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Survivance and Fluidity

George Copway's *The Life, History, and Travels of Kah-ge-gah-gah-bowh*

CATHY REX

Between 1847 and 1851, George Copway (b. 1818), a member of the Ojibwe Nation and a native Canadian, found himself riding huge waves of popularity in the United States and abroad.¹ The Methodist missionary, writer, lecturer, and Indian rights activist first gained public attention through the 1847 publication of his autobiography, *The Life, History, and Travels of Kah-ge-gah-gah-bowh* (George Copway), which was enormously well received and went through seven editions by 1848. Over the next four years, Copway additionally published two revised and appended versions of his autobiography, a tribal history of the Ojibwes, and a travel narrative; began his own weekly newspaper in New York; and proposed to the U.S. Congress a plan for the establishment of an independent Indian territory.² With multiple books and a newspaper in print, plentiful speaking engagements on Native themes up and down the Atlantic seaboard, and several noteworthy publication firsts, George Copway had become a bona fide member of the inner circles of America's literary, political, and social elite. He was intimately familiar with such famous figures as the ethnographer Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, historian Francis Parkman, and writers James Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, whom Copway purportedly inspired to write *The Song of Hiawatha*, a romanticized poem about the Lake Superior Ojibwe. With such varied and distinguished accomplishments, Copway was certainly one of the most prolific and visible Native authors of his time.

However, Copway's numerous literary and social contributions have largely remained overlooked by present-day scholars. Because of the general downward trajectory of Copway's life, his constant (and often disreputable) self-reinventions and identity changes, as well as his (perceived) failure to project any identity beyond that of the "Noble Christian Savage"—the lowly and inferior Indian struggling through the aid of Christianity to become "white"—scholars have tended to criticize Copway and his body of texts from a purely psychological standpoint.³ For example, Bernd C. Peyer argues that Copway was caught between two irreconcilable worlds. Peyer notes that Copway "consistently acted out both systems of belief in his various public guises, one as Kahgegagahbowh, 'Chief of the Ojibwa Nation,' and the other as the Reverend George Copway, 'Missionary to his People'" (*Tutor'd* 236) and that this "frustrating attempt to shape his identity according to his audience's whims . . . forced him to undergo various personality transformations that finally broke his spirit" (*Tutor'd* 224). Donald B. Smith has even gone so far as to note that Copway, as his life progressed and he purportedly became increasingly more disconnected from both his Ojibwe and European identities, "began to lose all touch with reality" ("Life" 25) and that, consequently, his works should be cited "very cautiously" ("Life" 29) and read with "considerable sympathy" ("Life" 28).⁴

Such readings position Copway as a transculturated individual with a conflicted sense of self who is unable, in both his life and his texts, to incorporate his Ojibwe heritage into the white, antebellum American society that was thirsty for exotic Indian curiosities. These readings conflate the events of Copway's life with the material in his texts, add a dash of speculation about his mental processes, and finally provide an unsupportable reading of Copway's psychological state rather than his literary endeavors. This is in part because these critics provide analysis that spans Copway's entire body of texts rather than offering sustained analysis of any one of his works.

However, when taken independently, Copway's texts, particularly his 1847 autobiography *The Life, History and Travels of Kah-ge-gah-bowh*, can be viewed as venues through which he forges a new possibility for Indianness, a self-determined identity that defies and

resists the static national, racial, social, and intellectual categories imposed by nineteenth-century hegemony. Rather than viewing his texts (and life) as failures to successfully integrate Indian, Christian, and “civilized” literary identities into a hybridized whole, I argue that Copway is instead creating a space within his autobiography in which an Ojibwe person can also be both British and American, as well as a creative, intellectual figure and a devout Christian. Through the authorship and structure of his autobiography, Copway is challenging national and ethnic absolutisms held by nineteenth-century Euramerican society about Indians. By claiming in his autobiography the positions of Briton, American, historian, ethnographer, Christian, and Indian activist while still claiming his Ojibwe identity above all else, Copway is reconstituting the terms of the category “Indian” and moving them beyond the assimilationist, syncretist, or separatist models. While his life choices and ultimate rejection by society most assuredly posit a certain narrative about the role and acceptance of Indianness within Euramerican society, I want to suggest that in *The Life, History and Travels of Kah-ge-ga-gah-bowh* another possible narrative is created by Copway. In this text Copway is not merely adopting or casting off one identity or another to suit his momentary needs or blending these identities into a polluted, hybridized form that sadly straddles two irreconcilable cultures, as critics have suggested, but rather he is producing a cultural adaptation of the “Indian” identity, a fluid intermixture of diverse elements that exceeds and defies the national and racial discourses of the nineteenth century.

In his landmark text *Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance*, Gerald Vizenor offers readings of various cultural texts that have produced simulations of tribal realities through the perpetuation of the tenets of Manifest Destiny. Vizenor argues that these simulations—copies of copies that found their genesis in the Western imagination—are now accepted and consumed as “the” real and continue to surveil and dominate tribes in literature. Vizenor writes, “Manifest manners are the simulations of dominance; the notions and misnomers that are read as the authentic and sustained as representations of Native American Indians” but ultimately testify to the

absence, rather than the presence, of the tribal real (5–6). Vizenor addresses such varied cultural forms as western movies, school mascots, tribal kitschymen, and the Boy Scouts for their participation in the production of simulations through the falsification and misrepresentation of tribal reality. He recognizes that there are, however, “postindian warriors of survivance” who arise from the existing simulations and attempt through the engagement of those simulations to liberate tribal reality from the tradition of oppression. These postindian warriors

bear their own simulations and revisions to contend with manifest manners, the “authentic” summaries of ethnology, and the curse of racialism and modernism in the ruins of representation. The wild incursions of the warriors of survivance undermine the simulations of the unreal in the literature of dominance. (12)

It is through various theatrical performances that recreate the tribal real, not its absence, that Vizenor’s postindian warriors resist and undercut this exploitation. Vizenor locates this resistance, this survivance over dominance, in “the silence of heard stories, or the imagination of oral literature in translation” (12), in “the shimmers of imagination . . . [and] an aesthetic restoration of trickster hermeneutics” (14). In essence, the resistance of Vizenor’s postindian warriors is found in the liminal spaces between “liberation and survivance without the dominance of closure” (14).

In a similar vein, Craig Womack, in *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*, argues for the discussion of the significance of Native literatures within Native communities. While Womack specifically addresses the Creek experience and Creek literature, his argument that Native worldviews can and do incorporate and transform new concepts from contact cultures without being obliterated is an appealing one that complements Vizenor’s sense of survivance. According to Womack, Native “cultural fluidity,” the ability to adapt and react to outside cultural forces in a dynamic yet stable way, is not a state of limbo between two cultures that negates the formation of any coherent identity. Instead, he argues that a distinctive Native

quality that is specific to Native literature and experience always remains after exposure to non-Native cultures, much as Vizenor argues for assertions of Native survivance that are embedded within and emerge from the literature of dominance. Ultimately, Womack desires a separate Creek literary canon in order to

emphasiz[e] unique Native worldviews and political realities, [to] searc[h] for differences as often as similarities and [to] attempt[t] to find Native literature's place in Indian country, rather than Native literature's place in the canon. (11)

Such a move, insists Womack, would acknowledge the sovereignty and legitimacy of Native texts.

I contend that through the textual assertion of the legitimacy of his tribal community, politics, history, geography, family stories, spirituality, and blood ties right alongside Euramerican identifications in *The Life, History, and Travels of Kah-ge-ga-gah-bowh*, Copway is experimenting with forms of survivance and cultural fluidity. In his later texts, which take the form of histories, travel sketches, and journalistic essays, Copway admittedly struggles to re-create the complex and challenging Indian identity that permeates his first literary endeavor.⁵ Perhaps, as some of the aforementioned critics have suggested, Copway's social, economic, and personal imperatives affected his sense of self as well as his literary style once his autobiography met with such success. However, his 1847 autobiography exercises creative, intellectual, and political agency in conjunction with their purported antithesis—Indianness—in a resolute effort to re-chart the complexities of Indian identity in nineteenth-century Euramerica. Through his adoption and critique of the static racial and national identifications and simulations placed upon him as a person of Native descent, Copway repudiates the Western inventions of a static, universal Native identity by placing emphasis on his fluid identifications among three distinct nationalities: British Canadian, American, and Ojibwe, the final of which Copway uses as his lens through which to view the others suggesting its de facto sovereignty and validity. However, he also adopts and adapts the dominant discourses of religious revivalism, science, and ethnology to complicate

and explode the supposedly stable notion of Native identity. The result is a textualized self that is resistant to the nineteenth-century racist and colonialist understandings of what it means to be of a certain nation, race, and class. By constructing a textual identity that is “neither/nor” as well as “both/and,” Copway is subverting and reinscribing dominant nineteenth-century ideologies and simulations that he otherwise might have been unable to challenge adequately through his lived experiences. He is performing a fluid self that cannot be swallowed up and contained by the established “authentic” representations of Native Americans.

CULTURAL FLUIDITY

In the final section of Copway’s 1847 autobiography, there is what he terms a “geographical sketch” of the state of the Ojibwe Nation. It offers a critique of recent Ojibwe-white relations and details the current status of and the improvements that Copway feels must be made within the Ojibwe settlements. However, since the nation itself is located “within the bounds of two Governments—the American and the British,” Copway states that he must give a separate account of the land holdings, population numbers, and civilized improvements of the varying American and British tribes (142). The fact of Copway’s “separate accounts” is an interesting one because while recognizing the Ojibwe Nation as a unified whole, Copway also recognizes that that whole has two differing national designations. It is the interplay among these three national and cultural identifications—Ojibwe, American, and British—and Copway’s varying levels of identification with all three that serve as a starting point for his revisioning of a culturally fluid Indian identity. By focusing a large part of his narrative on the process of his movement between and mediation of these supposedly distinct, stable nationalities, while at the same time revealing their blurred and overlapping boundaries as well as calling attention to the intrusive operation of colonialism on the Ojibwe Nation, Copway is destabilizing the idea of national identity, particularly that of the Indian.

One of the struggles facing Copway and all Native peoples in the

nineteenth century was to refute the empiricist theories about Indian difference that relegated Indians, as Maureen Konkle has noted, to the position of “anachronistic relic[s] of an early moment in the history of man locked in a state of nature without history and without a future [who] would rapidly disappear when confronted with the pinnacle of human civilization [Euramerican society]” (*Writing* 4). In this mode of differential thinking, the Indians who dared to continue existing after the moment of colonization were given the choice to either “assimilate or become extinct” (Konkle, *Writing* 33). The assumption of the times was that there was such irreconcilable difference between the “two cultures” that Native peoples either “live[d] a traditional, precolonization life or . . . lost their difference and ha[d] acceded to EuroAmerican culture” (Konkle, *Writing* 33). There was no “in between” status for Indian identity or existence. Consequently, Copway’s position as an author is riven; he must at once try to represent himself within his text and to represent what Euramerican society has represented him as. The prescribed representations, which reflect only the simulated, fetishized tribal “unreal” of Western imagination—either the timeless noble savage or the assimilated, inauthentic Indian—are unusable for Copway. He must instead, as Thomas King has suggested in his *The Truth about Stories*, “use the native present as a way to resurrect a native past and to imagine a native future” in order to fracture and reframe the tainted, archetypal binaries of Native history and identity in the dominant literature (106).

And Copway aggressively attempts to do so right from the opening chapters of his text by establishing the territory, government, and historical specificity of the Ojibwe Nation. After a brief preface, a word to the reader, and a few paragraphs in chapter 1 in which he purposefully positions himself as the “Noble Savage,” Copway immediately delves into the historical specificity of his nation and family. He relates how it was his great-grandfather who “first ventured to settle at Rice Lake, after the Ojibwe nation defeated the Hurons, who once inhabited all the lakes in Western-Canada,” and he reveals the failures of the Sacs, Shawnee, and Iroquois tribes to drive the Ojibwes out of the region, even when they resorted to warfare, espionage, and

a confederacy between the Hurons and Iroquois (14). Consequently, Copway states, “Our nation has never been conquered; and have maintained their ground wherever they have conquered” (44). He also describes the range of the Ojibwe territory, noting that it extends from

the upper part of Lake Superior, and even several hundred miles above its head, along the shore of Lake Superior, down to Lake Huron, St. Clair, the foot of lake Michigan, north of lakes Erie and Ontario, and some distance down the St. Lawrence. They now inhabit a portion of land extending about two thousand miles east and west, and from two hundred and fifty to three hundred miles from north to south. (45)

Copway then details the political hierarchies and cultural standards of the Ojibwes. He notes that each settlement within this vast territory straddling land in both Canada and America maintains specific territorial rights, a governing chief, several lesser war chiefs, and a tribal council composed of members of the differing clans of the Ojibwe Nation who lived within in each village. Whenever war or disagreements erupted between different nations or one nation would “sue” another for peace, Copway notes that “councils of peace” would be held in which “assemblies” of chiefs and warriors would meet to exchange wampum or calumets and present their cases before the Great Spirit to determine if he approved of their “proceedings” (45–46). Time, place, and political agency—even the political rhetoric—are significant in these passages because through them Copway is writing the Ojibwe into historical and political existence. He is attempting to undo the effects of white knowledge about racial difference by establishing the narrative of a coherent, independent, and powerful Ojibwe Nation, unified through its hard-won ties to a specific territory, cultural practices, and history from his position as a contemporary Ojibwe telling his own story and that of his nation.

Simultaneously, however, Copway recognizes the fractured and colonized status of the Ojibwe Nation. After the War of 1812, the Ojibwes were officially split between U.S. and British authority, an event which, when coupled with the fur trade, drastically changed

their lives. The Ojibwe people, however, were divided as a nation even earlier than that. As Ridie Wilson Ghezzi has observed, “By as early as 1800, there were four identifiable segments of Ojibwe,” a division she attributes “mainly to the strong effects of the French fur trade, which stimulated migrations of various groups from their earlier homeland” (44). So the Ojibwes, already disconnected by region and lifestyle from the northern tribes living more traditional Ojibwe existences and the southern bands relying more heavily on the fur trade, were further divided in 1812 when they were relegated to positions of pupilage under two separate, paternalistic governments with differing agendas and techniques for handling “their” Indians.

Copway acknowledges this difference and takes the British and the American governments to task separately for their mistreatment of the Ojibwes in various British and American land deals and lack of humanitarian efforts; as he writes, “[The Ojibwes] are hedged in, bound and maltreated, by both the American and British governments” (34). For example, he relates how in 1818 the British government for a paltry sum swindled the Ojibwes out of a large portion of their territory around Rice Lake in present-day Ontario, including some twenty islands that the Ojibwes wished to maintain, through the use of written articles of agreement, which the Indians could not read. Copway notes that it is “to the everlasting disgrace of that pseudo Christian nation” that the Ojibwes have been “most grossly abused, deceived, and cheated” (50).⁶ Similarly, in a later chapter he faults the American government for its large monetary payments to the Ojibwe Nation to gain mineral rights to their land because such payments encouraged con artists to sell goods and alcohol to the tribe at greatly inflated prices and because these payments were given without “any correct views of economy, utility, or prudence” (126). Copway writes, “In these appropriations, the American Government have grossly erred. What benefit can the many thousands of dollars, which are paid annually, be to the Indians if they are not capable of exercising any judgment in relation to a proper use of money?” (126).

Both of these criticisms are made of the colonial governments on the national level; Copway does not conflate the fraudulent dealings of the British government with the lackadaisical profligacy of the

American government by condemning all “white men” and their dealings with Indians. He recognizes that the Ojibwe peoples on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border are treated differently by their respective ruling bodies. He even dedicates his autobiography to “the clergy and laity of the American and British Dominions” in recognition of his dual audience and the Ojibwes’ (imposed) dual nationalities. In doing so, he acknowledges the national and political boundaries that now separate his own nation. At the same time, however, Copway is insisting on a unified Ojibwe Nation that exists in time, space, and place and that is united by culture and practice that supersede the “arbitrary” boundaries of the Euramerican governments. The Ojibwes clearly have (and have had) their own government, territory, and history and are still a single nation despite a divisive colonial border. Copway’s views of the Ojibwe national and political identity, rather than “follow[ing] a zigzag path, [that] in many ways mirror[s] his notions of cultural identity . . . [, which] are fluid” (Walker 102), posit what Craig Womack would describe as Native cultural fluidity.

This tension of national identity being marked by place and government yet being transcendent of both place and government is a point of rupture through which Copway attempts to articulate an Ojibwe identity that is historicized in terms of its lived realities as American or Canadian but that is also larger than either of those two determinations. Copway does not attempt to position the Ojibwes as the simulations of Western creation, relics of time immemorial that are unable to adhere to the rules and laws within civilized (white) governments. He does not disavow the political agency and authority of the United States and Canada only to reassert the Ojibwes’ separation from it. Instead, by criticizing the two colonial governments for their inappropriate dealings, he is implicating himself as a participant in both systems by offering a critique of the manipulative nature of the dealings, not the fact of the dealings themselves. In other words, Copway is a member of these systems and as a consequence is endowed with the right to critique them. The Ojibwes are both within and without the system. They are subjects to two different colonial governments, but they are also a single nation within those

designations. Such maneuvering on the part of Copway, while creating an instability in the understanding of colonial national identity, also opens room for the a new understanding of Indians as members of Euramerican society, deserving rights and consideration while still maintaining allegiance to their own native nations. Copway and the Ojibwes have not been “overpowered by outside cultural influences” but rather “transformed [them] . . . and deeply Indianized [them]” (Womack, “Beautifully” 12).

Complicating further the issue of national identification is Copway’s own destabilization of an Ojibwe/Indian identity and an Euramerican one. While it is clear that Copway is asserting an Ojibwe Nation that exists above and beyond yet within and subject to American and British rule, it is equally as clear that he presents a personal identity closely allied with the imperial and cultural forces of Euramerica. Once Copway has converted to Christianity, received a Euramerican education, and becomes first a Methodist translator for the missionaries and then a missionary himself, he has moments when he participates in the nationalistic discourses of his British counterparts concerning the French, the Yankees of America, and even his own brethren, the Indians.

For example, after serving his first winter (1834–35) as a missionary’s translator at the Ka-wa-we-non Mission on the southeastern shore of Lake Superior (Smith, “Life” 10), Copway and his cousin John prepare to depart with the Reverend Mr. Chandler and a few traders to spend the next “winter on the [western] shores of Lake Superior and do business with the Ojebwas” (Copway 68), some three hundred kilometers further to the west on the lake (Smith, “Life” 10). The journey, which took more than three weeks, found the group weather-bound at one point for an entire week, an event that led Copway to comment on the nature of the French traders among their group. Copway writes,

Our French companions were the most wicked of men. They would gnash their teeth at each other, curse, swear, and fight among themselves. The boat, oars, the winds, water, the teachers, etc., did not escape their execrations. I thought now that I

understood what hell was in a very clear manner . . . they would fight like beasts over their cooking utensils, and even while their food was in their mouths. I will just say here that I have often seen them eat boiled corn with tallow for butter. (68)

In this passage, Copway is clearly espousing the viewpoint of a properly Protestant British citizen. He views the Frenchmen, who were most likely Catholic, as “wicked” and as “beasts” and even admits that his “very hairs seemed to ‘stand erect’ . . . when they gave vent to their malevolence and passions” (68). He is vilifying these men much in the manner that the typical Protestant in nineteenth-century North America, whether Methodist or Congregationalist, British or American, would have done, and ironically enough, the way any white Euramerican would have characterized Copway himself as an Indian. Jenny Franchot observes that Catholicism in antebellum America

played the fiction to Protestantism’s truth, the failure to its progress, the weaker femininity to its superior masculinity. . . . Popery played a ritual parental figure—a menacing but eventually impotent opponent, one whose defeat had already been decided and whose threat was finally an intriguing one. (14–15)

Although he is not overtly addressing issues of popery among his French traveling companions, Copway, as a Methodist missionary, is clearly building upon the prevailing stereotypes with his invocations of the wickedness and savagery of the Frenchmen, while sharply undercutting the similar stereotype of Indians, in order to establish himself further as not wicked and savage, and consequently “not French” or Indian, as a cultured, educated, Christian Ojibwe.

Undoubtedly too, these French associates were of a coarser cloth than the well-educated and refined British missionaries and other white men Copway had been in contact with, one of whom even lived with his family for three or four years.⁷ It is clear that the young Copway, who was inculcated into the “superiority of British institutions and society” (Smith, “Life” 9) during his short time at the Rice Lake school, aligns himself as properly British-Ojibwe against the

French.⁸ In these instances of “identity layering,” there is an interesting tension between how Copway identifies himself (British-Ojibwe) and how others identify him (non-British-Indian), all of which must be filtered through, and indeed reconciled with, the cultured, educated, and Christian Ojibwe identity Copway continually invokes.

Copway further establishes his British-Ojibweness through contrast to the habits and dispositions of the “Yankees” of America. Upon his graduation from the Ebenezer Manual Labor School outside of Jacksonville, Illinois, in 1839, Copway decided to visit the major cities of America—Chicago, Detroit, Buffalo, Rochester, Albany, New York, Boston, and Syracuse—before he returned to his father and family in Rice Lake, Canada West (today’s Ontario). Copway writes, “I was very anxious to see the great cities of which I had read so much at school. I resolved to go through thick and thin for the sake of seeing New York” (92). However, for all of his “charmed” reactions to the people, the kindnesses he receives, and the “splendid scenery [that] enchanted” him (92–93), Copway still notes flaws with the American people. Finding their behaviors contradictory, especially in terms of their advocacy of temperance for the Christian Indians but disavowal of it themselves, Copway notes:

And I cannot but remark here, that it is to be greatly regretted that so many Christians in the States spend this day [New Year’s] in gadding about from house to house, and indulging in luxuries to excess. Nay, more; I have been informed that not a few professors entertain their visitors with *fire-water* or *devil’s spittle*, on that day. (101, emphasis in original)

He also criticizes the racist and intrusive questioning he receives from Americans concerning his marriage to a white woman, Elizabeth Howell. He writes:

What a curious, inquisitive, and teasing people, some of the Yankees are! . . . I had been married but a few days, and the following were some of the questions put to me;—”How did you obtain your wife?” “Where were you married?” “Did her father consent?” “How many of your people have married our

white women?" These inquiries were constantly made, and were exceedingly annoying. (107–08)

The interest of these passages resides in the fact that, again, Copway is positioning himself quite firmly as a British national; he is appropriately shocked and annoyed at the hypocritical and presumptuous behavior of his American hosts and adopts a slightly condescending tone toward these insensitive "Yanks." However, in the midst of his posturing as a good British colonial, Copway is simultaneously foregrounding his Ojibwe nationality. He openly criticizes the whites' use of alcohol, their profligate ways, and their discomfort with interracial marriages. Copway, while clearly viewing himself as British in his thoughts, words, and deeds, also views himself as an Ojibwe who is struck by the hypocrisy and racism of the American public. In these passages, Copway is both British and Ojibwe; he maintains British sensibilities and Ojibwe identity. He has effectively refigured these supposedly diametrically opposed national identities and brought them into cooperation.

Interestingly, however, for all of Copway's "anti-American" sentiment and proud British/Canadian identifications, it must be noted that most of Copway's fame came from the American public, and by most accounts his "authorial genesis . . . occupies a definite space in the history of early United States Indian literature" (Peyer, *Tutor'd* 224). It was also in an American city (Albany, New York) that Copway in December of 1846 registered his *The Life, Travels and History of Kage-ga-gah-bowh* at the clerk's office, and it was James Harmstead of Philadelphia who published the numerous editions of his autobiography in the first year. After the book's initial success, it was the Atlantic seaboard of America where Copway toured, delivering talks on "topical Indian subjects like 'superstitions and legends,' manners and customs, origins, advances in Christianity, and problems of intemperance" (Peyer, *Tutor'd* 243). Significant too are Copway's later membership in the Know-Nothings, a nationalist American group that denounced immigrants and Catholics, and the founding of his 1851 newspaper called *Copway's American Indian*, which folded the

same year. By all accounts, after his initial literary success with *The Life, History and Travels*, Copway looked to America as the locale for another re-creation of himself. Such national identification with America is palpable in the pages of the autobiography, which ends with the final word “nation”—in a direct reference to the American nation.⁹

Throughout Copway’s autobiography, however, he also consistently and even aggressively asserts his Ojibwe identity, even utilizing his roles as missionary and Briton in order to save his fellow tribesmen. For example, soon after his marriage to Elizabeth Howell, Copway and his new bride spent two years in the Upper Mississippi Nations ministering to the Ojibwes and other tribes of this region. The Ojibwes and the Sioux, who jointly occupied the area, were hereditary enemies, and the Copways had to move their mission several times, as it was often in the heart of a war zone. Copway writes, “At Rabbit River we labored with considerable success; but on account of the war raging between the Sioux and the Ojebwas, these two missions, with that at Ottawa Lake, had to be abandoned” (114). After this particular evacuation from Rabbit River, Copway was traveling with another missionary, Brother Spates, to preach to and convert other Indians in the area. As Copway notes, “The whole country seemed ripe for the Gospel” (117). He had left his wife and sister behind at the mission with the Ojibwe people who resided there. Four days into their travels, the men were confronted by a Sioux war party who informed them that “they intended to murder all the Ojebwas they could find” (117). Copway, of course, was horrified and immediately attempted to convince Brother Spates to accompany him back to Rabbit River to warn not only his family but also the tribe, who “might be barbarously murdered” (117). Brother Spates refused, telling Copway there would be too much risk to attempt to beat the war party back to the mission. Copway, now desperate to warn the others, writes,

After repeated efforts to get someone to accompany me, but without success, I was determined to go alone. I trusted in the

God of battles, and with his aid I was confident that I could prevent these merciless and blood-thirsty warriors from imbruing their hands in the blood of my nation. (117)

He then went to Little Crow, chief of the Ojibwe band the missionaries were currently staying with, and received a response similar to that of Brother Spates. Little Crow was more concerned with getting the scalps of the advancing Sioux than helping to prevent a tragedy. Copway was undaunted. "In the midst of jeers and war-whoops, I left their mission house," he writes. "They did not believe that I intended to go farther than Fort Snelling. As soon as I was out of sight, I began to run as fast as I was able" (118). He then made an incredible journey, running for miles and miles without stopping, sleeping without a fire, and not eating at all during the first two days. Copway claims he covered "seventy-five miles per day[,] . . . having walked two hundred and forty miles, forded eight large streams, and crossed the broad Mississippi twice" (118) before arriving back at the mission in only four days' time to warn the chief of the coming attack and evacuate the women and children of the village for safety. Although the Sioux attack never materialized, Copway notes that the enemy Sioux chiefs sent spies and tracking parties to follow and harass the Ojibwe missionaries as they continued on their journey throughout the region. Undeterred, Copway still attempted to administer Christianity to the Sioux trackers, going directly into their tepees, where they would show him "some of the scalps of the Ojebwas, and danc[e] the scalping dance" (120). Copway writes of these displays, which were obviously meant to intimidate and impede him: "What awful noises they made, as they danced in their fantastic dresses, with their faces painted black. They reminded me much of his Satanic and fiendish majesty, rejoicing over a damned spirit entering hell" (120).

This passage is especially ironic, not simply because of Copway's demonization of an Indian ritual in the exact terms used by white colonial discourse since the earliest ventures into the New World, but because he is using his British-Ojibwe sensibilities to criticize anti-Ojibwe sentiment.¹⁰ In these passages, Copway is quite firmly establishing himself as a devoted and proud person of Ojibwe heritage

who is reacting against two very threatening and terroristic displays against himself and his Indian people; undoubtedly, his incursions into Sioux teepees were intended to accomplish two goals: to perform his duties as a missionary and to protect his nation from Sioux aggression through Christian indoctrination. However, at the same time, Copway's reaction is couched in terms of Euramerican and Christian discourses that were overtly racist and hegemonic. Rather than viewing such extracts from his autobiography as evidence of assimilation into white culture or a sad disjunction from his Ojibwe identity, I think they should be viewed, in Womack's phrase, in terms of their "cultural fluidity." Copway is responding in these passages as a British-Ojibwe person, someone who is first and foremost a member of the Ojibwe Nation and heritage but socio-culturally British. He is creating a sense of himself that exceeds the binary of the two national choices placed before him, and consequently, he forges a rupture in the nineteenth-century understanding of the separate and immutable natures of culture and nation. He is making room for the emergence of an entirely new identity that transcends any mere national designation but without negating his Ojibwe worldview; Copway's British-Ojibwe self is adaptable and dynamic, yet stable.

