American culture, Du Bois writes: “there are today no truer exponents of the pure human spirit of the Declaration of Independence than the American Negroes; there is no true American music but the wild sweet melodies of the Negro slave; the American fairy tales and folklore are Indian and African.”⁷⁰ In the spaces Mary Louise Pratt calls contact zones, where “disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination,” the dominant group, she argues, is “as much influenced *by* as an influence *on*” those they dominate.⁷¹ In a powerful reversal of the myth of consumed and rejected blackness and Indianness, Du Bois argues that African and Native Americans are not the recipients of American culture. The music, stories, indeed the spirit of America are black and Indian.

69. See Warren, “Medievalism and the Making of Nations,” 293-294; Rich, *Race and Empire*, 13.

70. Du Bois, *Souls*, 220. All future quotes from *Souls* in this section will be cited in text.

71. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 7, 134-135.

When Du Bois places American Indian and African cultures at the heart of the American spirit, he resists reproducing the prevailing belief that all Americans had a little Indian in their hearts. The Indianness he references is not the nostalgic fantasy consumed by Euro-Americans in an attempt to forge a national identity distinct from Europe. It is not the myth Washington echoes in his work. It is, instead, a reference to what Zita Nunes calls the resistant remainder: the cultures and peoples who refuse assimilation or who are themselves refused.⁷² While he was clearly mindful of the fantasy-Indian's symbolic purchase, this moment suggests Du Bois was also attentive to the influence real American Indian cultures had on American culture. This suggestive moment informs my reading practice of Du Bois's later, more direct references to the official erasures of Indigenous peoples.

Du Bois was critical of Washington's policy agendas, and following Washington's death Du Bois became the most prominent black leader in the US.⁷³ He has been described as "[w]ithout question...the greatest 'race man' of the era."⁷⁴ Most known for his activism on behalf of African Americans, his theories became the bedrock of American critical race studies. As a sociologist, editor, historian, educator, and activist, and as a prolific writer about race, Du Bois changed the conceptual landscape of race in

72. Here I borrow Zita Nunes' arguments about the consumption and repudiation of blackness in her book, *Cannibal Democracy*. The remainder is made by those systems that demand purity in the national body. "In relation to the eaten, this remainder can be seen either as a rejection of the eaten by the national body or as the resistance posed by the eaten to assimilation" (14).

73. Dan S. Green and Edwin D. Driver, introduction to *On Sociology and the Black Community*, W. E. B. Du Bois, au. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 21.

74. Green and Driver, 19.

the US and abroad.⁷⁵ Within the first few years of the twentieth century, he had gained world renown with the 1899 publication of *Philadelphia Negro*, the first sociological case study of a black community in the US, and the 1903 publication of his magnum opus *The Souls of Black Folk*.⁷⁶

For more than a century, scholars have celebrated Du Bois's US-based work on double-consciousness and the color line. A few scholars have looked outside the US at Du Bois's international anticolonial work.⁷⁷ In the historical study *Transnational Blackness* (2008), for example, Manning Marable and Vanessa Agard-Jones argue that Du Bois clearly understood the color line to extend beyond the US, and to include "colonial domination in Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and the Caribbean among indigenous populations."⁷⁸ While scholars have begun to focus on Du Bois's global perspectives on race and imperialism, there is room yet for further exploration of his anticolonial work at home.

Scholars have rarely discussed the Indians in Du Bois's work. Those who have done so have focused on the consequences biological determinism had on all people of

75. In 1899 Du Bois presented at the Paris World Exposition where he won a gold medal for his exhibit on African American progress since emancipation.

76. Kyle T. Mays, "Transnational Progressivism: African Americans, Native Americans, and the Universal Races Congress of 1911," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 25, no. 2 (2013), 248.

77. See Bill V. Mullen and Cathryn Watson, *W. E. B. Du Bois on Asia: Crossing the World Color Line*. (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2005); Mays, "Transnational Progressivism," and Manning Marable and Vanessa Agard-Jones, eds. *Transnational Blackness: Navigating the Global Color Line* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

78. Marable and Agard-Jones, *Transnational Blackness*, 4.

color, rather than on the work done through the figure of the Indian itself.⁷⁹ The Indians in Du Bois's text are notable because he does not pander to stereotypes to comfort and appease audiences as most authors, including Washington and even Winnemucca, do (see chapter one). Like Washington, Hopkins, and Johnson, Du Bois includes Indians as part of his literary fight for social justice. Though he still uses the figure to make an argument on behalf of African Americans, Du Bois grounds his literary Indians in the specific histories and territories of particular Indigenous peoples. They are not that American metaphor interdependent with white supremacy; they are not one more American minority seated comfortably on either side of the color line. They are distinct nations – the Cherokee, the Creek – rooted in specific territories. Du Bois discusses attacks on Indigenous land and sovereignty not as a metaphor for African American oppression, but as integral to understanding the interrelatedness of American racialization and colonization.

Apart from the brief remark at the start of *Souls*, Indians do not feature explicitly until late in the book, in a chapter titled “Of the Black Belt.” The title glosses over the Indian relationship to the land it names, a relationship that the prose itself explores, making the Black Belt a palimpsest of indigeneity. Placing readers on a train flying past landscapes and peoples, Du Bois takes readers to the center of “the Negro problem”:

Just this side Atlanta is the land of the Cherokees and to the southwest, not far from where Sam Hose was crucified, you may stand on a spot which is to-day the centre of the Negro problem,—the centre of those nine million

79. See Ralph Watkins, “Between Slavery and Freedom: A Reflection on *The Souls of Black Folk* during the Ninetieth Anniversary of Its Publication,” *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History*, 31 January 1994, 73-91.

men who are America's dark heritage from slavery and the slave-trade (285).

On this land, the “centre of the Negro problem” meets the ‘Indian problem.’ Du Bois could have bypassed Indianness entirely. Doing so would have suited his analysis and met the expectations of American readers, who were accustomed to ignoring Indigenous peoples. Instead, Du Bois exposes the named roots of African American oppression, slavery, and that unnamed root: the European and Euro-American imperialism that also resulted in the dispossession of Indigenous peoples.

Ella Shohat and Robert Stam argue that the ‘questions’ that Europe and Euro-America trouble themselves over – that is, the Black, Indian, Jewish, Muslim, and African questions – are interlinked. They argue that “Their linked trajectories can be traced back to the events associated with the cataclysmic moment summoned up by the various ‘1492s’ – that is, the conquest of the ‘new’ world, the expulsion of the Moors, and the Inquisition.” Ethno-religious cleansing, racial states, race-based slavery, and colonialist racism have their origins in early the imperialist rhetoric that transformed colonies and the slave trade into race-based economies.⁸⁰

For Du Bois, according to Kyle T. Mays, “the ‘Negro problem’ was actually an American problem rooted in white supremacy. The ‘Negro problem’ was neocolonialism.”⁸¹ Referring to Jim Crow and the legal, social, political, and economic oppression of black people in the US, Mays argues that Du Bois’s activism against white

80. Shohat, Ella and Robert Stam, “Whence and Whither Postcolonial Theory?” *New Literary History* 43. (2012): 372-373.

81. Mays, “Transnational Progressivism,” 256.

supremacy was a fight against racial colonialism. Mays makes colonialism a metaphor for racism. Although parallels exist between racism and colonialism and the two often reinforce one another, they are not equivalent. As Chickasaw scholar Jodi Byrd, Kanaka Maoli scholar J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, and other Indigenous scholars have argued for years, making a metaphor of colonialism erodes the particulars of what it means to live as a colonized subject. The practice mutes and even erases territoriality as a central concern for such populations. In the words of Jodi Byrd:

But the larger concern is that this conflation masks the territoriality of conquest by assigning colonization to the racialized body, which is then policed in its degrees from whiteness. Under this paradigm, American Indian national assertions of sovereignty, self-determination, and land rights disappear into U.S. territoriality as indigenous identity becomes a racial identity and citizens of colonized indigenous nations become internal ethnic minorities within the colonizing nation-state.⁸²

The goal of most anti-racist activism is usually more social inclusion. This is rarely the main objective for colonized peoples who are also fighting for sovereignty and land rights. As an anti-assimilationist, Du Bois campaigned for black self-sufficiency not sovereignty.⁸³ To use anticolonialism as a metaphor for Du Bois's activism on behalf of African Americans is to overwrite indigenous issues. The metaphor reinforces the invisibility of indigeneity, which further entrenches colonial control of the US's invisible Indians.

82. Byrd, *Transit*, xxiii-xxiv.

83. Green and Driver, 21.

Moreover, the metaphor is unnecessary. As a chief organizer of the First Modern Pan-African Conference in Paris in 1919 and as a participant organizer of the Second Pan-African Conference in 1921, Du Bois was in fact a transnational anticolonial activist. Throughout his life, he fought against neocolonial incursions of the Western world on the African continent.⁸⁴ He was also actively involved in American Indian issues. As Mays points out, Du Bois's activism was "distinctly transnational."⁸⁵ I would argue American Indian nations comprised part of that transnational outlook. Du Bois was even an associate member of the Society of American Indians (SAI), a role given to people "of non-Indian blood interested in Indian welfare."⁸⁶

American Indian nations have a place in Du Bois's international anticolonial activism. His article "The Future of the Negro Race in America," for example, examines the global oppression of people of color and the linked systems of thought that justify manifest destiny, social Darwinism, American racism, and American imperialism:

[I]t must be confessed by all honest men that a theory of human civilization which stands sponsor for the enormities committed by European civilization on *native races* is an outrage and a lie. But do the theories of Darwin and Spencer, properly interpreted, support any crude views of justice and right and the spread of civilization as those current to-day? It may be safely answered they do not. Ignorant and selfish

84. Green and Driver., 23.

85. Mays, "Transnational Progressivism," 249.

86. Society of American Indians, *Constitution and By-Laws: The Society of American Indians*, Lawrence ks revision (Washington dc, 1916), 4. Edward E. Ayer Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois.

interpretation of great sociological laws must not any longer be allowed to obscure and degrade those laws.⁸⁷

“Native races” are integral to Du Bois’s color line. In fact, he locates modern black disenfranchisement within the decade the US surged forth as a global imperial power. He marks 1890, not 1896, as the year in which modern black oppressions began.⁸⁸ The groundwork for the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision was laid within historical episodes like the 1890 Massacre at Wounded Knee and the 1892 quadricentennial celebration of Columbus as an imperial hero. In other words, twentieth-century black oppression had roots within the cultural currents of a country celebrating its potential to take its Indian cavalry and rule over the world’s “barbarian” races. Du Bois was attuned to the ways racism and colonialism support and reinforce one another. Through the erasure of indigenous histories, US imperialism could be recast from brutal conquest to benign progress.

In *Souls*, importantly, Indians have not vanished; they have been forcibly removed. Du Bois writes: “This that we pass as we near Atlanta is the ancient land of the Cherokees,—that brave Indian nation which strove so long for its fatherland, until Fate and the United States Government drove them beyond the Mississippi. If you wish to ride with me you must come into the ‘Jim Crow Car’” (286). In 1893, a full decade before Du Bois published *Souls of Black Folk*, Indians were described at the world’s fair in Chicago as nearly extinct: “These peoples, as great nations, have about vanished into history, and

87. W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Future of the Negro Race in America,” *The East and the West* 2, no. 5 (1904): 11, paragraph break condensed, emphasis added.

88. Here I borrow Mays’ reading of Du Bois’s evolution in thought from Mays, “Transnational Progressivism,” 257.

now is the last opportunity for the world to see them and to realize what their condition, their life, their customs, their arts were four centuries ago.”⁸⁹ Said to represent life as it was “four centuries ago,” these unnamed and undistinguished peoples and nations were thought to have no place in modern times. As a matter of course, they vanish “into history.” The verb “vanish” not only euphemistically renames murder, removal, starvation, and exposure; the passivity of the verb also removes all culpability.

In contrast, Du Bois names the agent driving Indians from their land. Removal was the conscious choice of a government that also systematically excludes, disenfranchises, and under-educates another population through Jim Crow laws. From the Jim Crow car, readers are prompted to reflect, briefly, on the land of the Cherokees and the government that stole it. Although they have been removed, they have not vanished. They still live beyond the Mississippi.

The train moves on, and although the chapter touches only intermittently on Indigenous peoples and issues, even these brief instances become laden with meaning through Du Bois’s stark juxtapositions and conscious word choice. In a similar moment, as the train passes through Northern Georgia, Du Bois reports: “This is the land of the Creek Indians; and a hard time the Georgians had to seize it” (286). The land is – not was – that of the Creek. Moreover, the Creek and the Cherokee are not ‘Indians;’ they are individual nations with distinct histories based in specific places. Although brief, this

89. Qtd. in Curtis M. Hinsley, ‘The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893,’ in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 347. See also Huhndorf, *Going Native*, 40.

moment exists, as I argue throughout this chapter, because it is impossible to meditate on any American social or political issue without evoking the real or fabricated Indian.

Souls is not devoted to the study of American Indian issues, but it does call attention to the connection between the colonial exploitation of Indigenous peoples and the racial oppression of African American citizens, even if only in glimpses and traces. For Du Bois, “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line —the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea” (221). The color line connects American racism to US and European imperialism abroad. Rephrasing this same sentiment, Du Bois writes, “Indeed, the characteristic of our age is the contact of European civilization with the world’s undeveloped peoples” (320). These “undeveloped peoples” do not serve the same function as those of Booker T. Washington’s arguments. For Du Bois, this contact was characterized not by the civilizing process, but by “[w]ar, murder, slavery, extermination, and debauchery” (320). He writes:

Nor does it altogether satisfy the conscience of the modern world to be told complacently that all this has been right and proper, the fated triumph of strength over weakness, of righteousness over evil, of superiors over inferiors. It would certainly be soothing if one could readily believe all this; and yet there are too many ugly facts for everything to be thus easily explained away. We feel and know that there are many delicate differences in race psychology, numberless changes that our crude social measurements are not yet able to follow minutely, which explain much of history and social development. At the same time, too, we know that these

considerations have never adequately explained or excused the triumph of brute force and cunning over weakness and innocence (320-21).

Du Bois exposes the exploitation and destruction of the world's "undeveloped peoples," establishing a counternarrative that they are not destined for assimilation or annihilation. It may be soothing to believe fate is responsible for social ills, he writes, but "Fate and the United States government" appear to work in concert (286).

The challenge to social Darwinism reciprocates the challenge to imperialism. But because the text remains focused on the US, it is both surprising and unsurprising that American colonialism and imperialism are not more directly called into question. Traces of Indianness form a connective tissue between these international systems of oppression. However, because American Indian characters and narratives never make it to the page, American colonialism remains a mostly muted issue. Indians have been removed from their land in *Souls*, but not from the analysis. Their physical removal does not mean they can be ignored in examinations of the systemic oppressions that structure US racial and international relations. Du Bois calls upon readers to recognize the interchange between prejudice and social condition. The one reinforces and recreates the other. "It is not enough," he writes, "for the Negroes to declare that color-prejudice is the sole cause of their social condition, nor for the white South to reply that their social condition is the main cause of prejudice. They both act as reciprocal cause and effect, and a change in neither alone will bring the desired effect" (336). The reciprocal cause and effect of American colonialism and American racism mean that, in these too, a change in neither alone would bring about the desired effect.

Du Bois concludes *The Souls of Black Folk* with a meditation on the global disparities between peoples, the “deeds of men” that created these disparities, and the “arrogance” that leads privileged groups to forget this history (386). The arrogance of imperialism rationalized through scientific racism and the civilizing mission is the arrogance of white supremacy in the US. “Your country?” he asks, “How came it yours?” (387). Stolen black labor, black cultures, and black spirit made this country what it is, a sentiment Toni Morrison would reiterate decades later in her seminal work *Playing in the Dark*. At the end of his text, Du Bois asks, “Would America have been America without her Negro people?” (387). Without stolen labor, white Americans would not hold financial, social, and political dominance. Without stolen nations, white America would not exist at all. Indian issues are not just racial issues, though scientific racism does promote imperialism. Racism, imperialism, and settler colonialism share reciprocal cause and effect. Dismantling American racism, even within the context of its connections to global imperialism, will not dismantle the colonial crises faced by American indigenes.

Du Bois’s early scientific investigations were driven in part by a desire to upend America’s race problem by resolving its ignorance problem. Commenting on the evolution of Du Bois’s thinking, Green and Driver argue that in the first few years of the twentieth century Du Bois came to conclude: “The problems were not, as he had initially and idealistically assumed, those of ignorance, but were instead based on the conscious determination of one group to suppress and persecute another.”⁹⁰ Returning to Du Bois’s writing itself, I argue that Du Bois came to a very different conclusion. He wrote, for example, “Not simply knowledge, not simply direct repression of evil, will reform the

90. Green and Driver, 19.

world. In long, indirect pressure and action of various and intricate sorts, *the actions of men which are not due to lack of knowledge nor to evil intent, must be changed by influencing folkways, habits, customs, and subconscious deeds.*”⁹¹ Racism does not result solely from ignorance, but Du Bois did not argue, as Green and Driver contend, that racism proceeds from the “conscious determination of one group to suppress and persecute another.” Rather, he argues that racism permeates American culture. It is unconsciously reiterated and reinforced in the habits, customs, and folkways of the American people. To deconstruct American racism, activists must influence American culture in general. They must navigate the subtle ways and silent modes Americans communicate with one another and reinforce racism. As an activist who campaigned internationally against colonialism and who worked on behalf of Indigenous people as an associate member of SAI, Du Bois could certainly have written about American Indian issues exclusively in a realistic and historical register. Instead, he engaged both American Indians and the invented Indian in his work. In this way he could influence the folkways, habits, and customs of a people for whom Indians were a self-reflexive, symbolic means of understanding themselves.

2. Influencing the Folkways of a People

Although several organizations were, or purported to be, ‘friends of the Indian,’ SAI was the first pan-Indian political association directed entirely by American Indians. The organization therefore held special significance in the ethnocidal Assimilation Era. SAI’s many political pursuits included championing the causes of American Indian

91. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (New York: Schocken, 1940, 1968), 222, emphasis added.

sovereignty and self-determination; battling growing land losses caused by the General Allotment Act; improving the standard of living on reservations; and protecting Indigenous peoples from the deliberate neglect, corruption, and engineered resource starvation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Yankton Dakota writer and activist Zitkala-Ša,⁹² Red Bird, served as the secretary and treasurer for SAI, and for two years, from 1918-1919, she served as an editor and contributor for the organization's publication, *American Indian Magazine*. Recently called "one of the leading figures in the Pan-Indian movement,"⁹³ in the 1916 issue of *American Indian Magazine*, Zitkala-Ša was described as a woman who lived for one ideal: "the complete liberty of her race."⁹⁴

In her many roles – as activist, editor, public speaker, researcher, educational reformist, and writer (of both fiction and nonfiction) – Zitkala-Ša fought assimilation. Assimilation policies and programs were designed by the US government and 'friends of the Indian' to dissolve Indigenous self-determination. Her life's work took many forms, each forming a branch of her anticolonial activism. As an American Indian herself, Zitkala-Ša understood firsthand the deadly capacity of the invented Indian to disempower Indigenous people. Like all postcolonial authors, Zitkala-Ša had to contend with these

92. She is also called Gertrude Simmons Bonnin. In 1901, Zitkala-Ša renamed herself. I call her by the name she created for herself, which was also her penname. For Zitkala-Ša's account of renaming herself, see Dexter Fisher, "Zitkala-Sa: The Evolution of a Writer." *American Indian Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (1979): 231. Fisher writes, "In creating her own name and essentially her own oral history, Zitkala Sa is asserting at one and the same time her independence and her cultural ties."

93. David L. Johnson and Raymond Wilson, "Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, 1876-1938: 'Americanize the First American,'" *American Indian Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (Winter, 1988): 27.

94. Qtd. in Davidson and Norris, xxvi.

toxic colonial fictions. Her first book, *Old Indian Legends*, complicates the Indianness rippling consciously and unconsciously through the rest of American society. The Indianness in her legends advances a radical anticolonial critique of white supremacy and Indigenous desolation.

Scholarship on Zitkala-Ša's writing and activism constitutes an established and growing field.⁹⁵ Zitkala-Ša's career as a champion of American Indian rights, lifeways, and livelihoods is once again presented here, but this chapter focuses on the anticolonial elements of her children's stories. Du Bois argued that the actions of men must be changed by influencing their folkways, and folktales.⁹⁶ Zitkala-Ša's legends do precisely that.

Sakimay Metis scholar Janice Acoose (Misko-Kisikawihkwe) describes the ideological power of children's literature. Of her experience of the residential school system, she writes:

I also wasn't aware how those seemingly innocent stories from our primary readers about Dick, Jane, Spot, and Puff served an ideological system much different than my own. As I grew older, however, I began to wonder why I could never find reflections of my own wonderfully alive and continually busy home life in those early books used in school. ...Nor

95. See Dexter Fisher, "Zitkala-Sa: The Evolution of a Writer," *American Indian Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (1979): 229-238; P. Jane Hafen, "Zitkala-Ša: Sentimentality and Sovereignty," *Wacazo Sa Review* 12, no. 2 (1997): 31-41; Tadeusz Lewandowski, *Red Bird, Red Power: The Life and Legacy of Zitkala-Ša* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016); Patricia Okker, "Native American Literatures and the Canon: The Case of Zitkala-Sa," in *American Realism and the Canon*, Tom Quirk and Gary Scharnhorst, eds. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994) 87-101.

96. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 222.

did I find examples in school books of the joyously uninhibited, resourceful, adaptable, energetic, beautiful brown-skinned women who taught me about life in the privacy of our communities and home. Instead, I was introduced to and encouraged to be like the quietly reserved, pleasantly passive, and submissive ladies who so frequently appeared in the books I studied in school.⁹⁷

As a child, she explains, she was unable to resist indoctrination into a cultural system that denigrated indigeneity. Zitkala-Ša's legends were written to share stories with American Indian children who were still indoctrinated daily in residential schools around the US. Her stories offer messages of hope, resistance, and cultural pride.

In a legend titled “The Badger and the Bear,” a family of bears ousts a badger family from their home. The story is a clear allegory of the colonization of America, with the badgers representing the original inhabitants and the bears the exploitative usurpers. As invaders, each bear represents Euro-America, except one. He is brought there by the other bears and has “kinky wool,” a detail that distinguishes him as a representative African American. He has more empathy than the other bears. When one badger asks for mercy and compassion, the father bear literally kicks the badger out of the den:

All the little ruffian bears hooted and shouted “ha-ha!” to see the beggar fall upon his face. There was one, however, who did not even smile.

...[His fur] looked much more like kinky wool. He was the ugly cub. Poor little baby bear! he had always been laughed at by his older brothers. He

97. Janice Acoose (Misko-Kisikawihkwe, Red Sky Woman), *Iskwewak – Kah' Ki Yaw Ni Wahkomakanak: Neither Indian Princesses Nor Easy Squaws* (Canada: Women's Press, 1995) 27-28.

could not help being himself. He could not change the differences between himself and his brothers. Thus again, though the rest laughed aloud at the badger's fall, he did not see the joke. His face was long and earnest. In his heart he was sad to see the badgers crying and starving. In his breast spread a burning desire to share his food with them.⁹⁸

Because the bear is valued less by those in power, he has the ability to feel compassion in a way the other bears cannot. His burning desire to share his food – to save the badgers from starvation and removal – communicates a longing for people of color to work as allies against white supremacy. At first glance, this Dakota legend seems to offer children the same ahistorical vision Pauline Hopkins offers in *Winona*: the dream of innate solidarity among American people of color. Indeed, Zitkala-Ša creates a character as based in stereotyped visions of black identity as Hopkins' Indians were, to make a similar point.

Although their activist efforts generally did not intersect, turn-of-the-century Native and African American activists did ally with each other on certain fronts. Often these alliances included, as one historian explains, a “common stance against colonialism.”⁹⁹ Until this moment, the story does present an idealized dream of what racial solidarity could produce if African and Native Americans could extricate their internalized racism. The story speaks to the hope of compassion, resistance, and survival.

98. Zitkala-Ša, *Old Indian Legends*, reprinted in *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2003), 30. All future quotes in this section will be cited in text.

99. Mays, 243.

The legend's political message does not end there, however. Moving beyond racial solidarity and antiracist work, the legend ends on an anticolonial vision.

Blood drips from the buffalo meat stolen by the bears and from the blood springs a Dakota warrior. The warrior, shocked by the injustice the badgers have endured, demands that everything taken from the badgers be returned to them. The bears, in fear of the warrior, "disappeared" into the forest, and "singing and laughing, the badgers returned to their own dwelling," in a resolution that significantly parallels that of the Ghost Dance (32). A peaceful religious movement that swept through numerous Indigenous cultures between 1889 and 1890, the Ghost Dance religion promised the expulsion of Euro-Americans and the return of the buffalo, American Indian lands, and lost Indigenous lives. The movement was therefore overtly anticolonial. The US government, seeing this transnational, pan-Indian movement as a potential political threat, outlawed the dance and murdered the Hunkpapa Lakota holy leader, Sitting Bull. Just two weeks after the assassination, on 28 December 1890, the US army murdered three hundred Lakota men, women, and children on the Lakota Pine Ridge Indian reservation.

Zitkala-Ša was conscious at both the personal and community level of the massacre at Wounded Knee. Although she attended Indian boarding school, she was home at the Yankton reservation when the Lakota were massacred, and she began writing soon after. Nevertheless, her writing displays a reticence about Wounded Knee and the assassination of Sitting Bull. Cathy Davis and Ada Norris write that Zitkala-Ša's silence leads to an "elliptical political commentary," which "makes for haunting and powerful

literature.”¹⁰⁰ The haunting of this colonial act of genocide is closest to the surface, I argue, in Zitkala-Ša’s legends. *Old Indian Legends*, published just eleven years after the massacre, carries on the living ghost of the Ghost Dance. In “The Badger and the Bear,” the colonizer is expelled and the homeland is returned. The story ends, “‘I go,’ said [the avenger] in parting, ‘over the earth’” (32). In this legend, the prophecies of the Ghost Dance are fulfilled. The avenger liberates the colonized from their oppressors, and continues onward to perform the same work all over the world.

3. American Indian Legends for Dakota, Pan-Indian, and White Audiences

Legends are meant to teach children about themselves and their heritage. In the genocidal climate of the US, stories of Indigenous cultural continuity are radical political statements about American Indian survivance, a term coined by Gerald Vizenor to celebrate survival and resistance.¹⁰¹ With the 1890 Massacre at Wounded Knee came the close of the frontier in the American cultural imaginary, and with that, the final vanishing of the Indian. The ‘vanishing Indian’ trope had been present in Euro-American literature for nearly a century, a grim literary manifestation of the Euro-American cultural desire for the ‘Indian problem’ to solve itself. The vanishing Indian permeated of all American culture, making its way up into the legal sphere and down into everyday exchanges. At Zitkala-Ša’s memorial service in 1938, John Collier, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, called Zitkala-Ša the “last of the great Indian Orators.”¹⁰² Whether it is the last of the Mohicans in a James Fenimore Cooper novel or

100. Davidson and Norris, xii, xxxiii.

101. See Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners*.

the last of the great Indian Orators, Indians were, for white Americans, unquestionably on their way out. This was particularly true after 1890, when Indigenous peoples, so closely associated with the American landscape, were believed to have finally been conquered because the frontier was conquered. As Gerald Vizenor insists, American Indian authors resist such toxic racial myths when they write their presence back into the American literary, cultural, and territorial landscape.¹⁰³

Zitkala-Ša consciously writes back to the colonial narrative of Indigenous desolation. Her legends also take part in a Native storytelling tradition, in which stories inform, strengthen, and create life and well-being for Indian listeners and readers. In *Ceremony*, Leslie Marmon Silko writes of stories: “They aren’t just entertainment. / Don’t be fooled. / They are all we have, you see, / all we have to fight off illness and death.”¹⁰⁴ Stories are an integral part of survival, and as Gerald Vizenor explains, stories are “more than survival, more than endurance.”¹⁰⁵ N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa) similarly states, “we imagine ourselves, we create ourselves, we touch ourselves into being with words,” because “Language is a way of life...by language we create knowledge.”¹⁰⁶ For Zitkala-Ša, recording Dakota legends served precisely these purposes for Dakota readers. The stories resisted ethnocide by nurturing and affirming Dakota identity in the assimilation era. Her intended audience was not the Dakota alone. She wrote for the

102. Qtd. in Davidson and Norris, xxviii-xxix.

103. Vizenor, *Manifest Manners*, 4-5.

104. Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 2.

105. Vizenor, *Fugitive*, 15.

106. Qtd. in Laura Coltelli, *Winged Words: American Indian Writers Speak*. (USA: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 2.