SURVIVANCE WITHIN SIMULATIONS

In addition to crossing and complicating the ideas of nationalism and national identity, Copway also navigates among various cultural discourses that in the nineteenth century would have had fixed notions of identity (race, class, and gender) attached to them. It is important to view Copway in these instances as not merely an "intercesso[r] with the white world but as [a] proponen[t] of new and powerful definitions of Indianness" (Brooks 55). Joanna Brooks has argued of the eighteenth century: "Alienation, dependency, deprivation, degeneracy, dissolution—these were the values assigned blackness and Indianness within racist and scientific and political discourse" (46). Such negative racial and cultural constructions held that blacks and Indians were socially dependent and debased. By the nineteenth century, the racial and cultural constructions of the En-

lightenment came through the filter of science to be located specifically on the body, and the skin as well as other physical characteristics came to be the primary visual justifications for social inferiority and exclusion. Robyn Weigman has noted that these constructions formed through a variety of cultural contexts in which

specific racial categories [were] rendered “real” (and therefore justifiable) through the naturalizing discourses of the body, . . . [which] locate difference in a precultural realm where corporeal significations supposedly speak a truth which the body inherently means. (4)

No longer was mere social or cultural inadequacy inscribed upon the Native and black bodies; nineteenth-century knowledge-power formations now could scientifically ascertain physical inferiority through the gaze as well. Consequently, as many critics have noted, it was through the various rhetorics of nationalism, religious revivalism, and democracy that Indians and blacks found venues through which their communities could regenerate themselves and they could transcend the visual markers of race. Copway too participates in this appropriation of Euramerican discourses, particularly academic ones, in order to posit a new possibility for what it means to be Indian and Euramerican, but first, he must reify the “Noble Christian Savage” simulation before he can undermine and revise it within his narrative.¹¹

In his preface, Copway openly admits, “I am an Indian, and am well aware of the difficulties I have to encounter to win the favorable notice of the white man” (vii). To win that favorable notice, Copway very carefully positions himself in the opening pages of his autobiography as the prototype of the nonthreatening, reformed, and humble Christian Indian. He admits that he has “but recently been brought out of a wild and savage state” (9), that he is “too well aware of the many faults which are still to be found” within his work (9), and that he was originally “one of Nature’s children . . . born in nature’s wide domain” (17) until “the dawn of Christianity arose, and awoke the slumbers of the soul into energy and action” (11). Additionally, Copway insists upon his reader experiencing pity for the plight of the race of the “poor Indian,” noting that “the Christian will no doubt

feel for my poor people, when he hears the story of one brought from that unfortunate race called the Indians” (11). He further enjoins his readers to “pray for us” (viii), revealing that his goal in writing his autobiography is to “assist in rescuing them [the Indians] from an untimely and unchristian grave” (vii). His motto, he writes, is “*My poor People*” (vii, emphasis in original). However, even while Copway is adopting this obsequious and humble posture—this simulation of tribal reality—toward his audience and seemingly reinscribing the societal notions about Indianness, he is undermining and refiguring the notion of the ignorant savage through his use of academic and intellectual discourses. He is effecting survivance.

For example, in the preface in which Copway reveals his motto and his pleas for white assistance in saving the Indian race, he mentions the potential role of science in that salvation. Copway writes, “Pray for us—that *religion* and *science* may lead us on to intelligence and virtue; that we may imitate the good white man, who, like the eagle, builds its nest on the top of some high rock—*science*” (viii, emphasis in original). Clearly equating the achievements of white society with knowledge, both religious and scientific, rather than with some inherent superiority, Copway is adopting the discourse of the nineteenth century, which as the successor of the Enlightenment held empirical data and scientific reasoning to be the pinnacles of knowledge. Copway maintains this discourse of science throughout his text, as when he speaks of revisiting his family’s former home only to find it in ruins and decay but still a part of the living natural world. He writes, “Nature will be nature still while palaces shall decay and fall in ruins. Yes, Niagara will be Niagara a thousand years hence! . . . While the work of art, however impregnable, shall in atoms fall” (18). Not only is Copway reprioritizing the hierarchy of humans and their works as being subject to nature and its works, he is positing Indians and their civilizations, which are in and of nature according to the Western perceptions of tribal reality, as longer lasting than white society’s, and he is doing so with the infallible logic and vocabulary of science. The tension is great between the fact that Copway is a newly civilized savage who is supposedly incapable of rational, logical thought and the fact that he is using the very logical,

rational discourse of the privileged domain (white, male, educated) that has not only classified him as “the other” but is supposedly inaccessible to him. Copway is transgressing several boundaries of race, class, and culture here.

Copway goes even further, however, in his assertion of the Indian’s ability as a scientist when he enters into the timely conversations about animal classification and identification. In an early part of the autobiography in which he is describing the Ojibwe culture, Copway describes many of the omens heeded by his people, among them birdcalls and animal sounds of the forest. One of the omens, however, the noise of the bird, the “chuck chack ske sey,” has a footnote attached because, as Copway relates within the note, “I have not been able to discover it among the collection of the various birds in the books and in the museums” (39). He therefore has to refer to it by its Indian name and provide an ornithological description of the bird, noting not only its color and size but also its beak shape, wing span, and song patterns. Copway ends his footnote by opening his “discovery” to the broader world of science for further study. “I hope that the celebrated ornithologist Audabon [*sic*], to whom I intend to present a copy of my work, will throw some light upon this subject,” Copway writes (39). This passage is especially interesting because Copway has placed himself as a scientist on comparable ground with other great naturalists like John James Audubon (although he does misspell Audubon’s name). And Copway does so not through assimilation and denial of his Ojibwe heritage but through the usage of his Ojibwe knowledge to inform and transform Euramerican science. It is the Ojibwe culture that observes and values the bird, even assigning it its name, and then brings that knowledge to the attention of white scientific practitioners. Copway is melding Ojibwe knowledge and “scholarship” with Euramerican science and classificatory practice without hybridizing the two. He has effectively produced “Ojibwe science,” somewhat of an oxymoron by nineteenth-century standards, in passages such as these.

Copway also delves into other burgeoning fields of nineteenth-century scholarship, including ethnology. As Arnold Krupat has noted, “the Indian autobiography in its first manifestations appears

as historical document[s] of the nineteenth century . . . which shift their emphasis from a relation to Euramerican religion to a relation to Euramerican culture and society” (*Autobiography* 8–9). Although modern ethnological interest is in the academically defined categories of culture and identity and the more literal idea of ethnology as a discipline did not emerge until the later nineteenth and early twentieth century, Copway is participating in the preliminary efforts in the field alongside the works of other “‘amateurs’—journalists, westerners, and devotees of things Indian—in obtaining the life stories of warriors . . . and other aged Natives who saw and made history” (Krupat, *Autobiography* 9). Copway, in writing his own life’s story, is placing himself on both sides of the ethnologist’s office: he is the object of study, urged to reveal his “authentic” life story to a white audience thirsty for anything Indian, and he is the author of that story, gathering the data and producing the textual interpretation of it. What is unique about Copway’s adoption of these contrary roles, however, is the fact that he melds the two into one, creating a new capacity for Indianness: the Indian as the expert about and ethnographer of the Indian.

Copway’s ethnological tendencies are evidenced throughout his autobiography but particularly in the early portion of the text where he details his life experiences and cultural knowledge of the Ojibwe tribe. For nearly half of the text, Copway gives detailed accounts of his own ancestry and childhood in a traditional Ojibwe family, Ojibwe domestic customs and seasonal adaptations to those customs, methods of hunting, and even some of the sayings espoused by the medicine men of his tribe. Two of the most interesting ethnological moments in the text are when Copway reveals dreams that he has had, once as a twelve-year-old, unconverted boy, and once as an adult missionary. With each of these dreams, Copway provides ample commentary, describing the dreams in detail and then offering interpretations of the import of the dreams for his audience. The first dream occurred after young Copway had been fasting for several days with the hopes that the spirits would reveal to him what he was to do with his life. This was a successful vision quest for Copway, in which “a wind manitou appeared to him . . . and taught him a spiri-

tual song. Through this transfer of spiritual power, he was regarded among his people as having been fortunate enough to acquire an ‘identity’” (Peyer, *Tutor’d* 231). However, it is Copway’s father who must interpret the dream for him. His father tells him, “The god of winds is kind to you; the aged tree . . . may indicate long life; the wind may indicate that you will travel much; the water which you saw, and the winds, will carry your canoe safely through the waves” (40).

In this instance, Copway is pulling double duty as an ethnologist and Indian. He is revealing the cultural experiences and particularities of the Ojibwes, yet he is also revealing, as Konkle has observed, “a form of knowledge that Indians have and to which only Indians have access” (*Writing* 218). Copway is forging cooperation between these competing cultural discourses. He is, as an ethnologist, able to give his reader insight into the dominant cultural forms of the Ojibwe Nation—dreams—which were very powerful and important to the Ojibwes. However, through the revelation of the meaning of the dream, which ultimately is fulfilled by the life experiences of the well-traveled and cosmopolitan Copway, he is making a claim for the accuracy and “truth” of these forms. And because he is an Ojibwe person recording and writing this information, Copway is bringing the two worlds of the scientist and the object of scientific inquiry together. Copway himself makes a claim for the significance of the Indians writing their own histories. He writes,

The traditions handed down from father to son, were held very sacred; one half of these are not known by the white people. . . . There is an unwillingness, on the part of the Indians to communicate many of their traditions. The only way to come at these is, to educate the Indians, so that they may be able to write out what they have heard, or may hear, and publish it. (43)

The worlds of the anthropologist and Indian must merge, according to Copway, if tradition is to be preserved and if Indians are to remain in control of those traditions. By revealing his vision quest dream in textual form to his audience, Copway is both preserving the event and tradition and maintaining the control and facticity of it.

In Copway’s second dream, a much more romanticized, Chris-

tianized picture and interpretation of the Ojibwe dream tradition are given. In this dream Copway envisions the death of his cousin and witnesses his cousin entering the gates of heaven, after plunging into a river “like a duck” and emerging on the other side where a “throng of angelic beings” welcomed him (106). Copway later finds out that his cousin had transpired that very night at the exact moment Copway had experienced the dream. Although some critics view this second dream as Copway’s “attempts to conform the importance of dreams in Ojibwe society to the conventions of writing in English, in particular to the sentimentality favored by Christians and literary types alike” (Konkle, *Writing* 218) or Copway’s “abject aspect of subjugated discourse, . . . [his] ‘surrender’” (Walker 88), I feel it is another attempt by Copway to fashion a sense of Ojibwe culture within Euramerican discourse and forever alter Euramerican discourse through its introduction to Ojibwe culture, to make it “beautifully, wonderfully red” (Womack, “Beautifully” 12). This dream does not represent an act of “surrender” to nor “assimilation” into the dominant culture; rather, it is a transformation of that dominant culture, a glimmer of the tribal real subverting and exposing the vacant underpinnings of the literature of dominance. It is a moment of survivance.

The dream of his cousin is sentimentalized and rather clichéd with its visions of glowing, winged creatures and the glorious throne of “King Jesus,” which is separated from the living by a river that is “black as jet, and the rest as yellow as gold” (105); even Copway recognizes his own sentimentality as he apologizes to his readers for “having inflicted upon them this dream” (107). However, the fact that it is a dream and that dreams are major venues of knowledge, culture, and identity for the Ojibwes is worth noting. Copway is transposing Ojibwe values onto Christian/Euramerican ones and creating a new formation. The fact also that Copway, an Indian, is witnessing the supreme moment of Christianity, the moment of the ascension of another soul into heaven is evidence of Copway’s transformation of not only ethnological discourses but religious ones as well. Copway, although not permitted to cross the river with his cousin in this dream because he is still of the living, is able to see his cousin enter

heaven and be welcomed by angels and other Ojibwes, namely, the cousin's mother and sister who died before him. There are Indians in heaven, Copway reveals in this dream, and those Indians who are not yet there, such as Copway himself, can see Christ, just as any white person can. Copway writes,

There was a spacious seat, or magnificent throne. One sat on this throne who shone like the sun! On his crowned head was a circle, resembling a rainbow, on which was written, with letters of gold, "THIS IS THE KING JESUS." What a splendid sight! It dazzled my eyes. (104)

On one level, this is a very traditional, romanticized picture of what nineteenth-century and even modern-day Christians would expect to meet in heaven, and undoubtedly, Copway is influenced by that tradition. On the other hand, this is also a very radical passage in that Copway, a self-admitted child of "nature's wide domain" (18), is claiming to have the sanctity to see "King Jesus," albeit through the veil of a dream, while still living. It is a bold claim in which Ojibwe and Christian belief systems and cultures intersect, cooperate, and posit new possibilities for both.

THE MARINER ON THE WIDE OCEAN

Copway's life was admittedly chaotic and episodic. His multiple attempts to reinvent himself, to pander to white expectations, and to take advantage of any opportunity for self-aggrandizement cannot be ignored. They are complicated testimonies to the complex position of Native people in nineteenth-century America. Copway himself admits that he is "a stranger in a strange land" (ix-x). However, his intellectual contributions and attempts to reconcile the issues of race, class, and nation that directed Indian identity, his own included, in America and Britain and within the Ojibwe community must be understood and examined in the context of his literary endeavors rather than his lived experiences. Copway writes in his autobiography:

I view my life like the mariner on the wide ocean, without a compass, in the dark night, as he watches the heavens for the north star, which his eye having discovered, he makes his way amidst surging seas, and tossed by angry billows into the very jaws of death, till he arrives safely anchored at port. I have been tossed with hope and fear in this life. (13)

Indeed, Copway's life as recorded in his autobiography can be accurately described as an extended journey, tossing about amid surging seas, but that very same image, that of a mariner navigating through the dark without a compass, also aptly characterizes Copway's intellectual venture: to crystallize a new possibility—a safe port—for Native identity and the Ojibwe people that transcends and refigures the nineteenth-century binaristic options available to him and to other Indians. Copway's negotiations among various national, racial, and intellectual identities and his ultimate transfiguration of them within the pages of his autobiography are important not only for Native studies but also for any study of identity formation because he posits the possibility of openness. Rather than attempting to fix his nationality or ethnicity absolutely in terms of its similarity to or difference from the established norms, George Copway instead presents a narrative of the infinite process and unstable, malleable nature of identity.

NOTES

I would like to thank Hilary Wyss and the readers at *SAIL* for their assistance and advice.

1. "Ojibwe" is a broad term applied to a number of Indian groups of the Great Lakes region who speak a Central Algonquian language. The Ojibwes are variously known as Salteaux (in provinces of western Canada), Mississaugas (in southern Ontario), Chippewas (in the United States), Ojibways (throughout Canada) and Anishinabes (variously spelled), which loosely translated means "first people" and is how they typically refer to themselves. I have chosen to use the most common spelling of "Ojibwe," although there is no single standard spelling in English, and "Ojebwa," "Ojibwa," and "Ojib-

way” are all acceptable. I have retained the various spellings where they appear in quotations from Copway and other scholars.

Literature on the Ojibwe people is extensive, but for more information on their history, see Peacock, Wisuri, and LaDuke, *Ojibwe Waasa Inaabidaa*; Danziger, *Chippewas of Lake Superior*; Schmalz, *Ojibwa of Southern Ontario*; and for a condensed history, Peyer, *Tutor'd Mind*, 224–30. Nineteenth-century Ojibwe histories written by Ojibwes include Copway's own *The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation*; Jones, *History of the Ojibway Indians*; and Warren, *History of the Ojibway People*.

2. Additionally, Copway is generally recognized as having published one of the first full-life autobiographies authored by someone raised in his own traditional tribal environment (*The Life, History, and Travels of Kah-ge-gah-gah-bowh*). The first published, full-life Indian autobiography written by a Native American was *A Son of the Forest*, by William Apess, published in 1829; however, unlike Copway, Apess was removed from his tribal culture at age four and then bound out to a several white families. *The Life of Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak, or Black Hawk*, was also published before Copway's autobiography in 1833, but this oral autobiography was narrated to a translator and then revised by an editor for publication. Notably, Copway also authored the first Native history in English by a Canadian Indian (*The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation*) and the first travel narrative by a Native North American (*Running Sketches of Men and Places*).

While he was certainly a prolific and accomplished author, there is some debate about Copway's skill and credibility as a writer. Critics have noted the distinct possibility that Copway's wife, Elizabeth Howell, a Canadian woman he married in 1840, may have had a hand in editing and smoothing Copway's unpolished and often inarticulate style. Elizabeth, a published writer and poet, may have offered writing assistance and suggested the literary references Copway often used. Further, in 1850 Copway published under his own name an epic poem, *The Ojibway Conquest: A Tale of the Northwest*, authored by Julius Taylor Clark, a former Indian agent. Apparently with Clark's permission, Copway passed the work off as his own—even presenting copies to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Francis Parkman—by simply adding a revised introduction, endnotes, and a short poem to his wife. Also, critics have noted that Copway's 1850 proposal to Congress for an Indian territory, *Organization of a New Indian Territory, East of the Missouri River* (which interestingly suggested the name Kagega for the new territory), drew heavily from an earlier proposal for a Christian Indian territory authored by the politician James Duane Doty in 1841; Copway's *Life, Letters, and Speeches*

also “included verbatim excerpts from other published sources, totaling nearly 100 pages in the 298-page book” (Smith, “Kahgegagahbowh” 41). It is important to note, however, that such “sampling” of other sources and the lack of corresponding annotation was a relatively common practice of the times that other authors also engaged in. For further analysis of Copway’s abilities as a writer, see Ruoff, “Literary and Methodist Contexts”; Smith, “Kah-ge-ga-gah-bowh,” 29–36, 39–44; and Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations*, 195–97, 207–09.

3. Copway’s life and career, to be certain, do seem to spiral downward. After late 1851, life became decidedly more difficult for Copway and his family. Unable to recreate the success of his earlier publications and watching his newspaper fold only three months after its launch, Copway was in desperate financial straits. He and his wife, Elizabeth, had already lost three of their four children between August of 1849 and January of 1850, and by 1858 his wife and only surviving daughter had separated from him. Shortly thereafter, Copway found himself scorned by his literary friends because of his constant solicitations for money and spurned by the fickle American public who had grown bored with his “Noble Christian Savage” routine. Copway was thought to have died in 1863, a casualty of alcohol, but in 1868 he resurfaced, impoverished, bewildered, and alone, at the Lake of Two Mountains Reserve just west of Montreal. He had been eking out a living collecting bounties for each Canadian Indian he could enlist in the Union Army during the Civil War and, later, selling homemade cures as a “root doctor” and “Indian healer” in the American Midwest. Reportedly drinking heavily and financially ruined, Copway still seemed willing to re-create himself once again and declared to the priests at the Lake of Two Mountains Mission that he was a pagan who had come to study and embrace their religion. He was consequently taken in and baptized and given a new Christian name, Joseph Antoine. However, just days before he was to receive his first communion in early 1869, Copway died suddenly at Lake of Two Mountains; he was fifty-one years old.

For more detailed accounts of Copway’s final years, see Smith, “Life of George Copway,” 24–29, and *Sacred Feathers*, 247; Peyer, *Tutor’d Mind*, 260–62, and “A Nineteenth-Century Ojibwa Conquers Germany,” 158–59; and Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations*, 223.

4. Other scholars who examine Copway’s psychological status and his body of texts en masse include Cheryl Walker, who notes that “Copway’s own lack of psychological and cultural coherence is reflected in [his] texts’ confusing array of premises and styles” (85); Maureen Konkle, who reads Copway’s entire textual body as an extended treatment of the “confrontation

of tradition and modernity” (*Writing Indian Nations* 191); and even Gerald Vizenor, who recognizes that Copway was “a keen survivor” but that he was “separated from his tribal origins” (*People Named the Chippewa* 61–62). For a comprehensive review of Copway scholarship before 1997, including scholarship on his involvement with Henry W. Longfellow, the Know-Nothings and his reliability as a historian, see Bernd C. Peyer’s excellent research on Copway criticism in *The Tutor’d Mind*, 224–77.

5. Copway’s literary writings, post-autobiography, include two revised versions of the autobiography analyzed here—one released in 1850 in London as *Recollections of a Forest Life; or the Life and Travels of Kah-ge-ga-gah-bowh*, the second released in the United States as *The Life, Letters, and Speeches*, also in 1850. Copway also authored the previously mentioned Ojibwe history, *The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation* (1850); a travel narrative, *Running Sketches of Men and Places* (1851), based on his travels surrounding his trip to the Third World Peace Conference held in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1850; and a plan for an Indian Territory that he submitted to Congress in 1850 titled *Organization of a New Indian Territory, East of the Missouri River*. Copway also wrote numerous pieces for Copway’s *American Indian*, a newspaper he launched in 1851, which folded the same year, and other American and European newspapers and journals. He also published *The Ojibway Conquest*, the aforementioned epic poem, under his own name in 1850.

6. Copway also details and critiques another instance of underhanded dealings by the British on pages 20–21.

7. Between about 1830 and 1833–34, the Copway family hosted an elderly ex-sailor named Lewis in their home. Lewis learned the Ojibwe language and regaled the Copway children (George, an older sister, and a younger brother) with tales of faraway and exotic places. See Smith, “Life of George Copway,” 9; Copway, *Running Sketches of Men and Places*, 22–23.

8. For a summary of James Evans and the Rice Lake school, see Copway, *Life, History, and Travels*, 64; Smith, “Life of George Copway,” 8–9.

9. Copway ends his autobiography with pleas for the annexation of the Indian territories of Canada to the government and “those in the American dominions to the Union” (157). However, his final passage, in which he openly addresses his reader and the U.S. government, Copway concentrates only on the “annex of the Indian territory to our Union,” clearly indicating that he is referencing the U.S. alone when he ends the same passage by warning, “terrible retribution [. . .] unless it be averted [by annexation] will fall upon this nation” (158).

10. Kathryn Derounian-Stodola and James Levernier note that early colonial discourses, especially that of the captivity narratives “projected stereotypes that conveniently supported the political claims of the European country that published them” and often viewed Indians as “in collusion with Satanic forces bent on the annihilation of English colonial enterprises and all things godly” (17). Copway appears to be adopting this familiar rhetoric in this and similar passages. For additional critical analyses of the rhetoric and ideology of captivity narratives, see Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment*; Castiglia, *Bound and Determined*; Ebersole, *Captured by Texts*; and Namias, *White Captives*.

11. Much recent scholarship has been devoted to the rhetorical command of nineteenth-century Indian writers, especially to their adaptation and skillful manipulation of varying Euramerican discourses in order to critique them. For example, it has been noted by such critics as Sandra Gustafson, Carolyn Haynes, and Karim Tiro that William Apess—perhaps the best-known nineteenth-century Indian author—made use of Methodism in *A Son of the Forest*. Haynes argues Apess adopted Methodist rhetoric to “gain a wider white audience, to critique the practices of the larger Protestant church . . . and to make sense of and turn to his own advantage the opprobrium and discrimination he faced as a Pequot Christian” (26). Arnold Krupat similarly identifies “a voice to be heard commonly in early nineteenth century, the voice of . . . Salvationism” (*Voice* 144) in Apess’s autobiography/conversion narrative, while others, such as Bernd C. Peyer, Barry O’Connell, and Cheryl Walker identify Apess’s tone as more political than religious. Walker in particular notes that Apess “both taunted and appealed to the America of his day to rethink the implication of its nationalistic rhetoric” by claiming it for himself (42), and Peyer isolates Apess’s “activist standpoint—[his] belief in improvement through personal involvement” (*Tutor’d* 164). Additional scholars, such as Maureen Konkle, David Murray, Randall Moon, and A. LaVonne Ruoff have offered analyses of Apess’s use of racialized discourses of difference as a point of departure, including his use of “characteristic elements of the minority discourse found in slave narratives of the Nineteenth Century” (Moon 49) and his use of historiography, which he relied upon to “dislodge the foundation of white knowledge—the notion of Indian’s ontological difference—in order to open us space for a different history” (Konkle, *Writing* 106). Apess’s expert manipulation of literary genres and discourses has also been examined by Theresa Strouth Gaul, Roumiana Velikova, and Hilary Wyss, all of whom have contributed to the revisioning of Apess as an astute and sophisticated author.

Although the critical attention that has been devoted to Copway and his rhetorical skill is far less extensive than that given to Apess, several scholars have posited insightful readings of Copway's rhetoric. Maureen Konkle, for example, observes that Copway "employs inflated sentimental rhetoric to describe the lost world of the Indians," a world that Konkle notes he is ironically and perhaps contradictorily working to destroy through his own missionary efforts. Konkle does, however, recognize that this contradictory position is one imposed upon Copway by the strictures of nineteenth-century "sentimental Indian" tropes (*Writing* 195). Bernd C. Peyer also points out the contradictions within Copway the man and reads him and his rhetoric as "something of a paradox" (*Tutor'd* 224). He notes of Copway: "The ups and downs in the erratic career of this transcultural migrant were channeled by his own eccentric nature and the ideological fluctuations that shaped Indian policy in the course of mid-nineteenth-century American expansionism" (*Tutor'd* 224). Cheryl Walker, Gerald Vizenor, and A. LaVonne Ruoff view Copway's style as a combination of conflicting styles and foci. Walker, for example, posits his autobiography as "an amalgam of labored English phrasing, . . . high-flown Romantic rhetoric, sarcasm, earthy humor, quotations from canonical English poets, biblical reference, self-inflation, and self-denigration; withal it conveys little real sense of Copway as 'one of Nature's children'" (85).

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Europe and the Quest for Home in
James Welch's *The Heartsong of Charging
Elk* and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Gardens
in the Dunes*

SUZANNE FERGUSON

Coping with material and psychic losses of Native America to the incursions of Euramerica has been a central theme of Native American literary fiction since Mourning Dove and Darcy McNickle in the early twentieth century. That the struggle should take place on the North American continent would seem to be a given, yet two distinguished recent Native American novels are set partly or largely in turn-of-the-twentieth-century Europe. Examination of the European elements in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes* (1999) and James Welch's *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* (2000) is critical to understanding these authors' developing vision of European–Native American interactions, past and present. In these two novels, Welch and Silko can be seen to perform acts of (implicit) reconciliation between Native America and Europe, resolving some of the tensions that characterize their earlier works and finding themselves—through their characters—more “at home” in a conflicted world.¹ Reading the two novels side by side shows not only the extension of each novelist's own historical thought but also how surprisingly close their impulses are to understand and forgive the sins of the past.

In keeping with her Laguna Pueblo background, Silko makes her young protagonist, Indigo, one of the last survivors of a fictional Colorado River tribe she calls the Salt Lizards. Indigo is taken to England and Italy by her white “guardians,” Hattie and Edward Palmer, in a sort of educational tour in the manner of privileged young Euramericans of the time. She returns home to seek out her older sister (Sister Salt) and their familial homeplace in the desert southeast of

Needles, carrying cuttings, seeds, and corms of European and South American plants to add to their indigenous gardens.

Welch, himself of mixed Blackfeet/Euramerican origins, tells the story of Charging Elk, a young Oglala/Lakota man taken to Europe by Buffalo Bill's Wild West in 1889 but left behind in hospital in Marseille during an influenza epidemic, then stranded because he was mistakenly reported dead.² Charging Elk's struggles to survive in the urban French culture and find his way home lead through murder, prison, and marriage before he encounters the show again on a subsequent tour.

Both writers have alluded to the germs of their novels as sprouting from their own book tours in Europe, in ways that point to the writers' central concerns with reconciliation of European and Native American cultures. Silko describes the sense of kinship she felt when she gave a reading for the first time in Europe: "I could just feel that in that realm, those ancestors are not like human beings who differentiate, that my German ancestors were right there for me" (Arnold 4). As she continued into Italy she felt "some kind of heightened energy, and it had to do with the old spirits, and that they would come. . . . I felt welcomed. I felt at home" (5). As she began to work on *Gardens in the Dunes*, her sense of "the presence of the oldest spirit beings right there in Europe" (6)—the nature-worshippers—grew stronger. The tensions between orthodox Christianity and the religions of the earth began to gather about the figure of the garden and that of the Messiah. Pointing out that gardens are significant in "early Christianity, in the Bible, . . . the Koran" (6), Silko links the gardens of her Indian characters to the Ghost Dance, with its central figure of the Messiah, then to the Gnostic gospels that she learned about from biblical scholar Elaine Pagels when they were in the first group of MacArthur fellows together. Ellen Arnold summarizes: "If you set them apart from the politics behind them, people in Europe and the indigenous peoples in the Americas have a lot more in common than they have that divides them" (9). Silko adds, "And those who would make the boundary lines and try to separate them, those are the manipulators, those are the Gunadeeyah, the destroyers, the exploiters" (Arnold 9).

By traveling to Europe, Silko's Indigo learns that past European cultures have recognized spiritual connections to the cosmos—the earth and its bounty—that they honored in art and fetish objects, in ways that she grasps intuitively from her own experience. Through contact with the pagan and Christian past, Indigo and her American guardian, Hattie, both come to understand an interrelatedness of people across cultures and time in their shared respect for the earth and its creatures. A. M. Regier regards the juxtapositions of ancient and modern, tribal and European, as a project of “hybridization” on Silko's part, where culturally hybrid objects “become the medium of a sort of cultural and spiritual transmission plot, . . . as characters come to extend their senses of self-identity through the accumulative, anthropological collecting plot of others and selves” (148).

For Welch, the problem of Europe for the Native American presented itself as an extension of the issues of his 1986 historical novel *Fools Crow*, after an incident that happened on his book tour in Marseille in which a young Frenchman introduced himself as the descendant of a member of the Wild West who stayed behind and married a Frenchman. At the time, Welch relates in an interview, he paid little attention, but when he got home he began to write about such a figure. When another purported French descendant of a Wild West Indian introduced himself at a reading several years later in Missoula, Welch knew he was onto something.

Fascinated by the cultural frisson, he had already begun to work out what would happen to a person dropped into such a situation: “so many possibilities were there” (Perkins 178). In *Fools Crow*, Welch says, the character “was always within his culture, but the culture was becoming more and more isolated as the white people moved in. But with this guy, he's thrust full bore into this other culture” (Perkins 178). *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* is thus primarily Welch's exploration of his Oglala character's confrontation with and adaptation to nineteenth-century French culture, but it is also an exploration of how individuals can achieve cultural integration and, through that, a new identity. It is, in short, a hopeful book with considerable contemporary relevance. Obviously, from his loving descriptions of the French domestic scenes, Welch himself has enjoyed the culture of

modern Marseille and seeks ways in which the Indian and European can make common ground there.