Dakota, white Americans, and American Indian audiences of every nation. In recognition of the political value of pan-Indian coalition building, the Dakota legends also affirmed the value and survivance of all American Indian identities. Like Booker T. Washington, Zitkala-Ša mediates the expectations of diverse audiences, but she does so to very different effect. Rather than prioritize the needs of white audiences, her rhetorical choices instead include these audiences only to immediately challenge their assumptions.

The preface begins, “These legends are relics of our country’s once virgin soil,” which appears to corroborate the myth of the vanished Indian (5). The word “relics” likely attracted turn-of-the-century Euro-American audiences, who were interested in Indian stories and objects, which they considered the heritage of the United States. As Yael Ben-zvi argues, early twentieth-century Euro-Americans believed “U.S. culture is nourished by consuming Native American cultures.”¹⁰⁷ As a result, Zitkala-Ša’s writing did enjoy wide non-Indian readership. In the preface, these relics are soon revived, however. Neither the remains of dead cultures nor the patrimony of the United States, these relics instead refer to stories that have survived colonization. Zitkala-Ša writes of the living stories, “And now I have tried to transplant the native spirit of these tales – root and all – into the English language, since America in the last few centuries has acquired a second tongue” (5).

As a second tongue, the English language has not supplanted indigenous languages. In the assimilation era, Euro-Americans tended to see American Indians’ use of English as recognition of Euro-American cultural superiority, Zitkala-Ša emphasizes

107. Yael Ben-zvi, “Where Did Red Go?: Lewis Henry Morgan’s Evolutionary Inheritance and U.S. Racial Imagination.” *The New Centennial Review* 7, no. 2 (2007): 203.

that using English does not mean an end to Indigenous cultural continuity. It means, as Native American studies scholar Laura Coltelli writes, “that yet another language has been acquired by a people who were multilingual before European colonization.”¹⁰⁸ Throughout the legends, Zitkala-Ša employs the living Nakota language, building it into characters’ dialogue. She writes, for instance, “‘Ištokmus wacipo, tuwayatunwanpi kinhan išta nišašapi kta,’ which is ‘With eyes closed you must dance. He who dares to open his eyes, forever red eyes shall have’” (9). Translation allows the two languages to live alongside one another. The spirit of these tales lives within the Nakota language; the stories can be translated into English, but the Nakota language will not disappear. This point is especially powerful considering Zitkala-Ša herself was a survivor of the violently monolingual Indian boarding school system, which brutalized Native children for speaking their own languages.

In her semi-autobiographical narrative *American Indian Stories*, Zitkala-Ša gives an account of her boarding school experience. In the biting humor of her characteristic style, she titles the chapter “Why I Am a Pagan.” When the story was first published on its own, Zitkala-Ša wrote in a letter to her fiancé: “By the way, the *Atlantic Monthly* has just accepted a little scribble of mine – ‘Why I Am a Pagan.’ I imagine Carlisle will rear up on its haunches at the sight of this little sky rocket! ha ha!”¹⁰⁹ Zitkala-Ša laughs at her own trickster humor that defies annihilation through assimilation. The title of the story officially rejects the Carlisle Indian boarding school mission to “Kill the Indian.” Despite

108. Coltelli, *Winged Words*, 3.

109. Zitkala-Ša to Montezuma, May 1, 1902. Montezuma, Carlos, Papers. Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

all the assimilative efforts to teach, separate, and beat the Indian out of American Indian children, Zitkala-Ša reasserts that same Indianness which schools like Carlisle tried to destroy. Although the damage done by these schools has been long lasting and severe, Indian boarding schools also inadvertently created some of the most productive spaces for generating pan-Indian activism. Zitkala-Ša's stories reflect efforts to reclaim Indianness as a transnational political identity. The Indian is not permitted to stand as a tool for white supremacy and empire. As a strategic coalition, Indianness, in her work, illustrates a life-sustaining and radical resistance against settler colonialism.

In her preface, Zitkala-Ša writes that “The old legends of America belong quite as much to the blue-eyed little patriot as to the black-haired aborigine” (5). Her silence toward non-white and non-Indian readers is noteworthy, especially in the context of this chapter. We cannot know whether the omission is intentional (though it echoes the “underscored omissions” of black people, ideas, and culture Morrison writes about in *Playing in the Dark*).¹¹⁰ Zitkala-Ša's mention of these two audiences reflects her effort to influence both the victims and perpetrators of myths of Indianness.

Because the intended audience includes the “black-haired aborigine,” these relics serve the purposes of American Indian stories: to fight off illness and death, and touch American Indian readers into being with words. As such, the first sentence of Zitkala-Ša's preface carries a different meaning than white readers might expect. It is not the word “relics” but rather the word “are” that matters. These legends are part of the present survivance of Indigenous peoples. The sentence asserts cultural continuity with the precolonial past, just as the use of the Nakota language asserts continuity through the

110. Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, 6.

disruptive settler colonial present. These stories teach Dakota people about their Dakota heritage. Boarding school did not kill the Indian. Zitkala-Ša laughs, “ha ha!,” in her letter, in the title “Why I Am a Pagan,” and throughout her writing. America’s first peoples survive.

For Zitkala-Ša, Indian legends serve the political purpose of educating audiences about Indian humanity. When she asserts that the “blue-eyed little patriot” and the “black-haired aborigine” are the book’s intended audiences, she voices an entreaty that both the creators and the targets of invented Indianness will not forget what they learn within these pages. In the introduction to the legends, she writes:

The old legends of America belong quite as much to the blue-eyed little patriot as to the black-haired aborigine. And when they are grown tall like the wise grown-ups may they not lack interest in a further study of Indian folklore, a study which so strongly suggests our near kinship with the rest of humanity and points a steady finger toward the great brotherhood of mankind, and by which one is so forcibly impressed with the possible earnestness of life as seen through the teepee door! (5-6).

The indefinite “they” leaves Zitkala-Ša’s appeal open to both white and Indian readers. When white and Indian children are grown, she hopes they each continue their study of Indian folklore. The message to Indian readers is clear: that they not fall prey to internalizing narratives of their inhumanity. Their study of Indian stories is part of their survivance. The appeal to white readers is complex. White people must take an interest in Indian cultures to learn that Native people are humans just like themselves; however, the act of study itself reveals white people’s own humanity. The study – the interest in

Indigenous lives – “points a steady finger toward the great brotherhood of mankind,” in a way that the genocidal investment in Indian assimilation or vanishing cannot. White Americans’ own humanity is at stake. If the Indian vanishes so too will white Americans’ “kinship with the rest of humanity.”

Zitkala-Ša understood the climate in which she wrote. Her legends were published in *Atlantic Monthly*, alongside Mary Johnson’s serialized novel *To Have and to Hold*, a book that promoted all the standard racist fictions about savage Indians.¹¹¹ Describing these legends as “relics” in the first line seems to lay to rest the potential political threat that living Indians pose to the status quo. Nevertheless, the legends are bursting with commentary on contemporary political crises, including land appropriation, the assimilative school system, and settler colonial encroachment on Native sovereignty. These commentaries center Native American history and move the people’s political and social struggles from margin to center. Publishing in English in a magazine for a general audience – including white middle-class literati – allowed Zitkala-Ša to render these invisible political battles visible. Oral stories are stories in motion. They change with the seasons and generations. The details matter less than what happens and what it means. Thus, arrows can change to bullets, trains to cars, and the literature will still carry its meaning.¹¹²

111. For more on this see Patricia Okker, “Native American Literatures and the Canon: The Case of Zitkala-Sa.” In *American Realism and the Canon*, Tom Quirk and Gary Scharnhorst, eds. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994), 87-101.

112. See Gerald Vizenor, introduction to *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures* (USA: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993).

The changes Zitkala-Ša makes to the legends to address the political climate at the turn of the century were meant to educate white audiences, but such changes do not reflect any pandering to her white readership. Significant alterations are an important element of the oral storytelling tradition. Although her political messages are meant for all readers, her wry style defamiliarizes white culture, forcing Euro-American readers to question their norms and privileges. Zitkala-Ša thrusts a new type of Indianness on a readership primed for stereotypes.

One urgent political message conveyed in the legends deals with Indian dancing, and again, therefore, the Ghost Dance. In a legend titled “Dance in a Buffalo Skull,” a colony of mice dance under the cover of night inside an old buffalo skull. Slowly over the course of the story a creature with two fiery eyes stalks toward them in the night. Heedless of the warnings of wolves and birds who see the danger in the mice’s actions, the dancers continue to dance. When the glowing eyes appear within the sockets of the buffalo skull, the mice cry “Spirit of the buffalo!” and “A cat! a cat!” before scampering into the night (46).

This portrayal of dance is significant in part because when the legend was published in 1901, Native American dance and the practice of Native American religions were illegal. In 1883, the year Sarah Winnemucca published her autobiography,¹¹³ the Secretary of the Interior asked the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and the US Congress to compel Native peoples to “abandon this deception and discontinue their practices, which are not only without benefit to the Indians but positively injurious to them.”

113. See Chapter 1.

Dances and feasts were, according to the Secretary, “calculated” by the Indians to impede civilization. He writes:

I desire to call your attention to what I regard as a great hindrance to the civilization of the Indians, viz, the continuance of the old heathenish dances, such as the sun-dance, scalp-dance, etc. These dances, or feasts, as they are sometimes called, ought, in my judgment, to be discontinued, and if the Indians now supported by the Government are not willing to discontinue them, the agents should be instructed to compel such discontinuance. These feasts or dances are not social gatherings for the amusement of these people, but, on the contrary, are intended and calculated to stimulate the warlike passions of the young warriors of the tribe.¹¹⁴

Dances – in fact, any substantial gathering of Native peoples – were considered political threats to American empire. Native peoples’ political power had already been curbed through their incarceration on reservations. Until 1924, they were required to obtain special passes from the Bureau of Indian Affairs granting them the right even to leave a reservation. The reservation system created separate, resource-starved spaces, marked by sadistic agents, malnutrition, and the rank hypocrisy of reservation welfare programs (which were ethnocidal in the short term and genocidal in the long term). Because invented Indians were ‘vanishing’ anyway, reservations were not designed to help people survive in the long term.

114. Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, November 1, 1883.

Étienne Balibar writes that communities have historically “*excluded by including* and ultimately by *enclosing* in ‘domestic’ space the women, children, and slaves who, to different degrees, were rejected from the space of equality.”¹¹⁵ Through exclusion and enclosure, reservations are designed to control people. They are not the only spaces that do this work. In prisons, schools, and domestic spaces, exclusion and enclosure either help mold people into proper citizens or separate them from the imagined community of the nation. In this way, the community of the nation can be defined by who has access to public free spaces.

Robert Yellowtail (Crow) said to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs in 1919, “It is peculiar and strange to me [that]...you have not...one law that permits us to think free, act free, expand free, and to decide free without first having to go and ask...the Secretary of the Interior.”¹¹⁶ The enclosed space of the reservations was intended to curtail Indigenous people’s freedoms and ultimately to terminate the freedom to be Indian. Three years after the US government outlawed the practice of Indian religions, it instituted the General Allotment Act of 1887, which broke up communal land holdings, reduced American Indian land holdings by fifty percent, and mired people in poverty. In the 1901 State of the Union address, President Theodore Roosevelt lauded these results: “The General Allotment Act is a mighty pulverizing engine to break up the tribal mass.”¹¹⁷ Through the clichéd imagery of a modern US machine surpassing its primitive

115. Étienne Balibar, *We, the People of Europe?: Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*. Trans. James Swenson (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2004), 68.

116. Robert Yellowtail (Crow) to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, 1919. Nation to Nation Exhibit at the National Museum of the American Indian.

Indian past, Roosevelt celebrates efforts to dismantle Indigenous nations and organizations. Assembly meant the threat of collective organizing. The state saw dances not as “social gatherings” or “amusement,” but as rebellious acts “intended and calculated” as the Secretary of the Interior wrote, “to stimulate ... warlike passions.” The idea of Indianness was beloved, and Indian metaphors proliferated throughout US literature and other cultural products, but the real people displaced by the metaphor remained under attack.

Although it was illegal to travel, pray, dance, or congregate in large numbers, Zitkala-Ša’s mice – also referred to as “night people” – dance, feast, and drum anyway. It would be another thirty-three years after the legend’s publication before the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 made the open performance of Indian dance legal again, and it was not until 1978 that the Congressional American Indian Religious Freedom Act was enacted to protect basic civil liberties and allow the open practice of the Sun Dance. Indian dance in any form remained illegal for ten years after Native Americans were purportedly granted the rights of full citizenship. Under the veil of night, the mice dance, in a performance and narrative of radical resistance. The night people’s culture will not be pulverized by the mighty engine of the US government.

This message of resistance, which depicts a living, dancing Dakota culture, is further emphasized by the buffalo skull in which the night people dance. The buffalo is at the heart of Plains Indian cultures. The people are connected to this animal, which provided everything they needed from shelter to food, weapons, clothing, and

117. President Theodore Roosevelt, State of the Union Address, 3 December 1901. Reprinted in Fred L. Israel, ed., *The State of the Union Addresses of the Presidents, 1790-1966* (New York: Chelsea House, 1966).

sovereignty. Adrian Jawort (Cheyenne) explains, “As long as the North American buffalo roamed free and bountiful, the Plains Indians were able to remain sovereign.”¹¹⁸ The buffalo skull in the legend provides a shelter in which to dance and thus the freedom to resist ethnocidal laws. The sovereignty that the buffalo offered Plains peoples is evoked and amplified by the freedom stolen back through the dancing. The cry of “Spirit of the buffalo!” when the cat appears conjures up images of the Ghost Dance, which promised to bring the return of the buffalo. The dance moves beyond rebelliousness to an expressly anticolonial act. Although this act is halted by an oppressive force, the mice escape and live to resist for another day.

Under the threat of imprisonment and the strain of ethnocidal policies, the night people dance on.¹¹⁹ As a political activist and writer, Zitkala-Ša advocated for Indian dance, particularly the Sun Dance, on behalf of Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota practitioners. The Sun Dance was banned on the Pine Ridge Reservation in 1881, but its practice continued underground until it was again made legal. As part of her literary activism, Zitkala-Ša wrote an opera titled *The Sun Dance* to garner understanding and respect for this ritual among the opera’s mostly white audiences. The opera received rave reviews even while the Sun Dance remained illegal, and eventually her opera opened on the New

118. Adrian Jawort, “Genocide by Other Means: U.S. Army Slaughtered Buffalo in Plains Indian Wars.” *Indian Country Today*. Indian Country Today Media Network. 5 May, 2011.

119. In 1892, Congress passed new regulations threatening imprisonment to any person caught advocating, performing, or taking part in religious Indian ceremonies, dances, or beliefs.

York stage.¹²⁰ Through her stories, legends, opera, and legal activism, Zitkala-Ša worked to present a different version of Indianness to Indian and non-Indian audiences alike. Her legends celebrate radical anticolonial resistance through cultural continuity located within a specific culture in a specific space. When the Secretary of the Interior wrote, “It will be extremely difficult to accomplish much towards the civilization of the Indians while these adverse influences [i.e. Indian cultures] are allowed to exist,” he was right in one regard, one that roused Zitkala-Ša to action. Through cultural continuity, the ethnocide of the Indians – euphemistically and falsely renamed their ‘civilization’ – would never be accomplished.

III. Conclusion

“The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line,” Du Bois famously asserted in 1903. His prescience is undeniable, and his legacy long-lasting. Building on Du Bois’s formula nearly a century later, American literary and cultural scholars like Eric Sundquist continue to analyze America’s “biracial culture.”¹²¹ Although the color line has been complicated by the addition of other races over the years, it remains a prevailing paradigm. However, the legacy of Du Bois’s work has been only partially inherited. Many have forgotten that for Du Bois, the problems of the twentieth century were also European and American imperialism. Although Du Bois

120. Davidson and Norris, xx-xxi, xxxv.

121. Eric Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993), 9. Sundquist opens his book with a reading of Du Bois’s *Souls of Black Folk*, which, he says, suggests the dialectic between white and black cultures that has given rise to American national literature: “my argument moves back and forth – alternates, so to speak – between black and white texts in order to suggest that neither perspective is by itself adequate to account for the ongoing crisis over race in American cultural and political life” (Sundquist 7).

spent years as writing and working as an active anticolonialist, the elements of his work that criticize the colonization of American Indian territory have been largely overlooked.

Recently, postcolonial theorists and American studies scholars alike have called for more inter-ethnic comparisons.¹²² Most studies have focused on white appropriation of minority cultures. It is worth asking what happens when people of color write about one another. It is worth exploring, in the words of Toni Morrison, the “sometimes allegorical, sometimes metaphorical, but always choked representation” of each American population in the eyes of the others.¹²³ Such moments offer the potential for coalition, conflict, and disruption.

I have argued that the tradition of using Indians as a metaphor underscores the subtle ways in which authors of all backgrounds can participate in maintaining structures of power. Even literature written to disrupt the color line and to fight for African American rights can inadvertently defend white hegemony, if it uses the nation’s defining colonial myth. James Weldon Johnson, Pauline Hopkins, and Booker T. Washington each take up the common metaphor, and the efficacy of each argument deteriorates as a result.

Challenges to systemic oppressions that do not deal with the earliest form of such oppression in the US, namely settler colonialism, cannot fully dismantle US structures of power. In her book of Indigenous critical theory, Jodi Byrd writes, “the cacophony produced through U.S. colonialism and imperialism domestically and abroad often

122. The Midwest Modern Language Association has recently set aside a special issue of their journal for this very topic. See also Haggis, Jane. “White Women and Colonialism,” in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (New York: Routledge, 2003).

123. Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, 17.

coerces struggles for social justice for queers, racial minorities, and immigrants into complicity with settler colonialism.”¹²⁴ Building on Byrd’s argument, I argue that authors who draw on the Indian as a metaphor for their own social justice pursuits become complicit, to some degree, in settler colonialism. Settler colonialism forms a foundation for the hierarchies, privilege, and oppressions in the US. Social justice movements and literatures must also confront settler colonial epistemologies, or risk reiterating them. As Richard Slotkin argues, “A people unaware of its myths is likely to continue living by them.”¹²⁵

Literature is a key site of dismantling these myths. Janice Acoose writes:

literature is a powerful and very political tool. Because it is powerful and political, readers should be encouraged to approach it critically. I found, however, that most university students are not critical readers, thinkers, and writers; what the majority of students read in books, for example about ‘Indians,’ ‘Eskimos,’ or ‘halfbreeds,’ is generally accepted and processed without a whole lot of critical analysis. Consequently, the majority of students come to ‘know’ Indigenous peoples only through highly selective images perpetuated through a similarly highly selective literature, which ultimately maintains the status quo.¹²⁶

124. Byrd, *Transit*, xvii.

125. Slotkin, *Regeneration*, 5.

126. Acoose 34-35.

Du Bois and Zitkala-Ša resist the myth and the metaphor. By raising real indigenous concerns and illustrating real Indigenous peoples, they begin the long process of deconstructing white hegemony in all its many iterations.

Chapter Three

Indians in the Frontiers of American Identity:

Negotiating 'Native' Place and Identity

In the years following World War II, Americans for the most part lost interest in Native peoples, to some extent because no crisis such as that marking the period following World War I sent Westerners to Native America in search of an alternative ethos. Instead, complacency and prosperity characterized middle-class European-American life throughout the 1950s.

- Shari Huhndorf, *Going Native*, 127-128

[T]he Mexican Indian is mostly Indian—and that is the element which migrated to the United States in such large numbers, and looks upon leniency by authorities as an evidence of weakness or fear... Whenever this element is shown leniency in our courts, by *our* probation officers and other authorities, and is released from custody without serving a sentence, being put on probation, etc., he becomes a hero among *his own* gang members ... However, whenever this Mexican element receives swift and sure punishment such as proper incarceration he then, and then only, respects authority.

- Edward D. Ayres, "Statistics" (emphasis added)

In times of relative peace, Shari Huhndorf argues, "Americans for the most part los[e] interest in Native peoples." Her investigation into twentieth-century rites of conquest, *Going Native*, insists that Indianness comes to the fore only in times of crisis. I argue that Indians inhere in US culture. Long after times of crisis have passed, myths of Indianness continue to structure American perceptions and experiences. As Richard Slotkin argues, a nation's myths transmit from generation to generation "in such a way and with such power that our perception of contemporary reality and our ability to

function in the world are directly, often tragically affected.”¹ Myths of Indianness were never based in reality, but they do constitute and inform belief and action in the real world.

As my first epigraph makes clear, Huhndorf is focused on Euro-American culture. She argues Americans lose interest in Indians because “complacency and prosperity characterized middle-class European-American life.” For those Americans for whom complacency, prosperity, and middle-class Euro-American culture do not characterize their lives, Indians do not – and I argue cannot – fade from cultural prominence.

I argue that myths of Indianness play a key role in Asian American, American Indian, and Latino literatures in three ways. First, Asian Americans, American Indians, and Latinos are racialized through discourses of Indianness. The Indian on the frontier – imagined as civilization’s and humanity’s opposite – structured dominant nineteenth-century racist attitudes, fears, and ultimately policies that defined these Americans’ experiences. Even if these Indian myths emerged to shape attitudes and policies in times of crisis, as Huhndorf argues, their effects have proved long lasting. Second, because myths of Indianness have shaped these communities’ experiences, they become part of the literatures as authors reiterate, resist, or question these dominant cultural paradigms. Third, because Indianness forms part of the dominant, contradictory structures of racialization, it also has an impact on literary reception, which has often been characterized by demands for ‘authenticity’ and an incomplete appreciation for the ways literatures resist or perpetuate settler colonial epistemologies.

1. Slotkin, *Regeneration*, 3.

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (Dakota) argues that all American stories “contain the ghosts of an imperialistic history” and therefore it “is not possible to read Western literature without remembering that imperialism has almost always been the mission of that art.”² Recently, several scholars, including Jodi Byrd and Nicholas De Genova, have called for further investigation into the invented Indian’s propagation of US settler colonial and imperial ideologies.³ Historian Nicholas De Genova suggests that the Indian offers the “critical conceptual key” for understanding US racialization.⁴ Jodi Byrd argues, “ideas of Indians and Indianness have served as the ontological ground through which U.S. settler colonialism enacts itself as settler imperialism.”⁵ Such scholarship has uncovered the foundational roles invented Indians play in dominant US culture. Focusing on the Indian that haunts the ‘official stories’ of the nation, these analyses leave room to investigate literary responses – those unofficial stories that give voice to the peoples spoken over by the official Euro-American monologue. In chapter two, I argued that as Americans use and manipulate myths of Indianness to change the frontiers for who counts as American, they normalize and perpetuate US imperial and settler colonial culture by making a metaphor of the Indian. In chapters three and four, I analyze invented Indians in both ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ accounts of the nation, including legal

2. Cook-Lynn, *New Indians, Old Wars* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 178.

3. See Byrd, *Transit*; De Genova, *Racial Transformations*. Cook-Lynn’s *New Indians* considers imperial discourses, which I argue rely on invented myths of Indianness.

4. De Genova, *Racial Transformations*, 7.

5. Byrd, *Transit*, xix.

documents and literature, for the ways they perpetuate, normalize, or refute the mission of imperialism that Cook-Lynn argues is function of most of Western writing.

In this chapter, I examine negotiations with ‘nativeness’ in John Okada’s novel *No-No Boy* (1957), N. Scott Momaday’s novel *House Made of Dawn* (1968), and, briefly, Tomas Rivera’s novel *And The Earth Did Not Devour Him* (1971), each set in the historical period shortly after the 1942 Sleepy Lagoon trial, which asserted that Latinos, Asian Americans, and American Indians were, and would remain, foreign to the United States. During the Second World War spaces opened for the unprecedented participation of women and people of color in the US workforce and military. At the same time that the borders insulating white male hegemony were becoming more porous, these borders were also augmented through racist legal practices, immigration bans and quotas, race-based mob violence, the internment of Japanese Americans, and the start of the Termination Era, which aggressively worked to assimilate American Indians by ending federal recognition of nation-to-nation treaty obligations. As the borders of American identity shifted, Americans negotiated their identities and their place in this shifting landscape.

Set around a WWII Japanese internment camp, the sovereign Pueblo of Jemez nation, and the farmlands of the American West, Okada, Momaday, and Rivera’s novels engage the complex interplay between their characters’ identities and the spaces they occupy, which are each inconsistently conceived in the dominant imaginary as domestic yet foreign. As the war exacerbated racist xenophobic borderlines, many Americans used Indianness to vocalize their group’s Americanness, that is, to make themselves more native. In this chapter, I argue that these novels resist contributing to the normalization of

US settler colonialism by interrogating the hegemonic biological determinism that relies on the metaphor of the invented Indian.

In courtrooms, US settler colonial and racializing policies and discourses are generated, reimagined, and enforced. Fictional court scenes provide a space in which to imagine counternarratives, defamiliarize hegemonic assumptions and discourses, and depict the consequences of dominant cultural myths. Courts in *No-No Boy* and *House Made of Dawn* provide spaces for the texts to explore American racialization, interrogate the frontiers for who counts as American, and resist the biological and cultural determinacy that classifies the protagonists as ‘foreign’ despite their American citizenship. To probe the hegemonic perspectives to which these novels respond, the first section of this chapter close reads the official report submitted by Captain Edward Ayers in the 1942 Los Angeles court case, the Sleepy Lagoon trial. Relying on myths of Indianness to conflate ethnically Mexican, American Indian, and Asian people, Ayers claims that each group is both inherently foreign and inherently criminal. In part two, I examine the ways that court scenes in N. Scott Momaday’s *House Made of Dawn* reproduce, in order to defamiliarize, contemporary hegemonic debates on racialized criminality. In part three, I turn to John Okada’s *No-No Boy*, which illustrates the consequences myths of Indianness had on Japanese Americans during WWII. In its fictional representations of American courts, the novel examines the settler colonial logic of contemporary discourses of foreignness. Finally, I turn briefly to Rivera’s novel, which underscores Japanese American and Indigenous presence in the American West, mapping interlocked minority histories in spaces traditionally imagined to be white. Each fictional depiction of the law resists the legal fictions produced by court cases like Sleepy

Lagoon. Read together, fictions about the law and legal fictions paint a dramatic picture of the complex and contradictory discursive work Indianness does to dispossess and exclude Americans in the twentieth century.⁶

Edward Said suggests that rather than focus on the “manufactured clash of civilizations, we need to concentrate on the slow working together of cultures that overlap, borrow from each other, and live together.”⁷ Myths about one group intertwine with myths about others, and inevitably Americans’ trajectories are shaped by the settler colonial fictions that defined America’s first peoples. US minority fiction does not depict a clash alone; it also depicts the slow working together of overlapping perspectives and experiences. Three fictions about the law and one legal fiction will not unveil a master narrative of the invented Indian’s role in US racialization and settler colonialism.

6. In this chapter’s literary analysis, I build on recent work in critical race theory, especially by Yael Ben-zvi and Nicolas De Genova, who argue that race in the United States is tripartite, black-white-red, and not a binary. De Genova suggests that the Indian offers “a critical conceptual key” to unlocking the “variegated spectrum of ‘browns and ‘yellows’” that complicate the black-white binary. For him, US culture studies would be remiss in continuing to ignore the Indian that offers “the pivotal link” in unpacking the complex network of racialization and xenophobia in the US. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn echoes this sentiment in her call to alter how we read American literature when she writes: “all of the stories of America contain the ghosts of an imperialistic history, yet readers and critics alike often seem to miss this essential ingredient of historical imperial thought, or perhaps they just ignore it.” For Cook-Lynn too, any endeavor to study the cultural productions of the United States that does not attend the US’s imperial history and its invented Indianness would miss a critical component of American literature. She explains further, “imperialism has almost always been the mission of [Western literature], whether by design or accident” and literature, newspapers, and words – even expert court testimonies – furthermore, “cannot be underestimated as carriers of ideologies.” In this chapter, I unpack Ayres’s testimony as a carrier of settler colonial ideologies, and consider the ways in which fictional texts respond to, refute, and sometimes contribute to the mission of imperialism that Cook-Lynn argues is function of most of Western literature. See Yael Ben-zvi; De Genova 7; Cook-Lynn, *New Indians*, 178.

7. Said, *Orientalism* (2003), xxii.

Through their interrogations of the borders of place and identity, the specific histories and perspectives to which the three narratives bear witness can instead suggest patterns.

These three texts offer specific language in which to ground this dissertation's broader framings of discourses of Indianness and identity. As such, this chapter does not draw conclusions about the roles and meanings of Indianness in Asian American, Latino, and American Indian literatures and experiences broadly; instead, this chapter uses these texts to suggest the value in attending to Indianness in US discourse and literature.