Both authors base their quest for a negotiated wholeness, what I am calling “home,” in historical research: Silko’s into the Ghost Dance, the Gnostic gospels, European vegetation cults, and the history of the rapacious, even at-the-time illicit, nineteenth-century global trade in indigenous plants and artifacts; and Welch’s into the participation of Indians in Buffalo Bill’s Wild West and the workings of the nineteenth-century French judicial system. An authentic representation of their characters’ confrontation with Europe is manifestly important to both writers, not just as “exotic” setting, but as integral to their consideration of Native-white relations, then and now. Welch reveals in an interview that he had first tried writing the book from the perspective of an American professor researching the descendants of his protagonist, but it didn’t “work”: the *real* story was relegated to the background (Perkins 176).

While enjoying the texture of the fictional settings in both novels, one cannot escape the sense that the research and the work of imagining the characters are always in the service of an overarching motivation to bring the strangeness on both sides into a state of equilibrium, where both Native and European characters are understood, accepted, and perhaps forgiven.

The fact that both novels are precisely placed in the same time-frame is not simple coincidence but a shared search for a critical moment. The main characters of *Gardens in the Dunes* travel to Italy in the summer of 1900, soon after the assassination of the liberal King Umberto I. The first Colorado River dam at Parker, in the Arizona Territory, whose construction is the site of the secondary plot, was completed in 1901. Charging Elk goes to Europe with Buffalo Bill’s Wild West on its second European tour in 1889 and is released from his French prison in 1904. This is the period of defeat for the Native Americans: the United States—its military, its ever-westering settlers—has taken over Indian Country, relegated the Native Americans to reservations, and forced their children into schools in which they are forcibly separated from their cultural past, their families, their homes. It is at this juncture that the Ghost Dance—a move-

ment that in its origins, at least, incorporates Christian concepts of the return of a peaceful messiah who will remove the evil elements so that his people can live an Edenic existence in harmony with earth and their fellow humans—arises and is brutally quashed. Silko's Indigo agrees to go to Europe with the Palmers in part because the alternative is to return to the oppressive (and historically real) Sherman Institute in Riverside but in part because she hopes to find evidence that the Messiah and his family, along with her mother, may have returned to his home in the East.³ Thus the journey to Europe is a quest for healing and reunion with her mother, as well as the hoped-for culmination promised by the Ghost Dance religion.

Welch takes up the story of Charging Elk almost as a sequel to *Fools Crow*, which ended shortly after the Marias Massacre and before the Little Bighorn. Although Lakota rather than Blackfeet, Charging Elk could almost be Fools Crow's son. He chooses to join the Wild West, as did the Sioux holy man Black Elk as a young man, to learn about the world of the Euramericans (Black Elk and Neihardt 214–15) but also because he senses that his way of life as a “wild” Indian living away from the reservation is inevitably coming to an end.⁴

Left behind in Manchester with other Indians when they missed a boat in 1887, Black Elk was found and sent home when the Wild West returned to Paris in 1889 (Kasson 189–90). Charging Elk remembers witnessing Black Elk's return to the show and Buffalo Bill's kindness to the holy man (Welch 57–60). Other Indians from the Wild West did die in the influenza epidemic of 1889–90 in hospitals both in Marseille and in Spain (Bridger 354–55). One named Featherman, who becomes a character in the novel, died of smallpox contracted in Marseille. Welch notes in his acknowledgments having seen Featherman's death certificate (440; see also Moses 82, 94). By working so closely with historical sources, on the one hand, yet diverging from Black Elk's story by having Charging Elk remain in France, Welch bestows on his character the freedom *not* to have to confront the oppression of tribal life, a lonely freedom to find his individual destiny.

In contrast to Welch's concentration on the subjectivities of his characters in a geographically focused setting, Silko's scene is panoramic, as her characters cross the United States by rail, travel to Eu-

rope by ship, move by boat and rail across that continent from England to Italy and Corsica, then return. Edward Palmer sails up the Amazon in search of orchids and rubber plants, prowls the markets of Tampico for saleable curiosities, and prospects for meteor “diamonds” in northern Arizona. The settings range from an orange grove estate in Riverside, California, and the dam construction camp at Parker to an Edith Wharton–style mansion on Long Island, an English medieval cloister and the archeological digs at Bath, a Renaissance-era house and garden in Lucca, and a small rural town in Corsica. In every locale greed and folly are shown to join in the destruction of the environment and the repression of persons. At the same time, sympathetic characters—mostly females—appear in each primary location to show Indigo that peaceful integration is possible.

Welch, who most unfortunately passed away in 2003, was generally much less overtly political than Silko, and remains so in *Heart-song*, though he creates a touching picture of the individual caught in a rigid and self-serving French bureaucracy (one reviewer correctly called it “Kafkaesque” [Knickerbocker 16]) as Charging Elk tries to prove who he is (and that he’s alive, not dead) in order to get repatriated. As in earlier books, Welch works with great attention to psychological depth and to the novelistic techniques for achieving that depth, using his storytelling to feel out how people cope with the inevitable, how they live out their beliefs and dreams in an alien cultural context. Where *Fools Crow* had no choice but to live in a diminished world in his native home, Charging Elk, though isolated, is shown to be mostly free: free to leave his sponsor family, to change jobs, to pursue a wife, and, once released from prison, to remain in France and choose his own dwelling place.

Charging Elk’s spirituality is central to his quest and its resolution. At the beginning of the novel, Charging Elk may remind us not so much of *Fools Crow*’s eponymous hero as its renegade Blackfeet, Owl Child (also based on a historical figure), who pursues adventure and finally gets too much of it. In the case of Charging Elk, his being thrust so abruptly among Europeans with whom he cannot communicate orally or culturally challenges every point of his prior experi-

ence. Unlike Owl Child, Charging Elk holds to his traditional religion, although his interest in the religious practices of the French and his attraction to their churches motivate some of the most poignant confrontations of his experience.

Like Fools Crow, Charging Elk believes in his dreams as prophetic and tries to live in accordance with what he can discern that the Great Spirit, Wakan Tanka, intends for him. When he is threatened by rowdy, Indian-hating American sailors at the port, he sings his death song, only to find that it frightens his attackers and saves his life. This event, about three years into his exile (203–04), causes him to feel that perhaps it was his destiny to be in Marseille and emboldens him to make himself more at home in dress and behavior. Later, when Charging Elk, in jail for murder, receives cigarettes from a dandy newspaper reporter he calls “Yellow Breast,” he recognizes the offering as ritual tobacco and begins to take hope that he may be rescued again: “Wakan Tanka had sent Yellow Breast to him twice now. Perhaps there was a plan after all. . . . Charging Elk stared at the small yellow flame [of the match] and dared to hope just a little” (306).

Welch does not portray Charging Elk as completely abandoned and alone: along with Yellow Breast, other Europeans befriend him. Christians are repeatedly shown to exercise their faith and ideals in their treatment of the stranger. Even sexual exploitation is a catalyst for emotional discovery as well as brutality, as Charging Elk patronizes then falls in love with a prostitute, who reluctantly betrays him to a wealthy homosexual whom Charging Elk kills as a *siyoko*, or “evilness,” when the man drugs and molests him.⁵ Charging Elk’s experience with the French court and prison system opens doors of his mind as well as closing them.

As the North American continent caused the “American” to become, in Crèvecoeur’s formulation, “this new man,” France causes Charging Elk to remake himself, learning, for example, to eat fish and work with a fishmonger although he was brought up to shun such food (and vomits up the first fine bouillabaisse his French sponsors offer him as a treat); learning to farm although he was raised a hunter; and learning to dress in a European style, to live in an apartment, and to court a woman in the European way. After a decade and

a half in France, much of it as a convict, although he feels deep nostalgia when he visits the Indian “camp” of the Wild West, his responsibility to his French wife and child-to-be, along with his recognition that even the Indians have changed, lead him to refuse the opportunity to return to America.

Described in a schematic way, the book might be seen as a fable, a clever reversal of the “young man from the country” European plot that shows us the noble savage coping with absurd or cruel custom.⁶ But the texture Welch creates is anything but fabulist, with the kind of richness of psychological and physical detail we associate with the realistic novel from the nineteenth century to the present. For Charging Elk, who as a child witnessed the aftermath of the battle the Indians called the “Greasy Grass” and Americans called “Little Bighorn” and the subsequent surrender of his tribe to reservation life, the notion of home is forever ruptured, although he does not realize this at first and longs to return there.⁷ Welch, himself a “mixed-blood” person who participated in Euramerican culture in professional and personal relationships from his youth, seems to say that understanding and adaptation rather than *return* allows people to find their appropriate places, even in the face of loss. Charging Elk will never recover the kind of community he had in his youth, because—as he learns from his prophetic dreams and the narrative of the Wild West Sioux he visits at the end of the novel—that kind of community has disappeared. His choices for a French wife and family may seem diminished and even sad to the reader, yet they are in the end represented as good choices for Charging Elk. He says to Joseph, the young show Indian who urges him to return with Buffalo Bill,

I am not the young man who came to this country so long ago.
 . . . I speak the language of these people. My wife is one of them
 and my heart is her heart. She is my life now and soon we will
 have another life and the same heart will sing in all of us. (437)

Silko, for her part, creates a homecoming that is on the one hand romantic: her sisters are reunited, the next generation has been born with ancient knowledge, the new plants grow up beside the old, and a new spirit snake appears beside the spring where an old snake has

been brutally killed. On the other hand, Silko's vision is polemic and moralistic: exploiters of the earth (at least some of them) are punished while their victims survive and thrive by subsistence farming and respect for persons, plants, and animals. Silko ties her ecological theme to a feminist one: in the end, Hattie Palmer, whose feminist thesis was rejected by the Harvard Divinity School (where she was a special student after graduating from Vassar) and whose (celibate) husband uses her and Indigo as a cover for his plant stealing activities in Corsica, leaves her materialistic American family to find her home with an eccentric spiritualist aunt in England, where her ideas will be condoned, even welcomed.

By bringing together the feminist and ecological themes, Silko shows that they are interdependent: the Catholic Hattie begins in a religious tradition that in its "orthodox" form does not accept women as equals of men. Priests are celibate, Gnostic stories of Mary Magdalene as an honored disciple are "heretical," and one of the Church's key precepts is that "Man" should govern the earth and its denizens, a *carte blanche* for exploitation.

The scenes of destruction of nature are horrific in such episodes as when a fire is deliberately set to destroy Brazilian orchid habitat by pirates working for a respected European conglomerate of collectors and botanical gardens, simply to make those that have been stolen the more valuable;⁸ or when a huge copper beech tree is uprooted and transported to be a garden party ornament at Hattie's high-society sister-in-law's estate on Long Island; or when we are shown the protracted drying up of the Colorado river bottom agricultural lands as the dam diverting its water to California begins to take effect.

The gardens in the dunes are an idyllic place of refuge and restoration: though seemingly arid, by careful husbanding and respect for water sources, they can be made to flourish. Silko's anger at American consumption and destructiveness came to a head in *Almanac of the Dead* (1991), her sprawling and violent novel set in contemporary Tucson and El Paso. As she notes (somewhat tongue-in-cheek), *Gardens* is the "reward" to the reader for suffering through *Almanac* (Arnold 7). In *Gardens*, she looks to the past sources of the "vast care-

lessness” that Scott Fitzgerald also saw as symptomatic of American greed and excess, drawing them together in both a warning and a hope.

There is still plenty of anger for Silko to work through. It is not just Indians who suffer from prejudice and violence. The consequence of Hattie’s presumption in challenging the professors is simply being disgraced by the rejection of her thesis proposal on the Gnostic Magdalene gospels, but her subsequent opportunistic molestation by a male fellow student causes her to have a nervous breakdown. Her later presumption in patronizing Indians (along with her apparent possession of portable worldly goods) results in her brutal rape and robbery as she attempts to bring supplies to Indigo and her sister near the end of the novel. Silko allows Hattie a measure of revenge: discovering evidence of some of her stolen artifacts at the livery stable in Needles, whose owner’s son she has suspected of the crime, Hattie sets a fire in the stable. In a reverse mirror image of the orchid fire, Hattie’s fire sweeps through the corrupt town, thus purging at least some of the evil that has occurred there, before she leaves the area permanently.

The figure of Europe in *Gardens in the Dunes* may seem at first almost gratuitous. In a sense, most of Silko’s “points” about rapacious exploitation and the healing power of the garden could be made without any journey beyond Long Island. But as she has revealed in interviews, Europe fascinated her and suggested ancient links between Europeans and Native Americans. Besides the German experience, she talks about the spring rite of *Fasching* in Zürich, in which carnivalesque revelers dress in blackbird masks and roam the streets; later in Italy with her Italian translator Silko was surrounded by blackbirds, as she is at home in Arizona (Arnold 4–6). These blackbirds are associated in the novel with the coming of the Messiah and appear in Aunt Bronwyn’s English garden and Laura’s garden in Lucca, confirming for Indigo the rightness of her instinct in willingly going to Europe with the Palmers. Another link seems to be with Silko’s Scots ancestors, who were “stone worshippers,” as Silko is (Arnold 7).

One motif linking the European sections of the novel to those set

in America is the archaeological evidence at Bath of priapic and yonic fertility cults from pre-Christian times; other such figures appear in the elaborate Italian garden of Laura, Aunt Bronwyn's friend, a *professoressa* who has separated from her disgraced husband and lives happily on her own. Anthropomorphic figures of snakes cause important epiphanies for both Indigo and Hattie, who immediately sense the connectedness across time and culture. For Regier, Indigo's reaction to one of the figures forms a "crisis point,"

an original hybridity that positions the human form not in binary separation from the animal world, but which integrates female and snake forms, human and animal relations, just as such systems and ways of being were presented as integrated in Indigo's early life experiences in the gardens in the dunes. (149)

These ancient cults, with their veneration of the sexual, echo the Sand Lizard people's acceptance of sex as a basically friendly gesture that might lead to tribal affiliation. Sister Salt reviews the principle: "Sex with strangers was valued for alliances and friendships that might be made" (202). This attitude precludes jealousy and is contrasted both to the unconsummated marriage of Hattie and Edward and to the illicit affair Hattie's sister-in-law is carrying on with her Scots gardener, witnessed by Indigo: "Sister Salt once warned her never to peek at white people having sex or they'd go crazy and come after you" (192). Fortunately for Indigo, Susan Palmer simply tries to buy her silence by giving the girl a parrot, a formerly wild bird pining away on Long Island.⁹

Hattie and Indigo recognize evidence of primitive earth "spirits" in England (in the excavations at Bath and a ruined abbey built on top of earlier animist religious sites), and also in Italy, especially in Laura's gardens in Lucca, as indicating the layeredness of human activity over time. This persistence of a benevolent spirit in spite of cruelty and exploitation allows Hattie to return to live with her aunt in England, while Indigo is reunited in the desert with her sister, bearing seeds, black gladiolus corms from Laura, and some of the contraband orchids. The latter are a final reconciliation gift from Edward, whose cupidity and gullibility lead to his death at the hands of

a quack and criminal physician partner while pursuing a specious mining venture in northern Arizona, in the process finishing off the remainder of Hattie's marriage settlement. Indigo's success in growing the Old World seeds in the gardens in the dunes affirms change and growth within the family, just as the "mixing" of Indian and black blood in the "little grandfather" baby of Sister Salt does.

A corollary of this affirmation in *Gardens* is the transcendent "value" of beauty, which is only apparently at odds with practical value. Not only the orchids but the gladioli hybridized by the Italian professoressa have no value as food (in contrast to the contraband citrus cuttings that get Edward into jail on his return to Italy from Sicily) but are valued by Indigo for their loveliness. She later discovers one *can* eat the gladiolus corms, but that is merely an amusing "bonus," as she keeps and plants them regardless. The gladioli also come to serve as a peace offering from Indigo and her Chemehuevi friends Maytha and Vedna to the Christian Indians with whom they have been feuding; they take buckets of the brilliantly colored flowers to the church and find the empty buckets returned for more. The neighbors, who were flooded out by the completed dam, "received all sorts of food donations from other churches each month; but no one up or down the river had such tall amazing flowers for their church. So those flowers turned out to be quite valuable after all" (475).

If those who freely share abundance and beauty are rewarded with freedom and "home," those who try to make money on the stolen bioresources are either frustrated (the "company") or killed (Edward). Those who make money out of the plunder of the river are similarly foiled. Even Sister Salt's lover, the black cook and gambling entrepreneur Big Candy, has all his savings from the project stolen by a Mexican woman who is getting together arms for the Mexican revolution. Obsessed with the loss, Candy leaves Sister Salt and their baby and follows the Mexican woman eastward across the desert, nearly dying of hunger and thirst, but Silko allows him to be rescued and, again ironically, to end up driving the wagon with all the guns into Mexico as a way to raise some cash after he reaches Tucson. All his "sweetness" has turned to dust; his desire to settle down has been crushed.

The Ghost Dance—that strange amalgam of messianic Christian themes and the fervent wish that the whites might just disappear from North America—links the two books to those of other Native American writers, but its uses are distinctive in these novels. The Ghost Dance in both novels can be seen as a critique of conventional Christianity, which rarely seems to practice what it preaches where persons and property are concerned. In Silko's representation of the Ghost Dance—a vision of the Paiute prophet Wovoka in 1888—the Messiah, Christ, has a family that includes a wife and children. As Silko shows it, the Indians and neighboring Mormons employ fasting and dancing as a ritual to summon the Messiah and his family, who will bless them and free them from the oppressively hegemonic Euramericans.¹⁰ Regier finds the Ghost Dance central to the “hybridization” theme of the novel: “Silko’s conception of Wovoka offers a culturally syncretistic . . . version of a messiah” (140) that is available to all races in the present.

Historically, the Ghost Dance movement was drastically disrupted by the cavalry attack at Wounded Knee in December 1890, but remnants did persist. Silko admits that she “moved” a Ghost Dance from 1893 in Kingman to Needles for her novel (Arnold 7). In Europe, Indigo is able to identify several sites she visits with verses from the Ghost Dance chants she learned at Needles (262–65). In Silko's novel, the Ghost Dance, with its benevolent figures of Jesus and his family, is a kind of modern heresy that links Hattie's research into alternate Christian histories with Indigo's quest for her mother. This Ghost Dance messiah is always just over the horizon, never “here” (like the Krishna of Forster's Professor Godbole), but it is important for the people to keep seeking him, to keep trying to summon him.

For Welch, the Ghost Dance suppression seems one of the factors cutting Charging Elk off from his past. His vision of the dance itself comes to him in a dream early in the novel.

It was not rhythmic and graceful like the old-time dances; rather the people hopped and twirled in place, men shouting and wailing, women ululating and crying out. . . . some of the dancers fell to the ground, where some lay motionless while

others twitched and rolled around as though they were struggling to leave their bodies. (126)

The style of the dancing matches that in *Gardens in the Dunes* and apparently came from Wovoka's contact with Shakers, whom he encountered as teenager in the hops Welds of Washington and Oregon.¹¹ Although Charging Elk was already in Europe by the time of the massacre of the Ghost Dancers at Wounded Knee, Welch has Charging Elk dream that scene as well. In his troubled vision he is futilely trying to jump off a cliff back in the Stronghold:

He tried four times, five times, ten times, but each time the wind pushed him back, until he was exhausted from his labors. But the next time he approached the cliff, too weak to even attempt to jump, he looked down and he saw his people lying in a heap at the bottom. They lay in all positions and directions—men, women, and children, even old ones. They lay like buffaloes that had been driven over the cliffs by hunters, and Charging Elk understood why he had been weeping. (235)

Charging Elk cannot interpret these dreams until the visiting Lakotas in the Wild West relate the events to him near the very end of the book. He recounts the frightful visions to his hosts but manages to wrest some hope from the very fact that these Lakotas now appear before him. All the Lakotas were not “vanished from the earth,” as he had feared from his dreams: “We will go on because we are strong people, we Lakotas.” The show Indian “smiled for the first time, uncertainly but perhaps a little hopefully. ‘I don’t know—maybe’” (435). Yet in reality, it is Charging Elk who has “disappeared” from America. Written off as dead by a French doctor, he is presumed dead by the Wild West and most likely by his parents. Though hugely visible among the short Frenchmen of Marseille, he is also in a sense invisible because of his difference in France. Most Frenchmen simply ignore him, and for much of his early time in Marseille he courts “invisibility” (200).

Charging Elk's time in prison for the murder is less punishment than a continuance of his reeducation. While incarcerated he learns

the peaceful art of gardening, with its orderly seasonal tasks, which Welch describes almost ritualistically:

Eight months a year, from early March to the end of October, he spent his days in the terraced gardens or in the apple and almond orchards at the bottom of the hill. In the spring, he pushed a wheeled plow to break up the hardened soil, spread manure, mixed it in, and raked it smooth. He planted radishes and onions, leeks and peas and tomatoes. Then he tended them through the growing season, watering the plants, weeding and watching for pests. From mid to late summer he harvested vegetables, picked apples, and shook down the olives and almonds. In the fall after the first frost, he pulled the spent plants, pruned the trees, and cleaned up debris. He repaired tools, sharpened hoes and shovels, straightened up the tool-room and the greenhouse. (356–57)

These activities keep Charging Elk sane and whole for seven years. He is then released, thanks to the efforts of a Catholic Relief Society in Marseille, which has by some convoluted legal interpretation had him reclassified as a political prisoner: he was tried as a U.S. citizen, but his tribe is a separate nation “and therefore not subject to the legal agreements between the United States and France” (361). In an ironic reversal of the original refusal to repatriate him because he was not a U.S. citizen, the French now set him free. To aid his reentry into society, his mentors place him as a gardening assistant with the rural French family whose daughter, Nathalie, he ultimately marries.

These European gardens are more benign, closer to “home,” than Silko’s Long Island garden for which whole trees are transported and multitudes of spring flowers are artificially forced for one evening of bloom in the hot summer, all because they fit the hostess’s color scheme. When Charging Elk first sees the landscape outside his prison, he feels he “had never seen a more beautiful sight. Not even the smoky-black Paha Sapa could compare with such colors and lushness” (355). These fields are in fact much more similar to the ordered and colorful garden that Indigo plants along the lower Colorado. When Maytha and Vedna visit, they admire the “effect of the

color combinations Indigo made with the gladiolus she planted in rows to resemble corn kernels" (476).

The benevolence of Europeans on their home ground is also found in Welch's "Christian" French family, who are idealists acting in a principled way that grows into firm affection towards Charging Elk, and in the several French Catholic charities that help him, as well as the very secular rabble-raising reporter Yellow Breast. All are more humane than the unseen "Christian" Americans who have stolen his home and massacred his tribal relatives, or Silko's "Christians" who refuse to acknowledge Hattie's thesis and those who torture and kill not only the Indian Ghost Dancers but also the Mormons who participate in the Ghost Dance.

Europe, in these books, is in some ways the Europe of James or Hemingway, the estranged "other" with which the American—white or Indian—must come to terms, but it is more benign than the "America" the Indians have left behind.¹² The fictional Europes of Silko and Welch are symbolic places where new perspectives on Native American experience can be achieved, where Euramerican prejudices and covetousness can be set aside and a longer historical view of humanity can emerge. Urban Marseille becomes for Charging Elk a kind of neutral space where he and his French wife can construct their own "normal" life. In fact, removed from her rural home by the death of her mother and her cousin's inheriting the farm where she has always lived, Charging Elk's wife, Nathalie, is also lonely and dispossessed. However, we see both of them in the end trying to make a positive life as best they can, hopefully anticipating the birth of their child. In *James Welch, A Critical Companion*, Mary Jane Lupton reveals that Welch in 2002 was preparing to return to France to do research for a sequel that would take Charging Elk up to 1918 and return him to America (132). Such a return would indeed be a challenge to the kind of argument I have made, and one can only imagine a darker outlook for its conclusion.

The future for Indigo back in Arizona is unclear: as long as the sisters and "the little grandfather" baby of Big Candy and Sister Salt can stay hidden among the dunes, they are safely "at home," but they never give up the hope of finding their mother again. To do that they

will have to venture beyond the dunes. Hattie is safely at home in England, but we presume permanently celibate as well as estranged from her parents and separated from Indigo, whom she loves. Louise Barnett sees her departure as “exile”: “Her intellectual feminism, . . . is neither useful nor valuable, to herself or to others” (28). Angelika Köhler, however, takes a more positive view of Hattie’s resolution: “Claiming her right to individual choice, she develops into a spiritual seeker who finally discovers her homeland in Europe among Celtic runes and Roman statues” (241).

In both novels the transport of the Indians to a European setting shows that people of different races and cultures can learn to live together in reciprocal affection and respect if they are willing to make the effort, at least away from the contested ground of America. The European “connection” reflects Silko’s perception—experienced on the tour publicizing *Almanac*—of the interconnectedness of human sensibility when not corrupted by greed and selfishness: “Our human nature, our human spirit, wants no boundaries, and we are better beings, and we are less destructive and happier. We can be our best selves as a species, as beings with all the other living beings on this earth . . . without those divisions” (Arnold 9–10). Thus, Welch’s and Silko’s explorations of the past and of Europe suggest the possibility of reconciliation and the hope for a new kind of home, a home constructed by individuals of goodwill who manage to overcome grief and loss through spiritual ties with each other and with the natural world.

NOTES

1. Denise Cummings, writing in *SAIL* in 2000, provides a densely argued theoretical grounding for Silko’s uses of history in all her books. She summarizes,

I understand Silko in her traditional stories, her bricolage, her scathing criticism of Western culture, and her use of the nineteenth-century novel form as trying (perhaps unconsciously) to reveal the illogic of the dominant discourse while simultaneously using the dominant forms to rewrite history. (73)

2. I use the French spelling “Marseille,” since Welch does in the novel.

3. Silko notes that her grandfather, Henry C. Marmon, was a student at Sherman, as well as the “Gladiolus Man” of her family (Arnold 4).

4. Black Elk is a significant source for Welch in his account of how Charging Elk was left behind. Black Elk and several others missed their ship in Manchester in 1887. After traveling with other Wild West shows, Black Elk became ill and was taken in by a French “girl friend” and her family. In *Black Elk Speaks*, he recalls, “There was a Wasichu Girl who came to the show very often. She liked me and took me home to see her father and mother. They liked me too and were good to me. I could not talk their language. I made signs, and the girl learned a few Lakota words” (Black Elk and Neihardt 224–25). Welch has Charging Elk make friends with a Parisian girl, Sandrine, before the show moves on to Marseille, learning a few French words and teaching her some Lakota; Sandrine remains his image for the possibility of crossing the cultural divide. His relations with his “foster family” in Marseille are also reminiscent of the sketches provided by Black Elk. When Black Elk later fell ill with homesickness, he was taken to the Paris home of his girl friend, where he fell into a trance and had a vision of traveling on a cloud all the way back over the ocean to Pine Ridge, where he saw his family. The cloud returned him to Paris, where he awoke to find funeral preparations being made for him (227–28). Charging Elk also dreams of being home. Other elements of *Black Elk Speaks* appear in *Heartsong*, as well: Black Elk’s account (supplemented by two of his contemporaries) of the Custer battle, his fear and misery crossing the ocean in the “fire-boat” (where like Charging Elk he began to sing his death song), his description of the Ghost Dance. Other important sources for *Heartsong* came from Welch’s historical research for both *Fools Crow* and the 1994 nonfiction *Killing Custer* (with Paul Stekler).

5. The similarity to N. Scott Momaday’s Abel’s killing of the albino “witch” in *House Made of Dawn* is notable. But the *siyoko* Breteuil’s motivation and behavior are all too human, not mysterious.

6. Brigitte Frase writes,

During the Enlightenment the French were much taken with the literary figure of the naïf. In sunny didactic tales, the noble savage would be very much at ease in Paris, full of perspicuous observations about European culture and deep natural wisdom about the best ordering of a society. *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* is the melancholy revision of such optimism about the meeting of cultures. (20)

7. Details of Charging Elk's account of the battle parallel those of Black Elk. Cf. Welch, *Heart song*, 11, 57–58, and Black Elk and Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, 103, where Standing Bear, whom Neihardt characterizes as a “long hair” friend of Black Elk, speaks. Welch's research for *Killing Custer* is also evident here.

8. See, for example, Luigi Berliocchi's account (29); other descriptions are prominent in Susan Orlean's best seller *The Orchid Thief*.

9. A bit improbably, the bird is taken along to Europe and returns with Indigo to Arizona, where they are reunited with the monkey that originally belonged to Edward but becomes Indigo's, a plot development that provoked the book's characterization by Suzanne Ruta in the *New York Times Book Review* as “part Victorian children's book” (31).

10. There are numerous versions of the meaning of the Ghost Dance. Some call Wovoka the “Paiute messiah,” but Wovoka seems to have backed away from that idea; he in fact repudiated his vision prior to the massacre at Wounded Knee when he found it corrupted and led to violence. Wovoka lived well into the 1920s as a public figure. See Bridger, *Buffalo Bill*, 364–67, 394–95; Niezen, *Spirit Wars*, 130–36. An important collection of sources and commentaries appears in Michael Hittman's *Wovoka and the Ghost Dance*.

11. Bobby Bridger explains: “The Shakers were ascetic Christians who, as the ‘Whirling Dervish’ sects of Sufi Muslims, believed a heightened state of awareness and prophecy could be obtained through ‘agitated’ or ritualistic dancing” (166).

12. Angelika Köhler has suggested the James-Silko connection is a “common basic assumption . . . that both national and cultural identity exist as something to be made, not something given” (243).

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“A World Away from His People”

James Welch's *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* and the Indian Historical Novel

JAMES J. DONAHUE

In his landmark article “The Indian Historical Novel,” unique in its treatment of Indian historical fiction as a distinct genre, Alan Velie outlines the various narrative, argumentative, and political categories under which historical fiction can be classified.¹ Borrowing from Hayden White's *Metahistory*, Velie adopts four categories of narrative sequence: romance, tragedy, comedy, and satire. Velie defines them as follows:

In a romance good triumphs over evil; in satire it is the opposite: the leader fails, his country falls. Comic histories end with reconciliations between antagonists. Tragic histories end with the death of the protagonist, but not the destruction of his world. (392)

Velie similarly adopts four modes of argument as possible for historical fiction based on White's classification of historical narrative: formist, organicist, mechanist, and contextualist.

Formists emphasize events in their uniqueness, often focusing on the lives of national leaders. To them history is often primarily a matter of biography. Contextualists think in terms of historical trends, which imply that events are related, and periods have general tendencies. They focus on the things that make the “Gilded Age,” “Progressive Era,” or “Roaring Twenties” distinct from the periods that follow them. Organicists believe in patterns in history; events reflect the working of a great force,

such as Hegel's World Spirit, or the inevitable progress of a nation to freedom and democracy. Mechanists . . . believe in patterns of events, but attribute them to the working out of historical laws rather than an organic force [such as] oft repeated dicta like "the more oppressive the tyranny, the more violent the revolution." (392–93)

These classifications can be applied to all historical fiction, as they deal with metatextual concerns of literary form and historiography. Velie addresses these general concerns first in order to contextualize Indian historical fiction in a larger literary-historical framework. He then similarly outlines the specific cultural concerns addressed by Native American writers of historical fiction:²

Most Indian novels deal with the interaction of whites and Indians, and the political questions revolve around whether to be confrontational or accommodating—that is, whether to make war or peace—and whether to live separately to preserve the tribal culture, or whether to integrate into American society. (393)

While it is clear that these are the choices that have been made by Native American writers of historical fiction, it should be equally clear that these choices are more descriptive than universal in nature. They narrowly mark the existing limits of Indian historical fiction, not the limits to which such writers are inherently bound.³ Further, one may argue that Velie's schema borrows too heavily from Eurocentric definitions of literary form and as such is inapplicable to work produced by Native Americans.

The second of these charges falls prey to what Arnold Krupat laments in his work *The Voice in the Margin: Native American Literature and the Canon* as "manag[ing] to proceed as though there were no relation between the two, white and red, Euramerican and Native American" (3). To assume that all discussions of Indian literature must work independently of "Euramerican" discourses is to perpetuate the culture of "avoidance" that critics such as Krupat seek to deconstruct.⁴ This is especially the case with the genre of historical

fiction, a genre developed in Europe and primarily contributed to in American literature by non-Native authors. As Jace Weaver reminds us in *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community*,

few authors have ventured into this territory [historical fiction]—[except,] notably[,] James Welch (Blackfoot/Gros Ventre) in *Fools Crow*. . . . For the most part, however, the burdens of deconstructing history transmitted by the dominant culture have deterred Indian artists. (110)

This is not to imply that Native Americans' contributions to the genre must be judged by a different set of standards. Rather, I argue that they challenge the definition of the genre of historical fiction (as defined by such critics as George Dekker, discussed later) and that Welch's most recent work, *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, shows Velie's definitions of the Indian historical novel to be overly proscriptive, and ultimately politically inhibiting. *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* defies categorization according to Velie's schema, thus challenging his understanding of the narrative, argumentative, and political capabilities of Indian historical fiction. As such, it broadens the possibilities of both Indian historical fiction specifically as well as the historical novel more generally. Welch uses historical fiction not to investigate historical issues but to explore the individual construction of cultural identity. Ultimately, Welch's novel demonstrates that a third option exists for Native Americans, beyond Velie's reductive choices of separatism and complete loss of cultural identity.

The Heartsong of Charging Elk is set in France at the close of the nineteenth century, when the conflict between whites and Sioux came to a disastrous conclusion: in 1866 Red Cloud attacked soldiers on the Bozeman Trail; in 1868 Custer led the massacre on the Washitas; 1876 saw the Battle of the Rosebud and the Battle of Little Bighorn; and in 1877 Crazy Horse was killed after surrendering himself at Fort Robinson.⁵ It is at this point that Welch starts his novel; its prologue is a fictionalization of Crazy Horse's surrender. Although this event has for many Native Americans marked the end of a way of

life, the prologue ends not with a mournful tone, lamenting the loss of a great leader, but with the promise of hope:

He looked down at the fort, at the log buildings, at the red and white and blue flag of America that hung listlessly from a pole, at the rows of soldiers with their rifles with steel knives tight against their shoulders, at the thousands of Indians who ringed the open field, and he wasn't afraid anymore. The Indians who awaited them were alive—and they were singing. The whole valley was alive with the peace song. It was a song the boy would not forget for the rest of his life. (4)

This prologue, then, challenges Velie's narrative categories. Where the tone would imply that the novel following would be a romance, ending on the promise of hope, the surrender (and subsequent murder) of Crazy Horse—a leader of the Sioux—would imply a satire, which Velie opposes to romance. However, as the reader comes to learn that Crazy Horse is not the subject of the novel, and Charging Elk is not a leader of his people, these two categories cannot apply.

Traveling with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show in Marseilles, France, Charging Elk is injured while performing and is hospitalized. While Charging Elk is recovering, the show moves on, leaving him stranded. As a result, he is forced to assimilate into French society, learning the language and customs of a foreign people. At first, Charging Elk laments this fact. Soon after being left behind, he "wished he had stayed in school and learned the brown suit's language [English]" (14). Even though he understands that to have attended the *wasichu* school would have meant the loss of his more traditional way of life, he also understands that a knowledge of English would help him to make his way in the world. Nobody in France speaks Lakota, but there are those who speak English. Charging Elk also wishes that he had "given up all his good times, all his freedom, to be one of them [a 'reservation Indian'], home in the little shack with his mother and father" (20). He would similarly have given up his traditional way of life to be with his family. This demonstrates to the reader the importance of family for Charging Elk; it also fore-

shadows his eventual decision to stay in France for his new family, including a child to whom he can transmit his cultural identity. Charging Elk later understands that separation from his homeland need not mean the loss of his identity. His assimilation into French society continues with his adoption of a French name, Francois.⁶ Although he chooses this name in order to hide his identity so that he may visit the prostitute Marie, the name stays with him through much of the novel, if only for those people associated with La Salon. After falling in love with Marie, Charging Elk gives up any desire to return to America. With the money he was saving for his trip across the Atlantic, he decides to live a more comfortable life in France: “He bought wine, he ate out more often, he took his shirts to the laundry to be cleaned and pressed each week, he bought a few gifts for Marie” (251). He chooses, in other words, to further his assimilation into French life because he now sees a future for himself with Marie. Although this relationship fails, it does remind the reader of the importance of family to Charging Elk and again points toward his later decision to remain in France. It must be remembered that both his seeming assimilation and his final decision to stay are made freely and are not the result of any political and cultural pressures placed upon him.

After more than a dozen years of separation from his people and his homeland, Charging Elk visits Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show as a spectator. This is significant for many reasons. Charging Elk came to France as a part of the show and was left behind by Buffalo Bill after suffering injuries from falling off his horse during a performance, which led to a more prolonged illness. Although he spends much of the novel lamenting this fact, Charging Elk chooses not to return to his home and his people when given the chance.⁷ He instead chooses to remain in France with his wife and unborn child. As he explains to Joseph, a young Sioux traveling with Buffalo Bill’s show:

“This is my home now, Joseph. I have a wife. Soon I will have a child, the Moon of Frost in the Tipi.” Charging Elk stopped as he realized how improbable this must have sounded to Joseph. Then he said, in a wistful voice, “I am not the young man who

came to this country so long ago. I was just about your age and I thought of it all as a great adventure. But now here I am, a man of thirty-seven winters. I load and unload ships. I speak the language of these people. My wife is one of them and my heart is her heart. She is my life now and soon we will have another life and the same heart will sing in all of us." (437)

Charging Elk clearly has not been fully assimilated into French culture and does not identify himself as French, referring to the French—including his wife—as "them." He still retains his Native American identity, still speaks Lakota (he is speaking it now with Joseph), and still understands the world according to his cultural heritage. However, as much as he may consider himself culturally separate from the French, he chooses to remain in France with his family. This ending is simultaneously sad and happy, comic and tragic, according to Velie's schema.

Although Charging Elk's decision can be read as a reconciliation between himself and the culture he has been forced to accept—paralleling one of the central political issues of late-nineteenth-century Native Americans—it can also be read as the death of the protagonist from a cultural standpoint, if one reads Charging Elk's decision as turning his back on his homeland and his tribe. However, given his wife's interest in Charging Elk's culture—from stories about his homeland to the belt he makes for her—one could easily read the implication that Charging Elk may in some way influence French culture. This turning on its head of the notion of Native American assimilation addresses a question pointedly raised by Craig S. Womack in *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*: "Why is it always assumed, furthermore, that Native is assimilated by white, not the other way around?" (143). Although I am not suggesting that *Heartsong* be read as describing this kind of "reverse assimilation," I would argue that the novel's ending leaves open the possibility for a reciprocal exchange of cultural materials, blurring—if not eliminating entirely—the notion of Native American cultural assimilation by white culture, representing Womack's assumption "that it is just as likely that things European are Indianized rather than the anthropo-

logical assumption that things Indian are always swallowed up by European culture” (12).

The novel’s ending can only be read positively, can only entertain the possibility of hope, if one reads it outside of the contemporary political situation of Charging Elk’s tribe, the Sioux. Although one may be tempted to read Charging Elk’s decision as a resignation, parallel to a resignation on the part of the defeated Sioux to live on the reservations, Welch clearly precludes this reading by setting his novel in France. By having Charging Elk work through his personal development outside of the United States and its current political climate, Welch can explore the individual construction and definition of cultural identity for Native Americans outside of a specific cultural condition. As such, Welch uses his novel to address the central issues of a Native American identity, and the means by which a Native American can explore that identity on his own terms, despite his immediate cultural circumstances. This does not mean that *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* does not address Native American alienation in the way that such critics as Louis Owens have addressed it. In his study *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel*, Owens argues:

It can be said of the protagonists in American Indian fiction that they suffer from alienation in the Marxist sense, for the self from which they are alienated is, in fact, shown to be potentially coherent and dependent upon a continuing cultural identity . . . [, whose] authors more often than not move them . . . toward a coherent personal identity entirely dependent upon a coherent cultural identity. (20)

Charging Elk suffers from just this alienation and throughout the course of the novel works to reconstruct his cultural identity though separated from his family, his tribe, and his homeland.

Welch’s focus on Charging Elk’s personal identification with his Native American culture allows him to challenge Velie’s classification of historical argument. Although Welch does identify the specific moment in history through his prologue, he removes Charging Elk from that historical moment, as well as the resulting cultural context. As such, *Heartsong* employs neither contextualist, organicist, nor

mechanist arguments of history. By displacing Charging Elk, and forcing him to assimilate into a completely foreign culture, Welch avoids any discussion of the historical trends or the historical patterns that are working themselves out in America at the time. Welch also avoids a formist historical argument in two ways. First, he does not focus on the life of a national or cultural leader. Although this is only one way a formist historian may frame his historical argument, it is relevant because Welch's novel does focus on the life of a single man who is to be read as representative of his people. In this way, *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* reads almost like a biography—but Charging Elk is not a great historical figure; he is in fact entirely fictional.⁸

The second way Welch's novel works against a formist historical argument is by challenging the uniqueness of Charging Elk's personal growth. Although his situation could be considered unique, as we have no records of any Native American members of Buffalo Bill's troupe choosing to remain abroad permanently, I would argue that he is to be read as embodying the possibility for Native Americans to maintain their individual identity in terms of their cultural heritage. This reading is possible because Welch situates his novel historically and understands that this will force his audience to carry into his novel the cultural situation of the period. By allowing his readers to bring into the novel the relevant cultural background, Welch is able to develop Charging Elk as an individual while allowing him to be read in the current cultural context.

Welch's novel further avoids direct confrontation with the political categories outlined by Velie. Just as the reader carries the cultural background into the text by means of the prologue, he can similarly read into the novel the political implications of Charging Elk's decision to remain in France. Welch's novel can thereby avoid representing the necessary confrontations between Native Americans and whites in the late nineteenth century. Because writers of historical fiction are bound to faithfully represent history, even if only in the broadest possible terms, readers of historical novels are often familiar with the historical context. This is especially the case for Indian historical fiction. Although Velie's schema allows for some choices to be made—to make war or peace, to live separately or to integrate—it

assumes that the Indian historical novel will in some meaningful way address the inevitable political and cultural confrontation. *The Heart-song of Charging Elk* manages to avoid direct discussion of this confrontation. Because it does so, Welch does not have to make any judgments about the results.

One might expect a historical novel written by a Native American, set at the close of the nineteenth century, and focusing on an Oglala Sioux to address the loss of Native American culture as a result of white American expansion and cultural warfare. Velie says as much when he claims that “historical works reflect the politics of their writers” (393). The implication is clear; Native American writers of historical fiction are obligated to revise history in order to challenge previous understandings of history. Velie reminds his readers of the nineteenth-century ideological imperative of the “winning of the West” (393). He writes:

Accounts written from an Indian point of view, like John Neihardt’s *Black Elk Speaks* have, not surprisingly, often taken an ironic perspective: the subjugation of the Indians and their forced assimilation into American life is a great loss to the Indians, a form of spiritual extinction as a people. (393–94)⁹

Welch’s novel, however, avoids becoming a lament for the loss of a way of life by focusing its attention on Charging Elk and his personal identity formation.¹⁰ Charging Elk is intimately familiar with the encroaching white civilization. His first memory, arguably one of his crucial formative experiences, is of Crazy Horse’s surrender at Fort Robinson. Charging Elk is similarly familiar with reservation life; while his parents live on the reservation, he has chosen to live at the Stronghold, where he can still live “in the old way.” Although one may be tempted to read this as Welch’s statement against reservation life, one must remember that these glimpses of Charging Elk’s past all come as flashbacks. The main narrative depicts Charging Elk’s assimilation into French culture. Also, because Charging Elk was accidentally left behind, he is not given the choice of either assimilation or separation. By portraying Charging Elk as both a separatist and an assimilationist, Welch defies Velie’s reductionist political schema.

This also avoids the politics of assimilationism, or what Womack has called "the so-called Indian problem," which "assumes that Indians are, in fact, problematic, that they ought to act like white folks" (65). Although Charging Elk learns to speak French, is prosecuted and jailed under French law, and later adopts a French definition of marriage, at no point in the novel is he forced to act French; that is, the pressure to assimilate comes from within, not without. In order to survive, Charging Elk adopts certain aspects of French culture, but throughout the novel it is clear that the choice is his and not an imposition from the French.

This is not to say, however, that Welch's book does not make any useful contribution to political dialogue. Rather, the novel makes a more general statement about the possibility for a Native American to live his own life, according to his own individual and cultural values, while assimilating into a non-Native culture. For this reason, the book could not have been set in America. Had it been, the political statement would have been much more localized, much more historically contextualized. By removing Charging Elk from his immediate historical context, Welch was able to use him to work out issues of individual identity and cultural assimilation. In this light, Charging Elk can be read as a prototype, as a new kind of Native American. In his character Welch has created an individual who was forced to find a way to keep his cultural identity after having been torn from his homeland and his people. In *Heartsong*, then, Welch has shown how Native Americans can retain their cultural identity even after separation from their tribe and homeland. Although Charging Elk must struggle to retain his cultural identity while (at first) trapped in France, he is able to do so because he comes to realize that where identity is culturally assigned it is individually developed and maintained. Welch's novel, then, provides a new political category for the Indian historical novel: the Indian historical novelist does not need to choose between separatist and integrationist politics.

Given the history of Native Americans in the twentieth century—the period of time between the actual events and Welch's writing of them—the novel is much more politically descriptive than prescriptive, despite its fictional characters and circumstances. In other

words, *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* addresses the political needs of Welch's contemporary Native American audience and provides an alternative political stand to the earlier position of Vine Deloria Jr., one of the most popular and outspoken Native American political theorists. In his "Indian manifesto" *Custer Died for Your Sins*, Deloria addresses the major social and political issues for Native Americans in the twentieth century. One such concern is the legal standing of Native Americans. The Citizenship Act of 1924, according to Deloria, "gave all Indians full citizenship without affecting any of their rights as Indian people" (76). The legal question at stake here is whether or not Native Americans can have a Native American identity while being legally defined as citizens of the United States. Deloria shows how this question continued to be problematic through the 1960s and the Civil Rights Movement; he points out that in "the minds of most people in 1963, legal equality and cultural conformity were identical" (179–80). In other words, in "the minds of most people" (and the implication here is that this is true for both whites and Native Americans), minorities can only possess equal legal standing if they shed their cultural identity. This point is also made in his humorous chapter "Anthropologists and Other Friends," where he imagines the eventual anthropological conclusion that Native Americans are "bi-cultural." That this is a source of humor for Deloria indicates the absurdity of the notion for him. In other words, for Deloria, cultural identity is an either/or absolute; one cannot simultaneously claim Native American identity and U.S. citizenship (which implies cultural identity with the white community).

Welch addresses this problem during the continuing dispute over Charging Elk's legal standing. After having been arrested for leaving the hospital without authorization, he is subsequently charged with entering France illegally. This charge is made because, in the eyes of the French government, "he is not a citizen of the United States, he does not hold a valid passport" (114). This is true; at the time, U.S. citizenship had not yet been granted to Native Americans. However, Rene, Charging Elk's benefactor, disagrees with this view, and argues that "the law is misguided in this case, *capitaine*. The Peau-Rouge is

clearly a citizen of America. He is the original citizen. Buffalo Bill said so" (114). The different ways that each character refers to Charging Elk's homeland are important. In the eyes of the French government, citizenship is a legal right granted by a government—in this case the United States—to the individual. As such, legal identity is granted, not inherent. The opposite belief is held by Rene, who understands Charging Elk to be a citizen of America, referring to the land itself and not the political authority of the U.S. government: Charging Elk's identity is implied in the fact that he originates from a land. His identification with the land, in other words, is the basis for his cultural (if not political) identity. This would seem to be in line with Deloria's understanding of the importance of land to Native American identity: "Land has been the basis on which racial relations have been defined ever since the first settlers got off the boat" (178). However, the reader must keep in mind two facts. First, this is a dialogue between two whites, and as such should not be used to represent Welch's political views on the place of Native Americans. Second, this is not the end of the book.

Later in the novel, when Charging Elk is again brought before the court—this time for murder—the issue of his legal identity is again raised. The *procuruer general* prosecuting Charging Elk argues that "he was not only an illegal immigrant [reminding the reader of the earlier issue of legal identity] but a savage who could never comprehend the necessary rules and obligations of a civilized society" (315). The importance of place as a means of establishing identity is also alluded to when it is pointed out that Charging Elk "lives in La Panier, that notorious district of cutpurses and murderers and drug-runners. . . . He is part of that den of iniquity, that black wound in the breast of decent Marseille society" (316). Charging Elk is not only a savage because of his Native American heritage but also because he chooses to live with the social outcasts. It is not surprising, then, that he is found guilty of murder.

After roughly ten years behind bars for his crime, Charging Elk is freed following his reclassification as a "political prisoner." Since Charging Elk's incarceration, France has recognized the legal independence of the Sioux people. As one government official explains,

You were tried as a citizen of the United States of America. As it turns out, by treaty, your tribe is its own separate nation and therefore not subject to the legal agreements between the United States and France. Thus the reclassification from common criminal to political prisoner. You have been held illegally all these years. (361)

The reader must keep in mind through all of these legal maneuvers that none of this affects Charging Elk's personal understanding of his own identity. Although he does by now understand enough French to allow him to operate in French society, he does not in any way take part in these legal discussions. It is for this reason that when he does address the court, he does so only in Lakota. Further, he never questions the reasons behind his release or the political implications of them. His personal understanding of his identity as a Sioux never comes into question. Charging Elk's only defense, which is incomprehensible both because it represents a different worldview than what is understood in French society and because it is spoken in Lakota—both of which are central issues in Charging Elk's individual identity formation—is that he was obligated to kill the *siyoko*. The defense is only relevant to Charging Elk and highlights for the reader the insignificance of the discussion taking place around him. This is Welch's way of showing that all of these arguments are purely in the realm of the white worldview. Because Charging Elk chooses not to participate in any of the legal discussions, he shows how such discussions do not in any meaningful way contribute to his identity. The only aspect of French culture that does impact the way in which Charging Elk constructs his identity is his marriage to Nathalie and, more significantly, the promise of a family.

After staying with the Soulas family for some time, working as an assistant fishmonger and learning enough French to operate in French society, Charging Elk begins to save money for a return trip to America. He puts some of his earnings aside, even though he knows it will take years to save up enough money. He continues to save and continues to identify America as home. However, he has doubts about this assumption early on. Not long after he begins to save for

his trip, while sitting at a café drinking wine, he thinks to himself that perhaps "he was meant to live, and to live here, at the edge of the great water that stood between him and his home. Perhaps this had become home" (204). Welch makes clear to the reader that, despite accepting life in France, Charging Elk has not forsaken his religious beliefs, nor does he ever.¹¹ A cornerstone of his identity (and a major means of cultural identity for Native Americans), Charging Elk's belief in Wakan Tanka never wavers. Shortly after he starts to think of France as his home, Charging Elk begins to wonder if this is all part of Wakan Tanka's plan: "Had Wakan Tanka sent Charging Elk on this journey to the dark street to meet the *heyoka* again?" (208).¹² Charging Elk continues to question where he belongs, where home is: "His heart was not here [France]; nor was it there, at the Stronghold. It was somewhere he could not name just now" (235–36). These doubts continue to plague Charging Elk until he meets Marie and starts to think of marriage and a family.

After becoming acquainted with Marie, the prostitute with whom he first falls in love, Charging Elk begins to live a more comfortable French life, giving up his dreams of returning to America. His relationship with Marie begins to take over his life, and for the first time after his being left behind in France he conceives of a future there. While sitting at his favorite café, drinking his usual anisette, he takes special notice of an awning: "MARIAGES [*sic*]. Somehow, this evening the idea didn't seem so farfetched to him" (265). With his new interest in marriage, Charging Elk begins to imagine what his future would be:

They could be married and have children. She could cook him good meals. He could buy her a nice dress and a hat. They could walk along Corniche on Sundays and watch the fishing boats. He imagined that her eyes would light up over these plans. . . . He imagined that she would be happy to be with him for the rest of her life. (271)

Charging Elk's future does not include a return trip to America; rather, it involves walks along the shore in Marseilles, spending his money on French clothes for his French wife. Through marriage,

then, Charging Elk comes to imagine a future in France. These plans are temporarily delayed, however, by Marie, who betrays Charging Elk's confidence to another man. Breteuil, a rival of Charging Elk's former employer Rene, pays Marie to drug Charging Elk so that he may sexually assault him. It is this crime that not only separates Charging Elk from Marie but also sends him to jail for the murder of Breteuil. Although this leads to his decade-long imprisonment, it also leads him to the home of the Gazier family and his future wife, Nathalie.

Having worked with the Gazier family through their harvest, Charging Elk stays on to help after the death of Mrs. Gazier. Although his desire to stay with the family is based largely on a wish to help them through a difficult period, he also begins to develop a relationship with Nathalie, Vincent Gazier's young daughter. After visits to his room, during which Charging Elk tells her all about America and his previous life, they fall in love and decide to marry. Although he is initially resistant to the idea, Gazier ultimately gives his blessing to the union.¹³ Charging Elk marries Nathalie and brings his bride to Marseilles; soon after they arrive, Nathalie becomes pregnant. Charging Elk is excited but comes to define fatherhood through the examples he sees in France, not from examples remembered from his childhood. The reader learns that

he had been thinking of walking with his own son along the
quais of the Old Port, showing him the sea from the parapet of
Fort St-Jean, buying him a *glace* from one of the vendors on
Cours Belsunce—just as he had seen other fathers do. He
hadn't known until just this moment that he had envied them.
(415)

Not only does Charging Elk come to define fatherhood through French examples, but the fact that he has already given this some thought shows that he has desired a family for some time. This indicates that, since falling in love with and marrying Nathalie (if not back when he loved and wanted to marry Marie), Charging Elk has envisioned France as his home. It is at this point that Charging Elk also feels "for the first time since he had left the Stronghold, that he

was a part of a group of men who looked out for each other. And he liked it" (416). Charging Elk now feels that he belongs. And although he still feels physical pain at the thought of returning home—a pain that has afflicted him throughout the novel every time he thinks about the hopelessness of going back to America—he understands that he no longer wants to go back: "he was certain that he could have the one thing that he had wanted so desperately over the past sixteen years—and he didn't want to want it so much now" (420). Charging Elk may always feel homesick to some degree, but he chooses to stay with his family in France, which has become his home. It is important that Charging Elk is starting a family in France because it is the promise of a future generation that allows him to see France as his home. This is completely in keeping with his Lakota background. Summarizing Lakota scholar Kelly Morgan, Womack reminds his readers that "literature, Morgan posits, contributes to Lakota cultural survival because it extends knowledge of cultural practices to future generations" (15). With the promise of a child, Charging Elk knows that he can transmit his cultural knowledge; it will not die with him in this foreign land.¹⁴

That said, even though Charging Elk chooses to stay, and even though he feels that he finally belongs, he does not lose his Native American identity. Never once does Charging Elk consider himself to be French, either by choice or by forced cultural assimilation. Charging Elk retains his Native American identity and lives a productive, loving life—with the promise of a future in his child—both outside of the Stronghold and away from his tribe, the two means by which he formerly based his cultural identification.¹⁵ Charging Elk never waivers in either his worldview or his belief in Wakan Tanka. Although he may speak French and wear French clothes, such trappings are simply decoration and not indicative of a cultural assimilation.¹⁶ Native American identity is not lost simply because one must trade in one's moccasins for boots and Lakota for French. This point is shared not only by Charging Elk, who finally comes to realize that he does not need to be French to live in France, but by Andrew Little Ring, the Lakota with whom he speaks when he visits Buffalo Bill's show. Little Ring tells him, "I can see you are still one of us, yet you

are different" (431). This sentiment is echoed by his son Joseph who tells Charging Elk, "You are not a stranger. You are Lakota, wherever you might go" (435–36). "And whatever language you might speak, and whatever clothes you might wear," he could easily add. The fact that they can see through Charging Elk's appearance and understand that he is not a Frenchman even if he dresses like one reinforces Welch's political statement that identity is inherent and not assumed through various cultural trappings. Charging Elk himself reinforces this at the novel's conclusion, when Welch writes that "the Moon of the Falling Leaves would light his way" (438). Throughout the novel, Charging Elk marks time through the cycles of the moon as they were called in Lakota, never by the French calendar. That he does so at the end of the book signifies both that he has retained his Native American worldview and that it will continue to "light his way" as he walks off into his future as a Native American living in France, rather than as an assimilated Native American who had to become French in order to survive.

The political message is clear: Native Americans, even when removed from their tribal lands and people, need not lose their identity as Native Americans. By removing Charging Elk from the immediate social and political climate of turn-of-the-century America, Welch has shown that Native Americans need not have been forced to choose between their cultural heritage and cultural annihilation. A middle road was, and is, possible. This is shown not only through the example of Charging Elk but also through recent history. Although there have been, and continue to be, many problems in Native American relations with both white culture and with the U.S. government, many Native Americans continue the old traditions and retain their cultural worldview.¹⁷ Welch's novel points out what history has already proven: that while cultural imperialism was attempted, Native American culture was not wiped out.¹⁸ This idea challenges not only Velie's reductive schema but a major concern of many Native American scholars and critics as well. Womack stresses the importance of land succinctly: "Politics, land, and story are deeply intertwined entities" (58). All three could easily be read as the basis for cultural definition; we are who we are because of the politi-

cal system we have erected, the land we live on, and the stories we tell about ourselves. In this formulation, all three appear to carry equal weight. I would like to suggest that Welch's novel places more emphasis on story, at the expense of land and politics, in order to suggest that one is Native American not based on where he lives and under what government but primarily because of the story he tells about his place in the world. Ultimately, that is Charging Elk's heartsong.

This emphasis on story, on narrative, as a means of cultural identification is implied by the title of the novel and made clear in Welch's particular selection of genre. As Weaver reminds us, few Native Americans have attempted historical fiction; Welch has written two historical novels (the first being *Fools Crow*).