I. Legal Fictions

1. Captain Ayres and the American (Indian) Criminal

For the 1942 case that would come to be known as "Sleepy Lagoon," a Los Angeles County grand jury was tasked with determining if Mexican Americans were, by nature, criminals. The official report, prepared by the chief of the Foreign Relations Bureau of the Los Angeles county sheriff's department, Captain Edward Duran Ayres, demonstrates the role invented Indians play in the linked racialization of Asian Americans and Latinos. I close read the report precisely because it is not unique in its formulas, its assumptions, or its perpetuation of the ideologies of settler colonialism. In this section, I analyze the ways in which Ayres conjures the colonialist discourse of the Indian to create an internally consistent worldview that justified contemporary abuses and oppressions of Latino and Asian Americans. I argue that the invented Indian signifies the US's metaphorical frontiers, and it can therefore be deployed to imprint 'foreignness' on any US population, as it has been used, to considerable effect, on Latino and Asian Americans.

Ayres's report was submitted as part of a grand jury investigation of Mexican American crime in the wake of the murder of a young man named José Díaz. After the murder, the media broadcast unfounded claims about a Mexican American crime wave. The reports rivaled the hysterics of anti-Japanese sentiments circulated just months earlier, justifying the immediate and indiscriminant imprisonment of Japanese Americans in wartime internment camps. Emboldened by the media, in the spring of 1943 white residents carried out a brutal campaign assaulting and mutilating Mexican American Los Angelinos. This in turn spurred an eight-day mob attack on Mexican Americans carried out by US officials, including police and military personnel. The police then arrested the victims. In a pattern that has been seen over and over again in US history, the violence inherent within the campaigns of terror carried out by white Americans was projected onto a minority. Although Euro-Americans orchestrated months of brutal attacks on Mexican Americans, it was the Chicanos, not the Euro-Americans, who were held responsible for the violence. In part due to Ayres's report, and in part due to the prevailing attitudes it reflected, with no evidence, a jury of Euro-American 'peers' convicted seventeen young Mexican-American men for the murder of José Díaz. None of the white participants in the mob violence against Chicanos were ever brought to trial. The crime, then, was the accused's ethnicity.

In his report, Ayres argues that there is a "biological basis" for Mexican American criminality.⁸ Because no crime wave existed, 'criminality' can better be understood as a

8. Edward Duran Ayres, "Statistics: The Nature of the Mexican American Criminal," *Foreign Relations Bureau*, 1942. The Online Archive of California. California: The Regents of the University of California, 2009. All subsequent Ayres quotations come from this source.

prevailing sense of Mexican American difference, or, more specifically, a sense of Mexican Americans' failure to assimilate. By the self-serving logic of the *Foreign Relations Bureau*, the perceived failure to assimilate resulted from a racial identity that was *foreign*, by nature, to the American character. That foreignness, Ayres argues, stems from the biological inheritance of Indian savagery.

To argue his point, Ayres turns to the Aztecs. He explains that the Aztecs were “given over to human sacrifice” and that they sacrificed as “many as 30,000 Indians...their bodies being opened by stone knives and their hearts torn out while still beating.” The gratuitous image of the still-beating heart, torn ruthlessly from the chest of an innocent victim, serves as a shocking reminder to Ayres’s audiences of the myths of Indian savagery that justified colonization and white hegemony in the first place.⁹ From the Aztec example Ayres extrapolates that all Native peoples in the Americas are at heart violent predators. Ayres insists, “This total disregard for human life... has always been universal throughout the Americas, among the Indian population.” Indian savagery, he writes, “of course is well known to everyone.”

In arguing that there was no difference between the Aztecs of 1520 and Mexican Americans in 1940, Ayres exploits the hegemonic myth that Indianness is unchanging and anachronistic, a colonial myth that justifies conquest by suggesting Indians should perish with modernity.¹⁰ In further support of American imperialism, Ayres insists, “it is

9. Ayres repeats the common myth of Aztec savagery first invented by Cortez. Never mind that Cortez led a campaign of brutality and butchery; the violence of colonization was projected onto Native peoples. The myth of the savage Indian protected the European sense of self as a just and rational society.

difficult for the Anglo-Saxon to understand the psychology of the Indian” because, when provoked, the Indian’s “desire is to kill, or at least let blood.” Stressing the racial difference between the Indian and the Anglo-Saxon, Ayres’s racist, colonialist rhetoric carries with it the implication that Indian lands around the world should, and will eventually, go to more appropriate, more civilized, Caucasian stewards. Ayres bemoans that in Mexico “less than 20% [of the population] are pure Caucasians [sic] or White,” and that they are overrun by a “certain element.” Ayres stirs fears that this “certain element” has been allowed to breed and expand into the United States. This “certain [criminal] element” is racially Indian and Mestizo.

Championing white dominance, Euro-American imperialism, and a crackdown on the Indian element in the United States, Ayres admits that “all Indians in our country are Americans,” but concludes finally that their Asiatic origins render them foreign to the principles that govern American democracy. Though they may have been born within the borders of the United States, for Ayres, Indians represent America’s incompatible opposite. This is because the Indian is “evidently Oriental in background.” Ayres

10. See Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (Norman: U of Oklahoma, 1988). Paige Raibmon also points out that developers have used stereotypical pictures of Indians living on the property they hope to sell to entice buyers. She discusses how Indian occupation of the land ironically encourages rather than deters non-Native development and consumption of Indigenous lands. This is because “[o]nly the vanishing had legitimate claims to land and sovereignty; surviving modernity disqualified one from these claims. Either way, colonizers got the land.” See Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 9-10. The convenient myths of ‘Indian authenticity,’ which I explore in chapter one, suggest that the Indian “has always been” a certain way and that he must therefore vanish with modernity. The notion that all Indians are the same is a uniquely twentieth-century version of the colonial myth. Ayres’s Indians are not the same as Cortez’s Indians. Until the mid-nineteenth century, Native peoples were understood politically and culturally as individual tribes. It was not until the late nineteenth century that a minority was made of the many nations of Indigenous peoples.

explains that East Asians, Filipinos, Indians, and Latinos share “Oriental characteristics,” including, most notably, an “utter disregard for the value of life.”¹¹

2. Indians at the Borders

For Ayres, Indianness is the critical link for understanding the biology, behavior, and nature of Asians, Native Americans, and Latinos. He locates Indians at the border of the United States and in the biology of these peoples. In his reasoning, if savage Indians are America’s incompatible opposite, then all three races must remain foreign in perpetuity. With these conclusions, his report advances the settler colonial tradition of using the Indian to define United States’ borders.

The American frontier has long been imagined to bisect two distinct worlds: one white, characterized by civilization, modernity, and full humanity, and the other Indian, characterized by the opposing attributes of primitivity, nature, and semi-humanity.¹² ‘Indians’ never existed. They were invented to represent Euro-America’s opposite and to justify colonization through their savagery and difference. As America’s exterior Others, Indians help solidify a sense of national identity. Indeed, this has always been one of the invented Indian’s primary functions. In the Declaration of Independence – the first official account of the new nation – Jefferson describes Indigenous peoples as “merciless

11. Ayres writes, for example, “among the Filipinos crime of violence in proportion to their population is quite prevalent, and practically all of it over women. This is due to the fact that there are so few Filipino women here, and also the biological aspect enters into it, as the Filipino is a Malay, and ethnologists trace the Malayan people to the American Indian, ranging from the southwestern part of the United States down through Mexico, Central America and into South America” (Ayres)

12. Revising the historical reality of centuries of interdependent relationships between settler colonists and American Indian nations, these settler colonial myths use the ‘Indian’ as shorthand for whatever and whoever lay beyond the American frontier.

Indian Savages” that wreak “undistinguished destruction,” prompted by the king, on guiltless colonists. By defining Indians as that which transgresses the border, the Declaration uses Indians to rhetorically transform the colonies into distinctly Euro-American spaces and colonists into native citizens of a land over which they hold exclusive sovereignty. The document justifies Euro-Americans’ right to the British colony by establishing the Indian and its puppeteer British king as equally unjustified intruders into native Euro-American space.¹³ Indians are made ‘America’s’ foreigners. James Madison reiterated this common rhetorical tradition when he observed, “Next to the case of the black race within our bosom, that of the red on our borders is the problem most baffling to the policy of our country.”¹⁴ Together, the color line and the frontier line establish the whiteness of “our country.”¹⁵ Here again, ‘Indians’ at America’s borders do the rhetorical work of defining which peoples constitute the United States.

Ayres’s formula follows the same pattern as Madison’s and Jefferson’s to establish who is included within “our borders.” As a longstanding settler colonial metaphor for the United States’, civilization’s, and even humanity’s opposite, the Indian continues to serve as a convenient rhetorical device for establishing and negotiating the

13. The Declaration establishes the white hegemony of the nation through discursive violence, including the calamitous silence toward African Americans. Gerald Kennedy writes that the deletion of the paragraph on African American enslavement “effectively canceled recognition of African Americans’ human rights and changed the course of history.” See Gerald Kennedy, *Strange Nation: Literary Nationalism and Cultural Conflict in the Age of Poe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 264.

14. James Madison to Thomas L. Mckenney 1826.

15. Before the twentieth century, US racialization was tripartite: black, white, and red. Though the color line dominates current US discussions of race, the racial border remains a defining paradigm in the twentieth century. For more on this, see chapter two. See also Nicolas De Genova and Yael Ben-Zvi.

literal, cultural, and demographic borders of the nation. As the location and meaning of America's borders change over time, the Indian metaphor is simply revised and transplanted onto new lands and new populations. In *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire Building*, Richard Drinnon reveals how the Indian-hating rhetoric of the Indian Wars is revived with each new frontier, from the Indian Wars to the Philippine-American War to the Vietnam War, to justify American imperialism. Drinnon writes:

In each and every West, place itself was infinitely less important...than what the white settlers brought in their heads and hearts to that particular place. At each magic margin, their metaphysics of Indian-hating underwent a seemingly confirmatory 'perennial rebirth.' Rooted in fears and prejudices buried deep in the Western psyche, their metaphysics became a time-tested doctrine, an ideology.... All along, the obverse of Indian-hating had been the metaphysics of empire building.... The West was quite literally nowhere – or everywhere, which was to say the same thing."¹⁶

With a frontier that extends both everywhere and nowhere, Indianness can be mobilized and superimposed over any foreign population to justify US imperialism. The war of

16. Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press), 463-465. Building on Drinnon's points, Jodi Byrd writes, "the Indian is left nowhere and everywhere within the ontological premises through which U.S. empire orients, imagines, and critiques itself. *The Transit of Empire*, then, might best be understood as a series of preliminary reflections on how ideas of Indians and Indianness have served as the ontological ground through which U.S. settler colonialism enacts itself as settler imperialism" (Byrd, *Transit*, xix).

conquest against Mexico in 1846, for instance, prompted Americans to racialize Mexicans as “savage” and the US Senate to debate whether to remove the non-white Mexican population to Indian reservations after annexation.¹⁷ In the late nineteenth century, Indianness was applied to Asian immigrants as well. Racist concern over the growing number of Asian immigrants led to the first immigration quotas and the first Asian exclusion acts, and also prompted at least one congressman to suggest reservations for Asian Americans, modeled on the Indian reservation system.¹⁸ While Drinnon focuses on the overseas expansion of discourses of Indianness, Ayres’s report illustrates how the Indian metaphor can also be turned inward. Used against Americans themselves, invented Indianness fabricates ‘alien races’ out of American citizens.

Ayres’s legal fiction makes explicit the implicit thread that connected several recent US policies. The invented Indian is the discursive linchpin in what Nicholas De Genova calls a “lethal nexus of racialized associations” that precipitated racialized immigration restrictions in the 1920s and 30s, the summary internment of over 110,000 Japanese Americans, the deportation of over a hundred thousand Mexican Americans in the 1930s, the campaign of terror carried out by US officials against Mexican Americans in the streets of Los Angeles in the 1940s, and the mass conviction of seventeen Mexican Americans in the Sleepy Lagoon trial.¹⁹ Manifesting in street violence, incarceration, and legal codification, discourses of Indianness were used to erect borders that controlled

17. See De Genova, *Racial Transformations*, 5-6.

18. For more on this see Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1998).

19. De Genova, *Racial Transformations*, 9-10.

access to public spaces and delineated the boundaries between “our country” and those peoples who would be refused the rights and protections of full citizenship.

3. Ayres’s Formula Fails but His Monologue Dominates

Ayres’s report turns the fictional narrative of biological Indianness into the legal fiction of racialized criminality. Although Ayres advances a simple explanation of racial difference based on a simplified Indian metaphor, as I have argued throughout the dissertation, the Indian has never denoted frontiers alone. ‘Indianness’ serves as a metaphor for both the US’s opposite and its core identity. In *Constituting Americans*, Priscilla Wald close reads Supreme Court cases and describes “the importance of words, and of a narrative that could turn words into law.”²⁰ Historically, the American courtroom is where myths of Indianness have intersected with reality, shaping the trajectories of peoples and nations. In the Supreme Court cases *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832) and *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831), Chief Justice John Marshall concluded that “Indian nations had always been considered as distinct, independent political communities, retaining their original natural rights, as the undisputed possessors of the soil, from time immemorial,” and yet also, “The Cherokee Nation is not a foreign state.”²¹ Chief Justice Marshall articulated the Indian’s complex position as neither domestic nor foreign with his coinage, “domestic dependent nations.” In these cases, the Supreme Court both recorded and created competing myths of Indianness. Even as Indianness was disavowed,

20. Wald, *Constituting Americans*, 47.

21. Chief Justice John Marshall, *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832) and *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, 30 U.S. 1 (1831).

it was absorbed as an idea into American identity. As Indianness was absorbed, there remained a resistant, unassimilable remainder.²²

In other words, just as Marshall articulated in *Cherokee Nation*, the imagined Indian is not ‘foreign,’ and discourses of ‘foreignness’ do not suffice as a paradigm for American racialization. In *Cannibal Democracy*, Zita Nunes explains:

The constitutive outside (whether described as an ‘other’ or whether described as expelled in order to maintain the purity of identity) is often linked to the ‘foreign.’ ...[However] Africans are produced as black at precisely the moment they cease to be foreign through the experience of slavery. The experience of slavery has incorporated Africans and made something new that cannot be properly understood according to any paradigm of foreignness. The foreign is a relation; the remainder, however, is disavowed.²³

Nunes focuses on black identity, but the concept of the remainder helps account for the failures of Ayres’s formulas, which sought only to justify racist exclusions through discourses of foreignness. However, Latino, Asian, and Native Americans were not treated as ‘foreign.’ As I explain further in section three, the fact that Japanese Americans were sent to the ‘frontier’ to undergo a process of Americanization to prove their loyalty

22. The remainder is made by those systems that demand purity in the national body. Describing the process of assimilation as cannibalization, Zita Nunes explains, “In relation to the eaten, this remainder can be seen either as a rejection of the eaten by the national body or as the resistance posed by the eaten to assimilation.” Zita Nunes, *Cannibal Democracy: Race and Representation in the Literature of the Americas* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2008), 14.

23. Nunes, *Cannibal Democracy*, 39.

stresses that these Americans were not considered 'foreign.' Like Euro-Americans, they too could make themselves more 'native.' Ayres's formula cannot contain the Indian's competing meanings nor the disavowed remainder, and his explanations fracture within his own report. To prove his case for biological determinacy, for instance, he admits that Chinese and Japanese Americans experience the same systemic oppressions as Mexican Americans, "yet they have always been law abiding and have never given our authorities trouble ... such acts of violence as now are in evidence among the young Mexicans has been entirely unknown among these two Oriental peoples." With this comparison he hopes to prove biological determinacy, yet it is the Mexican American and American Indian's "Oriental characteristics" that biologically determine their criminality. The contradiction seems lost on Ayres, as does the irony that Japanese Americans were interned the very moment he proclaimed that as a race they were biologically predestined to "always" abide the law.

Ayres's opponents capitalized on his failure to account for the glaring contradictions in his report. The Sleepy Lagoon defense countered that Mexican American culture, not biology, was the cause of Latino crime. However, by using the same essentializing terms Ayres deployed, defenders only reproduced Ayres's determinist narrative. As Victor Jew notes, culturalism grew in popularity over biological determinism in the post-war years; however, "[c]ulture-based arguments could be a step backward as well as forward... While an improvement over biological arguments, culturalism could, nevertheless, cage already othered minorities into racially typed generalizations."²⁴ The defense failed to productively use the defects of Ayres's argument

to their advantage, and instead reproduced the dominant racializing monologue that represented Latinos as ‘foreign,’ in different terms.

Biological determinists and culturalists dominated the debate in both court documents and newspapers, though Mexican American activists and politicians fervently rebutted the terms of the debate at the time.²⁵ In his historical analysis of the Sleepy Lagoon trial, Jew regrets that “for the most part, the talk recorded in [Jew’s] essay reflected the assumptions and public speaking positions of those ‘outside’ ... the Mexican colony.”²⁶ Historical research is often hampered by the fact that ‘official’ reports and accounts privilege dominant perspectives. Literature offers an alternative form of representation for those voices suppressed within ‘official’ channels. By representing ‘unofficial’ stories, literature can harness the defects of the ‘official’ dialogue to more productively disrupt it.²⁷

24. Victor Jew, “Getting the Measure of Tomorrow: Chinese and Chicano Americas under the Racial Gaze, 1934-1935 and 1942-1944,” in *Racial Transformations: Latinos and Asians Remaking the United States* ed. Nicholas De Genova, (USA: Duke UP, 2006), 81.

25. Jew criticizes this same issue: that the trial and debate were dominated by non-Mexican American voices. Those who engaged in the official 1942 debate, whether proponents of biologism or culturalism, were mostly Euro-Americans. See also Nicholas De Genova, introduction to *Racial Transformations: Latinos and Asians Remaking the United States* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2006), 9.

26. Jew, “Getting the Measure,” 86.

27. Phil Deloria has recently discussed the limits of historical research and the trend toward culture studies as follows: “Historiography has generally turned to federal policy as the most effective frame for making general sense of the diverse experiences of hundreds of tribal peoples... In effect, this practice centers Indian history, not on Indian people, but on the U.S. government. The understandable response of many historians and many Indian people has been to turn to the unique particulars of tribal and community histories. Taken together, such community-based histories reveal the stunning breadth and texture of American Indian experiences. They also help fulfill the important

II. The ‘Foreign’ Indian

1. Defamiliarizing the Terms of the Debate

In the this section, I turn to the court scenes in N. Scott Momaday’s novel *House Made of Dawn*, which offer insight into the violent and silencing debate about American minorities that took place in newspapers and courtrooms throughout the Second World War. These fictional scenes demonstrate the shortcomings of official accounts by using fiction to tell a narrative unavailable through official channels.

House’s trial relies the same discourses of biological and cultural determinism that were wielded in the contemporaneous Sleepy Lagoon case. The fictional trial defamiliarizes the terms of the dominant debate. Though fictional, the court’s effort to determine whether Abel is biologically or merely culturally ‘foreign’ speaks to the very real limitations that settler colonial definitions imposed on Indigenous peoples. These limitations can be seen throughout Abel’s story, but they are most evident in the courtroom.²⁸ Moreover, the novel examines the uncertain position of sovereign

obligation of scholars to make their work meaningful to Indian communities. And, by revealing a wide range of Native responses, they effectively render inert the generalizing framework built around federal policy....Even as they do these things, however, tribal histories also militate against efforts to generalize or synthesize, leaving us to wonder how to do justice to the variation among hundreds of tribal and community histories while at the same time reaching for general patterns concerning such things as colonialism and empire in North America. Only recently have historians turned toward cultural analysis as a possible ground for considering Indian-non-Indian relations in broad terms” (Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, 11-12).

28. As a World War II veteran, convicted felon, and Native American man who has lived on and off the reservation, Abel’s story offers insight into the pressures of assimilation from its many sources: the public, the army, prison, religious institutions, friends, the economy, and social services. His story is one of losing himself to such pressures. Abel experiences the dilemma of assimilation: that he is neither accepted into the dominant culture nor does he feel a part of his own. The novel concludes with the resolution of the main conflict: with Abel’s reconnection to his cultural roots.

indigenous nations. As “domestic dependent nations” – neither fully domestic nor foreign to the United States – the Pueblo of Jemez lacks an independent judiciary, and Abel, a WWII army veteran, suffers the real-life costs of the legal fictions of foreignness. Ultimately, I argue that Momaday responds to the myth of ‘Indian foreignness’ by reinscribing Indianness into the landscape, not as domestic or foreign to the United States, but as sovereign.

The Indianness depicted in the text is a union of specific cultures – Kiowa, Navajo, and Towan Pueblo – grounded in the land of the sovereign Pueblo of Jemez. ‘Indianness’ matters to American Indian people, but as a strategic coalition of distinct nations, not as an innate Indian consciousness, culture, or biology. In an interview, Momaday explains,

When I was little, people didn’t think of themselves as Indians. They thought of themselves as Kiowas, or Comanches, or Crees, or whatever. But in the last 50 years or so ... [the sense of Indianness] has become stronger. And I can’t account for that except to say that the outside world has made incursions, and the Indians have left the reservation, and so there’s been a much greater kind of communication back and forth. And now we have things like pow-wows, which are extremely important in bringing young people -- especially -- together from every kind of different tribe and language. And they trade words, and dance steps, and music, and so on. And so, they bond and become a people.²⁹

Although ‘Indians’ may be the invention of settler colonial culture, and may be the result of the “incursions” of the settler colonial world, as I argue in chapter one, Indigenous

29. Momaday, “Interview.”

peoples have some power to influence and reclaim these oppressive fictions. Not a metaphor for the US's core or its exterior Others, Indianness as a strategic alliance builds strength, identity, and pride. As a political and cultural coalition, as Momaday notes, Indianness gives people a sense of place when they leave the reservation.

House Made of Dawn depicts the loss and rediscovery of a sense of place through the story of Abel, a Jemez, Navajo, and Bahkyush WWII veteran. Abel loses his sense of place upon leaving the reservation to join the army:

He didn't know where he was, and he was alone. No, there were men about, the bodies of men; he could barely see them strewn among the pits, their limbs sprawling away into the litter of leaves, and leaves were falling in the shafts of light, hundreds of leaves, rocking and spiraling down without sound. But there was sound: something low and incessant, almost distant, full of slow, steady motion and approach. It was above and behind him, across the spine of the hill, coming (24).

Abel's departure from the reservation marks the end of narrative clarity in the text. Abel suddenly wakes surrounded by corpses. With no context, the scene looks like a massacre. The piles of bodies, whirring sounds, and confusion defamiliarize the scene, and readers are left disoriented in sympathy with Abel's own sensations. The aesthetics of disorientation are part of the text's politics. The scene is reminiscent of a massacre and the lack of detail invites readers to recall US settler colonial histories and the massacres of many Native American peoples. The text collects, remembers, and remaps these histories, connecting distinct Indigenous nations and histories so that they "become a people."

The novel's Jemez oral structure, genre play, and narrative each strengthen the commitment to defamiliarizing invented 'Indianness.' These formal strategies evince a commitment to dismantling the settler colonial constructions of Indianness that dislocate Abel's sense of self and leave him so lost and disoriented. Through a pan-Indian cultural coalition, Abel finds his place once more at the end of the novel. Because Abel discovers his sense of place again when he rejoins a Jemez Pueblo run and recites a Navajo healing song, I argue that the novel sets the essentialist Indianness invented for settler colonial culture against the coalitional Indianness created to resist it.

Treated like a stereotypical Indian during his years of service, Abel returns from war feeling foreign in his own land. His patriotic sacrifice for the United States leaves him feeling ironically less, rather than more, American. I argue that his sense of displacement comes in part from the myths of Indianness heaped upon him by his army unit. His fellow soldiers know him only as "chief," and assume he speaks "Sioux or Algonquin or something," though as a Jemez, Navajo, and Bahkyush man, he would speak neither.³⁰ Abel is seen only through the lens of the invented Indian: that exterior Other that Ayres describes. When he returns from war, Abel's acute sense of loss and dislocation is aggravated again by his encounter with a white woman named Angela, who comes to the Pueblo of Jemez to perform the rituals of 'going native.' By performing Indian myths in this ritualized manner, she underscores that her American identity is created through the absorption and exclusion of Indianness. Abel's sense of alienation culminates in his murdering of a nameless fellow Jemez man, called 'the albino.' This

30. N. Scott Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*. New York: Harper and Row, 1989, 117. All future in-text citations in this section come from this novel.

murder precipitates his trial, which only again exacerbates his sense of estrangement through the dominant debates over biological and cultural determinism.

At trial, two white men speak for Abel. Abel himself explains the murder, once, but his statement is not recorded in the novel. Several Native American characters offer their interpretations as well, but, notably, never in any official capacity. Instead, readers are given the official testimony of two white men, Abel's priest, Father Olguin, and his army comrade, Bowker. At trial, Bowker offers an account of Abel's actions based in biological determinism, and Abel's priest, Father Olguin, offers his based in cultural determinism. According to Father Olguin, Abel cannot be held responsible for his actions because his is a fundamentally alien culture; for Bowker, it is because Abel is of an alien race.

In his testimony at Abel's trial, Bowker recalls a WWII battle that claimed hundreds of lives, and alleges that he saw "the chief" respond with a "goddam *war dance*" (117). Whereas Bowker's version of events caricatures Abel as a Hollywood-style Indian brave, Abel's recollection stresses the horror of his surroundings: "there were men about, the bodies of men; he could barely see them strewn among the pits, their limbs sprawling away into the litter of leaves, and leaves were falling in the shafts of light, hundreds of leaves, rocking and spiraling down without sound" (24). Abel's brothers-in-arms lie slaughtered about him like so many leaves, juxtaposing the untimely carnage of war and the natural death that comes with the changing seasons. The leaves would be unfamiliar to Abel, who grew up in the deserts of the American southwest. He reaches out, grabs at the earth and fallen leaves, and cannot recognize his surroundings or

himself. Abel feels disoriented and afraid, wholly alienated from memory, country, even humanity.

Bowker grossly misrepresents Abel's experience in his official court testimony. He describes Abel jumping up and "clapping whoops from his mouth just like in the movies" (117). Gutting the scene of any emotion or humanity, Bowker's testimony stresses the biological distinction between the white jurors and the chief who would do war dances in the midst of such carnage. Further accentuating the perceived difference between white people and Indians, Bowker identifies the other white men in his unit by their name and rank, but only ever calls Abel "chief": "Well, sir, Marshall, he got ahead of Mitch and me. He went on over the top of thirteen, and Mitch – Corporal Rate – and me dug in when we heard the tank coming up. ... Mitch, he punched me and pointed down the hill. It was him, sir, the chief, and he was moving around" (116). The other characters are named both with familiarity and, when Bowker corrects himself, with formality. Abel is *he*, *him*, and *the chief*. Bowker testifies: "Mitch – I mean Corporal Rate – and me were dug in on the side of thirteen, and we could see south along the ridge. ... and Corporal Rate and Private Marshall and me were the only ones to get out – except for him, I mean" (116). Bowker does not think to include Abel – who is left unnamed and uncounted – in the list of American survivors. Abel himself begins to internalize perspectives like Bowker's that regard him as alien to the American military corps and ultimately deprive him of humanity.

In his opposing testimony, Father Olguin promises a more humanized perspective because he lives in Walatowa among the Jemez. A witness for the defense, Olguin testifies in support of Abel, explaining that culture, not biology, is to blame for the

murder he commits. Furthermore, Olguin contends that the trial itself is unwarranted because United States' courts represent a different culture from that of the defendant: "Homicide is a legal term," the priest explains, "but the law is not my context; and certainly it isn't his –" (102). Indeed, Olguin concludes that Abel is incapable of homicide because he was subject to "an act of the imagination so compelling as to be inconceivable to us" (101). Olguin's culturalist defense extends a liberal argument for the time, one resistant to race-based biological determinism. His arguments appear compelling and compassionate. However, in arguing that Abel's thoughts and actions are beyond the bounds of understanding, Olguin draws a clear line between "us" Americans and "inconceivable" Indians. In his essentialist terms, the Indian is fundamentally foreign to the culture, laws, and worldview of the United States.

Although Abel insists that Olguin has no real knowledge of the issue, Olguin testifies from a position of authority and it is his voice represented in the official court reports. Abel realizes, too, that no one "even wanted [Abel] to speak" (102). Abel chooses to tell his story once and to remain silent over the course of the trial, but his choice is undermined by those who testify on his behalf. During Bowker's testimony, Abel "was listening to him, self-conscious, growing angry and confused that this white man should talk about him, account for him, as if he were not there" (116). Abel is silenced, not by choice, but by a legal system that is all too welcoming to myths of Indianness, and that, moreover, privileges the authority of white male testimony. On the stand, Olguin "wanted to affect great humility" because he wanted to perform the role of the liberal-minded, kind-hearted Christian caretaker of the Indians (101). He *wants to affect* humility, but in his mind and those of the jurors, he is an expert whose testimony

must be heard. His is the expertise of the ethnographer-anthropologist-missionary, the objective and objectifying voice that can explain a culture so inconceivable to *us*. Olguin's self-appointed position as mediator for Abel's culture maintains the same borders as Bowker's testimony. For both Bowker and Olguin, Indianness demarcates a clear boundary between Americans and Abel's culture and kind. As in the Sleepy Lagoon trial, both sides of the official debate maintain equally essentialist terms.

That Father Olguin's liberal testimony may not ultimately be at odds with Bowker's is first suggested at a festival he attends. Whereas Abel's grandfather describes the Diné as a group who "of all people, knew how to be beautiful" (76), in an uncharacteristic moment Father Olguin describes the same people with disgust and revulsion, calling them "innumerable and grotesque," "bloated or shriveled up with age," and all so alike in look and character that "their one timeless enigmatic face constrained into idiocy and delight" (72). About a baby, Olguin notes with distaste that "[i]ts little eyes were overhung with fat, and *its* cheeks and chins sagged down in front of the tight swaddle at *its* throat" (73, emphasis added). Since Olguin is generally solicitous and attentive to his parishioners, it is noteworthy that Olguin's disgust surfaces for the first and only time during a celebration that brings Native people into public spaces. He calls upon myths of Indianness to justify his discomfort.

It would not be until 1978 with an act of Congress that American Indians were permitted unrestricted access to public space. Since the nineteenth century, public gatherings for ceremonies like the sun dance and the potlatch were made illegal based in fears that "[t]hese feasts or dances are not social gatherings for the amusement of these people, but, on the contrary, are intended and calculated to stimulate the warlike

passions of the young warriors of the tribe,” as the Secretary of the Interior wrote in 1883.³¹ Étienne Balibar calls public space “the space of equality,” and argues that “the colonizing nation, imbued with its civilizing mission, categorized ‘cultures’ and ‘ethnicities’ in order to delimit and control the possibilities of moving from the status of an indigene to that of a newly ‘emancipated’ citizen.”³² The control of physical and social movement delimits the borders of the imagined national community of the settler colonial nation. The “one timeless enigmatic” Indian that so offends Olguin does so because timeless Indians do not belong in the space of equality; indeed, they do not belong in the modern world. Olguin’s unchanging Indians ultimately look no different from Bowker’s interchangeable Indians, that all speak “Sioux or Algonquin or something.” The interchangeable, anachronistic Indian is the vanishing Indian, and the vanishing Indian invites conquest and dominion over Native American peoples and lands. The myths of Indianness that inform both Bowker and Olguin’s testimonies erect borders that keep Indians ‘in their place.’ In its court scenes, *House* illustrates the toxic echoes in dominant debates that reiterated and reflected, rather than opposed, one another.

2. The Pursuit of Indianness

The restrictive definitions of Indianness represented within *House Made of Dawn*’s courtroom debates have also shaded critical interpretations of these scenes.³³ Lee

31. Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, November 1, 1883. Congress passed the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) in 1978.

32. Balibar, *We the People of Europe?*, 68, 39.

33. As I argued in chapter one, limited notions of Indian authenticity have influenced the reception of Native American literature.

Schweninger and Cara Cilano argue that through its court scenes, *House* emphasizes the injustice of putting a member of a sovereign indigenous nation on trial in the United States. They argue that the novel illuminates the “unwillingness and inability of the dominant culture, which makes and carries out the laws, to accept or acknowledge the worldviews or ethical systems of the ‘colonized’ culture.” While I agree with their thesis, I dispute their close reading, which takes for granted the veracity of Olguin’s testimony. They claim that Olguin “draws attention to the dominant culture’s absolute failure to acknowledge a radically different worldview.”³⁴ Their description of a “radically different worldview” aligns neatly with Olguin’s description of Indians as “inconceivable to us.” Rather than accept the premise of the dominant debate, I argue that critics should instead question the common critical assumption that there exists an innate ‘Indian’ identity or that this authentic Indianness can only be found in the analyses of scholars, anthropologists, and missionaries.³⁵ Though Olguin’s authority is often taken for granted, I argue his liberal, generous perspective is represented in the text precisely to force critics to question the compatibility of his culturalist arguments with their own.

Abel’s actions are not “inconceivable” nor are his motives “radically different” from other people’s motives. I argue that he should not be read as an authentic

34. Lee Schweninger and Cara Cilano, “‘Going Into a Whole Different Country’: Postcolonial ‘Nation’-hood in Native American Literature,” in *Beyond the Borders: American Literature and Post-colonial Theory*, ed. Deborah L. Madsen (Virginia: Pluto Press, 2003), 44.

35. I build on Maureen Konkle’s argument here as well as the discussions of Indian authenticity from chapter one of this dissertation. See Konkle, “Indian Literacy,” 151-152.

representation of biological or cultural Indian difference, but rather as a traumatized war veteran. In an interview, Momaday describes the significance of military service:

[The American Dream] means a great deal actually, and the reason it does has something to do with my being a Native American. I belong to a race of people, a society, that has been oppressed. We, the Indians, have had a hard time, for a long time. We have had to endure a great deal, but the dream means as much to us as it does to anyone. You'll never find a greater patriot than an American Indian. ... It is not an accident that the greatest honor that can come to an American Indian in my generation is to serve in the Armed Forces. And the veterans who have given their lives are greatly honored by the Native people.³⁶

Forty-four thousand Native Americans served in the US military during WWII.³⁷ Abel takes on this “greatest honor,” yet returns to Walatowa to become not a hero but a murderer. What happens when we stop reading Abel and the murder he commits as a metaphor for American borders? If instead we focus on the tension between his patriotic sacrifice and his reception in the US military as an ‘Indian,’ we can read the murder, not as an “inconceivable” expression of Indianness, but as a response to the very myths of Indianness by which critics have so often read this moment. When Bowker sees Abel’s physical reaction to the carnage of war as “a goddam war dance!”, he articulates an idea of Indian bravery that other American WWII soldiers drew upon to heighten their own courage. When paratroopers yelled “Geronimo!” as they leapt into battle, they

36. Momaday, “Online Interview with N. Scott Momaday,” American Academy of Achievement, 2001.

37. Vincent Schilling, “By the Numbers: A Look at Native Enlistment During the Major Wars,” *Indian Country Today*, 2014.

incorporated American myths of Indianness by drawing on their imagined Indian heritage to give them strength and courage.³⁸ Indianness is both absorbed and rejected. It is both a metaphor for true Americanness and a metaphor for America's opposite. As Indianness is absorbed and rejected, there remains a remainder: Indigenous peoples themselves. Abel's story highlights the damage these conflicting myths of Indianness do as they erase and replace Indigenous humanity in the American imaginary.

Further substantiating my argument that the murder Abel commits should be read as a response to the very myths of Indianness that critics so often use to interpret the scene is the fact that the murder takes place after Abel encounters Angela, a white woman, going native. Angela vacations in Walatowa in the hope of accessing the hidden powers of Indian healing by bathing in the water and attending Indian celebrations and ceremonies. As with Olguin, critics have often regarded Angela as a person of authority. When Angela attends a dance, she finds it "beautiful and strange" as well as "grave and mysterious" (36). She appears respectful, and because she finds beauty in the foreign mysteriousness of Indian festivities, critics have been receptive to her insights.³⁹ By representing Olguin and Angela's explanations of life on the Pueblo of Jemez as truth, however, sympathetic critics reproduce the dominant monologue that speaks over (by speaking for) Indigenous perspectives. Angela seems to facilitate access to that 'radically

38. In chapter four, I explain the implications of incorporating Indianness in more detail.

39. See for example, Harold S McAllister, "Incarnate Grace and the Paths of Salvation in *House Made of Dawn*," *South Dakota Review* 12, no. 4 (1975), 115-25; Carole Oleson, "The Remembered Earth: Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*," *South Dakota Review* 11, no. 1 (1973), 59-78.

different' Indianness Olguin describes; her perspective, however, proves to be solely one of colonial dominance. Looking at some Jemez dancers, she comments:

Their eyes were held upon some vision out of range, something away in the end of distance, some reality that she did not know, or even suspect. What was it that they saw? Probably they saw nothing after all, nothing at all. But then that was the trick, wasn't it? To see nothing at all, nothing in the absolute. To see beyond the landscape, beyond every shape and shadow and color, that was to see nothing. That was to be free and finished, complete, spiritual. (36-37)

Angela never solicits information about the dance, and instead authorizes herself to interpret it. Feeling trapped in a body she abhors – “She could think of nothing more vile and obscene than the raw flesh and blood of her body” (34) – Angela projects onto the Indians and finds escape from her insecurities in an imagined Indian culture.

Incorporating these escapist fantasies to improve her health and well-being, Angela goes native in Walatowa. Going native is a practice whereby white Americans ritualistically cleanse themselves of the negative effects of their society by absorbing their society's opposite: imagined Indianness. Many who go native do so out of a purported respect and love for Indigenous cultures. Recent iterations include white shamans, sweat lodge health retreats, and the booming business of selling 'Indian'-inspired goods for people seeking physical or spiritual healing, including healing stones, Indian figurines, and even a cat statue 'spiritual guide' called “Chief Runs with Paws”

which dons a feather headdress: “A noble keeper of mysterious secrets held within the spirit world, this tabby is ready to share his sacred wisdom with you!”⁴⁰

As alternative culture, alternative medicine, and alternative consumerism, this Indian-play offers the semblance of destabilizing dominant systems of oppression and privilege, but, as Shari Huhndorf notes, it “actually reinforces the racial hierarchies it claims to destabilize.”⁴¹ Huhndorf argues that going native is a ritual critical to the performance and maintenance of American whiteness. The practice promises that through Indianness, the corruptions of white society can be shed and resisted. Through Indianness, white people and white America can be reborn. I argue that it is paradoxically through the incorporation of Indianness into American whiteness that Native people themselves are forced out of ‘Americanness’ and reconceived as ‘foreign.’ As Angela goes native, she racializes Abel as nonnative.

Like Olguin and Bowker, Angela sees Abel not as a war veteran or fellow American, but as something else entirely: “a wooden Indian – his face cold and expressionless,” a tabula rasa she can stock with her own escapist fantasies (36). The narrator explains that long after meeting Angela, “For the first time since coming home [Abel] had done away with his uniform. He had put on his old clothes” (42). Although Abel served in the armed forces, and wears his uniform during most of their time together, Angela’s ritualized absorption of Indianness to create and define her white identity asserts that she is more included, more powerful, and thereby more American,

40. This is a real product. Product description from Amazon.com.

41. Huhndorf, *Going Native*, 3.

than he is. Because she needs Indianness to represent an escape, she erects a border between herself and Abel that he cannot cross.

Angela, Olguin, and Bowker each delimit white American identity by imposing fictive, foreign Indianness on Abel. They deracinate him to the point that he could not even recognize the earth while in battle: “He reached for something, but he had no notion of what it was; his hand closed upon the earth” (26). The stifling burden of these myths causes him to return from war “ill,” feeling unstable, confused, and lost (13). Abel responds by trying to kill the whiteness they construct through the creation, absorption, and exclusion of ‘Indianness.’ Misdirecting his anger and impotence, he kills a man he calls “the white man” (81), an act that critics – in the same manner as Bowker and Olguin – have interpreted as “entirely within the Indian tradition.”⁴² In reality, the Jemez Pueblo confront evil through ceremonies, several of which are depicted in *House*, not through killing.⁴³ I read Abel’s crime as a product of the destructive forces and myths of settler colonialism, rather than as an expression of impenetrable, unknowable, unchanging Indianness. Abel’s sense of foreignness comes from the historical conditions that make him so – in the ways the testimony and the army “dispos[e] of him in language” (95).

42. Marion Willard Hylton, “On a Trail of Pollen: Momaday’s *House Made of Dawn*,” *Critique* 14, no. 2 (1972), 62.

43. In his article, “Words and Place,” Lawrence J. Evers writes, “Abel appears to kill the albino then as a frustrated response to the White Man and Christianity, but he does so more in accordance with Anglo tradition than Indian tradition... The very day then that Abel kills the albino the community from which he is estranged could have provided him with a way of ritually confronting the white man. Had his return not been a failure, he might have born his agony... Separated from that community, he acts individually against evil and kills the white man” (308-309).

Native American literary criticism has inherited the settler colonial epistemologies at play in Ayres's testimony and in *House*'s debates. Critics continue to measure the quality of Native American texts and interpret the actions of Native American characters through the lens of an assumed Indian authenticity. Maureen Konkle calls these ongoing trends in literary criticism an "ahistorical pursuit of Indian identity." She concludes that literary criticism must move away from the search for an "innate Indian consciousness" and instead attend to "the existence of a historical and political entity, the Indian nation."⁴⁴

Created through nation-to-nation treaties, reservations serve as a geographical record of both sovereignty and colonization. They are social and political sites of tribal and US intergovernmental relations, but, often far removed from ancestral homelands, they also represent dislocation. Native American texts often incorporate legal scenes like the ones analyzed above, in part to comment on the liminal legal space Native American nations occupy.⁴⁵ Though they are sovereign nations with independent governments and court systems, Native American nations are still subject to the jurisdiction of the United

44. Konkle, "Indian Literacy," 152.

45. Schweninger and Cilano write, "Native American authors often present these questions of 'what rights?' and 'whose law?' by depicting encounters between mainstream laws and the behavior of particular Indian characters. Like questions of sovereignty, questions of legal status in both criminal and civil matters are often central in Native American literature" (43). For a longer commentary on Native American literary depictions of nationhood and the law, see Schweninger and Cilano, "Going Into a Whole Different Country." A short list of the Native American texts that Schweninger and Cilano analyze that incorporate legal issues and questions of sovereignty include Leslie Marmon Silko's "Tony's Story," Simon Ortiz's "The Killing of a State Cop," Linda Hogan's *Power*, Pauline Johnson's "A Red Girl's Reasoning," and Gerald Vizenor's *The Heirs of Columbus*.

States for many legal matters, including homicide.⁴⁶ Fictional court scenes create space for Native American authors to grapple with issues of nation and sovereignty that inevitably arise with any legal question. Most commonly, however, court scenes depict a sense of powerlessness as they expose the restricted sovereignty of the postcolonial Indigenous nation.⁴⁷ The reservation is the place where Indigenous national sovereignty lives, is questioned, and denied. Dramatizing how the denial of sovereignty denies Abel's identity, *House* relocates Abel's sense of self in the historical, political, and geographic space of the sovereign Jemez Pueblo.

Despite the pressure to assimilate from the army, prison, social workers, parole officers, coworkers, and even his friends, Abel finds his way back to the reservation and back to his culture.⁴⁸ In its form, the novel draws on the repetitive and circular structure of Jemez oral stories. The chapters shift in and out of time, resisting the linearity central to Euro-American myths of racial progress. Furthermore, the stories and vignettes weave together the points of view of several protagonists, emphasizing the communal nature of Jemez oral stories and resisting the standard western narrative practice of focusing on a single protagonist. In this way Abel does not find healing wholeness by participating in the American myth of the rugged individualist – that rugged individualist built through

46. With the Seven Major Crimes Act passed by Congress 1885, the United States no longer recognized the legal sovereignty of Indigenous nations, which had been previously protected by nation-to-nation treaties.

47. Schweninger and Cilano, "Going Into a Whole Different Country," 44.

48. At the factory, Abel's friend Benally downplays the violence inherent to the pressure to assimilate: "They [the other workers] kid around a lot down there, those guys. They're always calling you chief and talking about firewater and everything. . . . He was used to it, though, because he had been in the army, and in prison, too" (Momaday 152).

incorporated myths of Indianness. Abel finds healing by joining his community, and rejecting Euro-American myths of Indianness. At the end of the novel, Abel has one last encounter with Father Olguin. Abel tells him his grandfather is dead, and Olguin responds:

‘I can understand how you must feel, but –’

But Abel was gone. Father Olguin shivered with cold and peered out into the darkness. ‘I can understand,’ he said. ‘I understand, do you hear?’ And he began to shout. ‘I understand! *Oh God! I understand – I understand!*’ (210, emphasis in original)

Father Olguin says he *understands*, but his perception was always self-reflexive. His Indians were simply a way for him to understand himself – hence his repetition of I, I, I, I. At this point, the novel abandons the purported voice of objective authority. At trial, settler colonial discourses dictated the terms of Abel’s Indianness, and “[w]ord by word these men were disposing of him in language, *their* language, and they were making a bad job of it” (95). Word by word they discarded Abel by rendering his identity foreign even to himself. At novel’s end, however, Olguin has no further outlet to dispose of his Indians in language, and he is left alone to shout into a void. The literary narrative takes control back from the official trial record. In rejecting elements of dominant Euro-American myths within the narrative and Euro-American storytelling forms within the novel’s structure, the novel strengthens its commitment to resisting the myths of Indianness voiced by those Euro-American characters that ostensibly believe they are helping American Indian peoples. In form and content, the novel’s politics resist the

dominant monologue on Indianness, using fiction to broadcast those resistant voices silenced through more official channels.

III. Settler Colonialism and Japanese Internment

1. Legal Discourses

In this section, I turn to a second literary engagement with myths of ‘foreign Indianness,’ John Okada’s novel *No-No Boy*, the first Japanese-American novel about internment. With Executive Order 9066, issued by President Roosevelt in 1942, the United States government imprisoned between 110,000 and 120,000 Japanese Americans in concentration camps in the desolate desert regions of the American west. Accusing Japanese-Americans of a race-based predisposition for disloyalty, sabotage, and espionage, the government and newspapers both fomented claims that Japanese Americans posed a threat to national security. With no evidence, and no charges filed, for years Japanese Americans lived in a state of dislocation, surrounded by barbed wire and armed guards. The Supreme Court reviewed the executive order in three separate cases, and, declining to comment on its factual legitimacy, secured the order’s legality.⁴⁹

Los Angeles Congressman Leland Ford was an early proponent of Japanese American internment because, he insisted, “by permitting himself to be placed in a concentration camp, [the Japanese American, “whether citizen or not”] would be making his sacrifice and he should be willing to do it if he is patriotic and is working for us. As against his sacrifice, millions of other native born citizens are willing to lay down their lives, which is a far greater sacrifice, of course, than being placed in a concentration

49. “Personal Justice Denied,” *The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration*, www.archives.gov, December 1982, 48-51.

camp.”⁵⁰ In Ford’s paradoxical formula, through “patriotic” sacrifice, Japanese Americans could prove, not that they are one of “us,” but that they are “working for us.” As his biological determinism erects a clear border between “us” and Japanese Americans, the border simultaneously breaks down with his proposal that Japanese Americans can prove their patriotism to their country. As with Ayres’s formula, the historical fact of internment and its surrounding discourses illustrate how the paradigm of foreignness does not suffice to represent or dissect American racializations.

Further demonstrating these paradoxical tensions, in 1943, the War Department created a questionnaire to ascertain the loyalty of interned Japanese Americans and induct young men into the military. The final two questions were designed to measure the respondent’s loyalty, and thereby their Americanness:

No. 27. “Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States in combat duty wherever ordered?”

No. 28. “Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attacks of foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese Emperor, to any other foreign government, power or organization?”

The protagonist of John Okada’s novel *No-No Boy*, Ichiro Yamada, responds to both questions with “no.”⁵¹ Thus he became, along with four thousand young Japanese

50. Qtd. in “Personal Justice Denied,” 70.

51. Okada, John. *No-No Boy*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1957, 1977. All future in-text citations in the section are from this novel.

American men, a “no-no boy.”⁵² Based on the true story of a young man named Hajiime Jim Akutsu, *No-No Boy* follows Ichiro Yamada, an interned Japanese American who acquires the epithet ‘no-no boy’ when he refuses the draft. First incarcerated in a concentration camp, then incarcerated again in prison, Ichiro exemplifies exclusion through enclosure. Like *House Made of Dawn*, John Okada’s novel *No-No Boy* explores the US’s racialized discourses of foreignness in WWII through the judicial process.

Diverging from the standard tropes of the American novel, wherein the protagonist finds their place within the American dream, Ichiro challenges the premise of the individualist pursuit of capitalistic happiness. Depicting the systemic consequences of racism and internment, the novel ends with the fragmented pieces of Ichiro’s life still without resolution. Like Abel, Ichiro is forced to deal with racialized legal discourses through the American court system. In *No-No Boy*, courts both create the condition of Ichiro’s protest and prevent acknowledgement of his protest’s meaning. When Ichiro refuses the draft, the courts designate him a traitor. Ichiro’s internal turmoil finds echoes in the paradox of the questionnaire; delivered solely to America’s biological foreigners, the questionnaire affirms foreignness even as it confirms that US is indeed the respondent’s country to serve or betray.

Lisa Lowe argues “the Asian is always seen as an immigrant, as the ‘foreigner-within.’”⁵³ Immigration exclusion acts from 1882, 1924, and 1934 are partly to blame, as is the first Naturalization Act of 1790, which established racial whiteness as a

52. Storhoff 2.

53. Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 5.

prerequisite for naturalization. However, racist immigration and naturalization policies do not explain why US citizens were also imprisoned in WWII Japanese American internment camps by the tens of thousands. Immigration and naturalization policies cannot explain why US citizens were deported with their parents to Mexico, again by the tens of thousands, during the 1930s.⁵⁴ Official immigration policies also do not explain why, in 2018, anti-immigration protesters would accost Arizona Rep. Eric Dscheenie, a Navajo and a US citizen, about the legality of his presumed immigration status. Such official policies do not account for the enduring attributions of perceived ‘foreignness’ to Latino, Native, and Asian Americans. Historically, certain citizens have been denied the full rights and protections of citizenship. Discursively, as Lowe explains, certain citizens are “always seen” as ‘foreign.’

That Japanese Americans have been made to feel foreign in their own country is one of the central themes of Okada’s novel. WWII veteran Kenji joined the armed forces to prove his Americanness, to “fight for the right to continue to be American” (34). The narrator explains: “the shaken faith of an American interned in an American concentration camp was indeed a flimsy thing. ...this son had gone to war to prove that he deserved those rights which should rightfully have been his” (121). Those rights “should” have been, but were not, his because even Japanese American soldiers are treated as threatening, foreign agents. In one scene, American soldiers protect the President from other American soldiers: “the president named Roosevelt had come to the camp in Kansas and all the American soldiers in the camp who were Japanese had been

54. Act of 26 March 1790 (*Statutes at Large of the USA I* [1845]: 103). Public Law 82-414; *U.S. Statutes at Large* 66 [1952]: 163, also known as the McCarran-Walter Act.

herded into a warehouse and guarded by other American soldiers with machine guns until the president named Roosevelt had departed” (121). In his despair, Kenji advises Ichiro: “Go someplace where there isn’t another Jap within a thousand miles. Marry a white girl or a Negro or an Italian or even a Chinese. Anything but a Japanese. After a few generations of that, you’ve got the thing beat” (164). Internalizing the view that he is a contaminant, Kenji advises assimilation and eugenics to “beat” their racialized disease.

Ichiro is no stranger to such thoughts. He describes a neighborhood with a growing black population as “dirtier and shabbier” than it once was (5), calls his black neighbors “n*ggers” (5), and looks around a Japanese restaurant in a primarily minority neighborhood wondering, “Where is that place with the *clean, white* cottages surrounding the new, red-brick church with the *clean, white* steeple, where the families all have two children, one boy and one girl, and a shiny new car in the garage and a dog and a cat and life is like living in the land of the happily ever after? Surely it must be around here someplace, someplace in America. Or is it just that it’s not for me?” (159, emphasis added).

Seeking a *white* world, Ichiro articulates an American dream cleansed of nonwhite elements, even as he writhes against such racist hatred. Of this complex internal struggle, the narrator explains: “Friggin’ n*ggers, he uttered savagely to himself and, from the same place deep down inside where tolerance for the Negroes and the Jews and the Mexicans and the Chinese and the too short and too fat and too ugly abided because he was Japanese and knew what it was like better than did those who were white and average and middle class and good Democrats or liberal Republicans, the hate which was unrelenting and terrifying seethed up” (5-6). His hatred comes from the same place as his

understanding. Even as he punishes himself for not joining the army to prove he is an American, he recognizes that the army did not help the other Japanese men melt into the melting pot: “because the army didn’t do anything about his face to make him look more American” (159).

Ichiro’s sense of foreignness – that he does not look like an American and that he can never have access to the American dream steeped in capitalist ideals of ownership of that which is *clean* and *white* – reflects an internalized vision of how Japanese Americans were situated in the years before and during the Second World War, and the reality of their dispossession after internment. In 1942, as a result of Executive Order 9066, Japanese Americans were forced to dispose of their businesses, land, and property in a matter of days. Upon release, the once prosperous community was reduced to living in overcrowded, substandard housing.⁵⁵ Japanese American money, businesses, homes, and possessions were lost, sold at a loss or simply left behind. In a country built from profiting off of the free land, labor, and resources of its oppressed peoples, this was part of a much larger pattern. Once again the dispossession of American minorities secured the possessive personhood of Euro-Americans.⁵⁶

55. Toni Robinson and Greg Robinson, “The Limits of Interracial Coalitions: Mendez v. Westminster *Reexamined*” in De Genova, *Racial Transformations*, 97. Along with the loss of material wealth came emotional trauma. In the words of historians Toni Robinson and Greg Robinson, “The traumas of imprisonment and the rigors of the camp experience triggered widespread psychological disturbance among the inmates and brought about the breakdown of existing community and family structures.” (Robinson and Robinson 97)

56. Chiyo Crawford argues that claims that Japanese American farms were “strategically” located near military bases grew from the perception that these successful farms posed an economic and racial threat to white Californian farmers. See “From Desert Dust to City Soot: Environmental Justice and Japanese American Internment in Karen Tei

Noting Ichiro's struggles and the novel's emphasis on an 'American' identity that appears to come at the expense of a recognizable 'Japanese' identity, several critics have read *No-No Boy* as an assimilationist text. One critic writes, "the plot of *No-No Boy* boils down to a single rhetorical gesture – Ichiro's reaffirmation that he is 'American.'"⁵⁷ Others have interpreted the novel's redemptive arc as reproducing both Christian and US narrative traditions in rejection of Japanese traditions.⁵⁸ Expecting authentic Asian American literature to take one of two forms – either a titillating story of Asian exoticism or a pro-American narrative of successful assimilation – early critics and audiences could not recognize *No-No Boy*'s complex political stances.⁵⁹ Whereas some recent critics, like Gary Storhoff, have argued that sociopolitical readings "deflect attention from the novel's mimetic purpose," I argue that rather than turn away from the sociopolitical, critical interpretations need instead to resist imposing the restrictive binary of resistance-assimilation on the text. Jinqi Ling insists instead that "Okada dramatizes the fatal weaknesses of two available strategies for dealing with racism in American society-wholesale assimilation and fanatic Japanese nationalism," and that through the novel's

Yamashita's 'Tropic of Orange,'" *MELUS* 38, no. 3 (FALL 2013), 89. See also Yael Ben-zvi for more on possessive personhood.

57. Gayle K. Sato, "Momotaro's Exile: John Okada's *No-No Boy*." *Reading the Literatures of Asian America*, ed. Shirley Geok-lin Lim and Amy Ling (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 241.

58. Dorothy Ritsuko McDonald, "After Imprisonment Ichiro's Search for Redemption in *No-No Boy*." *MELUS* 6, no. 3 (1979): 19-26.

59. For more on the novel's early reception, see Jinqi Ling, "Race, Power, and Cultural Politics in John Okada's *No-No Boy*," *American Literature* 67, no. 2 (1995): 360-361.

tensions, “Okada opens a space in which the political potential of Ichiro’s stance can be further investigated.”⁶⁰

Few Asian American novelists had been published in the US by the mid-twentieth century. *No-No Boy* is the first Japanese American novel and the only novel written by a survivor of Japanese American internment camps. Describing the novel’s personal significance, Frank Chin writes in the afterword to Okada’s novel: “That’s what I grew up with. A literary tradition of cookbooks and autobiographies by the children of Christian converts and *Pocahontas yellows* whites call progressive for marrying out white.”⁶¹ For Chin, *No-No Boy* speaks to his lived experience. Jinqi Ling invites further investigation into the complex politics of the novel. Not written for white audiences, the novel does not pander to market demands for exoticism or assimilationism; in explaining that this is not the story of a “Pocahontas yellow,” Chin tries to emphasize a difference in what Okada has written. With “Pocahontas yellows,” Chin articulates the premise of this dissertation: that Americans enact rites of conquest and make themselves ‘more native’ by absorbing, playing, or purchasing Indianness. Okada does something different with Indianness. His characters are not written to justify, accept, or participate in white hegemony or American conquest.