The historical novel has a long tradition, beginning with Sir Walter Scott and James Fenimore Cooper, as a device used to codify and transmit cultural identification. Scott and Cooper wish to identify and portray for their readers what it means to be Scottish and American (in both cases, as opposed to English).¹⁹ In the same way, Welch uses the historical romance to identify and transmit to his audience what it means to be Native American.²⁰ As such, *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* should be read in the larger tradition of historical fiction. And just as Welch's novel challenges Velie's definition of the Indian historical novel, it similarly challenges the larger tradition of the American historical novel.²¹ George Dekker, in *The American Historical Romance*, discusses the genesis, development, and impact of the American historical novel. Grounding his argument in a close reading of Sir Walter Scott, James Fenimore Cooper, and other writers who worked to define and shape this genre, Dekker formulates two models by which historical fiction can operate: the "Waverly model" and the "stadialist-model." It is by means of these two models that Dekker classifies the form of the historical novel and its specific development in America. The Waverly model, loosely defined, is concerned "with a class of conflicts of which there were numerous instances in the recent history of many countries," which recognizes "a pattern which seem[s] to have universal relevance and adaptability" (43). In other words, the Waverly model deals with specific local (regional or national) instances of political or cultural conflict,

which themselves represent universal political or cultural issues. One should not be tempted here to read this simply as a mechanist argument of history as White has defined it. While there are similarities, Dekker's model is much broader in scope and could conceivably include both mechanist and organicist historical arguments, so long as they have local representations.²² Opposed to the cyclical understanding of history in the Waverly model (cyclical because the various classes of conflicts themselves are universals, forever representing themselves locally in various ways) is the linear stadialist model, where history is understood as a forward progression. This would imply, as John Stuart Mill argued in *A System of Logic Ratiocinated and Inductive*, "a tendency toward a better and happier state" (qtd. in Dekker 73) and is often understood to have four major historical stages:

- (1) a "savage" stage based on hunting and fishing; (2) a "barbarian" stage based on herding; (3) a stage considered "civilized" and based mainly on agriculture; (4) a stage based on commerce and manufacturing which was sometimes considered vercivilized. (Dekker 75)

Clearly, Welch's novel employs the Waverly model of historical fiction because it addresses the local problem of a Native American man dispossessed of his homeland and people who adapts and learns to live in the white world. This is a local instance of a larger cultural problem—one not limited to Native Americans alone—of dealing with the threat of cultural loss as a result of major changes in the cultural landscape. Although Charging Elk's specific circumstances differ from the circumstances faced by Native Americans in the face of Manifest Destiny and cultural imperialism, the means by which Charging Elk retains his individual cultural identity apart from his tribe and homeland are the very same means that have been employed by Native Americans in the twentieth century.²³ Both Charging Elk and the reader come to understand that "a world away from his people" (297) is not necessarily one in which he must forsake his cultural identity.

This is not to say that Welch's novel must be read outside of the

genre of Indian historical fiction and placed in the larger tradition of American historical fiction. Nor does it mean that Welch's novel does not similarly challenge Dekker's classifications. First, as shown earlier, it is impossible to discuss *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* apart from the Indian historical novel because, while *Heartsong* does subvert Velie's definitions, it still addresses the issues central to the genre as he has defined it. Second, *Charging Elk* does not fit into Dekker's classifications of the traditional protagonist. And just as there is a larger political understanding to be read in Welch's subversion of Velie's classifications, there is a more important political statement in his subversion of Dekker's classifications.

Taking as his model the historical fiction of Scott and Cooper and the historical drama of Schiller (whose *The Conspiracy of Fiesco* Scott translated), Dekker polarizes the gender traits of the male and female protagonists as follows:²⁴

<i>Man</i>	<i>Woman</i>
sentimental	naïve
intellect/learning	intuition/instinct
history	myth
art	nature
modern	primitive
fragmentary	whole (228)

Although such polarizations may exist in much historical fiction, these clearly do not work for Welch's novel. *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* does not have a female character who could be read as the "heroine" as Dekker defines the type of character. Although *Charging Elk* does have a love interest—and she is a major figure in *Charging Elk*'s development as well as in the development of the plot and its political significance—Nathalie does not possess the characteristics of either the "'light' heroine of flight-and-pursuit narratives" or the "'dark' heroine of siege narratives . . . whose sexual allure or infidelity unmans the hero and precipitates the fall of the kingdom" (222).²⁵ *Charging Elk* himself represents the attributes that Dekker attributes to "Woman."²⁶ He is for most of the novel naïve regarding French culture, which continues through his proposal and marriage

to Nathalie. And the only means he has available to him for any chance at survival are his intuition and his instincts; although they land him in jail twice, Charging Elk remains true to his instincts about hospitals and the *siyoko*. Similarly, one could easily read Charging Elk's dream/vision in terms of myth and his agrarian skills as representative of nature. He is consistently referred to as "primitive" (as well as "savage," both of which are often related by "civilized" societies). Finally, because he never wavers in his understanding of his own identity as a Lakota and not only survives but flourishes in French society, eventually marrying and fathering a child, Charging Elk could easily be read as a whole character. However, this is not to imply that there is no character in the novel who possesses the traditionally male characteristics. Ironically, this character is also Charging Elk.

Charging Elk's sentimentality is seen in the importance that family holds for him: both the family he left behind in America and the family he comes to achieve in France. His intellect and learning are shown through his learning of both the French language and various job skills; although not book learning, these tasks cannot be attributed simply to an instinct to survive. Charging Elk can be read as representing history in the way that he embodies, as a character, the history of his tribe; the fact that Welch is commenting on a historical problem necessitates that Charging Elk be read in such a manner. He embodies art through his construction of the belt that first catches Nathalie's attention; although he is not an artisan, and laments that he is not more talented, it is his attempt at art as well as Nathalie's recognition of the belt's artistic value that are important in this exchange. Charging Elk can be read as modern in the sense that he comes to live, by the end of the novel, a more modern—that is, technologically progressive—lifestyle, with his manufactured clothes and modern conveniences. Finally, Charging Elk can be read as fragmentary because of his separation from his land and people. Although he does become a whole character by the end of the novel, his persistent feeling of displacement would imply that his wholeness is earned only after being read as a fragmentary character.

Charging Elk's embodiment of both the male and female gen-

dered attributes is significant because it furthers Welch's political purpose for his character. Just as Charging Elk is a more progressive representational character for the Indian historical novel in that he works through the same issues of assimilation without falling victim to either death or total cultural loss, his embodiment of both gendered attributes forces the reader to not read him as simply representational. In other words, although Charging Elk can be read more representationally, he cannot be read as exclusively representational. If Charging Elk is read as merely representational, then all Welch's novel accomplishes is a reassigning of the Indian stereotype; Charging Elk would become a trope, and the political significance of the novel would be lost in the reestablishing of a stereotypical Indian.²⁷ In refusing to define Charging Elk's character by any set of limiting characteristics, of which Dekker's schema is just one possible and certainly relevant example, Welch forces his audience to understand the complex nature of identity. Just as Welch is able to show that cultural identity is a more complex issue than may have been previously understood, especially for Native Americans who have lost their land base and tribal unity, he is also able to show that personal identity is more than the embodiment of certain distinct categories. It is not that Welch is showing how Charging Elk is gendered both male and female; rather, he is showing that any set of mutually exclusive categories is inherently limiting in defining personal identity.

Similarly, Welch's characterization of Charging Elk works to deconstruct Owens's generalization of the crisis of contemporary Native American identity construction. In his study *Mixedblood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place*, Owens claims:

In literature by contemporary Indian authors, we find characters who constantly face this dilemma of an identity constructed within the authoritative discourse of the non-Indian world. In order to be recognized, to claim authenticity in the world—in order to be seen at all—the Indian must conform to an identity imposed from the outside.

As Hollywood and every savvy Indian fund raiser knows, there is nothing like traditional regalia and a drum to get the

cash flowing. For traditional Indians, however, such shallow commodification is particularly discouraging, because of course specific tribal dress and ceremony still play vital roles in the cultural continuity of Native communities. (12–13)

The Heartsong of Charging Elk forces the reader to recognize what Owens here implies with his reference to Hollywood: that the “commodification” of the Native American stereotype as a forced identity is a particularly American influence. In other words, by removing Charging Elk from America and placing him in a culture that not equipped to work with the cultural problematics of Native American identity, Welch demonstrates how a Native American is able to reconstruct his cultural identity despite having to assimilate to a white, European cultural model. This is not to say that the French are entirely ignorant of Native American cultural stereotypes. Recalling Charging Elk’s trial, the fact that he was a “savage” allowed the prosecutor to paint him in a negative light. Further, Buffalo Bill’s traveling show would have informed the French population about the American stereotypes of the Native Americans (with the further drawback of having Buffalo Bill’s representation as likely the only source of information on Native American culture). However, Charging Elk not only rejects the commodified identity imposed on him by Buffalo Bill (in his ultimate refusal to rejoin the show), he positively constructs a Native American identity without having to rely on any cultural identity imposed on him by the French. Charging Elk is “seen” as a Native American without having to “conform to an identity imposed from the outside.” Through his use of Lakota in both his dreams and in his internal monologues, his recognition of a Sioux worldview with respect to marking time, and his continued belief in Wakan Tanka, Charging Elk is able to reconstruct and maintain his individual cultural identity without pressure from French stereotypes, while assimilating to certain aspects of French culture.

As Weaver claims, the “contest of assimilation . . . and resistance to it form the backdrop for Native literature in the 20th century” (88). A great body of Native American literature—oral and written, poetry

and prose, history and autobiography—works to address this contest and detail the many failures for Native Americans attempting to live in America. Further, as Owens reminds us:

For American Indians, the problem of identity comprehends centuries of colonial and postcolonial displacement, often brutally enforced peripherality, cultural denigration—including especially a harsh privileging of English over tribal languages—and systematic oppression by the monocentric “westerling” impulse in America. (*Other Destinies* 4)

That both of these are true is not under dispute. However, despite the claims of such critics as Velie, Deloria, and others, this is not meant to imply that a successful construction of Native American identity is impossible in twentieth-century America. In *The Heart-song of Charging Elk*, Welch demonstrates that there exist possibilities for Native Americans outside of this notion of “contest.” Further, by removing Charging Elk from the American scene described by Owens, Welch demonstrates the possibility of a positively constructed Native American identity with respect to a continued assimilation in white culture more generally. As the character of Charging Elk exhibits, cultural identity need not be lost with assimilation into a foreign, specifically white European, culture. By challenging the proscriptive limits of the genre of the Indian historical novel as laid out by Velie, Welch dramatizes a bold political statement made by many recent Native American literary and cultural critics.

NOTES

1. Velie is not the only critic of historical fiction to do so. However, as he is the only critic who deals exclusively with Native American historical fiction, it is his schema I will employ for my discussion of *The Heart-song of Charging Elk*. It is also worth noting that Velie uses Welch’s earlier historical novel *Fools Crow* as one of his primary examples. Although Welch’s most recent work is in many ways a continuation of the work begun in *Fools Crow*, I will not be making any meaningful comparisons between the texts in this article.

2. Although I follow Velie and use “Indian” throughout this article to refer to the genre of the Indian historical novel, I will refer to the authors themselves as “Native American.”

3. Although Velie does assign narrative, argumentative, and political categories to *Fools Crow* and Gerald Vizenor’s *The Heirs of Columbus*, he does not provide examples of other Indian works of historical fiction that fall into other categories (such as narrative structures other than romance or works with a formist argument of history). As such, it raises the question as to whether or not Velie could more narrowly limit Indian historical fiction in his descriptive treatment and definition of the “Indian historical novel.”

4. In a later study, *The Turn to the Native: Studies in Criticism and Culture*, Krupat similarly claims that “to preoccupy oneself with drawing the lines between ‘us’ and ‘them’ risks missing the sociopolitical and sociocultural issues around which (not quite all of) ‘us’ and (at least some of) ‘them’ might organize in common” (xi). I would argue that this oppositional treatment of “Native vs. white” culture is largely absent in *HeartSong*, which instead focuses its energies on representing a more cosmopolitan view of the possibilities for Native Americans to live in white culture without being oppressed by it. Charging Elk finds that, in many ways, he shares the desires of the French, especially with respect to the importance of family.

5. Although the book specifically addresses the Sioux, the issues dealt with are more universal. This is a convenient point at which one may begin to see what will become the major issues dealt with by many Native Americans in the twentieth century: loss of cultural identity, reservation life, and political and economic paternalism.

6. I am here opposing assimilation to complete loss of cultural identity. As I hope to show, one can assimilate aspects of a dominant cultural force without losing individual cultural identity.

7. I am glossing over the political implications of this choice now so that I may explore them in more detail later.

8. I feel obligated to point out the similarities between Charging Elk and Black Elk, a historical figure whose life provided part of the background for Charging Elk. Although both were Oglala Sioux, traveled with Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show, and spent time in France learning the language and culture, Charging Elk is not to be read as a fictionalized version of Black Elk. In fact, Black Elk appears in the novel. This adds to the historical credibility of the novel and prohibits reading Charging Elk as Black Elk.

9. Although Velie points out that Neihardt’s view is more bleak than Black Elk’s, the point isn’t relevant here. The text itself is important for the position

it holds as a cornerstone of Native American literature and culture. Even though Raymond J. DeMallie's *The Sixth Grandfather* provides the full transcriptions of Black Elk's teachings to Neihardt, the book was published some fifty years after *Black Elk Speaks*. Also, Neihardt's book is more widely taught in courses on Native American literature. All of this points to the continued importance of such works that represent the closing of the nineteenth century as a period of tragic loss for Native Americans.

10. Interestingly, Welch's previous work of historical fiction, *Fools Crow*, while leading up to one of the worst massacres in the history of the Blackfeet people, similarly manages to end on a comic note. As Velie remarks: "Although the books skirts tragedy, it ends on a positive, indeed triumphant and defiant note" (395). This is because this book is, according to Velie, "a *Bildungsroman* of sorts" (395). In other words, where the novel addresses history, its focus—like that of *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*—is on the development of an individual in relation to his culture.

11. In *God Is Red: A Native View on Religion*, Deloria discusses the importance of religion as the central tie that binds Native Americans to their land and their tribe as well as the recognition that all being exist, in the Sioux worldview, as unique creations of Wakan Tanka. Quoting Shooter, a Sioux, Deloria writes, "each [being] is placed here by Wakan Tanka to be an independent individuality and to rely upon itself" (89). Therefore, Charging Elk's decision not to return to his homeland and tribe should not be seen as a denial of his beliefs, despite the importance for Deloria of land in Native American religion (see *God Is Red*, chapters 8 and 10).

12. Charging Elk's internal dialogue, thoughts, and emotions are almost always given in the third person.

13. Welch does spend some time on Gazier's objections, which are largely religious. However, these objections are not worth engaging in detail, both because Gazier does finally acquiesce and because the problems inherent in mixed-blood marriages are not a focus of the novel. Neither Charging Elk nor Nathalie consider their marriage to be culturally taboo.

14. As Arnold Krupat writes in *The Turn to the Native*:

In the case of ritual and ceremonial knowledge, "culture" is not, of course, written; nor is it produced. Rather, it is transmitted. Although traditional culture does not remain static, the changes in it and the circulation of it are so organized as to remain relatively fixed. (23)

Although I doubt that Krupat had in mind such a condition as Charging Elk's, one may read Welch's text as an assertion of this statement about cul-

ture and its continuance in the face of separation from one's people and homeland. As with Welch's earlier novel *Fools Crow*, the reader is left with a statement of hope and the possibility of continued cultural transmittance.

15. Even if his cultural identification, in relation to his tribe on the reservation, was defined oppositionally.

16. Welch never indicates whether or not Charging Elk thinks in Lakota or if he comes to think in French after he becomes fluent. One can assume that his dreams of the voice that speaks to him about his people are in Lakota, but that does not indicate whether or not he always thinks in Lakota.

17. This is not a new idea in Native American literature. Both Lame Deer in *Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions* and Betonie, the medicine man in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, discuss the necessity for Native Americans to adapt to new social circumstances. Change, for both medicine men, is an inherent part of cultural development and not a sign of cultural extinction.

18. This is also why *Fools Crow* could end on a hopeful note, despite the massacre of the Blackfeet people.

19. For both Scott and Cooper, the historical novel was a device to define a "native" culture, distinct from a political and cultural oppressor.

20. I should point out here that Welch is not a Lakota but rather Blackfoot/Gros Ventre. Because I believe Welch is making a statement regarding Native Americans in general, I do not think it is necessary to limit his examples to his particular tribe, as he did with *Fools Crow*. In fact, by representing different tribes in each of his historical novels, Welch could be attempting a universal approach to Native American identity more generally.

21. Although I have neither the time nor the background to undertake such a discussion, it would be interesting to discover how central the ethnic identity of the author is to the classification of his or her works as "Indian" or "non-Indian" (or "white," "African American," etc.) historical fiction. Is all historical fiction written by Native Americans automatically "Indian historical fiction," even if it does not address the issues raised by Velie? Although one could argue that a literary genre can only be defined through textual aspects, one cannot eliminate the ethnic identity of the author when dealing with ethnic-defined genre distinctions.

22. One should keep in mind that, while there are admittedly many similarities between the writing of historical fiction and historiography, White's classifications apply specifically to a historical argument, while Dekker's models apply to artistic (albeit not exclusively literary) models.

23. It makes sense that an Indian historical novel would employ a cyclical understanding of time, in light of the common Native American under-

standing of time as cyclical (see chapter 4 on time and space in Deloria's *God Is Red* for one of many examples).

24. I choose not to employ the terms "hero" and "heroine" because I do not think the association to heroism—to "the celebration of male feats and male relationships" as understood by Dekker (221)—implied by the terms is appropriate for *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*.

25. Although there are two women in Charging Elk's life who they are opposed in many ways—one is a prostitute while the other is a virgin, for instance—their opposition (aside from this one point) is not entirely in keeping with Dekker's definitions of "light" and "dark" heroines. Marie is more of a plot point, a means to get Charging Elk to the trial in which issues of identity are raised, than a fully developed character, even if she does represent Charging Elk's first (incomplete and poorly realized) love interest.

26. It should be noted that where Charging Elk exemplifies these attributes is usually, but not necessarily, at different places than where he exemplifies the attributes assigned to "Man."

27. I here use the term "Indian" as opposed to "Native American" to highlight two aspects of my argument. First, I want to point out that a reading of Charging Elk as merely representational would be offensive and limit any understanding of the depth of the issues at work in the novel. Second, by using stereotypes, one does not further an understanding of Charging Elk's cultural identity, for which I employ the term "Native American."

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Composite Indigenous Genre

Cheyenne Ledger Art as Literature

DENISE LOW

Suppression of Indigenous literary texts is an aspect of colonization, and reclamation of Indigenous American literature is a critical component of cultural sovereignty. When the Spanish burned most of the Mayan and Aztec codices, they truncated cultural continuity; they also furthered a dehumanized image of the American as an illiterate (and therefore even more heathen) “savage.” Survivor Indigenous writers use strategies to subvert the colonizer’s genres and reclaim an Indigenous literacy: they “reinvent” English-language literature, to use Joy Harjo and Gloria Bird’s term from their book *Reinventing the Enemy’s Language* (23–24). N. Scott Momaday’s circular structure for *House Made of Dawn* is another example of reclamation, as he embeds Indigenous thought into a European genre and transforms it. Momaday and many, if not most, Indigenous authors inflect written English texts with oral tradition structures. This process continues into the twenty-first century, as Indigenous people assign value to their own categories of texts.

English is a lingua franca for Indigenous peoples of North America, yet it is an imperfect vehicle. As I have taught American Indian and Alaskan Native literature at an all-Native school for over twenty years, and also at non-Native institutions, I have emphasized the hybrid nature of English-language Indigenous poetry and prose. Another Indigenous tradition closer to original Indigenous thought and deserving of reclamation is the sign system of text-images, including glyphs and pictographs, used by Indigenous people in north-

ern and Plains areas of North America. These were first inscribed on bark, stone, or hide. Later eighteenth- and nineteenth-century winter counts and ledger book texts are part of this tradition. Such Native-created textual sources sustain Indigenous sovereignty. As my students and I have encountered these sign-texts, European categories collapse. The images assert a legitimate alternative literacy.

I choose Cheyenne texts and images for personal reasons: I am from the region depicted in these sources, the central grasslands of Kansas. As I interact with them, I connect to my locale and learn its existence in another mode. Students at Haskell Indian Nations University reside in eastern Kansas, within this landscape, at the easternmost edge. Every Cheyenne ledger text references the land, either directly or indirectly.

Also, a good number of Cheyenne pictographic images survive. Cheyenne men participated in the ledger art tradition, including a group sent to Ft. Marion as prisoners of war. Therefore, a number of sources are available, including the Smithsonian online exhibit of ledger images by the Ft. Marion artist Tichkematse (Squint Eyes). The Newberry Library in Chicago has a complete ledger available for scholars' use, attributed to Black Horse, and another exists in nearby Ft. Leavenworth (Lovett and DeWitt).

Finally, most important, Cheyenne people have made the decision to allow outsiders to learn their sacred military narratives, many of which are depicted in the ledgers. Father Peter J. Powell assembled oral accounts of specific ledger drawings and other narratives in his 1987 volumes *People of the Sacred Mountain: A History of the Northern Cheyenne Chiefs and Warrior Societies, 1830–1877*. Dog Soldier Society members explicated their Summit Springs ledger book in the jointly authored publication *Cheyenne Dog Soldiers: A Ledgerbook History of Coups and Combat* (1997). These and other sources re-create the narrative context for images in this time.

Another reason to study the ledger images and texts is for the way these texts inform contemporary writers' history and methods. They are vehicles of continuity, following historic and personal narratives into the present time. James Welch's *Fools Crow* recounts events that

are in the Newberry ledger book, for example. The ledgers occur during the critical transition from tribal independence to reservation prisoner-of-war status, so they contain stories of the last generation before the reservation era. Unique Indigenous philosophical concepts emerge from the texts, especially representations of power or “medicine.” The markings invoke texts of military record, history, natural history, literature, art, and spirituality. They are beautiful images with multiple layers of simultaneous impact. Contemporary writers continue to evoke these same tropes.

The actual images are to a degree mnemonic and are completed by historic documentation, oral tradition, and further, Gerald Vizenor suggests, an intangible “fourth dimension,” or “presence” (169). Vizenor, also familiar with an Algonquin-language tradition like the Algic Cheyenne language (Cheyennes resided in the Great Lakes region before contact with Europeans), explains this intangible “presence” in the court testimony of an Anishinaabe elder, Aubid. The court case reviews an oral treaty agreement between the U.S. government and John Squirrel, a deceased man: “Aubid, in his *anishinaabe* stories about that meeting with the government men, created a presence of John Squirrel. That sense of presence, as sworn testimony in court, was the obviative, the fourth person in the poses of evidence” (169). The “presence” is the body of tradition that, in the ledger texts, interacts with image-texts.

Vizenor’s view of ledger art further details literacy as a dynamic interplay between texts and political stance. He writes of the Cheyenne ledger artist and author Howling Wolf and other Plains men:

The warriors and their horses are pictured in motion, the artistic transmotion of native sovereignty. The scenes and motion were of memories and consciousness, not poses and simulations. The transmotion of ledger art is a creative connection to the motion of horses depicted in winter counts and heraldic hide paintings. The hides and shields are visionary. (179)

The genre of ledger art and narration is “transmotion”: dynamic, culturally multidimensional, and visionary.

HISTORIC PHASES

Cheyenne ledger art begins in the 1860s, with the 1865(?) Yellow Horse ledger (Powell and Malone 13); the Carr ledger book, dated between 1868 and 1869 (Afton, Halaas, and Masich 371); and the Summit Springs Dog Soldier ledger, begun possibly in 1865 and captured in 1869 (Afton, Halaas, and Masich xix–xx). From the 1870s through the 1890s, warrior-artists continued the practice of recording their own and their military societies' texts in ledger books (Powell and Malone 28–29).

During this early phase, the books' drawings directly comment upon the turbulent events of the last years of Cheyenne freedom. During this time period, both Northern and Southern Cheyenne people engaged in much military conflict against Native enemies, such as the Pawnees, Shoshones, and Crows, and against the U.S. Army. These conflicts are depicted, as well as hunting, horse stealing, courting, and camp activities.

Another phase of ledger drawing took place at Ft. Marion, Florida, when Cheyenne prisoners of war created drawings on unlined paper. These drawings record memories of previous tribally independent life and document the transition to new surroundings. From 1875 to 1878, thirty-three Cheyenne men were among the group of Southern Plains prisoners at Ft. Marion, along with Kiowa, Comanche, Caddo, and Arapaho prisoners of war (Szabo 66). A number of the Ft. Marion Cheyenne prisoners created ledger drawings, including Making Medicine, Howling Wolf, James Bears Heart, Tichkematse (Squint Eyes), Cohoe (Broken Leg or Lame), and others (Petersen xvii).

Army scouts in Oklahoma became the next group to produce Cheyenne ledger drawings, and at least one, Squint Eyes, had been a prisoner of war at Ft. Marion (Greene "Scouts" 53). Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho men who worked as Indian scouts at Fort Reno and Ft. Supply (1885–95) composed nine ledger books, dated 1878–91.¹ One ledger book (at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas) has the inscription, "Drawn by Cheyenne Indians 1881 for Capt. Bethel Custer U.S.A.," for a non-Cheyenne man and possibly in a commercial context.² Powell documents the Northern Cheyenne artists who contin-

ued a reservation-era tradition of pictographic drawings on paper from 1891 to the 1930s: Daniel Little Chief (Wuxpais) and army scouts Wooden Leg, Limpy, and Shoulderblade (Powell and Malone 29).

According to Powell, a final phase of ledger drawings dates from 1937, when Northern Cheyenne Sun Dance priests began recording ceremonial information in ledger drawing style (Powell and Malone 33). Few of these are published.

COMMUNAL AUTHORSHIP

In contrast to Western tradition, production of drawings was not just individual but often a communal activity: “The fact that multiple artists worked in the same book, even sometimes on the same page, suggests that the production of drawings was a social event, with men working together and no doubt examining and commenting on each others’ pictures” (Greene, “Artists” 57). Several glyphic signatures appear in most of these early ledgers. Army Lt. John G. Bourke quotes Friday, a Northern Arapaho and close ally of Northern Cheyenne people, as he describes the shared authorship of ledger drawings in about 1877:

The “war-record” books we find are not necessarily the military history of one person: pretty nearly every boy has one which he keeps as a memento of his own prowess, but it is extremely common for intimate friends to insert in each other’s books, evidence of mutual esteem by drawing scenes from their past lives (To serve about the same purpose as the interchange of photographs and autographs does with us . . .).
(Powell and Malone 36–37)

This communal production of “scenes from their past lives” treats the medium as an aspect of Vizenor’s “presence” and “transmotion.” This mode also supposes a different kind of authorship—and therefore literacy—than Western literary tradition. Texts find completion within oral tradition of a society or community.

The safekeeping of such books was a serious undertaking. In the nineteenth century, during constant relocations, the ledger books

had the advantage of being portable. Indeed, in 1878 Little Fingernail, a younger man who rode with Morning Star at the time of the Ft. Robinson breakout, wore his ledger book strapped to his body. It was one of the few possessions he carried. In it were recorded drawings from his military encounters on the trip from the southern plains to the north, September to October of 1878 (Powell and Malone 41). At Ft. Robinson, he refused to sell the drawings to an interested army officer, Francis H. Hardie. This shows the value a man like Little Fingernail placed on his ledger book. Army bullets killed Little Fingernail during his flight to Montana, and the bullets that tore into his body also tore a hole in his book (Powell and Malone 41; Henson, lecture). Ironically, after the death of Little Fingernail, soldiers gave the book to Hardie as war booty, and the book now is on display in the Natural History Museum in New York City (Powell and Malone 41).

Bourke was an eyewitness to the destruction of many beaded and painted hides, medicine objects, and ledger books during the 1876 Powder River battle (Powell and Malone 35). This parallels the Spanish burning of books and other objects that supported the Indigenous culture, including its literary expression. As a result, untold numbers of texts were lost.

COMPOSITION

At first, Cheyenne men acquired ledger books and colored pencils as booty or as trade goods. They became a common expressive medium for Cheyenne individuals and for military society comrades. At Ft. Marion, Captain Pratt provided unlined paper and other supplies; often the artists sold these for spending money.

Most of the drawings are lead pencil outlines filled in with colored pencil pigments or crayon. Colors include blue, red, yellow, green, black, pink, and brown. Sometimes ink or watercolor paint is used, and it is used effectively for dotted patterns, stripes, and filling in outlined shapes, such as shields. The painted colors include vivid reds and blues, and these are more saturated than the penciled color. In some cases, such as the Newberry ledger book attributed to Black

Horse, sizing on the paper creates a slightly gritty texture for the watercolors (Aubrey). The predominantly colored pencil medium allows for precise but faint details.

In addition to use of different materials, the ledger art texts also require a different orientation to the page. Most often the drawings before Ft. Marion are aligned horizontally along the length of the pages, often paired with the opposite page. The ledger book must be rotated in order to read the drawings. Candace S. Greene discusses “bilateral pairings” as the major organizational principle, as she notes the predominant placement of the Cheyenne man on the right hand side of a page when he is depicted as warrior, hunter, suitor, or horse captor. She deduces:

Thus, in Cheyenne pictures the position on the right has the same connotation in pictorial space that it has in the ideological realm, where the right side is possessed of greater energy or spiritual force, and thus dominates the left. In pictures of warfare or hunting, this domination is expressed physically. In scenes of male/female interaction, the relationship is metaphysical. (“Structure” 29)

Greene found in 1,300 Cheyenne ledger drawings that 40 percent of the action flowed from right to left, 4 percent of the action flowed from left to right, and 45 percent of the action flowed toward the center (“Structure” 29). Another explanation of the dominance of the right-hand side of a page is the precedent of painting on buffalo-hide robes: “Painted robes were usually worn with the animal head on the left . . . [so] the pictures usually flow in the same direction, from right to left” (Horse Capture and Horse Capture 20). The left-hand side of the body is closer to the heart.