2. ‘Indians’ and Internment

As I have argued throughout the chapter, not “foreign” per se, Asian American racialization is better understood as the product of pre-existing myths of Indianness in American culture. These interwoven discourses are mapped foremost in *No-No Boy*’s

60. Ling, “Race,” 366.

61. Frank Chin, “Afterword: In Search of John Okada,” in *No-No Boy* by John Okada. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1977, 254, emphasis added.

literary geographies. Ichiro is sent to an unspecified internment camp. Several Japanese American internment camps, including the Colorado River and Gila River camps, were located on American Indian reservations because the US government could control access to this land even without tribal consent. Still others became layered sites of geographic dislocation, as Japanese Americans were forced into spaces from which Indigenous peoples were previously forced to leave. One of the most well-known internment camps, Manzanar, was located in the Owens Valley, the ancestral homeland of the Paiutes.⁶²

The palimpsest of the Indian underwrites fears over the legitimacy of Euro-American claims to dominance, claims that must be constantly renewed and remapped. Projecting ‘Indianness’ onto immigrants, migrants, diasporic populations, terrorists, and the US’s many colonized peoples, Jodi Byrd argues, “colonial systems continue to reproduce and remap themselves anew and again.”⁶³ In the 1854 trial *People v. Hall*, for example, the California Supreme Court ruled that the testimony of a Chinese witness was not sufficient evidence to convict a white person. In its decision the court cited an 1850 statute that “no Black, or Mulatto person, or Indian shall be allowed to give evidence in favor of, or against a White man.” Appellate lawyers contended that “Black” stood in as a metonym for all nonwhite persons, and, as Nicholas de Genova notes, they also argued that the Asiatic origins of Indians meant that “in effect, all Asians were, therefore, conversely Indians.” As early as the sixteenth century, European colonizers had used the

62. Jeffery F. Burton, et al., *Confinement and Ethnicity: An Overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 38-39.

63. Byrd, *Transit*, 206.

supposed Asiatic origins of Indians to argue against their legal possession of land in the western hemisphere.⁶⁴ The colonialist argument insisted that Indians were no more *native* than first generation European expats. Indians were foreign because they were Asian and Asians were foreign because they were Indians.⁶⁵

By developing a different relationship with Indianness, immigrants, migrants, and citizens alike could make themselves more native. Jodi Byrd argues that internment camps were designed to form western frontiers whereby Japanese Americans could emerge as ‘true’ American citizens by first “go[ing] native and then carv[ing] democracy out of the wilderness.” Indian affairs policymakers, like John Collier, were involved in the planning and development of Japanese American internment camps. Collier believed internment camps would provide spaces for Japanese Americans to tame the wilderness through farming - like true American pioneers - never mind that Japanese American farmers were forced to leave their own farms to tame this artificial frontier. In her analysis of Japanese internment, Byrd underscores the “theoretical blind spots within critical philosophy and postcolonial theory” and identifies “the discourses of colonialism

64. De Genova, *Racial Transformations*, 8.

65. As Lowe explains, although Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Asian Indian, and Filipino immigrants “have played absolutely crucial roles in the building and the sustaining of America,” “the project of imagining the nation as homogeneous requires the orientalist construction of cultures and geographies from which Asian immigrants come as fundamentally ‘foreign’ origins antipathetic to...modern American society” (Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*, 5). Overlapping orientalist discourses racialize Asian Americans and American Indians, and Latinos in turn. Jodi Byrd writes of the term *Indian*: “There was a violence embedded in the naming. And slavery. And genocide. It is today a marker of that legacy. ... It is an ‘Orientalism’ transplanted and remapped onto the indigenous peoples of the Americas, and it carries with it all the discursive attempts to control and to narrate the place of peoples into an already established world ” (Byrd, *Transit*, 72-73).

that facilitated the violation of Japanese American civil rights.”⁶⁶ Building on the historical, critical, and philosophical work of scholars like Byrd, De Genova, and Jew who have brought attention to ways that discourses of Indianness underpin racialized policies, I turn to literature to investigate the ways authors represent and resist the human consequences of these historical, economic, and cultural systems. Describing literature’s unique value, Okada wrote in a letter to a friend, “This is a story which has never been told in fiction and only in fiction can the hopes and fears and joys and sorrows of people be adequately recorded. I feel an urgency to write of the Japanese in the United States.”⁶⁷ In his analysis of the Sleepy Lagoon case, Victor Jew expressed his regrets as a researcher over the domination ‘official stories,’ and often white, male voices, in American historiography and legal discourse. Fiction offers a means to fill such gaps, since, as Okada explains, “only in fiction can the hopes and fears and joys and sorrows of people be adequately recorded.”

Through the characters’ struggles, Okada’s novel presents a complex picture of the ways American identity is filtered through the racialized logics of Indianness. The novel also reveals the limits of resisting the dominant monologue on race. Even resistant voices reiterate the myth of the vanished Indian. But in order to deconstruct anti-Japanese racism and xenophobia, the novel also deconstructs settler colonial epistemologies. The internment camp is not imagined to reproduce the frontier experience for Ichiro; indeed, it has the opposite effect. In its form and structure, the novel resists normalizing and

66. Byrd, *Transit*, 192.

67. Okada in a letter to Charles Tuttle, qtd. in Chin 256-257.

effacing the colonization of American Indian nations in the name of letting the protagonist 'go native' for himself.

As Ichiro and Kenji attempt to make sense of their feelings of foreignness, for instance, they discuss American racism at length, but their conversations are marked by the stark omission of Native Americans. When Ichiro lists all the excluded, unwanted, and oppressed peoples he can think of, he lists “the Negroes and the Jews and the Mexicans and the Chinese and the too short and too fat and too ugly” (5-6). Similarly, as Kenji grapples with internalized racism, he tortures “himself repeatedly with the question which plagued his mind and confused it to the point of madness. Was there no answer to the bigotry and meanness and smallness and ugliness of people? One hears the voice of the Negro or Japanese or Chinese or Jew, a clear and bell-like intonation of the common struggle for recognition as a complete human being” (134). In neither character’s list – of black, Jewish, Mexican, Chinese, and white Americans – do Indians appear. In omitting Native people from any negotiation with their American identity and any resistance to its arbitrary boundaries, Ichiro and Kenji each in their own way inadvertently reiterates the myth of the vanished Indian, a myth, as I discuss in the introduction, that justifies and reinforces white hegemony.

Exposing the power of language to efface oppression in the US, in another moment two unnamed soldiers call attention to words as a tool of empire. In the vignette, a Japanese American soldier apprises a Euro-American soldier of Japanese internment, and “the removal of the Japanese from the Coast, which was called the evacuation, and about the concentration camps, which were called relocation centers” (xi). *No-No Boy* hinges on the power of words to define, divide, control, and reimagine peoples and

politics. The language of ‘concentration camps’ and ‘removal’ exposes these US policies – usually hidden, ignored, or accepted through official euphemisms – for what they are.

Such moments emphasize language and invite close reading. In a bar that offers refuge to Asian American veterans from the daily bombardment of racism and xenophobia on the streets, Kenji contemplates the war’s effect on minority communities, thinking:

Not many places a Jap can go to and feel so completely at ease. It must be nice to be white and American and to be able to feel like this no matter where one goes to, but I won’t cry about that. There’s been a war and, suddenly, things are better for the Japs and the Chinks and

There was a commotion at the entrance. (133)

Kenji’s reflection on the welcoming atmosphere of the bar is interrupted by when the bar patrons attempt to prevent two black men from entering. Daily life was not, as Kenji supposed, better for “Japs and Chinks and”... black people? We are left to wonder how Kenji planned to conclude his list. Which peoples did he plan to mention? Following the “and” can only be other unnamed groups who fought and died to achieve social, financial, and judicial security, who too fought “for the right to continue to be Americans” (34). Of these are the 25,000 Native Americans, the one million African Americans, and the half million Latinos who served in WWII alongside 33,000 Japanese American soldiers. But the “and” has no follow through, not even an ellipsis. Perhaps Kenji himself cannot list all the Americans who fought to negotiate a more enfranchised American identity, as his other completed lists make clear. The commotion underscores

the prematurity of his celebration. The bar patrons call the black men “cotton pickers” and casually throw around the n-word.

‘That crazy Jap boy Floyd tried to get in with two n*ggers. That’s the second time he tried that. What’s the matter with him?’

A Japanese beside Kenji shouted out sneeringly: ‘Them ignorant cotton pickers make me sick. You let one in and before you know it, the place will be black as night.’

‘Sure,’ said Jim Eng, ‘sure. I got no use for them. Nothing but trouble they make and I run a *clean* place.’

‘Hail Columbia,’ said a small, drunken voice. (133-134)

As a place primarily for veterans, the bar does not welcome no-no boys, like Ichiro, whose actions emphasize their refusal to assimilate. The bar is *clean* precisely because it caters only to white and ‘assimilated’ patrons. Black people threaten contamination. After the black men are thrown out, “Everyone laughed, or so it seemed, and quiet and decency and *cleanliness* and honesty returned to the Club Oriental” (134, emphasis added). As purity and contagion scholar Mary Douglas explains, it is the ritual of separation that calls purity/pollution narratives into being.⁶⁸ In *No-No Boy* the segregated bar is such a space. The pressure to assimilate, intensified by the patrons’ rejection of no-no boys, results in a space rife with fears of contagion, fears that come from recognizing that the inclusion in the ‘pure nation’ won through military service can so easily be lost.

The scene links modern American racism to its roots in the imperialist discourses of racialized cleanliness. After the owner refuses to serve black men because he runs a

68. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 54.

“clean” place, a patron hails Columbia. The name of the female personification of the US, *Columbia* gained popularity through late nineteenth-century revisions of US history created to justify US imperial expansion overseas. The Columbus imagined to have laid the foundation for the United States is, as Matthew Restall notes, “not a fifteenth-century man, but a nineteenth-century one, with a twentieth-century veneer.”⁶⁹ Restall suggests that it is the absolute destruction of the Indigenous populations with whom Columbus had contact that is perhaps why he, and not any other conquistador, came to be celebrated in the US.⁷⁰ Hail Columbia, the patron shouts; in other words, hail the US as empire with Columbus as the founder, hail the colonization of Indigenous people’s land, hail white hegemony in US imperialism overseas.

We can read the many unfinished lists as representative of the erasure of Indigenous peoples which scenes like this then re-summon. By connecting the racist hatred toward black men, the shifting boundaries of Asian American ‘foreignness,’ the discourses of racialized cleanliness, and the salute to the US as empire, the scene creates a clearer sense of what Kenji and Ichiro are themselves unable to articulate about their experience. My methodology for reading this scene is modeled on Spivak, who writes of her own political reading, “I should hasten to add here that just as readings such as this one do not necessarily accuse Charlotte Brontë the named individual of harboring imperialist sentiments, so also they do not necessarily commend Mary Shelley the named individual for writing a successful Kantian allegory. The most I can say is that it is

69. Mathew Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, 11.

70. Restall, *Seven Myths*, 73.

possible to read these texts, within the frame of imperialism and the Kantian ethical moment, in a politically useful way.”⁷¹ Like Spivak, I do not suggest a reading of Okada’s intentions. I instead suggest that the text is a product of these competing, conflicting, and interlinked discourses and histories, and that it is possible to read the politics of the text in this way. By reading the text through this frame, we can more deeply investigate the questions that the characters themselves struggle to answer. Such a methodology, moreover, moves away from the restrictive binaries of assimilation and resistance that have often limited critical interpretations of the text.

Not assimilationist nor fully resistant, even as Ichiro challenges the legality of internment and the rationality of the draft, like Abel, Ichiro internalizes the court’s view of him. This is in part because, as Priscilla Wald writes, “Legal being . . . determines social being,” and court decisions both determine and reflect personal and cultural understandings of personhood.⁷² The courts, which never filed any formal charges against internees, create the conditions of Ichiro’s dislocated sense of self. Further underscoring Ichiro’s sense of loss, alienation, and impotence are the imaginary conversations he has with a judge wherein Ichiro circles through the implications of the official circular reasoning. He argues: “You can’t make me go in the army because I’m not an American or you wouldn’t have plucked me and mine from a life that was good and real and meaningful and fenced me in the desert like they do the Jews in Germany and it is a puzzle why you haven’t started to liquidate us though you might as well since everything

71. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism,” *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (1985), 257.

72. Wald, *Constituting Americans*, 8, 4.

else has been destroyed” (31). By speaking to a judge, Ichiro gives himself the power to challenge the system, but the fictitiousness of his musings lays stress on his ultimate powerlessness. The imagined conversation with a judge becomes a trope that recurs throughout the novel. As a literary strategy, the trope interweaves American judicial history into readers’ experience of the narrative. This fiction about the law and its consequences constantly recalls, questions, and converses with the legal fictions produced through cases like *People v. Hall*, *Sleepy Lagoon*, and Executive Order 9066.

Grounded in literary geographies of dislocation, both *No-No Boy* and *House Made of Dawn* re-map and remember the settler colonial discourses that silently structure US race, nation, and empire.⁷³ Tomas Rivera’s novel *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* similarly speaks to the US’s shifting borders.⁷⁴ The novel depicts the communal stories of migrant Chicano laborers in the 1940s and 50s. After finding work in Utah, two farm laborers converse: ““where is it?” ... ‘I hear it’s somewhere close to Japan.’”⁷⁵ As the Chicano workers enter Utah to labor for another unnamed white boss, they wonder whether they are near Japan. The brief moment powerfully elicits, with a question, the silenced histories of Japanese American internment and American Indian removal. Whose land is this and how came it theirs? Who drew these borders? In this moment, the

73. Byrd, *Transit*, xix.

74. A great deal of work has been done within Latino and Chicano literary studies on the historical pressure for Latinos to “accept anti-indigenous discourses as their own,” and on efforts to reclaim, with pride, the community and literature’s indigenous heritages. Rafael Perez-Torres, “Refiguring Aztlan,” in *Postcolonial Theory and The United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature*, ed. Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 113; see for example Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*.

75. Tomas Rivera, *...And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* (Texas: University of Houston Arte Publico Press, 1995), 91.

novel does the work of re-mapping and remembering the presence of peoples denied a sense of place in these American spaces.

IV. Conclusion

Indianness defines Americanness. It reverberates throughout American culture and across American landscapes. Indian words and names – though distorted by settler colonial spellings and mishearings – drape across the Americas, mapping where people began and where they were moved. State, city, and landmark names – the Dakotas, Miami, Sioux Falls —map words and worlds not at the margins but at the center of American culture.⁷⁶ These Indian words in American maps, homes, and identities suggest the premise on which this dissertation builds, namely that Americans of all ethnicities use real and invented Indians to understand themselves and each other, and as they do so Indigenous peoples themselves are erased.

In asserting their inclusion in a self-proclaimed ‘nation of immigrants,’ Americans often participate in the erasure of those peoples who were not immigrants. Cook-Lynn writes in response to immigrant stories about assimilation: “Wait a minute, America, wait...before you define and imagine the world for yourself and your children only on your terms. Remember, we are here, we have always been here. We are the Indigenes and we do not share your stories.”⁷⁷ Immigrant stories can participate in the mission of American literature – to buttress and naturalize US settler colonialism and imperialism by encouraging its cultural invisibility.

76. See Gordon Brotherston, *Book of the Fourth World: Reading the Native Americas through Their Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992).

77. Cook-Lynn, *New Indians, Old Wars*, 180.

In an effort to alter the landscape of who counts as American, American authors of every heritage recurrently turn to the figure of the Indian, in both its forms: as a border to cross and a cultural core to incorporate. They do so both because the ‘Indian’ is a convenient cultural metaphor and because discourses of Indianness are so often mobilized to exclude and disempower people. *No-No Boy* and *House Made of Dawn* both defamiliarize discourses of Indianness. In doing so, these literary works push beyond the limited and oversimplified binary of domestic and foreign, which still so often organizes historical and sociopolitical analyses.⁷⁸

78. Reiterating, rather than questioning, Ayres’s formula, for example, Victor Jew writes of Mexican American deportations, “The Depression era had witnessed mass ‘repatriation,’ the ‘sending back’ to Mexico of persons of Mexican descent. That the hybrid Mexican American identity could be vexed, problematic, confusing, and easily subjected to abuse was clearly evidenced in the fact that some citizens of the United States born to Mexican immigrant or second-generation parents were also ‘repatriated’ to Mexico alongside so many unwanted ‘foreigners’” (Jew, “Getting the Measure,” 75).

Chapter Four

The Jeremiad and Indianness:

Recommitting to Settler Colonial Roots in Vietnam War Literature

Further open efforts to overthrow Castro would evoke worldwide denunciations of America's colonial aggression. Vietnam promised instead the qualities of America's remembered frontier triumphs: remoteness from dangerous confrontation with a major European power, a savage enemy who could be righteously hunted down, a wilderness landscape in which the American could renew his virtues where the European had proved only his vices, and the Asian people America historically saw as the appointed beneficiaries of its destiny

– John Hellmann, 51

The reality is a continuum that connects Indian flesh sizzling over Puritan fires and Vietnamese flesh roasting under American napalm
... The problem is that myth can become lethal

– Richard Lundstrom

US Vietnam War literature is often described as novel, experimental, or even crazy.¹ The most “successful books,” as one critic puts it, “are all quite mad.”²

Experimental literary methods and forms, the argument goes, are needed to express the unprecedented American experience in Vietnam. Thomas Myers writes that there was a “necessity for inventing new aesthetic strategies for the rendering of new history.”³

1. James C. Wilson classifies the best Vietnam literature as the ‘Dope and Dementia’ genre. See *Vietnam in Prose and Film* (London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1982).

2. Donald Ringnalda, “Fighting and Writing: America’s Vietnam War Literature,” *Journal of American Studies* 22, no. 1 (1988): 37.

Similarly, Vietnam War literary scholar Donald Ringnalda argues, “for Americans [the Vietnam War] was qualitatively different from anything they had experienced in their history. For America, Vietnam was unique (and thus a unique literary response [was] called for).”⁴

The US experience in Vietnam, however, was not actually new.⁵ In military strategy, imperial intent, and discourse, in many ways the Vietnam War was a continuation of the earlier US wars of colonial aggression, commonly called the ‘Indian Wars.’ And though there were new literary strategies – including experimentations with postmodern literary modes – I argue that the new strategies were superimposed over the United States’ most traditional genre: the American jeremiad.

Studies of Vietnam War literature have often focused on the aesthetic strategies developed to convey the complicated experience of the war. These studies often overlook those formal elements that Vietnam literature and earlier US narratives share. The jeremiad is an especially problematic oversight. Americans process change through the ritual form of the American jeremiad, which means the crisis perpetuated by the Vietnam War was processed through a form that demands Americans return to their roots, roots firmly situated in structures of white male hegemony. Even as it reflects epistemic ruptures, I argue US literature about the Vietnam War also reflects a recommitment to colonial epistemologies. I would rephrase Ringnalda: Vietnam was not unique (and the

3. Thomas Myers, *Walking Point: American Narratives of Vietnam*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, 146.

4. Ringnalda, “Fighting,” 26.

5. See Philip D. Beidler, *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1982) and Philip H. Melling, *Vietnam in American Literature* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990).

literary response reflects this). While some studies investigate these formal and narrative continuities, most neglect the ways that these continuities reinforce racial myths and imperial ideologies. On the other hand, those that unpack American myths in Vietnam literature usually again ignore narrative continuities, which again leads them to conclude that Vietnam caused an epistemic rupture in American racial myths, particularly the racializations of the American Indian.

This chapter intervenes in earlier discussions about the historical, cultural, and literary connections between the Indian Wars and the Vietnam War to focus specifically on the jeremiad, which I contend deploys the invented ‘Indian’ trope to ritualistically reaffirm white hegemony. Previous studies of the American jeremiad have not examined Indianness as a central component in the development of white American identity. I argue the jeremiad is used to develop whiteness via the incorporation of certain elements of invented myths of Indianness in both mainstream- and counter-culture. This chapter attends the ways Americans reinforce settler colonial systems of privilege and oppression, even if they do so unconsciously.

The Vietnam War brought up comparisons between the Vietnamese and American Indians. American soldiers called the Vietnamese “Indians” and Vietnam “Indian Country,” which became standard tropes in both fictional and autobiographical war narratives.⁶ Philip Caputo, for example, begins his novel *Indian Country* (1987) with a definition:

6. See, for example, Eugene Burdick and William Lederer, *The Ugly American* (New York: Norton, 1958); Robin Moore, *The Green Berets* (New York: Crown, 1965); William Eastlake, *The Bamboo Bed* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1969); Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977); Norman Mailer, *Why Are We in*

Indian country n. [U.S. *mil. slang*] 1. term used by American soldiers during Vietnam conflict (1961-75) to designate territory under enemy control or any terrain considered hostile and dangerous. 2. [*fig.*] a place, condition or circumstance that is alien and dangerous

The terms also made it into official accounts of the war. General Maxwell Taylor, for example, testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that “[w]e have to get the Indians farther away in many provinces to make good progress.”⁷ The Eisenhower administration justified anti-communist intervention with the “politically acceptable precedents such as the U.S. Army’s role in developing the American West.”⁸ Historian Richard Slotkin described the Vietnam War as “our last great Indian War,”⁹ while Native American activists drew on the war’s unpopularity to draw attention to their own political struggles. As Woody Kipp (Blackfeet) wrote: “here, in my own country, I was the ‘gook.’”¹⁰

A number of literary and historical scholars have discussed the causes and implications of this association. Two early texts that helped establish the tenor of

Vietnam? (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1967); and Philip Caputo, *Indian Country* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), just to name a few.

7. Qtd in Frances Fitzgerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam* (Boston: Little Brown, 1974), 367-368.

8. This was the Military Assistance Program under the Eisenhower Administration. Noam Chomsky, *For Reasons of State*. (New York: Pantheon, 1970), 120.

9. Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration and Violence: the Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1800* (Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1973), 562.

10. Woody Kipp “The Eagles I Fed Who Did Not Love Me,” in Troy Johnson, Duane Champagne, and Joane Nagel, “American Indian Activism and Transformation: Lessons from Alcatraz” in *American Indian Activism*, 210.

Vietnam literary criticism were Philip Beidler's *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam* and John Hellmann's *American Myth and the Legacy of Vietnam*. US literature and other media depicted the early years in Vietnam as a modern cowboy and Indian narrative, and both Beidler and Hellmann argue that this imagery signaled a celebration of US imperialism and a confidence in the surety of US victory.¹¹ Frances Fitzgerald agrees, arguing that such references "put the Vietnam War into a definite mythological and historical perspective: the Americans were once again embarked upon a heroic...conquest of an inferior race."¹² As the war dragged on, Beidler, Hellmann, and others argue, the use of Indianness changed. Indianness was picked up by the counterculture. Antiwar protestors donned beads and fringed leather, and white hippies joined, and even attempted to take over, the American Indian occupation of Alcatraz, as they redeployed American Indian protest for protests against the Vietnam War. Depictions of disillusioned Vietnam War veterans became associated with the image of the Indian - as abandoned and disempowered figures in the face of an oppressive US government.

This chapter's central question is: why do both pro- and antiwar cultural productions draw on the same cultural symbol, and are their meanings radically different? The consensus is that the Vietnam War precipitated a fundamental transformation in the meaning of Indianness in US culture. Agreeing with Hellmann, Shari Huhndorf writes

11. See, for example, John Hellmann's analyses of both *The Ugly American* and *The Green Berets* in *American Myth and the Legacy of Vietnam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

12. Frances Fitzgerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, (USA: Back Bay Books, 2002), (368).

that since the 1970s, “Indianness has been transformed in American popular culture into an abstraction, into pure knowledge, into an essence divested of the histories and the presence of Native people. Indianness, it seems, can now be fully possessed by white society.”¹³ David Espey, too, argues that the Vietnam War saw “transformations in the popular image of the American Indian.”¹⁴ They each argue that the ‘Indian hating’ that characterized the early years of the war transformed into ‘Indian idolizing.’

Myths of Indianness were never based on the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. As I have argued throughout the dissertation, these myths already existed in European cultures to justify and encourage imperialism, and never actually described or referred to any particular peoples. Indianness is instead a colonial metaphor that stands in the place of Indigenous peoples.¹⁵ As such, ‘Indianness’ is an infinitely transposable metaphor, which could be used again to powerful effect in Vietnam, whether in support of the war in the early years or to argue against the war in the later years.

I argue that the transformation critics see is merely superficial, and that both mainstream and countercultural uses of the Indian functioned to reaffirm, reinvigorate, and naturalize white hegemony and US imperialism, even in the midst of the civil rights era and the launch of the Red Power Movement. In both the celebratory cowboy-and-Indian versions of the war and the narratives of disillusionment, white people looked to their Indian roots to seek wholeness and progress. White cowboys used Indianness to

13. Huhndorf, *Going Native*, 161.

14. David Espey, “America and Vietnam: The Indian Subtext,” *The Journal of American Culture and Literature*, 1994. <http://www.english.upenn.edu/~despey/vietnam.htm>.

15. See my dissertation’s introduction.

escape the feminizing influences of modern life to become tougher, more skilled warriors to defeat their Indian foe in Vietnam; white counterculturalists used Indianness to escape the corrupting influences of a modern society plagued with pollution, war, and racism. In both cases, white Americans expressed a frustration with the present, and to ameliorate the ills of the present, they sought an idealized American ‘Indian’ past that would help them progress toward a more true, authentic American future. Both mainstream and counterculture processed the Vietnam War through the American jeremiad: a ritual form based in myths of Indianness.

While the word “mad” is often used to describe Vietnam literature, tracing the figure of the Indian reveals that this literature is less ‘mad’ and more traditional than we might expect. This chapter looks at representative novels that either conform to or question mainstream culture to argue that both cultural impulses reaffirm white hegemony by calling on Americans to recommit to their ‘Indian’ roots. To review how Indianness played a role in dominant US culture, the first half of the chapter will analyze Robin Moore’s wildly popular novel *The Green Berets* (1965), alongside popular critical analyses of the work, to examine the cowboy and Indian tropes that resurfaced within Vietnam War literature and military vocabulary. By close reading this novel, I investigate the role of the jeremiad in the making of the racialized white American male. Importantly, this chapter emphasizes, the jeremiad itself disempowers Indigenous peoples by idealizing an Americanness built on the consumption of Indianness. To reveal how counterculture ‘Indians’ play a similar ideological role as those in the early ‘Indian hating’ years, in the second half of the chapter, I analyze William Eastlake’s antiwar novel, *The Bamboo Bed* (1969). In the final section of this chapter, I examine *The*

Education of Little Tree (1976), a hoax autobiography written by a white KKK wizard playing Indian. This chapter asks how white men could play Indian at the same time that they played cowboys killing Indians, and asserts that these are manifestations of the same cultural impulse.

1. ‘Indian Hating’ and White American Masculinity in *The Green Berets*

The book that most obviously deploys traditional American metaphors and forms in support of the war is Robin Moore’s bestselling novel *The Green Berets* (1965), the first American novel written about Vietnam. Unapologetically pro-American, the novel conflates Old West, frontier, and cowboy and Indian mythologies to depict Euro-Americans as heroes in a story of their own creation. Analyzing invented Indianness in *The Green Berets* exposes the colonial assumptions in both the content and form of the literature of Vietnam’s early years.

Historian Christian Appy argues that *The Green Berets* “did as much as anything to elevate the Special Forces to national prominence,” by spreading the symbols of “the false hype that had sold America on a war it could not win and should not have fought.”¹⁶ Moore acknowledges the elements of false hype and propaganda in his work. In an interview, he admits that he wrote the book at the behest of the Kennedys to provide American audiences with a literary celebration of the Special Forces.¹⁷ Nevertheless, Moore claims that *The Green Berets* “is a book of truth,” and that he changed only names

16. Christian Appy, *American Reckoning: The Vietnam War and Our National Identity* (New York: Viking, 2015), 126.

17. Moore interview, 17 September 1982, qtd. in Hellman, *American Myth and the Legacy of Vietnam*, 57.

to protect the identities of those involved.¹⁸ The novel played so heavily on American readers' imaginations and became so popular that it generated an enlistment surplus, allowing the Selective Service to briefly suspend the draft.¹⁹ Readers clamored to become the Green Berets that felt so real to them in of the novel. Although Moore recommits to the story's authenticity – addressing readers directly in the preface, “You will find in these pages many things that you will find hard to believe. Believe them. They happened this way” – the novel contains far more fiction than fact (1). Its claims to realism offer a suggestive view of the culture that would find it real, that is, into the myths that had become Americans' reality. As a bestselling novel, which was later made into a blockbuster movie, *The Green Berets* both represents, and helped create, a dominant cultural vision of the Vietnam War: one in which American cowboys variously fought, saved, or became Vietnamese ‘Indians.’

In the early war years, the myths and imagery of the American frontier resurged as the international space race activated a new frontier for the United States, while the US military fought an enemy in a wilderness imagined to be far from civilization. The US cultural imagination became overtly saturated once again in images of frontier heroism, indigenous barbarity, and the limitless expansion of civilization beyond its current borders. Western films and television programming swelled in popularity, and novels that

18. Robin Moore, *The Green Berets* (New York: Crown, 1965), 1. Subsequent citations will be provided in text.

19. Hellmann, *American Myth*, 53.

spoke to the US's current 'cowboy and Indian' culture sold by the hundreds of thousands.²⁰

The Green Berets sets the western overseas. In the episodic novel, 'Indian' stereotypes are projected wholesale onto the Vietnamese. The VC are depicted as ferocious savages, who deserve the grotesque scenes of torture and slaughter to which they are subjected. In one scene, an American soldier "grabbed a bayonet-tipped carbine from a lunging VC, gave it a twirl and plunged it through a Communist's back with such force that it pinned him, squirming, to the mud wall" (67-68). Squirming like insects to be exterminated, the Vietnamese in *Green Berets* inspire no empathy. In such moments, *The Green Berets* reproduces the military rhetoric of the early war years, when soldiers described the war as "the Indian idea...the only good gook is a dead gook."²¹ In the novel, the rest of the Vietnamese are depicted as primitives who are often too lazy and cowardly to let the US soldiers assist and civilize them. In the words of one of the novel's soldiers, the Vietnamese are "afraid to fight for their own country" (149). The Special Forces, on the other hand, are brave and brawny heroes. They are the best the US has to offer. Anything but soft and weak, they protect the US - and the world - from the communist threat.

These indistinguishable frontiersmen-types capitalize on their rugged 'individualism' to conquer their 'savage' foe and preempt conflict with weaker men. Although the novel depicts them as individualists, these Green Berets are all 'unique' in

20. Hellmann, *American Myth*, 94.

21. Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian Hating and Empire Building* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 457.

the same ways.²² By listening to their gut, refusing to follow orders, and intimidating rivals with their masculine prowess, the Green Berets find triumph where both locals and traditional American armies found only defeat and failure.

In idolizing one character type, the novel primes readers for its takeaway message: the US will not triumph unless Americans revive the character of the frontiersman and recommit to their manifest destiny. In the illustrative first episode, which unfolds like all the others, a Green Beret leads his unit to victory by going rogue. The “old line officers” grouse that this Green Beret is “too damned independent and unorthodox” (23,18). Like a good, autonomous American, he ignores their old-world advice because he knows better how wilderness battles are won. His encampment is even suggestively set in “a fort out of the old West” (17). Guided by the natural intuition of a true frontiersman, the Green Beret succeeds in wiping out the VC in a long, bloody scene that relishes the violent deaths of the “ferocious, suicidal Communists.”²³ And with the

22. On this communal individualism, Bercovitch writes, “For the fact is that the views which Hawthorne and Cooper express may be found throughout the popular literature. In virtually every one of the countless biographies of American heroes, for example, the author insists that ‘true individualism’ is not something unique – not a Byronic or Nietzschean assertion of superiority – but an exemplum of American enterprise: a model of progress and control that typifies the society as a whole. The great American, as Parson Weems said of Washington, embodies the ‘guardian power of ...the Revolution’; ‘guided by the hand of God,’ he ‘serves the people [that will] regenerate the rest of the globe.’” Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 156.

23. Moore 61. The Green Beret, Kornie, shouts “gleefully” and watches with an “infectious grin” while he plots an attack on the VC across the border against the weak politicians’ advisement (Moore 33).

confidence, authority, and masculinity that the novel suggests are uniquely American,²⁴ the Green Beret forces the surrender of VC sympathizers, who only yield after they “estimated our strength” (36). After seeing the Green Beret in action, the old colonel has a change of heart. Instead of issuing a court-martial, now the colonel winks and asks, next time “will you invite me along?” (66). The Green Beret’s masculinity and rugged individualism are infectious. With a few more men like this, the novel suggests, the whole army will be transformed. The US army can then successfully “serv[e] the cause of freedom around the world” (339).

This first episode, like each of the novel’s episodes, is structured in the form of the American jeremiad. The jeremiad consists of three parts: it establishes collective norms based in an idealized past; rebukes Americans for failing to meet these standards (while assuring that they can); and promises that a recommitment to the past ideal will guarantee better things to come.²⁵ Originally a Puritan form that suggested those better things would come in the form of world redemption, the American jeremiad pairs optimism with a fear of catastrophic failure. If American individuals fail in their errand, the country will fail, and if the country fails, the world will too.²⁶

24. Moore depicts the Green Berets as more masculine than the Vietnamese, who are depicted like children. When Kornie walks, for instance, he needs “to stop frequently to let the shortlegged Vietnamese catch up” (Moore 32). While the Vietnamese are described like children, the Green Berets are always the manliest of men. Compare these two descriptions: Moore regularly describes the Green Berets as “tough, highly competent guerrilla fighters” (Moore 9). He describes the Cambodians and Vietnamese in words like: “The little dark men in tiger-striped suits bounced around happily, chattering to each other and displaying bloody ears” at the end of a successful mission (Moore 37).

25. Bercovitch, *American Jeremiad*, 16.

26. Bercovitch presents a few pertinent examples of this style of thinking: as one nineteenth-century politician explained: “the genius of America, like the star in the east,

Throughout *The Green Berets*, tales of ineffectual army commanders are set against heroic accounts of Green Berets mastering the wilderness. Moore insists that the old US army colonels are “unsuited to this war in Vietnam” because they have “no concept of how the jungle fighter thinks” (146). These impotent men indicate a systemic national failure. The novel bemoans that Americans have begun to lose the qualities of the frontiersmen who bravely conquered the wilderness. The Green Berets represent America’s potential to revive their colonial heritage. The cowboys of the Old West have moved beyond the American frontier to fight “wherever Americans must fight to keep the perimeter of the free world from shrinking further” (13). While “our big American generals... play politics,” the Green Berets are on the frontier, shielding Vietnam, the US, and indeed the world from the “ferocious,” inhuman terror threatening their freedom (26, 61).

The novel neatly echoes President John F. Kennedy, who wrote in his own American jeremiad in 1962:

Our own history, perhaps better than the history of any other great country, vividly demonstrates the truth of the belief that physical vigor and health are essential accompaniments to the qualities of intellect and spirit on which a nation

will lead the earth’s people” to redemption. “But if we should become corrupt and unprincipled...the expiring cries of Liberty shall be heard in accents of agony” (Abram Maury in 1847 Qtd. in Bercovitch 150). Emerson voiced a similar sense of hopeful concern for America’s responsibility: “Ah my country! In thee is the reasonable hope of mankind not fulfilled” (Qtd in Bercovitch 190).

Bercovitch explains further, “the New England jeremiad [is] America’s first distinctive literary genre; its distinctiveness, however, lies not in the vehemence of its complaint but in precisely the reverse...its unshakeable optimism. In explicit opposition to the traditional mode, it inverts the doctrine of vengeance into a promise of ultimate success, affirming to the world, and despite the world, the inviolability of the colonial cause” (Bercovitch 7).

is built. It was men who possessed vigor and strength as well as courage and vision who first settled these shores and, over more than three centuries, subdued a continent and wrested a civilization from the wilderness. It was physical hardihood that helped Americans in two great world wars to defeat strong and tenacious foes and make this country history's mightiest defender of freedom. And today, in our own time, in the jungles of Asia and on the borders of Europe, a new group of vigorous young Americans helps maintain the peace of the world and our security as a nation.²⁷

For Kennedy, the act of wresting civilization from the wilderness was key for Americans to defend both the freedom of the world and the American character.

The American jeremiad has been a favorite of American writers and speechmakers. Its ubiquity stems in part from the genre's flexibility. Writers from Martin Luther King, Jr. to Republican Senator Paul Ryan have applied the formula of the American jeremiad to rally their audiences to action.²⁸ In his influential study of the American jeremiad, Sacvan Bercovitch explains that "the jeremiad has played a major

27. President John F. Kennedy, "The Vigor We Need," *July 16, 1962, issue of Sports Illustrated*.

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=8771>

28. In his examination of the American jeremiad, Bercovitch lists examples of American jeremiads: "here, the civil rights leader Martin Luther King, descendant of slaves, denouncing segregation as a violation of the American dream; here, an endless debate about national identity, full of rage and faith, Jeffersonians claiming they, not the priggish heirs of Calvin, really represented the errand, conservative politicians hunting out socialists as conspirators against the dream, left-wing polemics proving that capitalism was a betrayal of the country's sacred origins. The question of these latter-day jeremiads, as in their seventeenth-century precursors, was never 'Who are we?' but, almost in deliberate evasion of that question, the old prophetic refrain: 'When is our errand to be fulfilled? How long, O Lord, how long?' And the answers, again as in the Puritan jeremiads, invariably joined lament and celebration in reaffirming America's mission" (Bercovitch 11).

role in fashioning the myth of America” in both literary and historical terms.²⁹ As one of the oldest uniquely American genres, the American jeremiad has become “a cultural reflex, an ingrained habit of mind.”³⁰

Notably, this cultural mainstay does not ritualistically lament and revive just any bygone qualities. The form is deeply rooted in colonial epistemologies. The original Puritan form bespoke a religious errand to cast off the emasculating influences of ‘soft’ civilization, restore the community’s good Christian character, and conquer Satan’s wilderness for Christ.³¹ The metaphorical conquering of sin was aided by the literal conquering of territory. The form thus contained an inbuilt idealization of rugged masculinity and a zeal for spreading the Puritan (and later American) way by conquering peoples and territories. Over time, the religious elements of the jeremiad expanded into zealous patriotic metaphors. In a manner of “extension and adaptation, not of transformation,” Bercovitch explains, the Puritan saints and sacred errand became the US patriot and the country’s manifest destiny.³²

As a literary form and cultural ritual, the jeremiad still calls upon Americans to conquer the wilderness. By appropriating territories, killing enemies of American ‘progress,’ and expanding their sphere of influence, Americans can enlighten, convert, and save the world’s ‘Indians’ in the ever-westward march of civilization, which had now expanded into Asia. For Americans, writes Hellmann, Vietnam promised:

29. Bercovitch, *American Jeremiad*, xi.

30. Bercovitch, *American Jeremiad*, 190.

31. Bercovitch, *American Jeremiad*, 12.

32. Bercovitch, *American Jeremiad*, 94, 92.

the qualities of America's remembered frontier triumphs: remoteness from dangerous confrontation with a major European power, a savage enemy who could be righteously hunted down, a wilderness landscape in which the American could renew his virtues where the European had proved only his vices, and the Asian people America historically saw as the appointed beneficiaries of its destiny.³³

In *The Green Berets*, Vietnam offers a new frontier for the renewal of the American spirit. Moore insists, moreover, that the Special Forces "isn't all fighting" (7). The Green Berets build schools and dig wells in the service of bringing civilization to the wilderness. Such imagery allows American audiences to invest in an American imperialism disguised in euphemism.³⁴ Through development and warfare, the Green Berets carry on the American errand to conquer the wilderness, and the 'Indians' within it.

2. 'Indian Hating' Meets 'Indian Idolizing'

Because the book is rooted in these jeremiad traditions, Moore's Green Berets have all the characteristics of the archetypal American hero: the Indian hunter.³⁵ The

33. Hellmann, *American Myth*, 51

34. Christian Appy offers a reading of Moore's *Green Berets* as unintentionally antiwar in his book, *American Reckoning: The Vietnam War and Our National Identity*. New York: Viking, 2015.

35. "the Indian fighter and hunter emerged as the first of our national heroes" (Slotkin, *Regeneration*, 18). I unpack several critics' own internalized myths later in the chapter. Although Slotkin means to deconstruct American myth, his assumptions about 'Indian' perceptions of "superior" Euro-American culture and his telling use of the word "our" to describe a culture whose national hero he says is the Indian hunter reveal his internalization of the idea that 'the American' is 'the white American.' For example, see

American jeremiad promises regeneration, and the means to regeneration in American culture is violence.³⁶ In *Regeneration through Violence*, Richard Slotkin writes, “the myth of regeneration through violence became the structuring metaphor of the American experience.” As long as Americans continue to see themselves as world redeemers, writes Jodi Byrd, they “must designate or infect those to be vanquished as ‘Indians.’”³⁷

While critics have discussed the frontier, western, and Indian imagery in *The Green Berets* and novels and films like it, in which Americans play cowboy in order to kill, dominate, save, and civilize their Indians, few discuss the meaning behind the other element of Indianness in these narratives: those same cowboy-frontiersmen ‘going native’ themselves.³⁸ *The Green Berets* and countless other Vietnam texts are full of cowboy

“Since the Indian is, from our point of view, the only one who can claim to be indigenously American, it seems important to question whether our national experience has “Americanized” or “Indianized” us, or whether we are simply an idiosyncratic offshoot of English civilization” (Slotkin, *Regeneration*, 6); and “The Indian perceived and alternately envied and feared the sophistication of the white man’s religion, customs, and technology, which seemed at times a threat and at times the logical development of the principles of his own society and religion” (Slotkin, *Regeneration*, 25-26).

36. Explaining how the Indian hunter emerged as a national hero, Richard Slotkin writes in *Regeneration through Violence*, “The first colonists saw in America an opportunity to regenerate their fortunes, their spirits, and the power of their church and nation; but the means to that regeneration ultimately became the means of violence, and the myth of regeneration through violence became the structuring metaphor of the American experience. How that myth evolved and gained credence and power is the subject of this study” (Slotkin, *Regeneration*, 5). I resituate Slotkin’s study of the myth of regeneration through violence in the ritual form of the American jeremiad, which also promises regeneration (I argue, through violence).

37. Byrd, *Transit of Empire*, 158.

38. For Hellmann, the cowboy and Indian imagery showcase American hubris early on in the war, and for Wilson, the cowboy and Indian references are a symptom of the novel’s anti-historicism. A few examples include Dooley’s book of his experience in Vietnam *Deliver Us From Evil* (1956) which portrays Vietnam as a cowboy/Indian fight on the new frontier, and *The Ugly American* (1958), which, as Hellmann argues, is a jeremiad

versus Indian imagery, making the moments in which those same white characters *play* Indian noteworthy. If the killing of Indians in American literature allows Americans to participate in the myth of their Manifest Destiny to conquer the world, why would they also pretend to be Indians?

Shari Huhndorf argues that Euro-Americans have a long tradition of taking on the characteristics of their invented Indians. Because the ‘Indian’ myth was created to be civilization’s opposite, adopting ‘Indian’ ways of living, knowing, or being offers Euro-Americans a temporary retreat from society.³⁹ The Indianness they absorb transforms them and they return to society renewed and revitalized. Going native is a powerful escapist fantasy, producing some of the US’s most profitable books and films.⁴⁰ The seemingly benign practice has serious consequences, however. Each time the fictions are reused, they are revitalized, reaffirming racial and colonial power disparities over and over again in US culture. By going native, Euro-Americans ritualistically reenact the colonial fantasy of absorbing, destroying, and ultimately replacing the Indian.⁴¹

Huhndorf describes the act of ‘going native’ as a means of healing the Euro-American self or Euro-American culture at large. By going native, Euro-Americans

that reconfirms US beliefs and mission in its portrayal of southeast Asia and the American frontier-types who travel there; and *The Ugly American* which depicts frontier-types journeying to southeast Asia.

39. Huhndorf explains: “In 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” (Huhndorf 2).

40. The 1990s box-office smash *Dances with Wolves*, for example, was the most profitable three-hour-long movie ever made at the time. See Huhndorf.

41. As Huhndorf explains, going native “has served as an essential means of defining and regenerating racial whiteness and a racially inflected vision of Americanness.” (Huhndorf 5).

fantasize access to tribal medicine, ancient knowledge, or sustainable practices that allow them return to their own lives renewed.⁴² There is also a second form of ‘going native’ worth exploring: that of the Indian-hunter. Like the first American folk hero, Daniel Boone, and the heroes of later westerns, the soldiers in novels like *The Green Berets* claim to go native to better defeat their indigenous opponent.

In one of the novel’s longest episodes, a Green Beret named Major Arklin decides to live among the Hmong. Sloughing off the confines of civilization, Arklin strips down to a loincloth, participates in Hmong ceremonies, and even marries the ‘chief’s’ daughter – though it is worth noting that the Hmong do not call their leaders ‘chiefs.’ In fact, *The Green Berets’* Hmong share nothing in common with their real-life counterparts. They are merely the Indians of American fantasy, and they meet all the classic colonial criteria of the ‘good natives.’ Arklin’s wife, too, is the quintessential Indian princess who invites his masculine conquest.⁴³ Like so many Euro-American characters before him, Arklin adopts the skills and knowledge of the ‘good’ Indians in order to kill the ‘bad’ ones.⁴⁴ Hellmann argues that by “mak[ing] the primitivist Boone’s retreat into nature,” Arklin “is able to confront communist evil with the directness of an Indian fighter in the dark and

42. “By adopting Indian ways, the socially alienated character uncovers his own ‘true’ identity and redeems European-American society. Similarly, throughout the twentieth century, going native has served as an essential means of defining and regenerating racial whiteness and a racially inflected vision of Americanness” (Huhndorf 5).

43. She is submissive, mixed-race, and royal. A figure defined by her willingness to abandon her people, this Hmong ‘Indian princess,’ for instance, tells Arklin, “If I am with you I do not care where we go” (Moore, 201).

44. For an excellent analysis of the colonial power dynamics inherent in the categorization of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Indians, see Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*.

bloody forests of eighteenth-century Kentucky.”⁴⁵ While Hellmann explores these scenes in his incisive analysis of the novel, he probes no further into their meaning. For Hellmann, Arklin is merely another Indian fighter, and his choice to go native is just one more example of a Green Beret’s rugged individualism.⁴⁶

By going native, Arklin is not just one more Indian fighter. Inhabiting every stereotype, Arklin becomes an even better ‘Indian’ than the ‘Indians.’ He becomes a fearless warrior, a virile lover, an expert guerrilla fighter. He commands his fellow Hmong warriors with a mastery and proficiency they had never before experienced. In no time they make him their “revered chief” (164). It is noteworthy that in this wildly popular narrative, touted and accepted as a true account, white people are not just imagined as the frontier heroes that spread civilization; they are also imagined as the quintessential Indian. As Arklin becomes the Indian of American mythology, moreover, he simultaneously, and paradoxically, inches closer to the ideal white American male.

Hellmann argues that Arklin becomes the prototypical American hero through his “internalized balance of the savage and the civilized.”⁴⁷ I argue that Arklin’s narrative is not about balance; it is about his return to what are imagined as ‘his Indian roots.’ Arklin’s narrative is, therefore, another iteration of the American jeremiad. After ‘going native,’ Arklin gains the capacity to challenge ineffectual institutional authority and fulfill his Green Beret character arc. With his Hmong army in tow, the loincloth-clad Arklin refuses his superior’s orders, and through his rugged (Indian-inspired)

45. Hellmann, *American Myth*, 64, 63.

46. Hellmann, *American Myth*, 64.

47. Hellmann, *American Myth*, 64.

individualism, consequently saves the day. As a result, his army superior is relegated to the “bowels of the Pentagon,” while Arklin is promoted to colonel (221). Tales of Arklin’s masterful, masculine command gain him respect far and wide. After recommitting to his roots to become the ideal ‘Indian,’ Arklin returns to the US as the ideal white American man: a powerful, masculine force capable of conquering the world.

Hellmann was the first to put forth the argument that early ‘Indian hating’ Vietnam literature rehashes old forms and old myths, particularly the jeremiad. I argue that the Euro-American return to imaginary ‘Indian’ roots is also an expression of the American jeremiad. The American jeremiad is not only imperial in nature; it is also a key element in the racialization of white Americans and American Indians, a critical oversight in Hellmann’s and others’ analyses.

When white Americans invent and revive ‘Indian’ roots for themselves, they revitalize an early colonial practice that helped first define Americanness. Colonial Europeans adopted what they imagined was the wildness, independence, and subversiveness of their invented Indians to create a distinct American identity. When colonists dressed up as Indians during the Boston Tea Party of 1773, for example, they performed this aspect of their unique American character. Later it became popular to assume a more concrete relationship with Indianness, and Euro-Americans began to invent distant ‘Indian’ ancestors.⁴⁸ Their imagined Indian ancestor was always remote

48. As early as the eighteenth century, colonists realized how expedient it would be to have Native American ancestors. While interracial marriage was comfortably illegal, William Byrd bemoaned that if the early colonists had only intermarried with Native Americans, Euro-Americans would now be the legitimate heirs to the land, and the Indian ancestry would have been “washed white” within two generations.

enough for the inventor to keep the privileges of whiteness yet still gain the benefit of inherited territory. Transforming Native lands and cultures into US property and patrimony, Euro-Americans gained a birthright to Native America. Such myths whitewashed the violence of colonial conquest, and through the “mutually constitutive relationship between proprietorship and personhood,” writes Yael Ben-zvi, these myths negated the existence of Indigenous peoples in the twentieth century and allowed Euro-Americans to claim native status as the only legitimate heirs to the land.⁴⁹

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said describes the mutual reinforcement of possession and personhood in the Western imaginary: “Always there lurks the assumption that

By the 18th C, Euro-Americans began imagining a past in which early colonizers intermarried with American Indians, creating American descendants who were true heirs to the land. Imagining the American Indian blood would dilute over time, William Byrd wrote in 1728 that he wished the English would have intermarried with American Indians. He argues it would have led to faster conversion of the Native Americans and Native Americans would not have felt like their land was stolen, since their whiter and whiter daughters would have kept it: “Nor would the shade of the skin have been any reproach at this day; for if a Moor may be washed white in three generations, surely an Indian might have been blanched in two.” Peter Fontaine wrote that if “we had taken Indian wives in the first place, it would have been some compensation for their lands ... We should [have] become the rightful heirs to their lands.” Such sentiments reflect the power of fiction to define white-Native relations. While such unions were acceptable and even encouraged in a fictional past, at the time both men wrote these lamentations over American history, interracial marriages were illegal.

Such statements were part of an ongoing effort to whitewash the violent history of European and Euro-American conquest. From William Byrd *The History of the Dividing Line: Run in the Year 1728* Source: *The Westover manuscripts containing the history of the dividing line betwixt Virginia and North Carolina, a journey to the land of Eden, A.D. 1733, and a progress to the mines written from 1728 to 1736* (Petersburg [Va.]: Printed by Edmund and Julian C. Ruffin, 1841).

49. Ben-zvi 224-225. Aileen Moreton-Robinson further explains, “the postcolonial settler depends upon a possessive whiteness whose ontological premises are tied to dispossessing indigenous peoples of home, land, and sovereignty.” Moreton-Robinson, “I Still Call Australia Home: Indigenous Belonging and Place in a White Postcolonizing Society,” in *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*, ed. Sara Ahmed (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2003).

although the Western consumer belongs to a numerical minority, he is entitled either to own or to expend (or both) the majority of the world resources. Why? Because he, unlike the Oriental, is a true human being. . . . a white middle-class Westerner believes it his human prerogative not only to manage the nonwhite world but also to own it.”⁵⁰ In the US, the association of possession with personhood merged with the myth of Indian desolation. The result was a culture in which American Indian lands, bodies, and cultures were Euro-America’s inheritance. Through their possession, and the myth of personhood through ownership, Euro-Americans gained further legitimacy as the only true human beings and managers of the nonwhite world.⁵¹ Possessive whiteness and the possession of Indianness create a culture that is inherently imperial. As white Americans claim a hidden Indian in their heart or a long-lost Indian grandmother, that is, as they make Indianness their inheritance, they create two mutually reinforcing fantasies, in which white Americans emerge as 1) the sole true Americans, and 2) the sole humans capable of stewarding the world.

Arklin’s ‘Indianness’ regenerates his racial whiteness, revives his American spirit, and helps him recommit to the imperial errand. Although he idolizes Indians and the other Green Berets only kill them, his American jeremiad shares both origin and outcome with that of the other Green Berets. The white racial American jeremiad is founded in the fiction that white American men once were stronger, more independent, more *American* than they are now; if they take possession of their Indian heritage like their frontiersmen

50. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1979, 1994), 108.

51. In her analysis of US social Darwinist discourses, Ben-zvi writes, “property, its accumulation, and its transfer set evolution in motion” (Ben-zvi 206).

forefathers did, they will regenerate America and its errand to save the world. No matter if it is grounded in Indian hating or Indian idolizing, the white racial jeremiad creates a narrative in which Indians will die (through killing or vanishing and becoming Euro-American patrimony) and white people will take possession of the world.

3. Ruptures and Recommitments – Managing Crisis With Traditional Forms and Symbols

As Americans grew disillusioned with the war, they again turned to their traditional cultural alternative, their invented Indians, to provide them with escapist fantasies. American audiences were accustomed to cultural representations that cast the country in the role of the global good guy.⁵² As daily news broadcasts challenged the

52. Lloyd Lewis explains that the Vietnam War was unreal for soldiers (“T’ain’t reality and t’ain’t a dream” said one former Marine sniper) because they were socialized by movies, television, their family, and the military itself to understand war through WWII (*The Washington Post Magazine*, June 25, 1983, pg 7, qtd. in Lewis ix). Some of the greatest influences, Lewis writes, were John Wayne movies. “A close examination of the accounts growing out of the Vietnam War,” Lewis explains, “reveals several hundred direct references to the influence of [John Wayne], all of them affirming Wayne as the embodiment of the American warrior and therefore as the spirit of war itself” (Lewis, *Tainted War*, 25). Two examples he cites: “‘I think it’s because they had some concept of that’s the way it was done,’ said one trooper. ‘They watched too many John Wayne movies. It just wasn’t that way’” (Lewis 27, Al Santoli, *Everything We Had*, pg 202); and “‘An exasperated sergeant is even reported to have told some careless troops, ‘There are two ways to do anything – the right way and the John Wayne way’” (Lewis 27, Suid, *Guts and Glory*, pg 106). For American soldiers and war correspondents, argues Lewis, John Wayne’s WWII epics inculcated a narrative in which Americans were the good guys, the liberators, a narrative which made no sense in the context of Vietnam. The epistemic rupture that resulted was the catalyst for the new storytelling forms found in later Vietnam literature, so the argument goes.

Lewis’s arguments about the socializing power of movies to define white male American masculinity are compelling, but he focuses far too heavily on the influence of John Wayne’s WWII narratives. He even argues that WWII narratives almost exclusively influenced American perceptions of Vietnam. He writes: “Americans were socialized to think of warfare in terms borrowed exclusively from the Second World War” (Lewis x). John Wayne is, however, primarily known as a western movie star – building his

axiom that the US was the liberator and redeemer of the world, Americans experienced an epistemic rupture that critics argue transformed how Americans related to their invented Indians.⁵³

When, in 1969, the My Lai Massacre became public knowledge in the US, it exacerbated the distrust already brewing for the US government and forced Americans to question the understanding of who Americans were. Many Native American writers were quick to draw parallels between the massacre and largely forgotten massacres of Native Americans just a century before. In his book of poems, *from Sand Creek* (1981), Simon Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo) writes:

In 1969
XXXX Coloradoans
were killed in Vietnam.
...
In 1864,
there were no Indians killed.

Remember My Lai.

In fifty years,
nobody knew
what happened.

It wasn't only the Senators.

Remember Sand Creek.⁵⁴

formidable career in such western classics as *Red River* (1948), *The Searchers* (1956), and *True Grit* (1969). Lloyd B. Lewis, *The Tainted War: Culture and Identity in Vietnam War Narratives*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985.

53. Melling, *Vietnam in American Literature*; Lewis, *Tainted War*; Espey, "America and Vietnam;" Huhndorf, "Going Native."

54. Simon J. Ortiz, *from Sand Creek* (Arizona: The University of Arizona Press, 2000) 15.

The poem recounts past and present genocidal acts committed against Indigenous peoples. Comparing My Lai and American Indian massacres, Ortiz emphasizes the power of American myth to obscure and even erase histories. The poem's bare verses starkly juxtapose the two skeletal accounts of these histories, using the symbolic Indian to hold up a mirror to the brutalities in Vietnam. The bare bones of the words recalling the dead, in Ortiz's narrative, Indians are made more than the symbolic figures of US culture. In remembering My Lai and Sand Creek, audiences are asked to mourn rather than celebrate the killing of America's 'Indians.' No longer satisfied with the brutal Indian-killing of *The Green Berets*, audiences clamored instead for a different kind of relationship with their Indians.