In the Newberry, or Black Horse, ledger book, the artist(s) drew many of the scenes on the right-hand page only, with the opposing page left blank. The rest of the scenes are diptychs that cover two adjacent pages. Sometimes elements of the drawing, like inverted U-shaped horse hoof prints, continue across the center of the book onto the left-hand, or second, page. In a few instances, the action begins in the upper left-hand corner of a diptych and continues

down the page and continues onto the right-hand page (48–49). The right-hand page, however, usually is the starting point for reading the scene, whether at the bottom or top. The shifting of syntactical composition to emphasize meaning also differs from fixed alphabetic texts.

Human and animal tracks in many drawings represent the sequence of events—spatial and temporal simultaneously—that lead up to the focal point of the drawing. This structures the narrative within a visible timeline, through the story of the tracking process. Tracks may also represent a more intangible concept of the trail of power leading up to the dramatic moment of the drawing, so a pattern of dashes—footprints—appears as buildup of a fighter’s power, leading to the climactic coup moment (Petersen xxx, 272). Tracks, or “traces,” have a dimension beyond the visual representation. An Indigenous British Columbia pictographic map of the afterworld (also from an Algonquin tradition) uses dashes to represent footprints of spirits dancing (Giscombe 35).³ This is not in the exact geographic region of the Northern Cheyenne people, but the similarity of dashes to the glyphic representation of Cheyenne tracks is striking.

In most compositions, the main figure is usually the Cheyenne fighter glorified by a victorious act: coup, killing, or horse capture. The essential, focal information is the precise detail of the coup moment. All else contributes to representing and verifying this moment, and the composition of the drawings is based on this emphasis. These are, to some extent, drawn “coup tales,” one of the autobiographical categories recognized by H. David Brumble III (23–30). Further, the coup moment has significance beyond the historic military event. It exalts the moment of greatest valor. Three-point perspective of the European realist tradition is irrelevant, since the dramatic climax is a mapping of inward spirit, the culmination of military and spiritual action. Facial features are minimal, and identification is through emblems of military spiritual life—shields, war shirts, medicine bundles, and eagle headdresses. The drawings verify the places and times when great men gained their power or, in some cases, great men’s souls left this world. Human spiritual courage cre-

ates events that knit specific geographies and human valor into narrative accounts. These are sacred texts.

DESCRIPTORS

All military scenes include the Cheyenne point of reference—the “narrator,” or center of the picture—drawn full-sized and detailed, and usually a horse is part of the drama, also drawn in some detail. The literary text centers on this figure. Sometimes, a name glyph floats over the individual. Shield motifs may provide names or other significant information in the Cheyenne lexicon. Separate histories of powerful shields exist, and these show that shields may be loaned to another fighter on occasion, like the Box Elder shield created around 1780 and passed down to fighters until 1879 (Grinnell V.1). The life history of a shield is another form of biography; their creation and military histories are significant and noted in oral histories. Cheyenne ledgers depict many distinctive shields, and their histories are inferred by their specific details. Many shields do not survive, not only because of the U.S. Army’s destruction, but also because they were buried with the warriors who carried them (Mooney 15–19).

Details of human figures include dress: trousers, breechclouts, shirts, vests, hooded blanket coats, and hats or headdresses. These can indicate nation and season. Winter scenes sometimes show men wearing hooded blanket coats, such as “Pawnee chased across the river and killed by Cheyenne, has on blanket coat and hood (winter)” (Newberry ledger book 113. Here, trees are leafless to emphasize the season further). Other details include men’s medicine bags, which are sometimes grasped in the left hand or suspended around the neck.

The weapons are also detailed—rifles, pistols, clubs, lances, sabers, bows, arrows, and knives. Cheyenne ledger art also includes war society lances as identification. Many drawings foreground an object or individual in the arrangement of figures. One Newberry ledger book drawing (page 43) shows a figure with a pipe tied to his waist.

An 1830s buffalo robe drawing by Mandan leader and artist Four Bears (Mah totope) also has a figure with a pipe at his waist, and the sacred object is a simple but unmistakable line silhouette (Keyser plate 8). James D. Keyser interprets this as an indication that Mahtotope leads a war party. The Cheyenne drawing foregrounds the red pipe more than the Mahtotope drawing, and it is proportionally larger so that it is the focal point of the drawing. It floats like other objects used to count coup or confer spiritual power. Bows also appear in this “floating” position, to indicate a coup, but “coup sticks” as seen at today’s powwows are almost never present in the Cheyenne ledgers.

The horses are painted and wear distinctive feathers and medicine objects. Stolen or stampeded enemy horses are drawn with the same detailing as Cheyenne horses, even when human victims are simple line drawings (“Stampeding Shoshone horses under fire” [Newberry ledger book 58]). Wounded or killed horses have the same graphic emphasis as Cheyenne people. Enemy horses are common in war scenes, and a few scenes have only horses (“Running off Horses from Fort Dodge” [Newberry ledger book 130–31]). Coloring shows if the horse is bay, roan, chestnut, sorrel, appaloosa, spotted, white or gray. Some horses are colored blue (Newberry ledger book 49), and this convention continues in the works of some contemporary artists. Warhorses often have tied and ornamented tails. A few horses have eagle feathers or scalps tied to their reins (Newberry ledger book 53, 75, 87, 120, 127, 180, 181). Loose manes indicate the horse and rider were surprised or ambushed.

Enemies may be simple silhouette drawings or sometimes more fully detailed. In one drawing, all the dead Pawnee enemy victims are identical outlines, with no military ranking marks, but they lie in different postures. Their abbreviated representation emphasizes meaning in terms of military coup rankings for the Cheyenne fighter. How each died must be carefully verified in order for the coup to count (Brumble 27), so the posture of the body is significant. Hair-style is a glyphic representation of national identity, such as the scalp-lock for Pawnee men and braids for Shoshones.

Battle scenes are not always victorious for the Cheyenne. This compromises the essentiality of the book as a brag book of victories.

One scene in the Newberry ledger shows several Crow fighters killing a single Cheyenne, the man Powell calls the Great Warrior (*Sacred Mountain* 53). This is one of the few times when enemy fighters have detailed identification markers of dress. Deaths of significant people, such as the Great Warrior, are commemorated in winter counts. Ben Kindle's Oglala Lakota winter count, for example, gives deaths of famous Lakota men and some women as significant markers for many years (Beckwith 135–57). Ledger texts are not simply coup tales transferred to paper. The ledger artists present historic accounts from different vantage points, including coup accounts, battles, skirmishes, horse raids, social life, and defeats.

In recent years, the Cheyenne descendants of the northern Dog Soldier Society worked with non-Cheyenne writers to codocument the Summit Springs ledger book drawn by their society members in the 1860s. The Summit Springs ledger book is a collection of histories more than coup stories: “Unlike other books that interpret ledger book art, the authors treat the Summit Springs ledger drawings as historical documents, a history of the Dog Soldiers recorded by the warrior-artists themselves” (Afton, Halaas, and Masich 1). Historic themes in Cheyenne ledger books also occur in Ft. Reno scouts' ledger books (Bates, Kahn, and Lansford).

RELATED INDIGENOUS GENRES

Keyser, in *The Five Crows Ledger*, shows how ledger book lineage links to North American Plains tropes, from prehistoric rock petroglyphs of the northern Plains to historic hide paintings (war shirts, robes, and shields) to early ledger books like the Five Crows ledger drawings of the 1840s. The genre has Indigenous antecedents but utilizes Western materials—paper and pencils and sometimes watercolors. Some question arises regarding its authenticity. Ron McCoy notes the impact of George Catlin, Karl Bodmer, and other European artists on Plains artists but concludes:

Stylistic changes may have occurred in Plains Indian warrior art during the pre-reservation period, but they did not remove

the genre as a whole from the realm of an abstracted representationalism that is, in its fundamentals, the antithesis of Western photographic illusionism. (70)

That “abstracted representationalism” is a sign system, with its own convention of recording thought.

Ledger book idioms parallel the Plains Indian winter counts of the eighteenth century to early twentieth century.⁴ These Lakota, Kiowa, or Blackfeet mnemonic texts have one pictograph representing each year (Lakota) or six months (summer and winter, Kiowa). Kiowa calendar drawings sometimes included monthly sequences, like the Anko calendar (Penney 56). Winter counts accompany an oral text: “The actual Oglala words are usually mnemonic devices or keys to call to memory the skeleton of an incident which is then further elaborated” (Beckwith 135). The written form represents one aspect of a larger, intangible narrative canon, Vizenor’s “presence.” Likewise, ledger book texts unpack into larger narrations connected to oral literary traditions of the Cheyenne and also their religious and military traditions. Rock art, hide paintings, and winter count images are all forerunners of this form.

Biography is another aspect of the genre. Hertha Dawn Wong elaborates on the use of names as autobiography and the associations of identification glyphs, or “biographs,” with human figures in many ledger drawings (37–56). In ledger drawings, name glyphs sometimes appear over figures, denoting stories of the namings as well. Wong sees the sequence of names in a person’s life as a résumé of identity: “for a nineteenth-century Plains Indian male, life proceeded from his names, each new name joining the others before it, creating a changing but continuous personal history—a palimpsestic configuration of the self” (54). The prominence of glyphic representation in the ledger drawings would support the idea that these drawings are autobiographically dense moments, put into relationship with each other through the pages of the book. The pictographic “naming” of the several heroes is not a chronology, but like Wong asserts: “recurrent naming was not a linear process of a new name replacing the one before it. Rather, all the names existed in dynamic relation to one

another” (54). These drawings often refer to more than one person, so there is also a collective impact.

Joseph D. Horse Capture and George Horse Capture describe painted tropes on war shirts as representative of this autobiographic genre: “the drawings served as a mnemonic device; explicit features were not needed since they would be described in the detailed narrative” (21). These were public declarations of military history, made complete by communal consensus of participatory performance. Wong further elaborates the genre:

The picture scene is complete in itself, a visual narrative of a personal and a tribal history of battle. To be vitally complete, however, this pictured narrative must come to life as speech and action, as when Catlin tells of Mah totohpa, who “sat upon the robe, pointing to his painting” of the battle, and at the same time brandishing the identical knife which he drew from his belt, as he was showing how the fatal blow was given; and exhibiting the wounds inflicted in his hand, as the blade of the knife was several times drawn through it before he wrested it from his antagonist” (30)

In ledger art, the shift from historic pictographs drawn on hide, accompanied by oral text, to drawings on paper, with written and sometimes oral texts, is not a complete disruption.

For most ledger books, correlating texts exist in oral history, like the Summit Springs ledger book (Afton, Halaas, and Masich), W. S. Nye’s *Bad Medicine and Good: Tales of the Kiowas*, and Powell’s books based on Cheyenne oral tradition. James Mooney, Nye, George Bird Grinnell, and others document the Cheyenne oral traditions. A number of “as-told-to” biographies exist, such as works coauthored by Alex Black Horse, John Stands In Timber, James Shoulderblade, and others. Arnold Krupat describes autobiographical Native texts, often using coauthorships, as “original, bicultural, composite composition” (xi). Ledger texts, however, have more than binary dimensions; they are “composite” in that they have text and glyphs and representational drawings and oral tradition. These are available to fill in details from text-based sources in place of a communally under-

stood oral tradition, or “transmotion” (Vizenor 184–85). Further axes that replace a binary dialectic (Cheyenne-white) are those of Cheyenne relationships with Lakotas, Crows, Pawnees, Shoshones, and other Indigenous nations, as described in the ledger texts. Ledgers represent nuanced views of European-descended American people as soldiers, traders, hunters, and city dwellers.

Cheyenne ledger art is at once autobiographic, historic, military, and spiritual; it is written, drawn, and oral. Such biographic and autobiographic books create a complex narrative map for the contemporary readers. Individual drawings and short sequences coexist in the pages, commenting upon each other, interacting to create a whole work of literature. Contemporary Meskwaki writer Ray Young Bear comes from another Algonquin-based language tradition. He describes analogous disconnections in his own narrative autobiographic style:

The creation of *Black Eagle Child* was equivalent to a collage done over a lifetime via the tedious layering upon layering of images by an artist who didn't believe in endings, for the sweeping visions he wanted to capture were constant and forever changing. It was therefore essential to depict these visuals in increments, to keep these enigmatic stories afloat in the dark until dust-filled veils of light inadvertently revealed their luminescent shapes. (255)

Each drawing in a ledger book is such an increment, the accumulation of moments in a multidimensional sequence. Stories remain suspended. No closure defines the plot structure, and the impact on the viewer is left open, not boxed into a formulaic resolution.

AN EXAMPLE OF A COMPOSITE LEDGER TEXT

Pages 48 and 49 of the Newberry ledger book depict a skirmish of the Red River Wars. Cursive ink labels on the two pages are “Attack in 1874 on train near the Washita. Escort under Major Wyllys Lyman of 5th Infantry. Sketch is disfigured by attempt to change white men to Indians and the wagon caravan into an Indian village” (48) and

“Horse shot by escort” (49). These labels appear to have been added after the book was purchased from the Cheyenne artist-warrior(s). The Newberry ledger artist-author here documents the Lyman Wagon Train Battle from the point of view of a yellow-shirted fighter who carries a turtle-and-dragonfly shield, probably Cheyenne because of his dress, though Kiowas or Comanches also took part in the battle. His horse was shot and killed in the encounter.

Overall, the drawing testifies to the man’s courage as he charges the soldiers. Horse tracks begin on the upper left hand side of the diptych, page 48, go down the center margin, and cross onto the lower corner of the next page (49), where the horse is stricken. The horse and Cheyenne man are on the right-hand page, the position of prominence. These form the narrative time frame as well as a site mapping. The tracks of the horse show the path of the yellow-shirted man as he rides his horse past the soldiers’ train and is unharmed. Dashes under the horse show where the man dismounted and stayed with the horse, then walked forward and away, unharmed. The man proves himself brave by harassing the soldiers without injury. The positioning of the figures on the page, then, give the central narrative structure as well as the theme.

Details of the right-hand drawing denote more specific information. The man holds a quirt and an antler in his left hand and a pistol in his right hand. The antler may represent membership in the Elk Scrapers war society. The quirt represents coup and speed (Petersen xxx, 294). His belt is a holster for the pistol. The man wears a yellow-speckled cloth shirt with garters on the upper arms, a choker, a black belt with holster, red trousers, moccasins with beaded edges, and a long red breechclout edged in white, characteristic of Cheyenne men. Tied in his hair is a medicine bundle topped with a yellow feather.

The man carries a shield edged with eagle feathers that are tipped with yellow. In its center is a green turtle, flanked on each side by green dragonflies. Dragonflies occur on shields and other military insignia because “dragonflies are quick and are difficult to kill, and when they fly near the ground they create dust that makes them hard to see” (Maurer 140). This underscores the relationship between the

representation system and the attitude of the earth itself being a text of meaningful signs. The turtle is a tenacious earth being, a balance to the sky power represented by eagle feathers.

The horse is adorned for warfare. The horse's tail is tied in red cloth, and it has an eagle feather in its tail. It has a saddle, loose reins, and loose tether, which indicate haste. The bullets appear on the bottom of the page, in the air and hitting the horse, but the man is beyond range. A cannon ball also appears in a trajectory from the cannon on the previous page. The horse bleeds from the mouth (indication of death) and flank, and his intestines spill onto the ground. He is a brave being who is dying bravely.

The second page (Newberry ledger book 48) is the source of the bullets, a group of eight soldiers in blue trousers and gray shirts. They originally had reddish hair, but this is colored over with black to resemble Pawnee hairstyle. This refers to the label "disfigured by attempt to change white men to Indians." They are grouped left of center, in a spiritually less prominent site, and they are within a circle of eleven boxes with wheels that represent the wagon train, or "escort." Four of the boxes have tepee poles and flaps drawn over them to disguise them as "Indian." These secondary revisions of the images create their own subtext.

In the center of the group, a soldier lights a cannon, and a large puff of smoke emits from it. The cannon resembles the Rodman cannon in use at that time, such as with Custer's Seventh Cavalry (Viola, *Little Bighorn* 61). The lower left margin of the page is filled with smaller puffs of smoke as soldiers shoot from behind the wagons. They hold Springfield carbines, the single-shot rifles issued to the army at that time (Viola, *Little Bighorn* 169).

Other non-Cheyenne sources give corroborating information about the Battle of Red River as a major engagement of the Red River War, August 30, 1874. Col. Nelson A. Miles needed supplies in order to stay in the field, in the Texas Panhandle region, so he sent to Camp Supply for support. On September 9, Capt. Wyllys Lyman made the trip, under attack, and Nye records the engagement near the Washita River in Oklahoma:

Captain Lyman first sighted the Indians at eight o'clock on the morning of September 9. His thirty-six wagons were moving south toward the Washita in double columns, twenty yards apart, ready to be corralled instantly should danger appear. . . . He had just negotiated the passage of a deep ravine when the main body of Indians, whose presence he had not suspected, suddenly appeared in rapidly moving masses on his front and both flanks. (*Carbine* 214)

The troops dug defensive trenches under this onslaught. One soldier, Sgt. William DeArmond, died in the first charge. Comanche, Cheyenne, and Kiowa fighters attacked the thirty-six supply wagons. They laid siege until September 14, when troop reinforcements arrived. According to the hoof print glyphs in the ledger book, the yellow-shirted man made a charges past the soldiers, along with the rest of his comrades; this is consistent with Nye's account, as recorded in his inflated diction:

Some of the braves sat erect on their ponies, brandishing decorated lances and shields. Many indulged in gymnastics, throwing themselves out of sight on the far sides of their mounts; or stood erect on their horses' backs, with lofty red-and-white headgear flowing in the wind. A few galloped at full speed faced to the rear. All maintained a constant yammer of insulting and defiant yells and gestures. (*Carbine* 214–15)

The charges successfully kept the army pinned down in their entrenchment.

Nye records the Kiowa oral tradition of a young man's bravery in dashing between the soldiers' fortified trenches four times. According to the account, Botalye wore a white sheet tied to his waist and threw down a red blanket. He also wore two feathers in his hair, which were shot apart (*Bad Medicine* 193). This figure does not appear to be Botalye. However, another Kiowa version of the fight states, "None of our men were killed, but Sait keente's horse was shot" (Nye, *Bad Medicine* 197). This verifies the dead horse and no loss of human life. This image could be Saitkeente, a son of Kiowa leader Satanta who

was present at the battle, or an unidentified Southern Cheyenne fighter. Such charges of the Kiowa, Cheyenne, and Arapaho horsemen through the firing range of the soldiers were the extent of the battle (Nye, *Bad Medicine* 192–94).

Both the ledger text and the recorded oral tradition create a fuller view of the battle. The historic document created by Nye from Kiowa accounts and army records places an event within a linear chronology. The ledger book, however, centers on the admirable behavior of the Cheyenne fighter and the horse. It records military action and spiritual identity.

LEDGER ART TRADITION IN CONTEMPORARY CHEYENNE TEXTS

Edgar Heap of Birds, a Cheyenne-Arapaho artist, speaks to the survivance of a “circular Cheyenne world” sensibility more than exact mimetic of ledger form in his essay “Of Circularity and Linearity in the Work of Bear’s Heart.” Bear’s Heart, a Cheyenne ledger artist imprisoned at Ft. Marion, is a model regarding method, as Heap of Birds explains:

The strong lead forged by Bear’s Heart should be followed by our contemporary art practice. For today’s Native artist, it is imperative to pronounce strong personal observations concerning the individual and political conditions that we experience. . . . At times this visual expression should speak of human rights and issues of tribal sovereignty, but most important, our art must articulate viewpoints from a deeply personal perspective. The direct stylistic form should evolve without restrictions of presumed tribal traditions. Perhaps the preeminent exercise in sovereign freedom shall become the offering of one’s free-form thoughts as they are reflected from daily life. (66)

Heap of Birds calls for individualized art “practice,” analogous to the practice of the ledger warrior-artists, who represent events from personalized viewpoints, yet still within the context of moral, spiritual, and historic referents. Heap of Birds participates in a continuing Chey-

enne “presence,” as an artist and as a member of the Cheyenne Elk Warriors Society (Berlo 232).

Lance Henson, a contemporary Southern Cheyenne poet, creates poems that reflect the concise and highly connotative form of ledger art texts. He dedicates his poem “Buffalo Blood” to the warrior-artist Little Fingernail:

your pictures
 look at them

 they are walking
 over the
 mirror
 of the morning star

Henson’s poem refers to the ledger drawings as well as the heroic events Little Fingernail enacted. He addresses the great fighter of the Ft. Robinson breakout in present tense, creating simultaneity with historic elements of the poem. His compressed word art invokes the fourth “presence,” as defined by Vizenor, and extends historic events into present time.

The precedent of these pictographic texts, whether taken as a legitimate literacy or studied from a Western perspective, imparts context for contemporary writers. Ojibwe author Louise Erdrich’s re-workings of the same characters and the same events, but from different perspectives—such as the reappearance of Fleur Pillager in five of her ten novels—parallels the simultaneity of ledger texts. Her work continuously supposes and emphasizes a spiritual “presence.” James Welch’s heroes Fools Crow and Jim Loney experience dreams and visions that direct their actions, rather than the Aristotelian plot structure of Western literary works. The ledger texts represent such vision in detailing of power objects, such as shields, medicine bundles, war shirts, and head regalia.

Oral and scholarly written documentation, in combination with the ledger book images, re-create a hybrid Cheyenne/non-Cheyenne genre of narration. Each drawing or text exists in a time continuum, from precontact glyphs to the nineteenth-century ledger art to the

present time. Vizenor describes Native texts, or literacy, as multidimensional maps:

Maps are pictures, and some native pictures are stories, visual memories, the source of directions, and a virtual sense of presence; others are simulations and not a trace of the actual territory. Maps are references, not counterfeits; the memories of the actual territory are not transposed by simulations. Mappery is virtual, the creation of base line representations. (170)

Mapping suggests a holistic, not linear, representation of reality. Cheyenne and other pictographic texts are an alternative literature of unbroken cultural integrity.

NOTES

1. Candace S. Greene, in "Artists in Blue," and Bates, Kahn, and Lanford, in "Washee and the Indian Scouts of Fort Reno," document eight Southern Cheyenne ledger book holdings and identify scouts who contributed to this genre. Another is at Ft. Leavenworth.

2. Inscription is from my own photograph of the ledger at Ft. Leavenworth. In 1880 Capt. Bethel Moore Custer was stationed with the Twenty-fourth Infantry in Indian Territory, at Ft. Sill, Ft. Reno, Cantonment on North Fork Canadian Run and Camp Supply. He died in 1887. He was no relation of George Armstrong Custer.

3. Thompson River Indian traditions include pictographic signs parallel to rock art signs in the northern Plains, such as sun, star, lightning, and bear (Giscombe 37). As specific signs may be parallel, so may the intent behind them.

4. Winter counts may have older timelines. Doyasan, a Kiowa, described worn hide winter counts being copied periodically. Existing winter counts extend to the eighteenth century, including Ben Kindle's Lakota winter count (Beckwith 135–57).

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What Writer Would Not Be an Indian for a While?

Charles Alexander Eastman, Critical Memory, and Audience

GALE P. COSKAN-JOHNSON

Wanton cruelties and the more barbarous customs of war were greatly intensified with the coming of the white man, who brought with him fiery liquor and deadly weapons, aroused the Indian's worst passions, provoking in him revenge and cupidity, and even offered bounties for the scalps of innocent men, women, and children.

Charles Alexander Eastman, *Soul of the Indian*

In "American Indian Intellectual Traditions, 1890–1990," Robert Allen Warrior introduces Charles Alexander Eastman as a "troubling" writer. Eastman was a committed assimilationist who portrayed Natives as "needy for, worthy of, and ready for inclusion in mainstream civilization." Warrior places him among a group of Native intellectuals in the Society of American Indians (SAI), founded in 1911, who at the beginning of the twentieth century were bent on "civilizing" other Indians (8), and he asserts that the "coming together" of this group "marks the first time Native intellectuals had joined in a common organization" (6). He includes in his discussion an extraordinary statement—one of Eastman's contributions to the first conference of that society: "I wish to say that really no prejudice has existed so far as the American Indian is concerned." Warrior's critique of Eastman, along with other members of the SAI, poses the "scandalous treatment of American Indian people" alongside Eastman's "blinding progressivistic optimism" (6). Such a critique makes sense if Eastman's work in general is characterized by the seemingly naïve

position that Indians had suffered no prejudice. Warrior first asks whether Eastman and other SAI members were “misguided, brain-washed, self-hating collaborators,” and then he suggests a response: “their sincerity coupled with their often troubling politics call for a fair as well as critical reading.” Such a reading is crucial to the work of recovery; if Eastman is worth recovering, it is not so that he can be reinscribed in another romantic story of the past but so that we can interrogate his position as a public intellectual engaged in a dynamic early-twentieth-century national discourse challenging the sociopolitical treatment of American Indians by the U.S. government.

In fact, it is both Eastman’s sincerity and his troubling politics taken together that make this early-twentieth-century Native American public intellectual so interesting. A brief look at his background reveals someone of exceptional experiences. According to his own *Indian Boyhood* (1902), Eastman spent his childhood “within the traditional society of the Eastern Sioux,” where he trained to become “a skillful hunter and brave warrior” (Wilson ix). However, he left tribal life at the age of fifteen and followed his father into Christianity, short hair, and white man’s clothing, and he never really returned. After graduating from Dartmouth, he attended the Boston University School of Medicine, graduated in 1890, and was “elected unanimously” by his classmates “as the class orator” at graduation (Wilson 36). In 1890 Eastman was thirty-two years old, trained as a doctor, consulted by legislators, and already in demand as a lecturer (Wilson 36). Unlike his Native American intellectual precursors and contemporaries who were forced to attend oppressive government boarding schools and shed the artifacts of culture against their will, Eastman seems clearly to have chosen the path he took. He has no stories of family violence and abuse like those of William Apess before him (Apess, *Son of the Forest* 5). Nor did he share Zitkala-Ša’s experience of hair shorn by “teachers” while tied to a chair (Zitkala-Ša 91)—a story typical of many of their contemporaries who passed through Gen. Richard Henry Pratt’s Carlyle School for Indians. At the same time, he was not in a position to pay out of pocket for a cosmopolitan education at Oxford as John Joseph Mathews after him evidently was. Eastman’s entire education was funded through university schol-

arships and the patronage of friends (Wilson 33). His experience of education, by all accounts, was positive and empowering, and at the very least, it connected him to the small percentage of Americans at the time that held advanced college degrees. The question then becomes, Did Eastman write, as Warrior and others contend, as an assimilated Indian who wished other Indians to follow suit?

As a writer and a speaker who occupied widely disparate social and cultural positions throughout his life, Eastman did not write simply as an assimilationist, nor did he occupy the wistful position of an educated Indian “lost between worlds.” While I grant that the rage sometimes found in his voice stops short of revolution, his rhetorical strategies are too complex, too “tricky,” and too conscious of the requirements of their diverse rhetorical situations to be reduced to such one-dimensionality. In fact, an excellent and increasing body of scholarship has examined the autobiographical work that scholars have used to contest the position that Eastman’s writing was simply that of an “assimilated Indian” and to demonstrate the ways that he deployed strategies that derived from his position between cultures. In the present essay, I will continue working in the same spirit of some of this scholarship; however, I will focus on the juxtaposition of three of Eastman’s nonbiographical texts that have not yet been evaluated in depth: the *Soul of the Indian* (1911), which presents “Indian” spiritual life to a white, progressive audience; comments from the First Conference of the Society of American Indians in 1911, which take place in a professional space where he addresses his peers, other Native American intellectuals; and finally, an obscure article called “The Medicine Man’s Practice,” which was published in 1919 in a journal called *The Pharmaceutical Era*. The varied and complicated rhetorical situations inscribed in these three texts reveal Eastman as a complex and contradictory writer who was deeply engaged in a wider turn-of-the-century discourse, both inside and outside of the Indigenous community, interrogating Indian ways of being in the world in the face of the overwhelming socio-cultural and military force of the U.S. government. To direct one’s attention to the participants in this discourse community, including Eastman, is to begin to comprehend the complexity behind their positions, the difficulty of

their rhetorical contexts, and the rhetorical force of their commitment to change.

Complexity is already evident in some of Eastman's earliest writings. Eastman's first book-length text, *Indian Boyhood*, was initially published as a series of sketches in *St. Nicholas: A Magazine for Young Folks* in 1893. I begin with this excerpt because in it I find the seeds of a strategy that will resurface and inform the later nonautobiographical work upon which this analysis will focus. In the very first paragraph of *Indian Boyhood*, Eastman splits himself in two and produces a figure that simultaneously occupies two worlds. For Eric Peterson, in "An Indian . . . an American," this aspect of Eastman's writing conjures a figure that recalls Gloria Anzaldúa's *New Mestiza*—a figure that utilizes the fractured discourse of the "borderlands" (174). The metaphor of the borderland is useful here. It is as if, out of the richness of his borderland experience, Eastman deftly produces two fictional representations of himself inside the text because that is what would be rhetorically effective. The mistake would be to argue that his fictionalizing represented his reality and thus to render him "lost between worlds." Such a move invests the writer with a particular kind of tragic ethos that owes more to the ongoing (re)production of the discursive Western subject than to Eastman's textual production. More serious, it distorts our vision when reading his work by recalling and repeating the romanticized and demonized images of Hollywood, which "were, in fact, generally better at being Indian than the Indian" (Kilpatrick 4). In effect, we would "Orientalize" him. We would begin to impose on the evidence signs of the tragic Indian figure of mainstream American histories of the "other." In fact, the writer of this passage appears to be quite savvy about both the desires and the prejudices of his audience. Eastman's *Indian Boyhood* begins with the following lines:

What boy would not be an Indian for a while when he thinks of the freest life in the world? This life was mine. Every day there was a real hunt. There was real game. Occasionally there was a medicine dance away off in the woods where no one could disturb us, in which the boys impersonated their elders, Brave

Bull, Standing Elk, High Hawk, Medicine Bear, and the rest. They painted and imitated their fathers and grandfathers to the minutest detail, and accurately too, because they had seen the real thing all their lives. We were not only good mimics but we were close students of nature. We studied the habits of animals just as you study your books. We watched the men of our people and represented them in our play; then learned to emulate them in our lives.