In this climate, critics claim that Indian hating transformed into Indian idolizing and Indian pitying. Books about Vietnam began to depict Euro-American protagonists returning from war broken and battered, only to find healing wholeness in American Indian wisdom and medicine.⁵⁵ Films began to depict figures like Sylvester Stallone's Rambo – the half-American Indian,⁵⁶ bare-chested, long-haired film favorite – whose Indian symbolism elicited comparisons between the disaffected veteran and the American Indian. David Espey argues that through such imagery, the “cowboy has become an Indian” because “Vietnam war veterans and Indians ... both felt betrayed, misunderstood, and ignored by American society.” David Dresser and Gaylyn Studlar agree that figures

55. Michael Herr's *Dispatches* (1978); Philip Caputo's *Indian Country* (1987).

56. Sylvester Stallone is of Italian, French, and Ukrainian Jewish descent.

like Rambo began to “symbolically evoke the Indian as the romanticized victim of past government deceitfulness.”⁵⁷

Even as they make their arguments about changing attitudes, however, these critics still place the Indian in the past – a victim of the past and an allegory for the present, used by Euro-Americans to define their place in the world. Since language is a tool of empire,⁵⁸ the discourses, tropes, and word choice of popular narratives are more than just rhetorical or linguistic features. These rhetorical choices shape the popular imagination, and in the words of Peter Hulme, these narrative elements “function within a broader set of socioeconomic and political practices” to create the ideology of empire.⁵⁹ As I discuss in this dissertation’s introduction, critics can also reinforce and perpetuate the ideologies of empire. US language, historiography, and even analytical paradigms can participate in the naturalization of settler colonial epistemologies.⁶⁰

57. Espey, “America and Vietnam;” and David Dresser and Gaylyn Studlar, “Never Having to Say You’re Sorry: Rambo’s Rewriting of the Vietnam War,” in *From Hanoi to Hollywood: The Vietnam War in American Film*. Eds. Linda Dittmar and Gene Michaud. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1990. 108.

58. “Language is the perfect instrument of empire,” Bishop of Avila to Queen Isabella of Castile, 1492. Qtd. in Hulme 1, The Bishop had just presented to the Queen, Antonio de Nebrija’s *Gramatica*, the first grammar of a modern European language, and had been asked by the Queen ‘What is it for?’”

59. Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, 5.

60. Audra Simpson writes about the problem with representing, analyzing, and discussing the Indigenous self when indigeneity and personhood are both products of “the languages and analytics of a foreign culture that occupies their semantic and material space, and naturalises this occupation through history-writing and the very analytics that are used to know them” (Audra Simpson, “On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, ‘Voice’ and Colonial Citizenship,” *Junctures* 9 (2007): 75).

In the second half of the chapter, I argue that the transformation critics see in Indian symbolism is superficial. With this argument, I make two interventions. First, I contend that Indian imagery in antiwar narratives still supports white hegemony and US settler colonialism, if not also overseas US imperialism. Second, I argue there was no transformation, and the reason critics see one is because they have not unpacked the racial and colonial dynamics of American cultural mythology.

While it is true, for example, that the images of Indian-killing that were celebrated in the war's early years were considered "unspeakable... stupid... rotten and false in every detail" by critics by the time the film adaptation of *The Green Berets* was released in 1968, the film was still enormously popular with American audiences. Domestically the G-rated movie grossed over 21 million dollars at the box office (nearly \$153M in 2018).⁶¹ Accentuating the novel's cowboy and Indian elements, the film casts the biggest Old West film star, John Wayne, as the protagonist, and depicts the Vietnamese as replicas of western cinema and television Indians.⁶² The Vietnamese even talk, as one reviewer notes, "like movie Sioux."⁶³ Although people were becoming more disillusioned with the war amongst media broadcasts of endless violence, audiences still found something gratifying, entertaining, indeed fulfilling about immersing themselves back into the myths of America that the western enables.

61. Renata Adler, Movie Review: "Screen: 'Green Berets' as Viewed by John Wayne: War Movie Arrives at the Warner Theater," *New York Times*, 20 June 1968.

62. John Wayne was also the director of the film.

63. For a longer analysis of the film see Hellmann 90-93. The review comes from an anonymous reviewer in *Time*. "We build many camps, clobber many V.C." is typical dialogue.

In 1971, John Kerry expressed the changing attitudes toward Indianness and Vietnam in his testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Speaking out against the cowboy and Indian culture of the early war years, he explains:

An American Indian friend of mine who lives in the Indian Nation of Alcatraz put it to me very succinctly. He told me how as a boy on an Indian reservation he had watched television and he used to cheer the cowboys when they came in and shot the Indians. Then suddenly he stopped in Vietnam one day and said, “My God, I am doing to these people the very same thing that was done to my people.” And that’s what we are trying to say, that we think this thing has to end.⁶⁴

David Espey calls the cultural shift from Indian hating to Indian pitying a “reversal of the Indian analogy.” As Indians shift from enemy combatants to victims, however, it is telling that even in Kerry’s antiwar testimony we see the western’s formidable power to frame his argument and make it relevant to his audiences. Was the Indian analogy really reversed? It is the contention here that it was not.⁶⁵

64. John Kerry, “Vietnam Veterans Against the War: Testimony to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee,” in *Vietnam and America: A Documented History*, ed. Marvin Gettleman. New York: Grove P, 1985. 457, qtd. in Espey.

65. Furthermore, it must be noted as well that *pity* was not unique to the Vietnam War. Pity has often accompanied the genocide of Indigenous peoples. In fact, pitying the vanishing indigene has been a hallmark of colonial genocide, because it allows the actors responsible to use the passive voice for acts of genocide (Indians vanish; no one is responsible for their murder) and the active voice for an emotion which proves their own humanity to themselves and the world (though they are not responsible for the genocide of vanishing Indians, they pity their loss). See Maureen Konkle, and chapter 1 of this dissertation for an extended discussion of pity in official documents as a means of dissociating from the violence enacted against Indigenous peoples.

Hellmann, for example, argues that late-Vietnam literature “inverts” the traditional American myth in which “the prototypical American hero achieves manhood by shooting an Indian.”⁶⁶ In late-Vietnam literature, he argues, when Americans kill indigenes in a dark, colonial forest, they feel sorrow rather than fulfillment.⁶⁷ Is this what constitutes an inversion of American culture? Whether set in Indian territory or in Vietnam, whether sorrowful or proud, the white American hero still kills an ‘Indian’ in their journey of self-discovery. Over 61,000 American Indians served in Vietnam. Nevertheless, in Hellmann’s and others’ analyses, the American in Vietnam is white, and Indians are just figures, tropes, and myths in the literature.⁶⁸

Margaret Anderson writes, “the taken-for-granted and invisible character of whiteness reinforces systems of advantage and disadvantage and . . . the construction of

66. Hellmann, *American Myth*, 111. Here specifically, he discusses James Fenimore Cooper’s novel *The Deerslayer* (1841).

67. “The Vietnam of *Born on the Fourth of July* inverts the forest of Cooper’s *The Deerslayer* (1841), in which the prototypical American hero achieves manhood by shooting an Indian who with his dying breath renames the young title character Hawkeye. Kovic kills in the Vietnam woods only to lose his youthful illusions of personal power and righteousness” (Hellmann 111).

68. Indeed, his analysis takes for granted that Americans are white. He never notes, for example, that the protagonists in each of the Vietnam texts he analyzes are only white, though the war was fought disproportionately by minorities. In his analysis of critical interpretations of Indianness, Berkhofer writes, “As fundamental White ways of looking at themselves changed, so too did their ways of conceiving of Indians. Since the description, interpretation, explanation, and manipulation of the Indian as image and person were and are inextricably combined in White minds, the scholarly understanding of past and present White images becomes but the latest phase of a centuries-old White effort to understand themselves through understanding Native Americans and vice versa.” See Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, xvi.

whiteness supports the hegemony of white power.”⁶⁹ Hellmann’s inattention to the frontier myth’s and the jeremiad’s roles in maintaining white hegemony leads him to erroneously conclude that Vietnam led to “disruption of our story,” that is to say, that Vietnam caused an epistemic rupture in the fabric of American myth. He concludes:

Vietnam is an experience that has severely called into question American myth. Americans entered Vietnam with certain expectations that a story, a distinctly American story, would unfold. When the story of America in Vietnam turned into something unexpected, the true nature of the larger story of America itself became the subject of intense cultural dispute. On the deepest level, the legacy of Vietnam is the disruption of our story, of our explanation of the past and vision of the future.⁷⁰

Vietnam may have caused a crisis of faith, but Americans had faced crises many times before; indeed, crisis constitutes an integral part of US cultural rituals of progress. As a cultural ritual, the jeremiad fuses tradition to transformation, making the rhetoric of the jeremiad a key form by which Americans manage and interpret cultural, political, and

69. Anderson, “Whitewashing,” 22. See for example, Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege and Male Privilege” (1988); Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters* (1993); David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness* (1991). Margaret L. Andersen, “Whitewashing Race: A Critical Perspective on Whiteness,” in *White Out: The Continuing Significance of Racism* edited by Ashley W. Doane and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, New York: Routledge, 2003, 21-34. Margaret Anderson writes, “disrupting whiteness will shake the foundations of racism. Therefore one of the purposes of whiteness studies is to ‘destabilize’ white identity – to expose, examine, and challenge it. . . . studying whiteness will help us understand how white domination continues” (Anderson, “Whitewashing,” 25).

70. Hellmann, *American Myth*, x.

social changes.⁷¹ The crises brought about by the Vietnam War were similarly managed through invocations of the jeremiad.

Bercovitch explains, “[t]he American jeremiad was a ritual designed to join social criticism to spiritual renewal, public to private identity, the shifting ‘signs of the times’ to certain traditional metaphors, themes, and symbols.”⁷² Traditional forms like the jeremiad rely on traditional symbols like the Indian. The return to traditional forms and symbols allowed authors to make their unique experiences in Vietnam intelligible to their audiences. It also signals a recommitment within the rupture. Phil Melling and Lloyd Lewis argue that Vietnam literature illustrates a retreat from meaning in American culture.⁷³ The reality is that Vietnam War narratives retreated into, not out of, old cognitive maps.

4. Processing Change by Returning to Indian Roots in William Eastlake’s *The Bamboo Bed*

71. “The American jeremiad was born in an effort to impose metaphor upon reality. It was nourished by an imagination at once defiant of history and profoundly attuned to the historical forces that were shaping the community. And in this dual capacity it blossomed with every major crisis of seventeenth-century New England...by the 1670s, crisis had become their source of strength. They fastened upon it, gloried in it, even invented it if necessary” (Bercovitch 62). Continual conflict is required for Americans to keep reconfirming their Americanness by conquering new wildernesses: “sacred history means the gradual conquest of the profane by the sacred. The believer cultivates the inner wilderness in prescribed stages of spiritual growth; the church as a whole wins the world back from Satan in a series of increasingly terrifying and triumphant wars of the Lord. Continuous conflict, then, and gradual fulfillment become mutually sustaining concepts, and as such they lend themselves powerfully to the strategies of the American jeremiad” (Bercovitch 178).

72. Bercovitch, *American Jeremiad*, xi.

73. Melling, *Vietnam in American Literature*; Lewis, *Tainted War*.

The Bamboo Bed (1969) exemplifies the shift in popular perceptions of the war. One of the first novels to stress the war's futility and madness, *The Bamboo Bed* depicts Vietnam as one long, irrational, aimless, disorienting, and repeating battle. The novel opens on a battle called "the biggest thing since Custer," raising expectations for a fated, but heroic, Vietnam War narrative.⁷⁴ Instead, readers learn that that this same battle – for the same hill, led by the same commander, and resulting in the same catastrophic loss of life – has all happened before, and will likely happen again. The only thing that changes by novel's end is that all the main characters have been killed, to be replaced by new troops so the battle can begin again. Although the postmodern novel depicts Vietnam as an insane, inane war, the narrative's retreat into old symbols – the tired Indian fictions that saturate the novel – I argue performs the work of the jeremiad, reconfirming America's errand.

Bamboo Bed propels its antiwar message by depicting the cowboy characteristics of American soldiers as too aggressive and too absurd to properly represent their country. Known best for mutilating corpses, the soldiers in the central battle express a toxic masculinity that proves more lethal to themselves than to their enemies. One soldier, Mike "the hunter," feels particularly consumed by the aggressive masculinity so celebrated in *The Green Berets*. In his mind, all lesser men become 'Indians' to be hunted. He shoots other American soldiers, while musing to himself, "everybody wants to be the cowboys. Everybody wants to win" (79).

74. Eastlake, *Bamboo Bed*, 24, 93-94, 170. Subsequent citations for this novel will be cited in text.

Following the same trajectory as Moore's Green Berets, these soldiers perform the ritual of the jeremiad based in the rhetoric that Americans are now weaker than they once were. Incorporating the strength, masculinity, and brutality of their imagined Indians, they transform into the frontiersmen who will bring civilization to the wilderness by force. Like Moore's Green Berets, the soldiers draw on the 'Indian' in their hearts to boost their masculinity and increase their efficiency as soldiers on the frontier. Their Indianness makes them better warriors than the Vietnamese: While "*they* booby-trap the trails," "*We* ambush. Like Indians."⁷⁵ Descending into wilderness warfare, they cut ears off corpses so they can inhabit the identity of the scalping Indian (29). In the standard racist imagery linking civility, sanity, and whiteness to one another, like Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, they also let the savagery of the wilderness overtake them: "It was the classic American blunder in Vietnam of giving the Indians cover. The enemy was fighting from the protection of the jungle. You couldn't see them. Americans love the open. Americans do not trust the jungle. The first thing Americans did in America was clear a forest and plant the cities" (24-25). Unlike their frontiersmen forefathers, these soldiers are unable to successfully clear the jungle in Vietnam. In joining the jungle, they make themselves impotent in the face of their errand to bring civilization to the wilderness. The novel's central criticism of cowboy culture comes in a critique of their variant of the American jeremiad.

The brave and victorious Daniel Boones of pro-war Vietnam literature have become the foolish, defeated Custers of antiwar literature.⁷⁶ If the central battle "is the

75. Eastlake, *Bamboo Bed*, 192, line break condensed, emphasis added.

biggest thing since Custer,” the commander, Clancy, is Vietnam’s Custer. He sacrifices his unit, like Custer, not once but twice. At least his heroism is historically significant, the narrator proclaims, unlike “that other thing at Gettysburg” (170). Clancy “died for your sins,” just as “Custer died for your sins” (320, 275). Indeed, “everyone on our side looked like Custer when those Indians” attacked (187). The novel’s ironic tone is meant to undercut the early war narrative that Vietnam is a heroic, and worthwhile, war. When Mike explains that he is in Vietnam to “protect[] Americans from the Red Hordes,” his Indian-hating rhetoric comes across as crass and cruel (24). The cowboy and Indian justification for Vietnam simply no longer suffices.

The alternative to the hawkish soldier is the hippie, who represents the cultural transition from Indian hating to Indian idolizing. The novel’s two hippies, Bethany and Peter, seek to regenerate the US and the world through love, and so advance their own American jeremiad in an attempt to relocate America’s role in Vietnam.⁷⁷ The two “San Francisco Indians” go native to protest the US’s cowboy culture, and like Arklin, they become more Indian than their Indians (72). After his company is decimated, Clancy/Custer sees them and thinks: “I thought we killed all the Indians. No, this time the

76. When describing the “reversal of the Indian analogy,” David Espey explains that typical depictions of American troops in Vietnam “change from heroic rescuers of settlers on the frontier to slaughterers of the red man. Instead of figures like Daniel Boone or Davy Crockett, they bring to mind the foolish exploits of the overmatched General Custer.” Espey, “America and Vietnam.”

77. Bercovitch considers the flexible dichotomy of America and false Americanness: “The dream that inspired them to defy the false Americanism of their time compelled them to speak their defiance as keepers of the dream. It is true that as keepers of the dream they could internalize the myth. Like the latter-day Puritan Jeremiahs, they could offer *themselves* as the symbol incarnate, and so relocate America” (Bercovitch 180).

Indians killed us. If they are Indians they are American Indians. Because they are white. Two white people from the states” (163).

White Americans have long believed they have a hidden Indian inside them. A reporter for the Chicago *Inter-Ocean* wrote in 1893 that watching Wild West reenactments reminded him of “the aboriginal ancestor” that is still “in us after all the long generations of attempted civilization and education.” Another wrote in 1899 that these westerns arouse “the hidden savage” and the “ineradicable trace of savage instinct” in the overcivilized audience.⁷⁸ That ‘hidden Indian’ imagined to be sleeping silently within the heart of white Americans could be drawn on by dominant and counter-culture alike. By returning to the Indian inside them, Bethany and Peter become better, kinder, whiter versions of themselves.

The novel criticizes the hippies too, however, for adopting an attitude that is too complacent toward the world’s Indians. Hunted by Mike, the two never attain a single one of their goals before they are killed. Unable to make progress on their errand to save the world through love, they demonstrate that their American jeremiad is no more viable than that of the cowboys.

Bamboo Bed criticizes pro- and antiwar perceptions of the American errand, but not the idea of the errand itself. Instead, the novel proffers its own American jeremiad. The Vietnam War is mad and futile, the narrative suggests, because Americans are recommitting to the wrong roots. Americans need not absorb ‘savage Indianness’ to emerge more militant, or perform ‘enlightened Indianness’ to protest. In this American

78. Qtd. in Richard Slotkin, “Buffalo Bill’s ‘Wild West’ and the Mythologization of the American Empire,” in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, eds. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), 174.

jeremiad, Americans need to recommit to their predecessors' role as guardians of the Indians.

The novel relies heavily on the American colonialist myth that the world's people of color need white paternalism to protect, lead, and care for them. American men are the only ones capable of this task. The Vietnamese are lazy, infantile, and servile.

Throwaway lines by the novel's heroes confirm: "This is a free country as long as the Americans are here," and "If the American Army quit Vietnam it would set the country back to the time before Christ, which would be fine with them" (276, 330). The novel suggests rugged American masculinity is the only hope the world's infantilized peoples have.

Although *The Bamboo Bed* criticizes the Vietnam War, I argue it does not ultimately condemn US imperialism. Indeed, everything in the novel implies American imperialism is necessary for global order. Despite the novel's ironic tone, for instance, Asian men are still feminized and white masculinity celebrated. An American soldier muses, "there was something feminine in that boy's face, but all men in Asia..."⁷⁹ Likewise, the women complain that there was simply "[n]o man at all" before the Americans arrived.⁸⁰ In both overt and subtle ways, *Bamboo Bed* recreates the imagery of

79. Eastlake, *Bamboo Bed*, 124, ellipses in the original.

80. This is especially pronounced in the novel's romantic scenes. Vietnamese men, distinguished by their childlike subservience, are depicted as sexually inadequate. They are simply not an option to pair with female protagonist, Mme. Dieudonné. Clancy becomes her lover and performs so well Mme. Dieudonné asks through satisfied exhaustion, "Mon Dieu, are all Americans this good?," with the implication that indeed they are. As her opening scene explains, there was in fact "[n]o man at all" before the Americans arrived. (Eastlake 272, 8).

European and Euro-American colonization of the ‘New World.’ In one illustrative passage, Eastlake writes:

That’s the way it is in Nam, you have the utter and absolute stillness of a primordial, an unrecorded and unwitnessed time – such an awful silence of beauty that is fixed and hushed, such a magnitude of all of time, you cannot breathe.

Then the choppers come.

The world begins.

Man arrives. (16)

Like the ‘New World,’ Vietnam is reimagined as a paradise devoid of real men, fated to be discovered, peopled, and civilized. Imperialism brings progress. This is the United States’ true errand.

Bercovitch writes, “all our classic writers (to varying degrees) labored against the myth as well as within it,” and Eastlake is no exception.⁸¹ In the antiwar novel’s imagining, whether as cowboys who hunt Indians, hippies who inhabit them, or guardians who assimilate them, Euro-Americans still dominate their invented Indians. *The Bamboo Bed* reiterates, in an attempt to reverse, the tropes, symbols, and myths of Indianness in its portrayal of the Vietnam War. In rehashing old forms, however, it also rehashes old myths. *Bamboo Bed* may illustrate changing attitudes toward Indianness, but I argue colonial epistemologies remain intact and unquestioned, even in antiwar novels like this.

5. Indians in Counterculture: A Retreat not a Transformation

⁸¹ “all our classic writers (to varying degrees) labored against the myth as well as within it. All of them felt, privately at least, as oppressed by Americanism as liberated by it. And all of them, however captivated by the national dream, also *used* the dream to reach beyond the categories of their culture” (Bercovitch 179).

In the late-war years, counterculturalists of every persuasion used Indians to represent their own dissatisfaction with the United States. As I already mentioned, antiwar novels and films redeployed the Indian as the symbolic victim of the US government. In similar fashion, American Indian women were made symbols of natural motherhood, artless femininity, and even free love by people seeking to challenge the codes and norms of American womanhood. University feminist studies and ethnography programs, for instance, made an American Indian protester named Mary Crow Dog a symbol of feminine power and free love after an academic textbook published her story. Crow Dog gave birth at the 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee, a multi-month protest demanding, among other things, that the US government uphold its treaty obligations. Ethnographers and feminist scholars coopted the protester's activism for their own. By reimagining her as a "'natural Indian maiden' giving birth outside the confines of society or patriarchal marriage," non-Native scholars could ignore her identity as a racialized and colonized woman, thereby erasing the significance of Wounded Knee and eviscerating her activism.⁸²

The occupation of Alcatraz was similarly coopted. The fourteen-month occupation was one of the most important American Indian protests of the twentieth century. As Troy Johnson and Joanne Nagel explain, "the symbolic importance of the Alcatraz occupation as the launching pad for a decade of American Indian protest must

82. Her experience was described in the book *Ojibwa Warrior*, taught in universities across the country. "In spite of those objections, Erdoes's work on Mary Moore became a classic in feminist studies. In many cases, it was the only book on Indian affairs read in women's studies enclaves for decades and it is still on the shelves of bookstores everywhere" Cook-Lynn, *New Indians*, 9.

not be underestimated.”⁸³ It created a space for Indigenous peoples to come together, find common ground, and fight for common interests. As Woody Kipp (Blackfeet) explains, “native militants took over the abandoned prison island of Alcatraz to call attention to the destitute conditions of natives of America.”⁸⁴ Alcatraz was a pan-Indian movement aimed at confronting the federal termination-era Indian policies that had directly caused hospital closures, skyrocketing infant mortality rates, dislocation, and extreme poverty for many American Indian nations.⁸⁵

When the occupation became increasingly prominent in the public eye, non-Native Californians joined in large numbers. Drawing on the Indian as a symbol for their own discontent, hippies and non-Native drug-users reimagined the occupation as a protest against capitalism, poverty, exploitation, and Vietnam. It was their protest too against the kind of hyper-masculine cowboy culture that had wreaked havoc in Vietnam. They, like

83. Troy Johnson and Joane Nagel, “Introduction,” *American Indian Activism*, 2.

84. Woody Kipp “The Eagles I Fed Who Did Not Love Me,” 207.

85. Vine Deloria Jr. writes in *Custer Died for Your Sins*: “People often feel guilty about their ancestors killing all those Indians years ago. But they shouldn’t feel guilty about the distant past. Just the last two decades have seen a more devious but hardly less successful war waged against Indian communities. . . .during the past twenty years federal medical services have been denied various tribes, resulting in tremendous increase in disease.

The Congressional policy of termination, advanced in 1954 and pushed vigorously for nearly a decade, was a combination of the old systematic hunt and the deprivation of services. Yet this policy was not conceived as a policy of murder. Rather it was thought that it would provide the elusive ‘answer’ to the Indian problem. And when it proved to be no answer at all, Congress continued its policy, having found a new weapon in the ancient battle for Indian land” (Deloria 54-55).

Peter and Bethany in *The Bamboo Bed*, believed they were choosing the side of the Indians. In reality, they contributed only to confusion and disarray on the island.⁸⁶

Such appropriations eclipse Indigenous activism and perpetuate the myth that Indianness is Euro-America's to own. In this same era, as New Age and hippie circles monetized their truncated, westernized versions of American Indian spirituality, medicine, and arts, they too participated in the evisceration American Indians' political realities. American Indian anticolonial activism at the local and transnational levels in this era came in the form of grassroots organizing, literature, the development of university Native American studies programs, protests, occupations, and government intervention.⁸⁷ This tireless activism made massive strides, including gains in intellectual and political sovereignty, but the Indianness sold in stores was not an engaged, enraged, revolutionary, and living American Indian reality. It was a de-politicized, palatable, spiritual, and gentle Indianness disconnected from any living people.

Huhndorf argues that the New Agers, hippies, and counterculturalists who seek cultural alternatives through Indianness are "torn" between their love for the Indian and their unwillingness to challenge their privilege.⁸⁸ I disagree with Huhndorf on this point.

86. For an excellent series of essays on the political, social, and cultural import of the occupation of Alcatraz which took place between November 1969 and June 1971, see Troy Johnson, Joane Nagel, and Duane Champagne's collection of essays *American Indian Activism: Alcatraz to the Longest Walk* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

87. In 1970, the First Convocation of American Indian Scholars outlined plans to develop university Native American Studies programs. The goals of the discipline would be to attend to American Indian cultures, knowledge, and nationhood and defend American Indian sovereignty.

88. Huhndorf, *Going Native*, 166

Invented Indians are produced by, for, and within settler colonial paradigms, so the refusal to challenge the racist and colonialist foundations of American culture is consonant with, not a departure from, a love of invented ‘Indianness.’ The images of Indianness adopted by the antiwar, liberal, free-love left were no more real than those of the pro-war right. As I argue in chapters two and three, making the Indian a metaphor reproduces in language the territorial displacement produced within US settler colonialism.

In the Vietnam era, the turn to idolizing and pitying Indians did not lead to widespread activism by non-Indians against attacks on American Indian lives and land, including the forced sterilizations of thousands of Indigenous women, forced relocations of hundreds of Seneca, and ongoing occupations of American Indian territory.⁸⁹ As long as the Indianness revered, respected, and championed is divorced from Indigenous peoples’ lives and realities, ‘Indian idolizers’ can continue to impose limited notions of authenticity on Indigenous peoples, uphold colonial fantasies, ignore treaty obligations, and occupy indigenous territories with impunity.⁹⁰ The colonial fantasies that remain

89. The Kinzua Dam, constructed from 1960-65, flooded Seneca territory, displacing hundreds. For more on the forced sterilizations of Indigenous women, see Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women*, 56; Jane Lawrence, “The Indian Health Service.”

90. Paige Raibmon argues that colonialist assumptions remain intact into the twenty-first century, and she looks at demands for Indian authenticity as evidence. When Indigenous peoples survive modernity and make use of modern conveniences and lifestyles, they are accused of assimilating, and some peoples have been subjected to losing recognition as a distinct people and polity when they deviate too far from limited notions of authenticity. She writes, “The Puyallup of Puget Sound were thus legally obliterated in the mid-twentieth century when, based in part of the testimony of anthropologists, a judge ruled the tribe extinct because he deemed tribal members assimilated” (9). See *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the late-nineteenth-century Northwest Coast* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005).

intact are precisely those that are transported overseas, perpetuating the myth of the US's manifest destiny.⁹¹ Similar in cause and consequence, Indian idolizing did little to change a culture so recently defined by Indian hating.

6. Loving the Indian, Replacing the Indian

One of the most striking examples of the intersections of Indian-hating and Indian-idolizing can be found in *The Education of Little Tree* (1976) by Forest Carter. The Indian autobiography was adored by Indian-idolizers for decades, but, as it was later discovered, the book was actually written by a Ku Klux Klan leader, a writer who cannot more firmly embody the hatred of non-white peoples. The confluence of Indian-hate and Indian-adoration represented in the writing, marketing, and reception of this book illustrates my main argument: that Indian hating and Indian idolizing are not opposites on either side of an epistemic rupture. Instead, I argue invented Indianness inheres in American narratives of progress, whether these narratives are imperial, economic, social, or, as I have argued throughout, racial. The loving depiction and reception of Carter's 'Indians' illustrates how Indian idolizing could be as favorable to settler colonialism and white hegemony as was the culture of Indian hating that wreaked havoc in Vietnam.

The Education of Little Tree chronicles the (fictional) upbringing of Forest "Little Tree" Carter in the American South during Prohibition. Raised by his Cherokee grandmother and part-Cherokee grandfather, Little Tree learns "Indian" ways of living

91. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn writes, "as long as we continue to focus on civil rights and sensation, we can ignore treaty matters. To take up treaty rights would require an honest look at colonial law, not just criminal law, as it affects the indigenes. ... This is not to suggest that civil rights matters are not important. But those matters are not essential to the function of Indian Studies. What we in Indigenous Studies must recognize in American history is that Manifest Destiny began on the eastern seaboard and it has been carried around the world as a colonial fantasy and it must be revised, if not defeated" (Cook-Lynn, *New Indians*, 10).

off the land. His grandfather, Granpa, is a moonshine distiller. Because the story is set during Prohibition, Granpa teaches Little Tree to resist the federal “guv’mint,” whose only purpose in the book is to tread on the poor folks’ personal freedoms.

Through his many lessons, Granpa teaches Little Tree that Indianness is a way of life. It is a sense of freedom and a rebel spirit. Anyone can harness it. He tells Little Tree about his own father, a white Confederate soldier, who felt that “rebel Indian yell rumbling from his chest and out his throat, screaming, savage” as he rode into battle (44). Little Tree discovers that other white folks “gave themselves, as the Indian did, to nature, not trying to subdue it, or pervert it, but to live with it. And so they loved the thought, and loving it grew to be it, so that they could not think as the white man” (123). Little Tree’s Granpa is half Indian, but “he thought Indian” and lived “as the Indian did,” so Little Tree, whose father is also white, discovers that he too can learn to live like the Indians (123). Indeed, any white person can.

The book appears to be a love letter to Indians. The Indians are kind, wise, rebellious, and dependable. They are stewards of the natural world, so inspirational to readers that audiences called the author the “guru of new-age environmentalists.”⁹² Divorced from any cultural attributes or political realities that would identify his characters as Cherokee, Carter’s Indians instead represent attributes of self-reliance, rugged individualism, and rebellion against tyranny. Although it was published and marketed as an autobiography, the fictional text takes the form of an American jeremiad.

92. Dan T. Carter, quoted in Felicia R. Lee, “Best Seller is a Fake, Professor Asserts,” *New York Times*, 4 October 1991, A00011.

By examining the elements of the American jeremiad at play in this text, *Little Tree's* white supremacist underpinnings become more transparent.

The ritualized complaint of the jeremiad insists white Americans have degenerated. In *Little Tree*, Americans' materialism, laziness, and reliance on the government have made them weak, and their weakness risks destroying America. In one of *Little Tree's* many didactic moments, Little Tree learns that if people become materialistic, or "loose with their money," "then politicians seen they could get control. They would take over loose people and before long you had a dictator... no thrifty people was ever taken over by a dictator. Which is right" (164). The self-reliant, rebel, and frontier spirit of the Indian protects Little Tree and his grandfather from the emasculating influences of modern American life. It is this spirit of the Indian that protects the nation's democratic ideals. Like all jeremiads, *Little Tree* offers a resolution through its complaint and constructs what Bercovitch calls, "a civic identity rooted in a prophetic view of history."⁹³ At the end of the book, when all the Indians have passed away, Little Tree is the only person left with Indian knowledge. The Indians may all be gone, but America still needs their wisdom. Forest "Little Tree" Carter steps forth as the redeemer, who will take his inherited Indian wisdom and renew his nation. Only when it is renewed will America once again be able to lead the world.

Before Little Tree can take up the mantle of America's redeemer, he first had to secure his Indian inheritance. The Cherokee people, he discovers, "were broken and lost, scattered from these mountains that was their home" (149). Little Tree meets the last full-

93. Bercovitch, *American Jeremiad*, 177.

blooded Cherokee man, Willow John. Silent, stoic, proud, and mysterious, Willow John looks “misplaced somehow [on the] fringe of the white man’s civilization” (150). The time of the Indian is over. Willow John understands that the future has no place for him, for “he knew only the past – of the Cherokee” (45). Embodying the vanishing Indian trope, Willow John imparts his wisdom and gladly leaves this world (“I want to go”), confident that he leaves it in the hands of a true American who will carry on the Indian way (209). Once again, Indianness is re-imagined as Euro-America’s patrimony, and through the tenets of possessive individualism, white people emerge as the only true Americans. At the end of the tale, all the Indians have died, and young Carter promises to preserve Indian attitudes and attributes: “I told Willow John ... I was going to be a Cherokee” (148). Little Tree heads west, the direction of America’s destiny, to regenerate the American spirit.

Marketed as a Cherokee autobiography, the book was beloved by audiences seeking an escape from US culture, so much so that the book’s popularity launched its author to the status of “a new-age wise man.”⁹⁴ As I argue in chapter one, the genre of Native American autobiography is especially popular with American audiences because it provides access to ‘authentic Indianness,’ which promises an escape from the US’s consumerist, tech-based, and over-civilized culture. In the celebratory foreword of the

94. Dan T. Carter, “The Transformation of a Klansman,” *New York Times*, 4 October 1991, A31.

2001 reprint, Rennard Strickland emphasizes that the “autobiographical remembrance” promises “a fresh perspective for a mechanistic and materialistic modern world.”⁹⁵

Little Tree’s Indians are unassuming, uneducated country folk, who possess time-honored wisdom, a deep respect for the land, and an inborn masculinity that commands respect. Because the Indians adhere to stereotypes (they are all old, wise, stoic, and dying), *Little Tree* was received as an authentic representation of American Indians.⁹⁶ It received widespread critical acclaim and was even taught in newly developed Native American studies departments, illustrating the need for Indigenous intellectual sovereignty discussed in my introduction. In his foreword, Strickland proclaims that the book is for those seekers and dreamers who find it while “passing through an Indian reservation.”⁹⁷ Not for those who live on the reservation, this book of Indian knowledge is intended for everyone but Native Americans themselves.

To its intended white American audiences, the narrative insists that ‘their Indian ancestors’ lived with a liberty, masculinity, and heartiness now lost. Only by returning to their remote Indian roots, can white American audiences regain their authentic American identities and progress into a brighter future. Written in the wake of US failure in Vietnam and the civil rights movement, *Little Tree* speaks to anxieties over perceived

95. Strickland, “Foreword: By Rennard Strickland for the 25th Anniversary release,” au. Carter, Forest, *The Education of Little Tree* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976, 2001), vi.

96. The book meets all the restrictive requirements of Indian authenticity I discuss in chapter one.

97. Strickland, “Foreword,” vi.

threats to white and US hegemony. As a jeremiad, it offers a justification for US failure in Vietnam, and a prophetic vision of a brighter imperial future.

The book climbed to the top of the *New York Times* bestseller list in 1991 and was reprinted in 2001, despite the fact that by that time the author's true identity had been exposed.⁹⁸ Carter was not a new-age guru; he was a KKK terrorist. He organized a KKK subdivision that assaulted Nat King Cole in 1956, kidnapped and tortured another African American man the following year, and bombed black homes and churches. Carter also built his career spreading white supremacist propaganda. He worked as a right-wing radio host, white supremacist speechwriter, and racist pamphleteer. Inciting hate and anger around the first appointment of a black police officer in his town, he wrote, "SOON, you can expect your wife or daughter to be pulled over to the side of the road by one of these Ubangi or Watusi tribesman wearing the badge of Anglo-Saxon law enforcement and toting a gun . . . but [he will be] as uncivilized as the day his kind were found eating their kin in the jungle."⁹⁹

The America of Carter-the-KKK-leader is white, and that racial whiteness is delivered out of the violent terrorizing, torture, and murder of African Americans. Yet, the America of Carter-the-writer-of-westerns is Indian. This change does not speak to a changed man, and *Little Tree* carries on Carter's career as a white supremacist propagandist. *Little Tree* turns Indians into metaphor for resistance to federal interference. Granpa calls the government "powerful monsters who had no regard for how folks had to live and get by" (16). In the civil rights era, the tyrannical pressures to

98. Huhndorf, *Going Native*, 130.

99. Dan T. Carter, "The Transformation of a Klansman," *New York Times*, 4 October 1991, A31; and Huhndorf 130-131.

which Carter responds are those of a government compelling desegregation. In the book, Granpa does not vote, and another Indian who tries to vote “got so nervous about it, he taken to heavy drinking spells, which eventually killed him. Granpa laid his death at the door of politicians” who force the franchise on incapable minorities (16). In *Little Tree*, Indians may have admirable attributes, but all people of color are still lesser creatures than white men. As a white supremacist jeremiad, the didactic *Little Tree*’s final message is to call white Americans to recommit to ‘their Indian roots’ to become more authentically American, that is, to become a more dominant white American male. Through their imagined Indian roots, white Americans inherit the land along with a culture that resists tyranny. They inherit the right to rule the world’s people of color. In the natural course of events, white Americans will ultimately replace the Indian, concluding the conquest of Native America, and opening the prospect of future successes in its imperial wars.

7. Invisible Indians, Invisible Imperialism

Americans resist the fact of American imperialism.¹⁰⁰ Preferring to view themselves as liberators, anti-fascists, and generators of civilization in the wilderness,

100. Kaplan writes: “United States continental expansion is often treated as an entirely separate phenomenon from European colonialism of the nineteenth century, rather than as an interrelated form of imperial expansion. The divorce between these two histories mirrors the American historiographical tradition of viewing empire as a twentieth-century aberration, rather than as part of an expansionist continuum. By linking United States nation-building and empire-building as historically coterminous and mutually defining, the essays in this volume complicate the simple chronology that plots the U.S. empire emerging full blown at various stages of the twentieth century to step into the shoes of dying European empires; instead the essays explore in varied contexts how the United States, as Richard Drinnon has claimed, exports its past ‘metaphysics of Indian-hating’ and Indian-fighting into new frontiers and across new borders” Kaplan, “Left Alone with America,” 17.

Americans redeploy the fictions of Indian around the world to justify their international acquisitions, interventions, and imperialism. As Richard Drinnon writes, the “metaphysics of Indian-hating” have been transmitted over and again to new frontiers and new imperial projects.¹⁰¹ In obvious ways the cowboy and Indian tropes of early Vietnam narratives buttressed and perpetuated the imperial myths on which the United States has long relied. In more subtle ways, tales of Indian adoration, like that in *The Education of Little Tree*, also supported and promoted US imperial projects.

Amy Kaplan argues that the US academy is also to blame for the firmer establishment of US denials of empire. As William Appleman Williams argued mid-century, “[o]ne of the central themes of American historiography is that there is no American Empire.”¹⁰² Official government reports, media coverage, novels, and even literary criticism have worked in tandem to create a vision of Vietnam in the dominant US cultural imagination, in which the Vietnam War erupted without history. Without any context, novels like Robin Moore’s *The Green Berets*, paint a mythic vision of the United States as the conveyer of world freedom, not as a global empire. The treatment of the Vietnamese as Indians, in life as in literature – including forced relocation, likening them to devils in the forest, imagining them as children in need of care – was caused precisely by the fact that the US had embarked on such imperial exploits before. By turning Indians into a myth and a metaphor, Americans can not only ignore the ongoing colonization of

101. Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building*, 1980).

102. William Appleman Williams, “The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy,” *Pacific Historical Review* 24 (November 1955): 379-95.

American Indian nations, but they can also capitalize on those myths and metaphors to obscure and rename twentieth-century US imperialism.

Although some scholars have begun to note the continuities between US expansion and empire,¹⁰³ most still insist that Vietnam lacked precedent, with a historical myopia unique to American Indian histories. To support the claim that Vietnam was “different from anything [Americans] had experienced in their history,” Ringnalda, for instance, explains that Vietnam was “the first war in which Americans fought an indigenous enemy in a terrain that was largely jungle. The formidable landscape was ... hell to American GIs.”¹⁰⁴ Unconscious of the irony, Ringnalda illustrates Vietnam’s singularity with echoes of Puritan attitudes toward an indigenous enemy in a hell-like wilderness; his description of Vietnam borrows words and imagery right out of the Indian Wars. Only with American Indians thoroughly removed from the dominant American consciousness could a serious scholar assert that the US had never before fought an indigenous enemy.

Even scholarship that makes an effort to contextualize the war often falls short. In his monograph, *Vietnam in Prose and Film*, James Wilson, for example, criticizes all US

103. See especially Drinnon, *Facing West*. See also Melling, *Vietnam in American Literature*; Lewis, *Tainted War*; Espey, “America and Vietnam;” Frances Fitzgerald, *Fire in the Lake*.

104. Ringnalda, “Fighting and Writing,” 26. He also describes Vietnam as “one of two wars (the other was the Philippine War of 1899-1901) in which Americans often could not with any clarity distinguish friend from foe. Thus, the nice distinction between battle casualties and homicides became lost” (26). Here he again unconsciously evokes a colonial trope, one of the earliest in fact, between good and bad Indians. The one deserves to die, and the other unfortunately and tragically dies as well. In either case, their deaths encourage colonial power and land acquisition. See Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, for more on the discursive benefits of this colonial dichotomy.

depictions of Vietnam for ignoring European and US imperial histories. Concerned that unofficial narratives reiterate official distortions by ignoring the context of the French Indochina War, he argues, “by implying that the war is impossible to understand, these writers simply play into the hands of all those who wanted (and still want) to keep the war a mystery.”¹⁰⁵ Although he argues for historical contextualization, Wilson only contextualizes the war within recent French imperialism, and, like Ringnalda, seems oblivious to the connections his words and references make to the US’s Indian Wars. For example, Wilson’s description of the US strategy of “stripping the Vietnamese people from their land, their ancestors, and their past” as “Americans attempted to annihilate Vietnamese culture and history so that they might more easily construct their own”¹⁰⁶ uncannily echoes US Indian policy during the Indian Wars. The soldiers Wilson quotes do the same, as they stereotype the Vietnamese as anachronistic primitives: “Look – they’re a thousand years behind us in this place, and we’re trying to educate them up to our level.”¹⁰⁷ Wilson’s survey of Vietnam literature is crowded with evidence, suggestions, and traces of Indianness and US colonial history – because the literature itself is crowded with the same.

Vietnam literature experiments with how to convey the truth about a war made mad by a lack of direction, incessant euphemism, altered vocabulary, horrors too shocking to be real, and horrors too real to be shocking. Critics often style hallucinatory,

105. Wilson, *Vietnam in Prose*, 51.

106. Wilson, *Vietnam in Prose*, 35.

107. qtd. in Wilson, *Vietnam in Prose*, 34, Jonathan Schell, ‘The Village of Ben Suc,’ *The New Yorker*, July 15, 1967, pg 50.

confused narratives as the archetypal Vietnam literature, and those aesthetic choices, as Wilson notes, can function to obscure the historical continuity between the US's various imperial ventures. New literary strategies, I argue, told the same old story. Not the sea change they have often been described, I argue they were surface changes still deployed within the most traditional American genre. Tracing the invented Indian within the American jeremiad form of these texts reveals both the recommitment to tradition and the obfuscation of history that conceals it. By returning to old forms and myths both pro- and antiwar literature contributed to the strength of the ideological status quo, which was based in denying and justifying the colonization of indigenous nations.

8. Literary Fictions, Lived Consequences

The ideology of empire had obvious ramifications for the countless Vietnamese civilians killed during the war, whose deaths were initially minimized through US perceptions of expendable Indians. But the fictions deployed for and against Vietnam also had ongoing consequences for the Indigenous peoples first called 'Indians.' Sakimay and Metis scholar Janice Acoose, Misko-Kisikawihkwe, unpacks literature's commanding influence on culture, politics, and people's perceptions in her monograph *Iskwewak – Kah' Ki Yaw Ni Wahkomakanak*. Students, Acoose notes, believe what they read in books, which means both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people come to understand indigeneity almost exclusively through prevailing misrepresentations.¹⁰⁸ A

108. She writes, "literature is a powerful and very political tool. Because it is powerful and political, readers should be encouraged to approach it critically. I found, however, that most university students are not critical readers, thinkers, and writers; what the majority of students read in books, for example about 'Indians,' 'Eskimos,' or 'halfbreeds,' is generally accepted and processed without a whole lot of critical analysis. Consequently, the majority of students come to 'know' Indigenous peoples only through

majority of students, she notes, consider to be realistic the racist Indian stereotypes found in James Fenimore Cooper novels, just as audiences accepted Carter's Indians as authentic.

When it comes to Indigenous peoples and issues, Vine Deloria, Jr. agrees that, for the average person, it was "impossible to tell truth from fiction or fact from mythology."¹⁰⁹ In his 1969 manifesto *Custer Died For Your Sins*, Deloria argued that "The American public feels most comfortable with the mythical Indians of stereotype-land," and Native people absorbed these fictions and pressures. "To be an Indian in modern American society," Deloria argued of the Vietnam era, "is in a very real sense to be unreal and ahistorical."¹¹⁰ The calls to deconstruct the toxic fictions of Indianness have been reiterated for centuries, and yet popular literature and film still perpetuate these myths. The fictions found in literature "have come to be believed," argues Gordon Johnston, and 'Indian' myths, embodied in characters new and old, have "come to be regarded as real."¹¹¹ The detrimental effects literary myths of Indianness have on Indigenous peoples, Acoose argues, cannot be overstated. In her experience,

[because of the] dominating ideological influence, I shamefully accepted that I was not only different but inferior. Consequently, I learned to

highly selective images perpetuated through a similarly highly selective literature, which ultimately maintains the status quo" (Acoose 34-35).

109. Vine Deloria Jr. *Custer Died* 1-2.

110. Vine Deloria Jr. *Custer Died* 2.

111. Gordon Johnston, "An Intolerable Burden of Meaning: Native People in White Fiction," in *The Native in Literature: Canadian and Comparative Perspectives*. Ed. Thomas King, Cheryl Calver, and Helen Hoy. Toronto: ECW Press, 1987, 50-65.

passively accept and internalize the easy squaw, Indian-whore, dirty Indian, and drunken Indian stereotypes that subsequently imprisoned me, and all Indigenous peoples, regardless of our historical, economic, cultural, spiritual, political, and geographic differences.”¹¹²

Vine Deloria Jr. agrees, and adds that for Indigenous peoples in the Vietnam era these dominant ideologies were “Our foremost plight.”¹¹³ The ‘Indians’ Americans use to tell stories about their American identity and their nation’s place in the world perpetuate toxic fictions that erase Indigenous Americans. Because most people simply accept what they read as truth, the political power of these popular novels must be taken seriously.

9. Conclusion

Hellmann writes that Vietnam “resulted from a sick contemporary American society perversely acting out the lost rituals of its heritage.”¹¹⁴ A return to the ‘lost rituals of American heritage’ is precisely what the American jeremiad does. Vietnam literature reenacts the cultural rituals of the war it describes. Both the pro-war *Green Berets* and the antiwar *Bamboo Bed* return to settler colonial myths and traditional American forms to make sense of the war in Vietnam. In both novels, the upper echelons of military management are out of touch with the war. These characters speak to the anxiety that modern America is spineless, weak, and overly reliant on technology. The cowboy infantrymen on the ground need to draw on their Indian core to better kill the Indians. On

112. Janice Acoose, *Iskwewak – Kah’ Ki Yaw Ni Wahkomakanak: Neither Indian Princesses Nor Easy Squaws* (Canada: Women’s Press, 1995), 29.

113. Vine Deloria Jr., *Custer Died*, 1.

114. Hellmann, *American Myth*, 81.

the other hand, these texts also speak to, or in the case of *The Green Berets*, provoke, the anxiety that the modern US is a tyrannical imperial force out of touch with its core values of democracy, self-reliance, and individual freedom. The New Ager, the hippie, and the war protester draw on their Indian roots to protest government overreach, much like the protesters did during the Boston Tea Party centuries before.

While critics argue over the meanings of cultural ‘reversals’ and ‘inversions’ of Indianness, I argue instead that pro- and antiwar narratives formally have a great deal in common: the jeremiad based in myths of Indianness. As Vietnam, civil rights movements, women’s movements, and the American Indian movement challenged the status quo, the jeremiad ritualistically reaffirmed white hegemony and US imperialism.

In Vietnam War narratives, as white people imagined themselves the heroes within a story of dominating the world’s Indians, white hippies resisted by playing Indian. This, as Alcatraz illustrates, actually interrupted and disrupted the anticolonial work of American Indian activists at the time. The use of the same cultural symbol – the Indian – within the same cultural ritual – the jeremiad – showcases the limits of a resistance still invested in white hegemony. In using the same terms, each functions to maintain systems of oppression. Espey writes that the soldiers of later Vietnam literature “fail” to embody the rugged, self-reliant frontiersman: “The processes of history and myth have come full circle. The American soldiers sent to save South Vietnam from revolution fail in this mission but return to revolutionize America instead.”¹¹⁵ This is indeed the revolution of an American jeremiad. They move forward by circling back; they progress by returning to their roots. Through the ruptures and crises of the Vietnam

115. Espey, “America and Vietnam.”

war, the American jeremiad remained an organizing structure for the stories Americans told about themselves and the world's Indians. The shifts in how white people related to their Indians were not sweeping cultural changes, but were rather a continuation of a long cultural tradition based in unquestioned settler colonial epistemologies.

Conclusion:

“Nobody Complained” in the Dakota Access Pipeline Protest

To be here on the front lines and to see the desecration of our sacred sites literally erased from the record books is damaging enough to one's soul and existence. This is history in the making that is so tragic that they are trying to erase us from the books. We say enough is enough.

- Cody Hall, Spokesperson for Red Warrior Camp

In 2016, thousands of protesters from hundreds of indigenous nations gathered to protest the Dakota Access Pipeline. From the Hunkpapa of North Dakota to the Maori of New Zealand, from the Sami of Scandinavia to the Mountain Crow of Montana, over three hundred indigenous nations joined together through heat, rain, and the freezing North Dakota winter to fight the latest environmental injustice directed at Indigenous Americans. The protest comprised the largest pan-Indian activist coalition of the twenty-first century and was one of the largest Native gatherings in US history. Indigenous people and allies, including thousands of US veterans, came from around the country and the world to combat the threat to Dakota water sources.

Hunkpapa leaders welcomed allies and provided nonviolence training rooted in Lakota traditional values. Celebrating Lakota culture and the people's rootedness in the land on which their community has resided for thousands of years, the protest was a significant expression of the ways Indigenous peoples' pan-Indian coalition building protects and espouses the needs, culture, health, lives, and sovereignty of individual

nations.¹ The water protectors' regard for Lakota traditions and campaign to protect Lakota water represents a significant departure from the invented 'Indianness' imposed upon Indigenous peoples by the US's settler colonial culture. Describing the incredible power of pan-Indian activism, one protester, Sampson DeCrane (Mountain Crow) explained, "If you get all native people together on one issue, we will be unstoppable."² The historic protest launched several activist groups and programs as well as a record number of Native American congressional and federal office campaigns in 2016 and 2018.³ The long term significance of this historic moment cannot yet be measured, but it can already be felt and should not be underestimated.

In response to the peaceful protest, US police forces attacked the water protectors with dogs, pepper spray, and fire hoses. Water protectors also faced mass arrest as well as blizzard conditions and freezing temperatures. Nevertheless, more demonstrators arrived each day. Tara Houska (Anishinaabe from Couchiching First Nation), a tribal attorney in Washington, DC, described her firsthand experience with the violence: "we saw the use of excess force, the use of dogs, to attack Native American people as they were protecting a sacred site. To see that and to know that is where we are in the narrative and to know that a company would even think that they can do that speaks volumes about

1. John Grim in Timothy Brown, "John Grim on Standing Rock: 'This is Not Only About Water, It's All About Water,'" *Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies*, 30 November, 2016.

2. Qtd. in Erika Larsen, "Meet the Native Americans on the Front Lines of a Historic Protest," *National Geographic*, 23 September, 2016.

3. Leila Fadel and Talia Wiener, "Record Number Of Native Americans Running For Office In Midterms," *NPR*, 4 July, 2016.

where we are treating Native Americans and how [we] view them.”⁴ Houska notes the power of myths of Indianness to dehumanize Indigenous peoples and further the interests of US settler colonial capitalism. Further describing the stereotypes that framed national perception of the protest, Native American studies scholar John Grim explains, “I can hear people saying, ‘These people are standing in the way of progress. They’re frozen in history; they don’t understand what the world is about.’ My response is that I think they understand the world better than dominant America does. We can’t live without water; we can’t survive. And so this action in support of water is all the more important.”⁵ As has happened throughout US history in its engagements with other nations, those who stand in the way of US prerogatives are reimagined as through the lens of invented ‘Indianness:’ backward, erasable, and ultimately expendable.

In an effort to oppose such stereotypes, American Indian activist Chase Iron Eyes (Standing Rock Sioux) explained the value of the DAPL protest in terms the dominant culture would understand, “We don’t have energy security unless we have water security. We don’t have food security unless we have water security. We don’t have national security unless we have water security. I say this with the truest of intentions because when you look at who we are fighting to stop this poison from coming into our homelands and this is all of our homelands. America, you are 240 years old; we have been here since time immemorial and we have been telling you that you can get by love what you have taken by force.”⁶ Nevertheless, myths of Indianness continued to

4. Qtd. in Erika Larsen, “Meet the Native Americans.”

5. John Grim in Timothy Brown, “John Grim on Standing Rock.”

6. Qtd. in Erika Larsen, “Meet the Native Americans.”

dominate media coverage of the protest, with outlets like Fox News emphasizing job creation⁷ and profits over Indigenous concerns over their lives, health, and land, thus again casting the Indians as opposing economic progress without cause.

This dissertation has focused on myths of Indianness in the long twentieth century because they largely have been overlooked. The point at which all the messy, interconnected, and contradictory myths I have explored meet is in the myth of Indian desolation. As I explained in the introduction and throughout the dissertation, the myth of Indian desolation ultimately does four things: it conceals the historical and ongoing violence of settler colonialism and US imperialism; it consolidates white male hegemony; it prevents productive legal, political, and literary engagement between the US and Native America by normalizing and further entrenching US colonization of over five hundred sovereign indigenous nations; and it supports and furthers the unfinished conquest of American Indian territory. Each of these outcomes can be seen in the perception and coverage of the Dakota Access Pipeline, not the least in the protest's eventual forceful termination.

Police armed with military-grade gear and weaponry forced the unarmed protesters to disband, and, in one of his first moves in office, President Trump signed a presidential memorandum on January 24th, 2017 to advance construction of the pipeline. In explanation, Trump said, "As you know I approved two pipelines that were stuck in limbo forever. *I don't even think it was controversial.* You know, I approved them and I *haven't even heard one call from anybody* saying, 'oh, that was a terrible thing you did,'"

7. General consensus estimates that the pipeline will result in several thousand short-term jobs (under two years) and under forty full-time positions.

and again, “As you know, I did the Dakota pipeline and *nobody* called up to complain.”⁸ For Trump, as for so many others, the several thousand Indigenous protesters could be brushed casually aside as “nobody,” their voices silenced, their presence ignored, their very existence denied.

In 1978, Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr. concluded his study of white men’s invented Indians with the prediction that “it seems certain that the term and the idea of Indian otherness will continue into the future.” He explains further, “Partly such a prediction seems warranted by the continued usefulness of that otherness ... for so many groups in the White population.”⁹ The myth of Indian desolation allows people in power to erase Indigenous presence, and it certainly proved useful once again in the case of DAPL to further US corporate and governmental interests in the unfinished conquest of Native America.

Myths of Indianness created the conditions for no-DAPL’s forward-looking protest, focused on protecting future generations, to be recast as the backward complaint of a people who cannot enter the present. This dissertation opened with an analysis of the ways myths of Indianness have preemptively silenced Indigenous activists like Sarah Winnemucca by restricting ‘real Indian’ behavior to the non-literary, non-judicial, non-human realm. I close the dissertation with the most recent example of the ways Indianness continues to reframe and undermine Indigenous anticolonial activism. The presumptions that Indians by definition stand in the way of progress, that they live

8. Justin Carissimo, “Donald Trump: ‘I haven’t had one call’ complaining about Dakota Access Pipeline,” *Independent*, 8 February, 2017, emphasis added.

9. Berkhofer, *White Man’s Indian*, 196.

outside the bounds of civilization, or that they are not even there continue to ripple consciously and unconsciously in media, governmental, and literary registers.

I am not as certain as Berkhofer that invented Indians will continue to dominate future US experiences, discourses, and policies, but I hope that this project has made it very clear that ignoring the ongoing pervasiveness and cultural influence of invented Indianness in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries will only allow lies and denials like Trump's to continue unabated and unquestioned. Myths of Indianness continue to advance ethnocide and genocide, and as Richard Slotkin writes, "A people unaware of its myths is likely to continue living by them."¹⁰ Literature has the power and potential to rewrite and write back against the stories about American Indians that continue to replace reality. New stories can build a better world. As Laura Coltelli writes, American Indian literatures are "a means for survival,"¹¹ and other literatures can be too, only if and when we become aware the US's ongoing reliance on its Indian myths and the ways we all promote and participate in them.

10. Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration*, 5.

11. Coltelli, *Winged Words*, 6.

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