“What boy,” Eastman asks his youthful audience, “would not be an Indian for a while when he thinks of the freest life in the world?” The graduate of Dartmouth, the medical doctor who was chosen to speak at his graduation from Boston University Medical School, next states categorically, “This life *was mine*.” With the possessive, Eastman lays claim to the credibility with which he addresses his Euramerican audience and professes to teach them about the Indian way of life throughout his writing career. At the same time, his use of the past tense confesses to the limitations of his credibility. That life *was* his; however, at the age of fifteen, he embarked on a very different path than the one he enjoyed in the freedom of his childhood: he spent seventeen years becoming a doctor. The irony here is that the Christianity and the Euramerican education that he acquired at his father’s request (Wilson 17) separated him from his past, but it also placed him in a special position to write about that past. In the paragraph quoted earlier, there is an interesting and insistent repetition: “the boys *impersonated* their elders”; they “*imitated* their fathers and grandfathers”; they were “good *mimics*,” “close *students*”; and they “watch[ed],” “represented,” and “emulate[d]” their elders. With the repetition of the concept of facsimile, Eastman is able to establish the authenticity of his Indian experience while at the same time revealing his distance from that experience. The distance is intensified then by the corresponding repetition of the word “real.” The “real game” and the “real hunt” that the narrator experienced as a child contrast with the one that the youthful, Euramerican reader of *St. Nicholas* can only have experienced “through books.” The narrator sets up an unequal relationship with his audience by placing himself in a posi-

tion of the privileged knower when he compares his “real” experiences to those that “you study in your books.” At the same time, the distance and nostalgia created by his choice of words, and the fact that he addresses “you” in writing, serve to identify him as one who no longer lives the life he describes. The message that he sends to his audience might be, “although I am now one of you, I was once one of them.” At the same time, the exoticism of “them” is mitigated by an underlying message that, as children, we all played games. The move Eastman makes here has been described as “tactical authenticity” (Powell, “I Write These Words” 163a). He authenticates himself as one who has experienced the life that his readers desire but could not have known, and at the same time he authenticates himself as an authority, a narrator, and as the narrator, he is able to address his audience through the medium of print—in their books. He effectively “invokes” and “destabilizes” his audience’s beliefs about Indians (Powell, “I Write These Words” 163a).

In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, literary critic Kenneth Burke explores a notion of rhetoric that is able to shift between action and attitude: “Insofar as a choice of *action* is restricted, rhetoric seeks rather to have a formative effect upon *attitude*” (50, italics in original). In this sense, Eastman’s rhetoric works subtly throughout the passage above as “persuasion to *attitude*.” Eastman poses an alternative and positive representation of Indian life, which would arguably counter more common negative stereotypes that would inevitably be encountered in the dominant discourse by the children who would read this magazine. The text works to invoke the image of the “wild Indian,” likely quite familiar to its audience in a caricatured sense, and to reconstruct the respectability of that image. Eastman’s rhetorical position, which is subtle and not always motivated by what may appear on the surface, demonstrates the challenge of enacting a critical public memory that draws upon but is not trapped in nostalgic renderings. Houston A. Baker distinguishes helpfully between the “twin rhetorics” of nostalgia and critical memory. Nostalgia constructs a past “filled with golden virtues, golden men, and sterling events” while critical memory “is the very faculty of revolution,” and it “judges severely, censures righteously, renders hard ethical evalua-

tions of the past that it never defines as well-passed" (7). For Baker, "Critical memory operates to save Dr. [Martin Luther] King from arrest in a golden allegory of the past" (8). I include Baker's framework here as a cautionary note; he seems to address the tension earlier described by Warrior and to suggest a strategy for avoiding its pitfalls. Baker produces a strategy of recovery that resists a nationalist discourse's tendency to construct heroes in order to replace loss. Some sense of Baker's concept of critical memory seems crucial in the recovery of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Native American public intellectuals. Some work, as we shall see, reconstructs Eastman by romanticizing him—as if we should read him because he was a good person rather than because he spoke up at a time when the powers that be did not want to listen. Writers like Eastman often engaged in the contemporary, racialized, assimilationist, and progressivist rhetoric of their day, and yet close reading often reveals not their victimization by this discourse but rather complexity and deep, ongoing, active commitments to resisting the oppression of their peoples by the U.S. government. It should not be surprising that this resistance was often couched in rhetorics that were possible and effective from within their historical moment. Revolution is only occasionally "blood in the streets"; what we are more likely to find here, given the overwhelming hegemony of American cultural and military forces in the United States at the time, is something trickier, more sophisticated, and heavily veiled—something that would protect a speaker from retribution and so allow her or him to continue speaking, something more like the excerpt from *Indian Boyhood* above. From such a perspective, we are able to recognize Eastman's elitism and his material and rhetorical support and adherence to assimilationist government policies. At the same time, we are able to see the ways that his writing often works differently and ironically from within this discourse. This is a reading that would refrain from dismissing the rage and the critical perspective that surfaces in his work simply because it not always present. It may be possible to view Eastman himself as romanticizing his traditional upbringing and engaging in nostalgia for a lost past, considering the purity and innocence of the precontact Indian that he invokes in much of his writ-

ing; however, it might be more fruitful to consider the rhetorical possibilities that Eastman's idealized Indian generates. As a fictionalized character that is everything that the white man is not, he becomes a tool to critique what Eastman viewed as the material and spiritual failings of white culture.

Raymond Wilson's biography *Ohiyesa: Charles Eastman, Santee Sioux*, the only full-length work covering Eastman's life, is a valuable source of archival information on the Sioux doctor's life. However, it is also a dangerous source. There is something oddly theatrical about the character of Eastman that emerges from Wilson's text when juxtaposed with the highly intelligent but "troubling" intellectual that emerges from Eastman's own writing. In fact, Wilson tells us that once he began to study Eastman, he "quickly surmised" that his life "was dramatic enough to be made into a film or to serve as the basis for a good historical novel" (ix). Eastman died of a massive heart attack in 1939, several years after being awarded a medal presented by the Indian Council Fire with these words: "Dr. Eastman's achievement record covers a long career that has contributed much to his own race as well as to the paleface." Wilson's biography ends with this image of a small award given to an old man, and his final discussion of Eastman portrays him as a tragic hero: Eastman's "pen failed him"; he was a "winner lost"; and at the end of his life he "withdrew—a very Indian thing to do" (193). Wilson seems to render Eastman, in Baker's terms, "arrested in history" by the application of a nostalgic narrative framework. Although Wilson describes Eastman's life as "an author and gifted lecturer" (x) in great detail, he is unable to resist the narrative move to tragedy—he finally buys into the myth of the vanishing Indian.

Another more recent work of recovery is Drew Lopenzina's "Good Indian," which joins the welcome and growing body of scholarship that is developing around the project of recovering Eastman as well as other important early Native American public intellectuals. Lopenzina acknowledges that Eastman "can be located . . . on . . . the 'wrong side' of nearly every major issue he faced at the height of his prominence" (727). Lopenzina's response to Eastman's detractors is more or less that Eastman got a lot of issues wrong but that he was a

good man with “an overall philosophy of a life of service” (728). One of the drawbacks of this very personalized strategy of recovery is that it leads Lopenzina to overpsychologize Eastman in order to justify what he has identified as poor decisions and to direct his recovery at the human being rather than at his textual production. Lopenzina’s attempt at recovery, like Wilson’s, founders in spite of itself, and Eastman is rendered decent but pathetic: “Even after his marriage to Elaine Goodale, Eastman would live a life without a foundation, without roots, wandering from one place to the next with nowhere to call home” (740). Such a claim is problematic because, first, it seems to reach back into Eastman’s unconscious and his spiritual self, neither of which we have access to, and, second, it repeats Wilson’s move and reduces Eastman to the subject of a picturesque and tragic narrative.

Lisa Tatonetti’s “Disrupting a Story of Loss” and Penelope Myrtle Kelsey’s “A ‘Real Indian’ to the Boy Scouts” both contribute importantly to the scholarship on Eastman. Tatonetti argues that the prevailing critical position that labels Eastman an assimilationist causes the reader to overlook the complexity inscribed in Eastman’s text. She argues that Eastman is “an interstitial figure with a stake in two disparate and often conflicting cultures” (289). Kelsey goes farther than Tatonetti—she begins by asking a question: “Was an engagement with the dominant discourse around racial identity a necessity for publication in their [early American Indian writers’] era?” (31). Kelsey finds convincing textual evidence that calls into question Eastman’s allegiance to assimilationist principles. She asserts “critics need to reconsider his writing in light of how he utilizes the dominant rhetoric of racial identity, in addition to tribal and Euro-American genres, to secure a better place for sovereign tribal nations in a new era” (32). Like Tatonetti, and echoing Peterson, Kelsey poses an Eastman who has a stake in two ways of being: he “mediates two lifeways,” and she argues for “a reconsideration of his autobiographies that establishes his ability to refuse racial confusion and advocate tribal livelihood while claiming a competence in each culture” (32). By rejecting a reading of Eastman’s autobiographical work that assumes that he simply wrote, transparently and naively, what he be-

lieved, both of these scholars are able to reveal the resistance in Eastman's texts without engaging in reductive forms of nostalgia. One wonders whether this position could be taken too far. Eastman was a successful product of an uncoerced Western Enlightenment education, and, unlike many of his peers who were forced into boarding schools against their will, Eastman chose to cross cultural boundaries. It seems quite likely that Eastman was conflicted in his own beliefs and that they experienced shifts and changes over time; however, what his writing makes clear is that he employed a progressivist discourse in his writing as a means of persuasion in texts focused on changing the attitudes of his audiences. In fact, as we will see, the ways that he employed that discourse often worked against its own original intent.

Malea Dawn Powell's "Imagining a New Indian: Listening to the Rhetoric of Survivance in Charles Eastman's *From the Deep Woods to Civilization*" suggests seeing an Eastman that "learned to *use* the schools and tools of Euroamerican culture" (215, italics in original). He did not use them in order to shift back to an earlier way of being or to be assimilated into white culture; rather, he uses them in order to produce "a crossblood subject, a new *Indian-ness*" (215, italics in original). Significantly, Powell's approach releases her from the need to consider whether or not to believe Eastman's representation of his Santee Sioux past. Instead she explores ways that he uses his knowledge of "late nineteenth century 'beliefs' about Indians to create a new kind of Indian-ness in which these belief are both invoked and destabilized" (214). Further, in "I write these words with blood and bones," Powell finds that Wilson's biography misses the irony that often underlies Eastman's writing and that the "tormented" character who struggles to survive in white society misses the most interesting complexities of this writer (165a). She insists that the "contradictory Eastman" who marries Euramerican Elaine Goodale six months after witnessing the carnage of Wounded Knee in a "lavish reception in New York paid for by Frank Wood" (168), is the Eastman that is worth investigating. At the very least, a careful critique of Wilson's autobiography suggests that Eastman is a more complex and contradictory figure than Wilson allows. Wilson's Eastman remains, at best,

unproblematic. Wilson reduces Eastman's motivation for writing to the desire to "bring Indians and Whites closer together in an effort to break down the wall of prejudice which existed" (145). I do not mean to imply that such a goal is not worthy or that it did not motivate Eastman's writing on some level—it certainly informed his rhetoric. The point I want to make here is that the Eastman who materializes out of a rhetorical reading of his work is tougher, grittier, less naïve, and more aware of the material reality of his time than Wilson would have him be.

If we wish to carry out the work of a "fair" reading of Eastman in the context of Warrior's critique, we should begin by contextualizing the damning comment cited by Warrior in which Eastman denied, in front of his Native intellectual peers at the first SAI conference, that Indians had suffered from prejudice. In fact, that statement was embedded in comments by Eastman as part of a general discussion following two papers presented at the conference.

THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN INDIANS

The SAI met for the first time in Columbus, Ohio, from Thursday, October 12, to Saturday, October 14, 1911. The *Report of the Executive Council on the Proceedings of the Society of American Indians*, published in Washington, DC, in 1912, draws the picture of a highly professionalized organization invested with a focused, activist purpose. A wide-angle-view photo insert accompanies the text, containing forty-four members of the first conference. One woman, Nora McFarland, front and center, is dressed in buckskin and wears two long braids, while the rest of the group are clad in conservative European-style suits, long skirts, and high-necked dresses. There are twenty-eight men, hair cropped short, and twelve women, who, with the exception of McFarland, wear their hair tied up. A few choose to hide their hair beneath fashionable hats. Four more men appear in the background, but it is not clear whether or not they are part of the group. The individuals in this photo stage a performance of staid assimilation to mainstream culture. The rigid formality of their clothing, neat hair, folded hands, and even the red-brick wall with

white trim that makes up the backdrop of the photo convey a studied professionalism, *progress*; however, I am left wondering at the meaning of Nora McFarland, in braids, at the center. Does she manifest a moment of collective resistance—a traditionalist crack in the center of the progressivist façade? Can we read her image as shouting out that one need not dress in European clothing to be an intellectual? Such an assertion would only work if it found echoes inside the text.

The proceedings begins with a preface that presents the SAI as the product of a century-old dream of the “American Indian . . . for the purpose of the protection and the advancement of his race.” It cites the “common ground” of every tribe as “the oppression of the red race by the various divisions of the white race that had invaded America” (3). It points out the Indian has been “doubly wronged” in that he has been prevented from continuing his former style of living while at the same time he has been “thrust into a false environment inconsistent with the modern conception of enlightened conditions.” The Indian has been placed on reservations and “told that he is a nation” and “yet he is unable to exercise the rights of a nation or to enforce the provisions of the treaty” (4). The preface clearly presents the aims of the SAI as fulfilling the need for “*race organization*” (italics in original) and its goal as that of equality: “The thinking Indian, therefore, asks that he be treated as an *American* and that a just opportunity be given whereby the race as a whole may develop and demonstrate its capacity for enlightenment and progress” (5, italics in original). Running throughout the proceedings is a powerful sense of both pragmatism and something like an insistent kind of hope in the face of evidently well known and obvious (to those present) historical and contemporary obstacles. The proceedings do not provide evidence of blind optimism or collaboration. It is not my intention to argue that this group, named the “red progressives” by Hazel W. Hertzburg (31), was right to pursue assimilationist policies—history proved them very wrong; however, it may be that the strategic move toward *something like* assimilation, in the face of the failure of overt Native American resistance and overwhelming poverty throughout the reservation system, made sense as resistance at the time. In this text, Eastman addresses an audience of his peers: doctors, lawyers,

and teachers who were educated, professional Indians engaged in “race organization.” While there were Euramerican members of the SAI, the conference proceedings assert that the attendees were all delegates selected by their tribe to attend (11).

These proceedings are a rich and valuable resource from which to reconstruct the activist discourse of these early organizers and one that begs further scholarly work and greater visibility. Eastman, who is listed as one of the six founding members and the corresponding secretary and treasurer, although he did not participate consistently (Hertzberg 42), appears in several exchanges on the second day of the conference. He evidently read a paper on the final day of the conference, but the text is not included in the proceedings. In Eastman’s first exchange (88), he responds warmly to a Mrs. Angel De Cora Deitz, who read a paper called “Native Indian Art” in which she pointed out that inferior designs were being reproduced by “manufacturers” that employed “Indian designs in deteriorated forms” (87). In his comment, Eastman speaks of the “peculiar pleasure” he felt listening to Deitz; he affirms the importance of remembering the designs of “our old distinctive art”; and then he elicits laughter from the crowd by commenting ironically that the old art shows “one basic idea, but it has been badly confused by our teachers who are white people, who have mixed the different characteristics of the different tribes, so that you cannot tell an Arapahoe from a Sioux now, and cannot tell a Cheyenne from a Crow” (89). This is interesting because, as we will see, Eastman is less sensitive to the diversity of Native identities when he addresses a presumably all-white audience. The exchange and the subsequent laughter suggest an intimacy among the participants that contributes to a general sense throughout the proceedings that the members of these groups were self-conscious of their roles as educated and privileged members of an oppressed group—an absent “white” figure is often invoked and critiqued. At the same time, the criticism is usually gentle (it becomes less so toward the end of the proceedings). The “white man” is dangerous but is also someone capable of helping if the request for help is convincing, and so it seems that he is not to be blatantly disrespected. Eastman continues:

I hope that in this gathering we will come to some realization of these things in the proper sense; that we may take a backward step, if you please, in art, not in the sense of lowering our standard, but returning to the old ideas that are really uplifting, and are a purer basis for character building. (88)

What is fascinating here is the way that a “backward step” is “uplifting” and that it is to tradition that one turns to for “character building.” Eastman’s speech here repeats a pattern that is common in his other work in which he reverses the binaries of progressivist, developmental terminology, ironically, so that to step backward is to build “character” and be “uplifted.” Eastman continues this pattern when he comments, “Sometimes when we see things in this way and have gone back to the old order, our teachers have said that we have gone back to barbarism, and many times I believe it would be well if we had” (88). Here again is a veiled reference to the white man, “our teachers” who call the old way “barbarism.” In these words, barbarism, the negative pole of the classic developmental binary, is ironically posed as a place “we” should have gone. In effect, Eastman’s comment, made to an audience of his peers, rejects the progressive impulse and faults white culture’s belief in it.

Eastman’s comment denying that Indians have suffered prejudice occurs during the discussion that follows two papers, both called “The Indian in the Professions.” The first paper was read by J. M. Oskison, a Cherokee. Oskison’s is a rollicking speech that begins by the speaker identifying himself as a writer and editor and declaring “Now, I’ll write fiction about cowboys, make ’em yip-yip and shoot their forty-fours till everybody’s deaf, but I’ll be hanged if I’ll repeat the old lies about the Indian for any editor that ever paid on acceptance!” (94). He then cites an editor who had said to him, “Most of the Indians really *do* go back to the blanket, don’t they!” (94). He uses this challenge, then, as a backdrop for a long list of successful professionals who make up “a gallery of individual Indians who are getting to the top of their professions in a friendly, honorable competition with ninety million white Americans” (94). Then he lists doctors, lawyers, dentists, writers, teachers, veterinarians, and politicians, in-

cluding a dentist employed by the Cuban government, a governor of a pueblo, and “a thin-faced, keen-eyed Sioux, who wants to colonize Nicaragua with American Indians” (97). Oskison’s presentation, clearly intended to be an inspirational oration, ends with words quite similar to Eastman’s: “Prejudice against the Indian simply does not exist among the people who can make or mar a career . . . I believe the average Indian would rather work his brain than his hands” (98).

The second paper was read by O. DeF. Davis, and it critiques the failure of the government-run and funded education system for having “not been an unqualified success” (99). He blames the failure on the system, asserts that it is not because Indians cannot be trained, and insists, “The problem which confronts us is one which must be met and solved by the Indian himself” (99). He then goes on to argue enthusiastically that Indians are naturally inclined to be trained for professional work (99). Davis finishes his talk to “applause” by declaring that such well-trained professionals will “demonstrate forever and beyond all possible question the utter falsity of the old saying,—“The only good Indian is a dead one.”” There is something painful in this talk. Davis’s speech is certainly open to the critique that it represents optimistic progressivism, but the final words remind us of the profound material and discursive oppression and violence that surrounds the participants of this conference. Through their own professionalism—performed visually in the photograph—through the meticulous taking of minutes throughout the proceeding, and through the formal professionalism of the conference, these public intellectuals worked to interrupt a mentality that reduced their reality to a brutal cliché.

Eastman was the first to respond to Davis’s speech:

The recent Indian Commissioner was a man who seemed to have no use for an Indian, and did not care to see him succeed, but he is only one man, and when you can point to an Indian who has achieved some distinction, it makes an impression among the public. (101)

For Eastman here, the successful Indian will change the view of the public of which the commissioner, who is prejudiced, is only one

member. Davis's and Oskison's optimism is mirrored in Eastman's comment, and then it circulates and is tacitly debated throughout the subsequent discussion. A Miss Emma D. Johnson agrees that "the Indian is capable"; however, "*the majority of the people of the Caucasian race of the United States do not recognize the ability of the Indian to compete with the white race*" (101, italics in original). A Mr. Sloan addresses the state of education among Indian children: "*more than nine thousand Indian children are without school facilities*" (102, italics in original). But he lauds the work of the "Indian school system," to which he attributes his own success. Then Chairman Cloud has "noticed among the Indian people a certain prejudice against the Indian who is trying to strike out for himself" (104). Cornelius asserts the need for a national fund to assist in training for Indians "for getting into the higher professions" modeled after a Port Rican system (105), and she argues that the present system will fall apart "as soon as citizenship comes" and that boarding schools "hurt [children] too much" (106). Mr. Dagenett agrees with Cornelius but corrects her: it is not a Porto [*sic*] Rican system; rather, "It is Philippine," he says, and it could be used to provide funding for children in public institutions. He also insists, "we must regard the Indian school as a necessary evil" (106). Mr. Chase then adds, to recurring applause, "I for one belong to that class of Indians that wants to stand upon their own feet, upon their own exertions" (107). He confronts the opinion that "has been flouted throughout the country" that Indians "have been fed and clothed by the government all these hundreds of years" (108). He takes exception to this idea and insists that all the government has given, it was "obliged" to give. It is here that Eastman reenters the discussion:

In connection with the words of the last speaker, that there has been a great deal of injustice done to our tribes, I wish to say that really *no prejudice has existed* as far as the American Indian is concerned. I have found that it lies within us to show the paleface what we can do. . . . You must be honorable and moral, and in this way move up and be of service to your neighbor, for it is only the ignorant, the worldly of the worst kind that turn

up their noses at our people. There is *no prejudice against our people* in the professions. (109, italics mine)

It is difficult to know with certainty which of the speakers Eastman refers to here. None of the speakers seem to have overtly claimed “injustice”—in fact, they seem to have gone to pains to avoid such an assertion. Eastman seems oddly intent on making this point. Nevertheless, he then presents his own household as evidence of lack of prejudice: to laughter from his audience, he tells them that in Massachusetts where he lives his “house is full of college boys. I happen to have five daughters growing up” (109). At the end of his comment, he reiterates a third time: “What I want to impress upon your mind is that there is *no real prejudice against any honest Indian* on the part of the white people” (italics mine). The triple repetition of this sentence (itself a repetition of Oskison’s words above) implies that the rhetorical force of this message was directed less at its audience’s reality and more at a strategic belief system: insisting on prejudice will not get you anywhere. Eastman, unavoidably, has first-hand knowledge of prejudice, and he speaks to an audience who shares an intimate knowledge of such prejudice. However, he seems here to be intent on producing a Horatio Alger-type mythos for the consumption of his peers.

That this reading carries weight becomes evident in the next discussion in which Eastman appears in the proceedings: a heavily footnoted presentation by the Honorable Hiram Chase of the Omaha tribe of Indians titled “The Law and the American Indian in the United States.” Chase cites extensive legal precedent that asserts the international and “binding” nature of treaties and the unconstitutionality of several acts of Congress that had stripped Indian nations of their legal property rights (138). Eastman asks Chase, as a lawyer, to explain the legal status of the reservation in terms of property and jurisdiction. Chase answers at great length and uses as an example the creation for the Sioux of an “inalienable reservation sufficient for your needs” (145), at which point Eastman inserts in a way that, textually, is blunt: “They did that twice, and broke it” (145). Chase continues by exploring the history of contact: “A fight between white

men is a battle but when the Indian, fighting for his rights, gets the better of the paleface, it is a massacre. But I do not wish to say one word here that would alienate those of the white race whose sympathies are with us" (145). Chase then goes on to describe the way Indian policy generally results in Indians losing their lands. Eastman's next comment is the one that most strongly complicates his triplicate denial above:

When they push them out of their homes and destroy their means of living, and indiscriminately murder them, don't you think that is the cause of the Indian's turning against the whites and becoming so unreasonable, seemingly unreasonable, and perpetration some of the most atrocious methods of warfare? (147)

The question then is this: Does Eastman simply contradict himself? How can he contain both sentiments? It seems to me that the earlier comment is invested with a progressive reformer's desire to teach, to persuade his peers that, pragmatically, they should act as if there was no prejudice, because this is what would be effective rhetorically for the absent white audience haunting the conference—the audience that Chase does not wish to “alienate.” On the other hand, the quote here is taken from the midst of a passionate exchange between several participants. Would it go too far to say that, here, Eastman speaks from the heart? In any case, this Eastman is the one that emerges powerfully from *The Soul of the Indian*, which he published in the same year as he attended the conference.

THE SOUL OF THE INDIAN

Wilson mentions *The Soul of the Indian* briefly—it evidently received “good reviews” when it was published. He also asserts that Eastman’s “purpose for writing the book appears to have been his need to re-affirm his identity with the past rather than to explain that past to white society.” Wilson goes on to say, “Eastman let his readers know that he was proud to be an Indian and was proud of his ancestral religious beliefs” (135). I would argue that the purpose of this text is

more subversive than that and that what Eastman subverts is the notion of white superiority. To do this, he uses the tragic figure of the noble savage overcome by progress that makes up an essential aspect of the national story of United States of America. Even though Eastman borrows the language of progressivism, he deploys it in novel ways that transform its linear temporality and the assumptions underlying the civilized/primitive binary.

In the foreword to *The Soul of the Indian*, Eastman states the purpose of his book as follows: “I have attempted to paint the religious life of the typical American Indian as it was before he knew the white man. I have long wished to do this, because I cannot find that it has ever been seriously, adequately, and sincerely done” (x). However, before he even begins these words, he has already made three revealing rhetorical moves in the text. The first is a photograph of himself in a feathered bonnet staring beatifically toward a light in the sky. The photo is titled *The Vision*. Arguably, this photo simultaneously invokes Christian catharsis and the Native American vision quest. Eastman here illustrates Powell’s simultaneous “tactical authenticity.” The photo is imbued with the spirit of the Christian saints at the same time that it reaches out to the romanticized image of the “good Indian”—the Protestant hero of Karl May that Eastman also fictionalizes in this text. Then we turn to a dedication to his wife in which he again “tactically authenticates.” Eastman praises his Euramerican wife for her “Indian-like virtues.” He rereads his Christian wife as an Indian much as this text will read Indians as origin(al) Christians. In fact, within the logic of this text, by calling his wife an Indian, he is calling her a “true Christian.” Finally, Eastman lists three epigrams—Sidney Lanier, a Romantic poet; Thomas Campbell, a reformist Christian; and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who wrote lyrically about nature and also was involved in the Christian reform movement. In effect, before moving into his description of “the religious life of the typical American Indian . . . before . . . he knew the white man,” Eastman establishes credentials in three areas: as an Indian (he has the power to turn a white woman into one); as a cultured man (he knows his poetry); and as a reformist Christian with an Enlightenment education. Interestingly, the epigrams of the white poets re-

main autonomous, adult, and associated with his analysis rather than controlled by it while the Indians he writes about remain caught inside the narrative of the text and are curiously homogenous products of his construction. More important, we discover an Eastman here who, rather than “split” between two worlds, appears to be quite adept at manipulating the symbols of both in a manner that would appeal to his progressive, Christian, reform-minded white audience.

The first chapter of the book, “The Great Mystery,” describes the Indian’s sense of divinity. Or so it would seem. The reader may feel frustrated—it does not seem as though we get very close to the “Great Mystery” at all. First of all, Eastman anticipates this failure in his foreword. He argues that previous attempts to represent the Indian’s spirituality have run aground, first by asserting that the Indian who “believes” doesn’t speak about his religion and that the one who has lost his faith “speaks inaccurately and slightly.” Secondly, the “prejudice” of past observers prevented them from seeing the Indian clearly, and finally, “all existing accounts . . . have been made in the transition period.” Rather than simply accusing Eastman of suffering from the ailments he accuses others of, I would rather focus on what Eastman does achieve in this chapter. Eastman’s spiritual Indian is everything that the Euramerican is not—or he *isn’t* what the whites *are*. There “were no priest’s authorized to come between a man and his maker.” He lists what was not there in the time before the whites: no preaching, “proselytizing, persecution,” “scoffers or atheists.” The original Indian religion was the absence of the objects and artifacts of Christianity. And the savvy Indian, “knowing that God sets no value upon material things,” made no sacrificial offerings. After carefully establishing the Indian as humble and lacking in material objects, Eastman suddenly goes on the attack. He accuses the Indian’s “white conquerors” of despising “his poverty and simplicity,” and then, in a sentence dripping with irony, he states, “They forget, perhaps, that his religion forbade the accumulation of wealth and the enjoyment of luxury.” The text continues:

To him, as to other single-minded men in every age and race, from Diogenes to the brothers of Saint Francis, from the Mo-

notonists to the Shakers, the love of possessions has appeared a snare, and the burdens of a complex society a source of need-less peril and temptation. (9)

Here Eastman comes to the heart of his purpose in at least this first chapter of his text. He writes to critique the excesses of “a complex society,” and, echoing voices both Native and European before him, he proposes the precontact Indian as an ideal Christian community—not because they would be easy to convert, but, rather, because they were already living the life. To do this he provocatively challenges white perceptions: “Who may condemn his superstition? Surely not the devout Catholic, or even Protestant missionary, who teaches Bible miracles as literal fact!”

Eastman questions the divide that is assumed to exist between these two cultures: “our American Indian myths and hero stories are perhaps, in themselves quite as credible as those of the Hebrews of old” (17). Finally, he attacks the belief of the whites that the Indians had needed them: “It is the simple truth that the Indian did not, so long as his native philosophy held sway over his mind, either envy or desire to imitate the splendid achievements of the white man” (18). This sentence could seem somewhat ambiguous—the “achievements” that the Indian did not “envy or desire to imitate” are called “splendid.” However, the ironic force of this adjective becomes clearer as the chapter continues. Eastman’s critique has so far been couched in a subtle language of comparisons, which draws his nostalgic and at times patronizing description of the “good Indian” before depicting the corruption of the whites. Arguably, he has done nothing very subversive so far, but as the chapter goes on, his critique becomes more vitriolic. Eastman uses the patronizing discourse of government policy to subvert the position of the dominant culture in his text. He sets the Indian’s “simple mind” beside the “the professionalism of the pulpit, the paid exhorter, the moneyed church” and asserts that the Indian, in his simplicity, resisted the whites until overwhelming abuse forced him to yield: “it was not until his spirit was broken and his moral and physical constitution undermined by trade, conquest, and strong drink, that Christian missionaries ob-

tained any real hold upon him” (20). It also may be argued that Eastman was in control of rather than controlled by that discourse when we consider the following:

The lust for money, power, and conquest so characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon race did not escape moral condemnation at the hands of his untutored judge, nor did he fail to contrast this conspicuous trait of the dominant race with the spirit of the meek and lowly Jesus. (22)

The Indian, who should be the child in this discourse, is capable of judging and even “condemning” the excesses of the “Anglo-Saxon race.” Eastman’s Indian is not passive here; rather, he has applied a sophisticated critique of the “dominant race” by judging them by their own yardstick. Eastman’s Indian talks back.

The final paragraph of the chapter reveals Eastman’s underlying purpose with a searing critique of the U.S. government’s oppressive and duplicitous treatment of the Indians:

When distinguished emissaries from the Father at Washington, some of them ministers of the gospel and even bishops, came to the Indian nations, and pledged to them in solemn treaty the national honor, with prayer and mention of their God; and when such treaties, so made, were promptly and shamelessly broken, is it strange that the action should arouse not only anger, but contempt? It is my personal belief, after thirty-five years’ experience of it, that there is no such thing as “Christian Civilization.” I believe that Christianity and modern civilization are opposed and irreconcilable, and that the spirit of Christianity and of our ancient religion is essentially the same. (24)

With these words, Eastman appropriates the Christianity of the whites, dismantles its primitive/civilized binary, and places the Indian in the superior spiritual position. This passage clearly troubles Warrior’s concern that Eastman was simply an assimilationist. At any rate, Eastman strays some distance from the purpose Wilson attrib-

uted to this work: “to reaffirm his identity with the past rather than to explain that past to white society.”

THE MEDICINE MAN’S PRACTICE

At the SAI conference, in Columbus, Ohio, Eastman addressed his Native peers as an educated professional. In *Soul*, he addressed an audience of white, reform-minded Christians. In the following article, Eastman addresses his peers again, but this time they are his generally non-Indian peers of the medical profession. Gone is the recognition, joked about at the conference, that Indians are not a homogenous group. “The Medicine Man’s Practice” is quite different from Eastman’s other work. In fact, if one’s glance passes from *Soul* to the first two paragraphs of this article, it might, at first, appear shocking. Actually, Eastman does something tricky here. The first two paragraphs of this article seem to be an almost cathartic celebration of modern medicine at the expense of the healing practices of Eastman’s own people: “Perhaps the most important principle underlying the practice of the Indian medicine-man is one which the ‘quacks’ of civilization so largely utilize—they prey upon the weaknesses and superstitions of the human mind.” As Eastman continues, he uses a technique that is common in his other work—in comparing the Indian medicine man to the worst practices of Euramerica, he refers to the medicine man as “cunning,” “superstitious,” and using the technique of hypnotism. Rather than simply comparing Indians to whites, he compares the worst of each group: the medicine man is not bad when compared to some white doctors; rather, he is bad *like* the worst of them. He goes on to say that the medicine man “had very little knowledge of physiology and pathology” and “their knowledge of anatomy was limited to such animals as they were accustomed to dress for food.” His words here imply several things. First, they reveal what it means that Eastman’s experience of Sioux healing practices come to him through the memories of a fifteen-year-old boy whose experience was limited to imitating the adults but never actually acting as one. Second, it lends credence to the as-

sersion that Eastman should be read rhetorically—with an eye to the ways that he manipulates beliefs about Indians held by whites in order to transform those beliefs. In the case of this article, this sort of reading is crucial.

As one continues through the rest of the article, Eastman's intention shifts. In fact, in the rest of the article, Eastman lists several settings in which the medicine man's practice is successful or at least not demonstrably harmful. To view his words here as purely manipulation would be to understate his own real complicity with his audience. He is writing to his peers, and like them, he is a product of the Western medical establishment. On the other hand, what is interesting is that the balance of the article seems to be an attempt to rehabilitate the image of the Indian medicine man. First, Eastman tells a story: "There is a story," about an Englishman who developed "consumption" while living with the Sioux. The medicine man took him to a herd of Buffalo, killed one, and then gave the man "a drink of warm blood in a piece of tripe" (281). Eastman then tells us, "It is said that many patients in an advanced stage of tuberculosis have been cured by this treatment." He next tells us about "their habit of removing the sick from a close cabin" (281), which has become an "example being followed nowadays by the most enlightened" (282). He identifies "five modes of treatment" as "the 'sweat house' or steam bath, venesection, the stomach bath, the use of laxatives, and the 'rest cure'" (282), and what follows is an analysis of each practice. The sweat bath invigorates the blood and is a "tonic to the muscles." About bloodletting, he describes having observed "twenty old men who proved to [his] satisfaction that they had been subjected to this blood-letting at least once a year since they were twenty years of age." Eastman qualifies his analysis of bloodletting by protesting, "theoretically, I myself do not believe in the practice, yet it is hard to see how it harmed these men." There is only one moment in the text, toward the end, when Eastman overtly claims his Indian identity: "We Indians considered complete rest very essential in any physically abnormal condition." The article ends, strangely, with a comment about the medicine man being "better protected" in terms of payment than "most doctors." He explains that the fee might be a blanket of "sev-

eral ponies” and that payment was “regarded as a sacrifice to the great mystery” and so it was an obligation that could not be evaded. This is interesting because eight years earlier Eastman had claimed that the medicine man was never paid—that is, he was not paid until the white man appeared and introduced trade.

This article was written eight years after *Soul of the Indian*, in which Eastman gave a very different reading of the Great Mystery. For example, in *Soul*, the medicine man has “personal magnetism and authority” (75), instead of the ability to manipulate weaknesses. Further, “in the old days the ‘medicine-man’ received no payment for his services,” until the “idea of payment and barter was introduced among us” (76). In fact, it is the introduction of white culture that leads “to the rise of the modern ‘conjurer,’ who is generally a fraud and trickster of the grossest kind” (76). In “The Medicine Man’s Practice,” aimed at a white, professional audience produced by the medical field, Eastman leaves all these details out. However, it is important to reread the first two paragraphs of the article in the light of the rest, because if Eastman was addressing an audience who had very little knowledge of Indian ways of being in the world, it would make sense to begin from a position comfortable to their prejudices and thus persuade them to listen.

The Charles Eastman that takes shape through a juxtaposition of these three texts is complex, slippery, and difficult to categorize. To reduce his work and that of others of his generation to that of assimilated Indians who wrote nice Indian stories but, lost between worlds, ultimately came to nothing would be, first, to bury the subversive rage and resistance that his writing contains. It would also ignore the complicated struggle that Eastman and others of his generation took an active part in, and it would be to remain complicit with a view of American history that has attempted to erase the rough edges of resistance in the past and pass on a story of America in which Native Americans, among other marginal voices, were silent. In order to transform contemporary views of the past that are inscribed in a nostalgic form of history largely written for and promulgated by educational institutions that present homogenous narratives that do

not disrupt the status quo, it is crucial that critical work, through critical memory, recovers the writers who somehow slipped through the gaps of a historiography that did not count them among the winners. This is true in mainstream history, but it is also true in many of our received histories of rhetoric—one must fiercely resist the tautology that says, Why are there no Indian (woman, African American, Latino, worker, immigrant) writers in the textbooks? Because Indians didn't write. Eastman wrote widely. He engaged in a rich Native American public discourse that circulated in and out of national discussions of identity and politics. Eastman's writing voice speaks quietly, and then it shouts, depending on whom he is talking to.

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Book Reviews

Woody Kipp. *Viet Cong at Wounded Knee: The Trail of a Blackfeet Activist*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2004. 166 pages.

Scott Andrews

Woody Kipp's memoir is the story of at least two educations. One is suggested in the title: his education in the racial and political dynamics of America, which included experiences in the Vietnam War, the Trail of Broken Treaties, and Wounded Knee II. Another is perhaps more pervasive than the first: his long, slow, and violent education into the damaging influences of alcohol—in his life and in the lives of those around him. Throughout both, though, Kipp never loses his sense of humor, relating many funny stories (many of them at his own expense) and insisting in the end on looking for a path to health and happiness for himself and his people.

One could say that Kipp begins his memoir in the oral tradition, in that he recounts his ancestry, establishing his connectedness to the community and the land from which he speaks. In the first sentence he declares his right to speak as a Blackfeet, giving us his name in his people's language and an early experience that establishes his membership in that community: "I, Woody Kipp, Natoos Sina (Sun Chief), survived on bull elk meat for a few days when I was two months old" (1). He goes on to describe his adopted family and their experiences in a community in the midst of many changes: "I was

adopted into a fighting family, a proud, complicated Blackfeet family that stood with one foot in the old ways and the other in the acculturated American ways" (7).

Kipp says much of his political awareness began in his basic training for the marines. This education was started by two black friends, who taught him the definition of "splib"—Segregated People Living in Brotherhood. His education continued through his encounters with white enlisted men and officers. They asked many innocent but uninformed questions about Kipp's life as a Blackfeet, and he, still naïve about racial dynamics in America and relatively uninformed about his own cultural heritage, was not sure how to answer. Kipp writes that their many questions could be boiled down to one: "Do you fuck, fight, and flagellate against the powers of the world without the benefit of the true way?" (28). *Viet Cong at Wounded Knee* is the story how his naiveté was removed, how he began to learn effective responses to injustice, and how he found his path to that "true way," albeit with many detours.

As his title suggests, Kipp identified with the Vietnamese people while he was overseas. In retrospect he sees himself in particular as the Viet Cong, the irregular military arm of the North Vietnamese in the South—in other words, he is not just different from the Americans; the Americans perceive him as an enemy. Kipp identified with the Vietnamese people, partly because of physical resemblances he saw between them and American Indians and partly because of cultural similarities. Years later, he understands part of the attraction to the Vietnamese people being based on "their understanding of nature and family, animist beliefs, and Buddhism" (41). In Vietnam he heard racist remarks toward the Vietnamese that echoed the remarks leveled at Indians, and he saw echoes of his ancestors' experiences in the differences between the Americans' advanced, technological weapons and the North Vietnamese's weapons: "I began to more clearly comprehend what my people had faced in the American West when the whites came with the Gatling guns" (47).

Kipp's education in race and politics continued through academics and activism. At the University of Montana he learned that there was much ignorance concerning America's first peoples: "I began to

see that much had been written about me and my people, and a lot was utter bullshit” (84). With college came political activism, and Kipp joined AIM and the caravan for the Trail of Broken Treaties, participating in the takeover of the BIA headquarters in Washington, DC. By 1973 he was involved in the occupation of Wounded Knee. At Wounded Knee the lessons of Vietnam came full circle. The U.S. forces surrounding the little church used an aerial flare to light up the compound, the same type of flare Kipp and other U.S. soldiers had used to look for Viet Cong and North Vietnamese soldiers at night. He writes, “At that moment in the ravine, I realized the United States military was looking for me with those flares. *I was the gook now*” (126; italics in original).

Alcohol is a near constant presence in *Viet Cong at Wounded Knee*. Nearly every period of Kipp’s life is influenced by drinking. He tells several funny stories, but he also talks of the grief alcohol caused in his life and in the lives of others. He openly confesses that many of his troubles and bad decisions were accompanied by alcohol. Even events such as the Trail of Broken Treaties and the occupation of Wounded Knee featured alcohol, despite oaths of sobriety by participants. Throughout the book, Kipp blames much of the poverty and suffering in American Indian communities on the U.S. government. But he also holds his community responsible for its troubles: “The fact is that through the years, from the time the Indian traders . . . brought liquor among the Indians, we have really made fools of ourselves in the use of it” (140).

At times the book demonstrates a sophistication concerning the nature of the racial tensions in America. Kipp writes that at the university he began to understand Native identity issues from an “academic angle” (84), and later he sounds academic when he describes a racial dynamic similar to Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, stating the U.S. government (here synonymous with “the white man”) projected its own fears and behavior onto the Native: “He is not afraid of me; he is afraid of what he has done to me, and thus he is afraid of himself” (139). Yet at other times, the book makes rather totalizing and essentializing statements, about Indians and about white people. For instance, Kipp writes that “Indians are *by nature* a gregarious people”

(italics mine), and he writes of “the white mind,” monolithic and dominant: “This was the white mind at work, the owning mind, the lost mind, the mind that nobody, not even a large portion of his own womenfolk, really understood” (117). Overall, though, Kipp understands identity as the product of a complicated convergence of economics, culture, political power, and other forces.

Kipp today is an English instructor at the Blackfeet Community College in Montana, but the book narrates his life only up to 1973, with Kipp still drinking and getting into trouble. However, the epilogue suggests that in a later volume he will “tell of those decades of spiritual growth, healing, empowerment through knowing the intimacies of ancient culture, and the sloughing off of tradition that is not useful today” (142). That sounds like another good book.

Elaine A. Jahner. *Spaces of the Mind: Narrative and Community in the American West*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2004. 191 pages.

Franci Washburn

In the author’s own words, this book is about “narrative and the varied ingenious uses we make of it as we negotiate among different cultures, histories and locations” (ix). Specifically, Jahner analyzes oral histories from the Yanktonai Sioux in North Dakota and their German-Russian neighbors and the written works of novelists James Welch and Mildred Walker using a theory that she has developed for the analysis of narrative, a theory that she calls cognitive style. She defines this theory as “the linguistic evidence of historical processes at work in speech acts that function to define an individual’s place in a textual community” (23).

The introduction and early part of the book are both personal and highly theoretical. Research projects such as Jahner’s are usually born in the academy. A researcher comes up with an idea and then finds a place where the idea can be tested using human subjects, goes there, completes the study, returns home, and writes up the results. This project was conceived while Jahner was already working with the Yanktonai Sioux and their German-Russian neighbors in another

capacity, and only years later did she come up with the premise of this book. The subjects of her study were her own friends and, in some cases, her relatives thus conferring upon Jahner both an insider and an outsider status in relation to her subjects and the project. While this can sometimes be problematical, Jahner turns it to her advantage. Her intimate knowledge of the people coupled with her academic training enable a deeper insight than would have been possible as either an insider or an outsider. The opening information anchors the rest of the text in a theoretical background that draws upon the works of researchers and writers such as Dell Hymes, Ella Cara Deloria, Martha Warren Beckwith, and Clark Wissler who worked with American Indian narratives. Seymour Chatman (*On Narrative*) provides the main source of information on Euramerican narrative style.

The aim of the book is to demonstrate that personal narratives are more than just interesting stories but are also the subjects' ways of situating themselves historically and personally as individuals within larger communities that are connected to geographical landscapes. The analyses within the book illustrate the ways in which two very different cultural groups—the Yanktonai Sioux and the German-Russian immigrants—transmit this information via oral narrative in ways that are both similar and different.

Because these are people that Jahner knows, the analyses of their narratives are sprinkled with personal anecdotes and information about the actions and personalities of the people themselves, often told in poetic language, that makes them come alive for the reader in ways that a strict outsider distanced approach would not have done.

Jahner applies the same analytical methods to written narrative in the works of the two novelists, James Welch, who is a Blackfeet writer native to Montana, and Mildred Walker, who is a descent of Euramerican immigrants to Montana. This section of the book is much more distanced in tone, necessarily so because here Jahner was working with archival information—the novels of these two writers and related critical writings. She had to work with the stories of fictional characters created by storytellers—a Native American and a Euramerican immigrant whose points of view were parallel to the subjects telling oral narratives.

The book is not without problems because it would appear that the information upon which the study and analysis of the oral narratives is based was collected at least twenty years ago, although Jahner never states exactly when. Some more recent data to see if her theories still hold would seem to be not only appropriate but also necessary. Nor is information offered on the number of people who contributed information or other statistical variables between groups. The reader is required to accept on faith that the material presented comes from a sound theoretical framework of data collection, at least for the comparative analysis of Yanktonai Sioux and German-Russian subjects in the book. Perhaps Jahner would have liked to update her data but did not have the opportunity to do so. She was critically ill during the final stages of completing this text and died before the book was released in June 2004.

That said, Jahner certainly had the credentials to write this book, which lend validity to her analysis and conclusions despite the lack of transparency about the data collection. In 1977 Jahner wrote of the need for new “critical equipment” for the analysis and understanding of American Indian texts. In the almost twenty years since then, she continued to write journal articles and advocate for new critical theories and approaches to reading and teaching American Indian literature. This book is the result of years of thinking and teaching about the subject. Her earlier published books displayed little of this sophisticated level of analysis, however. Along with Raymond J. DeMallie, Jahner edited the papers of James R. Walker, which were published by the University of Nebraska Press in *Lakota Belief and Ritual* (1980) and *Lakota Myth* (1983). Some analysis of the material was included, but for the most part, DeMallie and Jahner simply placed Walker’s collected papers into printed form with notes about Walker’s sources, probable time of collection, and a biography of Walker himself. *Spaces of the Mind* is the culmination of all the intense work on critical theory and analysis that Jahner has done since the publication of the Walker material.

There are other books that purport to advance a critical theory and methods of narrative analysis for American Indian Literature, such as Elvira Pulitano’s *Toward a Native American Critical Theory*

(University of Nebraska Press, 2003). However, neither Pulitano's book nor others offer anything new in the area of a critical theory but are essentially rehashes of critical analysis in the style of Arnold Krupat. Jahner's book does exactly what she advocated back in 1977: it provides new "critical equipment" for the analysis of American Indian narrative, both oral and written. *Spaces in the Mind* pioneers a theory and a methodology that could prove very useful in the analysis of narrative in general and Native American oral narrative in particular provided that those who use the book realize the problem of data collection and are careful to document and situate their own data for research applications.

Alexander Posey. *Chinnubbie and the Owl: Muscogee (Creek) Stories, Orations, and Oral Traditions*. Ed. Matthew Sivils. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2005. 128 pages.

Tereza Szeghi

Matthew Sivils does a service to American Indian studies by collecting a number of Alexander Posey's stories, orations, and works of oral tradition for the first time. He frames the book with aspects of Creek history and Posey's life crucial to Posey's work and its place in Creek literature and history. Invoking Craig Womack, Sivils takes pains to refute popular perceptions of Posey as "torn between worlds." He argues that Posey's fusion of Creek tradition and Euramerican literary forms demonstrates his adept negotiation of various cultural influences that shaped his life and work. Sivils confronts a disturbing aspect of Posey's worldview that one cannot escape when reading this collection: his racism toward African Americans and Creek freedmen in particular. Nonetheless, Posey's freedmen stories effectively demonstrate, as Sivils notes, the complex social hierarchy of the Creek Nation at the time. Given the complexity of Posey's literary influences, his political views, and the tumultuous period in Creek history in which he wrote, Sivils advocates a multicultural, multidisciplinary approach to Posey's writing that takes

into account these influences and Posey's distinct blending of them rather than viewing them as contradictory.

The book is divided into three sections distinguished by genre: stories, orations, and works of Muscogee oral tradition, each with a separate introduction by Sivils. Posey showcases, across genres, his unique blending of cultural forms that displays his debt to oral tradition but also reveals his belief in innovation and change as central cultural components. His incorporation of contemporary political commentary into traditional Creek stories and invocation of Euramerican writers in his speeches about the Creeks' vibrant future reflect his conviction that cultural survival requires adaptation but not assimilation. He illustrates the viability of traditional stories as frameworks for critiquing mainstream American culture but also for understanding Creeks' relationship to it. While his central motivation in recording traditional Muscogee stories was his belief that they would be lost, he exemplifies their ability to live in new cultural forms.

The title story, "Chinnubbie and the Owl," exemplifies Posey's practice of sustaining through transforming oral tradition. Chinnubbie wins a storytelling competition based on his well-crafted, original story whereas his opponents are accused of plagiarizing the oral tradition "to veneer the imperfect portions" of their stories (35). This charge has less to do with retelling old stories than poor storytelling—a product of not taking the oral tradition seriously. Chinnubbie speaks to the power of retelling old stories, saying, "a good story, however ancient, is always new, and the more frequently it is told, the more attractive it becomes, and is destined to never be obliterated from the memory in which it lives" (36). Chinnubbie argues that the power of stories increases with each telling and that repetition is crucial to their longevity, thus affirming that they must be told by generations of storytellers, not just by the teller who experienced them firsthand.

In his stories about Creek freedmen, Posey characterizes them in terms Euramericans have often applied to American Indians—for example, as lazy and indolent—but also illustrates their compromised position within the Creek Nation and the United States. In "Jes 'Bout a Mid'lin', Sah" the narrator's father decides to oblige Jim, a

Creek freedman, in his desire for a cut of meat in hopes of persuading him, and by extension the rest of the “Coon Creek niggers,” to vote for his choice candidate for chief. In “Mose and Richard,” despite his disparaging treatment of Creek freedman, Posey speaks to their multiply compromised position. Uncle Dick wants his children to go to school, otherwise, “if you grows up ignunt, de white man’ an’ Mistah Injin gwine to git de best ob you” (63).

Posey’s speech, “The Indian: What of Him?” encapsulates his complex view of American Indian traditions vis-à-vis Euramerican culture. He counters allegations of American Indian’s having an “unprogressive” nature and being unchanged by education while simultaneously asserting that “no intelligent being can for a moment entertain the idea that the Indian has had ample time and opportunity to become a conspicuous character on the battle plains of human progression” (83). This is not due to lack of longevity in relation to Euramericans but to delayed contact with them and the advantages of “higher enlightenment.” Posey takes pains to note the success of members of Indian Territory in founding governments and other social institutions, despite removals and broken treaties. Thus, while he perpetuates the notion that “civilization” began with Euramericans, he also accuses them of stifling the advancement of American Indians by going against their own enlightened principles while highlighting the innate abilities of American Indians given their “progress” despite these odds.

In his traditional Muscogee stories, Posey again exemplifies his particular valuation of Muscogee tradition while appropriating Western forms. In “The Origins of Music According to the Creek Medicine-Men,” he laments that the “Red man” had not “advanced” enough until recently to have a written language in his original tongue with which to record his history. He recognizes the oral tradition as a historical vehicle but argues that its reliance on memory lends itself to inaccuracy. Yet Posey also attributes much of his alleged weakness of the oral tradition to the number of Creeks neglecting the “habit of transmittance” in the face of Anglo American influence.

“A Fable” further complicates Posey’s views of history and simple oral versus written dichotomies. In this story a dog claims to have

beaten a monkey in a fight, but when he is to burn the hair at the fight scene, he hesitates because the hair actually belongs to him. The fable concludes, "If historians confined themselves to facts, fewer complete victories would be recorded and less hair burned" (121). Adapting the oral tradition to written form, Posey thus critiques the practice of history itself.

Perhaps Posey's most poignant conjoining of traditional Muscogee stories and contemporary politics occurs in "Story by an Indian Raconteur." Including himself in the story, in his role as Dawes Commission interpreter, he positions himself in the "progressive" sector of Creek politics. Yet the story he tells undermines the myth of allotment that he endorsed: that it would secure Creek land for Creeks. In this story, Posey tells another Native man of Dawes Commission proceedings, leading the man to compare the people of Indian Territory with rabbits. According to Creek lore, when various animals gathered to select their chosen food, rabbit opted for buttons growing on a sycamore tree that never dropped, leaving him to prowl and steal food. Like rabbit, Creeks awaited allotment promises that would not be fulfilled.

This collection of Posey's work invites engagement with the complexity of his time and the difficulty of securing cultural survival in the face of colonial encroachment. Womack characterizes Posey as a trickster, as someone who challenges boundaries and turns categories upside down. By extension, Posey's writings require complementary critical readings that disrupt facile distinctions and simplistic categorizations, trickster-style.

Ward Churchill. *Kill the Indian, Save the Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools*. San Francisco: City Lights, 2004. 157 pages.

Beverly Slapin

Churchill's latest diatribe is a single essay, with an incomprehensible yet self-serving preface by George E. Tinker:

The scope of demystification Churchill has pursued over the past twenty years or more has evolved to include nearly the full inventory of “interpretive techniques” . . . with which North America’s settler intelligentsia has sought to expunge from the accuracy of memory certain actualities attending its forbears’ initial “encounters” and subsequent “interactions” with the continent’s indigenous peoples. (xvii)

In miniscule type, the eighty-five pages of notes, bibliography, and index outweigh the actual text in verbiage and match it in pomposity. Many of the notes reference Churchill’s earlier works and arguments. (See, for instance, note 64: “For additional samples of Churchill’s rebuttals of those who would deliberately distort the definition of genocide for political reasons, see . . .”)

There’s nothing new here, except to note that Churchill’s massive ego has grown even more. For narratives from people who had survived the boarding schools, he relies heavily on Brenda Child’s *Boarding School Seasons* (University of Nebraska Press, 1998) and David Wallace Adams’s *Education for Extinction* (University Press of Kansas, 1995), at the same time excoriating Adams for not using the term “genocide.”

Kill the Indian, Save the Man is part of Churchill’s *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas, 1492 to the Present* (City Lights, 1997), expanded, reargued, and made even more unreadable. From the introduction:

I have by design engaged in no new research while assembling my essay. Instead, to underscore the obviousness of what is being obfuscated and “denied” by “responsible” scholars, I’ve chosen to rely exclusively on previously published data, most of it long and readily accessible to anyone willing to consider its implications. My main contribution to the literature, I think—aside from offering the first comparative assessment of residential school operations and impacts covering both the U.S. and Canada—is thus to have effected a synthesis of the relevant information, configuring it in a manner facilitating its being scrutinized through the lens of legality.

Yet Churchill's bibliography contains sixty-nine references to material published *after 1997*, the year *A Little Matter of Genocide* was published. He did not reference, however, Roland Chrisjohn's excellent essay "The Report," part of "Residential Schools: The Past is Present," by Michele Cheung, in *Dark Night* field notes, no. 17/annual issue 2001, in which Chrisjohn writes, "What happened with reservation schooling wasn't kind of like genocide, it wasn't cultural genocide, it wasn't something approximating genocide. It was genocide." Churchill had to have known about it, because he was on the editorial board. What he has seen fit to cite is Linda F. Witmer's questionable-at-best *The Indian School: Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 1879–1918* (Cumberland County Historical Society, 2000) and Michael S. Cooper's abominable children's book *Indian School: Teaching the White Man's Way* (New York: Clarion Books, 1999), which Churchill describes as "a good, and very succinct study of how these principles were imposed in the U.S."

Kill the Indian, Save the Man also contains a lot of archival residential school photos, randomly placed and some inappropriately captioned. See, for instance, the photo of little Richard Kissiti (Apache) at age four, captioned as being the "youngest 'student' at Carlisle in 1895." He was not a student, even if the word is surrounded by quote marks. His story is very painful, and apparently Churchill didn't feel it was necessary to tell (assuming he bothered to find out).

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Major Tribal Nations and Bands Mentioned in This Issue

This list is provided as a service to those readers interested in further communications with the tribal communities and governments of American Indian and Native nations. Inclusion of a government in this list does not imply endorsement of or by *SAIL* in any regard, nor does it imply the enrollment or citizenship status of any writer mentioned; some communities have alternative governments and leadership that are not affiliated with the U.S., Canada, or Mexico, while others are not recognized by colonial governments. We have limited the list to those most relevant to the essays published in this issue, thus, not all bands, towns, or communities of a particular nation are listed.

We make every effort to provide the most accurate and up-to-date tribal contact information available, a task that is sometimes quite complicated. Please send any corrections or suggestions to *SAIL* Editorial Assistant, *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures, 3D Olds Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1033, or send e-mail to sail2@msu.edu.

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Curve Lake First Nation
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Fax: 705-657-8708
<http://www.curvelakefn.com>

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
P.O. Box 455
Cherokee, NC 28719
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Fax: 828-497-8196
<http://www.cherokee-nc.com>

Fort Belknap Indian Community (Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes)
Rural Route 1 Box 66
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<http://www.fortbelknapnations-nsn.gov/index.htm>

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